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EXISTENTIAL PESSIMISM AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: MILL, SCHOPENHAUER, AND NIETZSCHE ON LIFE'S VALUE

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JOSHUA ISAAC FOX

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Table of Contents

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Abbreviations and Translations

When text is cited in translation, the original language text is provided in Appendix A. Translated text is matched to original language text by a number in brackets accompanying the citation. As an example, the following text appears in the second chapter: "want and boredom are the two poles of human life"(PP II: 295 [1]). The [1] accompanying the citation indicates that the German text will be the first entry in the chapter two section of Appendix A.

Texts by Mill, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche are cited using the following abbreviations:

A: *The Anti-Christ*
BGE: *Beyond Good and Evil*
BT: *The Birth of Tragedy*
CW: Mill's *Collected Works*
CW: *The Case of Wagner*
D: *Daybreak*
EH: *Ecce Homo*
GM: *On the Genealogy of Morality*
GS: *The Gay Science*
HH: *Human, All Too Human*
OBM: *On the Basis of Morality*
PP I: *Parerga and Paralipomena* I
PP II: *Parerga and Paralipomena* II
TI: *Twilight of the Idols*
WWR I: *The World as Will and Representation* I
WWR II: *The World as Will and Representation* II
Z: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Although there is an overlap between the standard abbreviations for Mill's *Collected Works* and Nietzsche's *The Case of Wagner*, references to the two texts can be distinguished by the form of the citation. References to Mill's *Collected Works* are given by volume number and page, e.g., *CW* 10.113. References to Nietzsche's *The Case of Wagner* are given by section number or section name, e.g., CW 1. The inclusion of a page number in the *Collected Works* citations can be used to distinguish the two.

Overview

In current use, pessimism is a temporal thesis. The pessimist denies the possibility of *improvement*. Things are, the pessimist suggests, as good as they are going to get. Perhaps they will stay the same. Perhaps they will get worse. What is certain is that they will never get better.[1]

In the latter half of the 19th century, pessimism meant something different, something that allowed Nietzsche to define it as "the problem of the *value of existence*"(GS 357 [1]). Nietzsche and his contemporaries were not worried about the *relative* value of tomorrow and today. Their fear was more absolute. They did not worry that life is already as good as it is going to get. They simply worried that life would never be good enough. Pessimism, in its 19th century use, was a worry about life's value to the one who lives it. In its weakest form, it was the fear that human happiness is an impossibility. In its strongest form, it was the thesis that human life is not worth living.[2]

Worries about pessimism in this sense of the term gripped thinkers throughout the 19th century. In what follows, I will discuss three thinkers who took this problem particularly seriously: John Stuart Mill, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Each of these thinkers takes their own approach to the problem of pessimism. I will do my best to bring out the grounds of their individual worries about life's value. I will also argue that there is a particular advantage to putting these thinkers' worries in contact. When taken together, their separate confrontations with pessimism point toward something of lasting philosophical significance:

[1] For discussion of this contemporary understanding of pessimism, see Barua 2012: 129 and Dienstag 2006: 29. Both misstep by projecting this contemporary understanding back into 19th century discussions. Their presentation of the contemporary view is, however, highly helpful.

[2] On the 19th century understanding of pessimism, see especially Beiser 2016: 4. This understanding of pessimism will be discussed in much greater detail in the coming chapter.

namely, a compelling account of the roles aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic dignity play in making life worth living.

The dissertation can be helpfully divided into two parts. In the first two chapters, I trace Mill's engagement with pessimism and his attempt to use that engagement to ground claims about the importance of aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic dignity. Although there is much for us to learn from Mill's efforts, I ultimately conclude that he falls short of his goal: Mill's engagement with pessimism leaves his claims about aesthetic appreciation and dignity still in need of firmer foundations.

To fill this gap, I turn to a different thinker's engagement with pessimism. Thus, in chapters three through five, I trace Nietzsche's confrontation with the pessimism of Schopenhauer. I argue that Nietzsche makes good on Mill's approach: through his engagement with pessimism, Nietzsche finds compelling grounds for the same claims about the importance of aesthetic appreciation and dignity that Mill had hoped to establish.

Chapter 1: Two Pessimisms in Mill

In his *Autobiography*, John Stuart Mill describes a crisis in his early life, a period during which he could find no value in his existence. This struck Mill as more than a personal misfortune: he feared that "the flaw in my life, must be a flaw in life itself"(*CW* 1.149). Mill's crisis, then, led him to a natural engagement with pessimism, the claim that human happiness is an impossibility.[1]

In what follows, I examine the first two challenges Mill confronts in *Utilitarianism*'s second chapter. I suggest that these challenges are best understood through the lens of Mill's engagement with pessimism. Both challenges share a common structure: each suggests utilitarianism entails the truth of pessimism, and each assumes that pessimism and utilitarianism cannot be true at once. I will refer to challenges with this structure as *pessimistic challenges*. They are a variety of *ad hominem* critique which suggests that a position is undermined by entailing a pessimism that is incompatible with it.[2]

Utilitarianism's second chapter is entitled "What Utilitarianism Is"(*CW* 10.209). It serves a clarificatory role. Later chapters offer positive arguments in utilitarianism's favor. Chapter two simply defends utilitarianism against misrepresentation.[3] The chapter opens with a two-part

[1] Although it is easy to recognize Mill's worry as an engagement with pessimism, Mill himself never describes it as such. This is unsurprising, as the term pessimism was just working its way into English during Mill's lifetime (see Zanker 2011: 84-86 for a history of the term's development). It is used to describe a sour attitude toward life as early as 1815, but does not become identified with a philosophical view about the impossibility of happiness until after Schopenhauer's rise to prominence in the 1850s. When James Sully publishes his *Pessimism, a History and a Criticism* four years after Mill's death, it is still necessary to note that most English readers will be unfamiliar with the term's use to describe a philosophy rather than a disposition (Sully 1877: 1-2).

[2] Pessimistic challenges are *ad hominem* in the following sense: they are arguments built around premises accepted by an opponent rather than premises accepted by the person making the argument.

[3] Mill lays out this division of labor in chapter one's final paragraph (*CW* 10.208).

definition of utilitarianism: utilitarianism combines a moral claim – actions are right insofar as they promote happiness – with a "theory of life" – pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends (*CW* 10.210). The rest of the chapter rebuts *ad hominem* challenges to this position, replying to a series of critics who claim utilitarianism has unacceptable implications. Mill argues that these critics misconstrue the views they reject: the critics take utilitarianism to have these unfortunate implications because they misunderstand either the theory of life or the moral claim on which it is based.

It is in this context that Mill confronts the two pessimistic challenges I discuss. Like all challenges in this chapter, the first two build an *ad hominem* case against utilitarianism. What is distinctive about them is the particular structure of their critiques. Both challenges seek to create a tension between utilitarianism's two central views. They do this by arguing that utilitarianism's theory of life undercuts its moral claim. If pleasure really is the sole object of human desire, then human happiness is an impossibility.[4] If human happiness is an impossibility, then promoting it cannot be the goal of moral action. The utilitarian is forced to compromise one of the constitutive views of her philosophy: either her theory of life or her moral claim must go.

Mill replies that these challenges misrepresent utilitarianism's theory of life by failing to recognize the diversity of human pleasure. The critics claim that identifying pleasure as the sole object of human desire entails the impossibility of human happiness. What really entails this, however, is identifying *an impoverished subset* of human pleasure as the sole object of human desire.

[4] For convenience, I will speak of the utilitarian theory of life as identifying pleasure as the sole object of human desire. This abbreviates the theory, which recognizes freedom from pain as an object of desire on the same level as pleasure.

An extensive and helpful literature has built up around this response and its implications for Mill's qualitative hedonism. I will not be contributing to that literature here. I am not directly interested in Mill's response to these challenges. Rather, I am interested in his reasons for taking them seriously. Although Mill thinks these critics misrepresent utilitarianism's theory of life, he grants that their charges would go through were this not the case. He accepts, in other words, that pessimism really is entailed by the impoverished theory of life these critics wrongly attribute to utilitarianism. That Mill accepts this is particularly interesting due to the divergence between the critics' complaints about the pleasure desirer's best life. The first group of critics suggest that this life would be satisfying but ignoble. The second, that it would be noble but unsatisfying. Mill accepts that the pleasure desirer's best life would be an unhappy one on either of these descriptions. My goal will be to bring out Mill's reasons for treating both of these challenges as genuinely pessimistic challenges. Mill grants that happiness would be equally out of reach were the best human life satisfying but ignoble or noble but unsatisfying. Why does he do so? To answer this question, I will offer an account of Mill's reasons for endorsing two claims: 1) a life that cannot be noble is an unhappy one, and 2) an unsatisfying life is an unhappy one.

In offering this account, I also hope to bring out some important points about the structure of pessimistic arguments and the value of their study. This chapter thus plays a key role in motivating the larger project of my dissertation. In the remaining chapters, I work to understand a series of historical pessimisms. Part of this first chapter's task is making it clear why understanding these pessimisms is worthwhile.

I. Pessimism and Pessimistic Challenges

In what follows, I offer an account of the first two anti-utilitarian challenges *as* pessimistic challenges. I understand a pessimistic challenge as one with two features: it suggests both 1) that a position is incompatible with pessimism and 2) that this same position entails pessimism. To see the challenges in these terms, it will help to first say more about how I understand pessimism itself.

Pessimism questions life's value to the one who lives it. One way to do this is by claiming that even the best possible human life falls short of happiness. A happy life is expected to offer some array of benefits to the person living it. In suggesting that human life cannot be happy, the pessimist claims that some of the benefits a happy life would provide are unavailable to us. She thus questions life's value to the one who lives it in the relatively mild sense of claiming that we never get quite as much out of our lives as the idea of happiness suggests. Alternatively, the pessimist might make a much stronger claim, asserting that even the best possible human life is not worth living.[5] On the first understanding, pessimism can allow that human life is more beneficial than harmful, as long as life's benefits still fall short of what the idea of happiness leads us to expect. On the second understanding, pessimism must assert that the preponderance of harmful over beneficial aspects of human life is so extreme that it would be better not to exist at all than to exist as a human being. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will identify claims as pessimistic if they meet the demands of the first, weaker understanding of pessimism. I will, however, treat claims as bearing greater pessimistic force as they approach the

[5] This was the standard claim during pessimism's 19th century heyday (Beiser 2016: 4). Mill was intimately familiar with this view, describing his father's position in strikingly similar terms: James Mill "thought the most fortunate human life very little worth having"(*CW* 1.48).

requirements of the second understanding. When it is helpful to distinguish between these two varieties of pessimism, I do so using the terms weak pessimism and strong pessimism, where weak pessimism refers to the claim that even the best possible human life is not a happy one, and strong pessimism refers to the claim that even the best possible human life is not worth living.

It should be noted that this approach allows claims to qualify as pessimistic even if their acceptance would not cause any of the affective or motivational problems typically associated with pessimism. To accept a pessimistic claim is to see human life as flawed in a way that renders happiness impossible. It is, in other words, to make a *judgment* about the limits of human life which supports another judgment about the possibility of human happiness. Such judgments need not be motivationally or affectively potent. In part, this is the case because the link between judgment and affect is not always straightforward: I might maintain a deep attachment to life despite judging that attachment irrational. Additionally, some pessimistic judgments, especially those associated with the weaker forms of weak pessimism, will not render attachment to life irrational in the first place. The belief that my life might be very good, just not quite good enough to warrant calling happy, does not justify a lack of interest in pushing it as close to happiness as possible. For both of these reasons, a claim might bear pessimistic force despite being both motivationally and affectively impotent: its force will consist in its impact on our judgments about happiness, not the impact of those judgments on our attachment to life.

This may look like a defect in my approach to identifying pessimistic claims. The filter I am using picks up claims with wildly differing significance to our lives: some simply modify our judgments with no affective or motivational result; others deal a serious blow to our motivational framework, leaving us with little motive to keep on living. I see this as a virtue rather than a defect: the diversity of these claims' impacts is part of what makes it interesting to group them

together. It is only when we see what is common to all of them that the question of why some have a motivational impact that others do not can become a problem for us. As such, I will treat both motivationally potent and motivationally impotent denials of the possibility of human happiness as forms of pessimism. I will, however, make an effort to distinguish between the two.

Having noted two places where my approach to identifying pessimistic claims is more inclusive than might have been expected, it will help to consider a few of its firmer limits. Thus, pessimism always attributes a flaw to *life itself*. Pessimism views the impossibility of happiness as more than a contingent matter, asserting that human beings can *never* find happiness in our world. As such, the flaw a pessimistic claim points to must be a permanent feature of human life, not a temporary defect caused by circumstances that might credibly change.

Likewise, as already suggested above, pessimism has a specific conception of the happiness it denies. Happiness might be identified with a particular good, one of a potentially large number of things which add value to a life. This is the way the term is used when happiness is identified directly with particular instances of pleasure or desire satisfaction, particular moments of contentment, etc. It is this understanding of happiness which underlies statements like, "I feel so happy right now," "She was such a happy child," etc. – phrases which suggest that happiness is a localized phenomenon, potentially characterizing some parts of a life but not others. The happiness which pessimism denies does not have this localized character. It involves a global judgment about the overall worth of an individual's life taken as a whole.[6] At bottom, the function of pessimistic claims is to suggest life is worth less to us than we might have thought. As such, for a pessimistic claim to suggest happiness is impossible will be for it to

[6] The distinction between these two uses of the term happiness is helpfully discussed in Annas 2004: 45-48 and Nussbaum 2008: S86-88.

suggest life is worth less to us *on the whole* than a truly happy life would be. This judgment is totalizing and global in the sense that it takes the overall worth of a human life as its object.

In another sense, however, the pessimistic judgement is quite local and partial. It asks only about what a life is worth *to the person leading it*. Pessimism critiques life's value *as a source of happiness*: it suggests that life fails to *benefit* the one who leads it in the way that a happy life would. This is what distinguishes pessimism from broader questions about the meaning of life. To ask if human life can be meaningful is to ask if it can be significant in any respect. To ask if human life can be happy is to ask if it can be significant in one particular respect: namely, if it can be good *for the person leading it*.

These features of pessimism rule out two different approaches to answering it. A pessimistic claim could not be answered by identifying some particular good that life contains – say, pleasure – and calling it happiness. Nor could it be answered by pointing to some benefit life provides a second party – say, God – whose interests are furthered by people leading lives that are of no benefit to themselves. Neither approach would counter the pessimistic claim that, when taken as a whole, life is worth less to those leading it than the idea of a happy life suggests.

With these general remarks about pessimism out of the way, we are now ready to look at Mill's presentation of the particular pessimistic challenges he confronts in *Utilitarianism*.[7]

[7] The account of pessimism that I have offered here distinguishes the topic of my work from that of previous Mill scholarship. A variety of papers (e.g., Adams 1992: 445-446; Corcoran 2019) have discussed Mill's confrontation with what might be called *political* pessimism: doubts about the possibility of social and political progress. The pessimism I consider differs from this variety by a lack of focus on distributional concerns and the absence of a temporal dimension: the question is not whether *more* people will be happy tomorrow than today, but whether it is possible for any people to be happy at all. The pessimism I discuss likewise differs from what Messina describes as Mill's "pessimism about human nature"(2020: 8): his fear that human beings have an innate tendency to treat each other unjustly. The question at hand is whether *any* human beings are capable of happiness, not whether they tend to find that happiness at each other's expense. Mill's engagement with this starker variety of pessimism has not received significant attention outside of direct analysis of his crisis in the *Autobiography*.

II. The First Challenge: Life as Satisfying but Ignoble

According to the first pessimistic challenge, a life dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure is a base life. The identification of pleasure as the only thing worth desiring as an end thus entails that even the best human life will be base. Mill presents the critics' position as follows:

> To suppose that life has (as they express it) no higher end than pleasure – no better and nobler object of desire and pursuit – they designate as utterly mean and grovelling; as a doctrine worthy only of swine. (*CW* 10.210)

Mill accepts the pessimistic force of this challenge: instead of dismissing the relevance of nobility to happiness, he defends the nobility of the specifically human life of pleasure. Mill accepts the challenge's pessimistic force out of concern for the dignity of human nature: he affirms both that the dignity of human nature depends on the nobility of the best human life, and that human beings cannot be truly happy unless they bear dignified natures.

Mill is explicit in identifying the dignity of human nature as what is threatened by the denial of the best human life's nobility. Thus, his counter-charge is "that it is not [the utilitarians], but their accusers, who represent human nature in a degrading light"(*CW* 10.210). Likewise, he is explicit in claiming that human beings cannot be happy unless they see themselves as bearing dignified natures. He declares the sense of dignity to be an "essential [] part of the happiness of those in whom it is strong"(*CW* 10.212), and suggests that anyone who thinks life might be better in its absence "confounds the two very different ideas, of happiness and content[ment]"(*CW* 10.212). For Mill, to lose the sense of dignity is to lose part of what makes human life worth living. Our desires might be satisfied in its absence (we might find "content[ment]"), but even their full satisfaction would not be enough to make our lives as valuable to us as the concept of happiness suggests. My goal in this section will be to explain

Mill's acceptance of these two claims: why does Mill hold that the dignity of human nature depends on the nobility of the best human life, and that an appreciation of that dignity is part of what makes life worth living?[8]

The first step to understanding Mill's endorsement of these claims is getting a better sense of what he means by human nature. In his essay, "Nature," Mill explains his use of the term, identifying an object's nature as

> the ensemble or aggregate of its powers or properties: the modes in which it acts on other things (counting among those things the senses of the observer), and the modes in which other things act on it; to which, in the case of a sentient being, must be added, its own capacities of feeling, or being conscious. (*CW* 10.374)

In other words, Mill identifies an object's nature with what it can do and what can be done to it, i.e. with the sum total of its capacities for acting and undergoing. A human being's nature, then, is rightly identified with her potential: it is the set of things she might do or be.[9] This squares well with *Utilitarianism*, for Mill presents the dignity of human nature as hinging on humanity's capacities. Thus, when Mill suggests that utilitarianism's critics degrade human nature, he does so on the grounds that "the accusation supposes human beings to be capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable"(*CW* 10.210). Similarly, Mill portrays the sense of dignity as possessed not just by those who actually lead noble lives, but even by those who

[8] This claim about *dignity's* importance to happiness should be distinguished from claims about *nobility's* importance to happiness discussed elsewhere (e.g., Mawson 2002; Riley 2013 and 2019; and Devigne 2006a, 2006b, and 2017). I am not directly interested in the importance of actually leading a noble life. I am interested in the importance of bearing a nature which makes leading a noble life possible. This particularly distinguishes my approach from that of Riley 2019. Riley also focuses on the first utilitarian challenge, but overlooks this distinction. Thus, he explains Mill's claims about the sense of dignity's importance by appealing to his claims about the pleasure of actually leading a noble life (2019: 200-201).

[9] A similar point is made in Tulloch 1989: 154. Adams 1992: 441-443 and Corcoran 2019: 481-484 emphasize that Mill also uses the term human nature to refer to the innate tendencies of uneducated human beings. As is clear from both accounts, however, it is only the identification of human nature with human potential that is relevant to human dignity. Mill views humanity's uneducated tendencies quite poorly. The dignity of human nature, consequently, hinges on humanity's potential extending further than its uneducated instincts suggest.

simply appreciate their capacity to lead such lives. Thus, he emphasizes that there is special value even in the life of a person whose dignity comes out primarily in awareness that her life is not as noble as it could be (*CW* 10.212).[10] As Miller 2010 helpfully puts it, the sense of dignity is a pleasure taken in "the mere possession of developed faculties"(61): it hinges on *possessing* such faculties, not expressing them. When Mill speaks about the dignity of human nature, he speaks about the dignity of humanity's potential.

There is, however, a significant difference between having a potential which is itself dignified, and simply having the potential to do things which are dignified. To bring this out, consider the following: although a grounded bird might have the potential to fly, its potential is not itself flying. Capacities do not always take on the properties of their expressions. When Mill speaks of the dignity of human nature, however, it is clear he means that human nature is itself dignified, not just that its realization might be. The dignity of human nature is meant to provide a source of happiness that is independent of other aspects of our nature's realization: our lives are enhanced by awareness that we bear natures which *could* be realized in noble activity even when hostile circumstances render such activity impossible. This makes sense only if there is something valuable about human nature itself, not just the things human nature allows us to do. As such, more needs to be said about how the nobility of the best human life secures the dignity of human nature. It is not immediately clear if seeing human nature as potential nobility is the

[10] Riley 2019: 199-200 misconstrues this case in a way that obscures the difference between bearing a dignified nature and living a noble life. Mill claims it is "better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied"(*CW* 10.212). As Riley reads this, Socrates' dissatisfaction stems from desire for the fool's pleasures: Socrates enjoys the pleasures of leading a noble life, but is dissatisfied since leading this life requires sacrificing lesser goods. This is not how Mill describes Socrates' dissatisfaction. Socrates is dissatisfied because he feels himself capable of a nobility he has not yet attained. This sense of his *unrealized* capacity for nobility is, Mill suggests, what makes Socrates' life better than the fool's: Socrates' knowledge of his life's deficiencies "will not make him envy the being who is indeed unconscious of the imperfections, but only because he feels not at all the good which those imperfections qualify"(*CW* 10.212).

same as seeing it as itself noble. Nor is it immediately clear whether seeing human nature as noble would be the same thing as seeing it as dignified.

Mill offers little explicit guidance about the transition between the nobility of human life and the dignity of human nature. Nonetheless, I take it the link will become clear once we see what Mill means by nobility. For Mill, to call something noble is more or less the same as calling it beautiful: nobility is the term Mill uses to track aesthetic value in the realm of human affairs. This equation of the noble and the beautiful finds explicit confirmation in Mill's *System of Logic*, where aesthetics is identified as the branch of the Art of Life concerning "the Beautiful or Noble, in human conduct and works"(*CW* 8.949). Further confirmation is found in Mill's discussion of the "aesthetic aspect" of action in his essay on Bentham. Mill suggests that an action's beauty determines whether we judge it to be "admirable" or "mean"(*CW* 10.112). I take it that the "admirable" which Mill speaks of here corresponds to the noble that Mill speaks of in other works – "mean" is, after all, taken to be the opposing term for both. There is, then, good reason to treat Mill's use of the term noble in *Utilitarianism* as a way of tracking aesthetic value.[11]

There is need for a certain amount of caution here, as Mill has a highly moralized view of what constitutes beauty in the realm of human affairs. Thus, Mill suggests that actions are beautiful only when they are not merely right, but also expressive of a settled virtuous character.[12] If care is taken regarding the limits Mill places on what counts as beautiful in the

[11] Anderson 1991, Riley 2013, and Devigne 2017 similarly suggest that Mill sees nobility as the object of particularly aesthetic sentiments.

[12] This comes out most clearly in Mill's discussion of the importance of treating virtue as a direct end in *A System of Logic*. Mill presents as interchangeable the claim that "the cultivation of an ideal nobleness of will and conduct, should be to individual human beings an end" and the claim that "The character itself should be, to the individual, a paramount end"(*CW* 8.952). Contra Heydt 2011, however, Mill does not consider actions beautiful only when they serve something greater than the agent's own good. Thus, Mill defends applying aesthetic judgment to entirely self-directed actions. He notes, for instance, that "If [an individual] is eminent in any of the qualities which conduce *to his own good*, he is, so far, a proper object of admiration"(*CW* 18.278, my emphasis). The uniting thread in Mill's discussions of human beauty is

realm of human affairs, however, we can treat him as equating the beautiful and the noble in this realm. As such, when Mill suggests that the dignity of human nature depends on seeing that nature as the potential to lead a noble life, we can also hear him as saying that the dignity of human nature depends on seeing that nature as the potential to lead a beautiful life.

The question that has to be answered, then, is whether there is something dignified about the potential to be beautiful. This is easier to get a grip on than the question of whether there is something dignified about the potential to be noble, if only because beautiful is more of a live term for us than noble is. As a first approach at an answer, consider a truly beautiful sculpture, an irreplaceable one-of-a-kind masterpiece.[13] Viewed aesthetically, the world is worth more for containing such a work: its presence within the world makes the world a more beautiful thing than it would otherwise be. From the perspective of someone for whom aesthetic value is a genuine type of value, such a work bears a certain weight. Its claim to be an *irreplaceable* masterwork is borne out, for its significance to the world's value is such that it truly makes a difference whether or not it is present within it. Let us ask how someone who views a work of art as significant in this way will view a slab of marble thought of as that work *in potentia*, as something that might become that one-of-a-kind-masterpiece. I take it that, considered in this way, the marble will itself inherit much of the weight and significance of the sculpture. The

virtue, not self-transcendence: an act expressing selfless devotion is beautiful, but so is one expressing truly refined prudence. On this point, see Riley 2013: 113 and Devigne 2006b: 99.

[13] The analogy between a beautiful human life and a beautiful work of art is one Mill makes explicit use of in similar contexts elsewhere, e.g., when claiming that "Among the works of man, which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself"(*CW* 18.263). It is likewise common among the romantic authors who heavily influenced Mill on these issues. As helpfully described by Thorlby 1973, these authors' ideal was the "shaping of one's own life, as though it were a never-finished work of art"(107), a process understood in terms of the individual "realiz[ing] his inner potential to the full"(101).

marble matters to the world, for it has something special to offer it: namely, the aesthetic value of the sculpture that it might become.

The case for expecting a transfer of significance from realization to potential is even stronger where the relation between a beautiful human life and the nature that allows such a life is concerned. For, considered at an individual level, the nature that each person bears is not just *a* port by which something of incredible beauty might enter the world, but the one and only port: any given sculpture might have come out of any number of slabs of marble, but the beautiful life of a particular human being can come about only through the realization of the particular nature she bears. If the life of a human being can be a masterwork on par with a great sculpture, enhancing the world by its presence within it in just the way that a great sculpture does, then the nature of a human being will bear the weight that properly belongs to the one and only thing capable of becoming such a masterwork. Thought of in this way, human nature seems the proper object of a sort of wonder or awe: it bears a special significance in light of its significance to the world. As a result of this significance, human nature seems to deserve a certain respect and consideration. It might, without any violence to the term, be described as having a certain *dignity* that it would otherwise lack.[14, 15]

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[14] This account fits well with Moshe Halbertal's observation that denying someone's gift is a way of denying her dignity (2015). To tell someone she has nothing significant to offer is a way of saying she herself lacks significance.

[15] I have suggested that the dignity of human nature follows from its status as a particular kind of positive potential: namely, the potential to be beautiful. It might be objected that seeing human nature as a positive potential does not rule out simultaneously viewing it as a neutral or negative potential. As such, it is worth asking whether the dignity that human nature gains from its conception as potential beauty can withstand its simultaneous conception as potential ugliness and potential aesthetic irrelevance.

In answering this question, it will help to first identify the negative attitudes toward human nature that might be prompted by its conception as potential ugliness and aesthetic irrelevance. Three negative attitudes might be prompted: contempt, disgust, and (less probably) fear. I argue that the first two of these attitudes are effectively warded off by the conception of human nature as potential beauty, while the last is perfectly compatible with human nature's dignity.

To consider contempt first, I take it that the proper object of contempt is something seen as insignificant and beneath notice (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II.2, 1378b10-16). Conceiving of human nature

At this point, it is clear why Mill claims that the dignity of human nature depends on the nobility of the best human life. If even the best human life is ignoble, then human nature will lack the significance that comes with being nobility *in potentia*. What remains to be seen, however, is why Mill treats the suggestion that human nature lacks this sort of dignity as a kind of pessimism: why can we not lead happy lives even without dignified natures? Mill's answer to this question focuses on the essential role the sense of dignity plays in human happiness: human beings, Mill suggests, do not lead truly worthwhile lives unless they are aware of their status as the bearers of dignified natures.

Mill does not provide an explicit statement of what it is that makes this awareness so vital to happiness. A plausible account has, however, been suggested by the preceding discussion. We have seen that when Mill speaks about the dignity of a creature's nature, he means to speak of the dignity of her potential. The identity between a creature and the potential she bears is quite close:

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simply as potential aesthetic irrelevance would present it as contemptible in these terms. Conceiving of it as both potential aesthetic irrelevance and potential beauty, in contrast, renders it an improper object of contempt. Something that *might* have something significant to contribute needs to be taken into account. It is not beneath note just because its contribution is not fully secure.

Moving to disgust, I take it that the proper object of disgust is something that actively degrades the world around it: the disgusting thing is both base and base-making, infecting others with its baseness (Miller 1997: 8; Rozin 1999: 433). Human nature, viewed simply as potential ugliness, would seem a proper object of disgust on this account: it would be something that cannot but degrade the world around it, unavoidably releasing ugliness into the world in a way that diminishes its worth. When human nature is simultaneously viewed as potential beauty, however, it ceases to actively corrupt in this way. Unless human nature *necessarily* issues forth in ugliness, it makes no sense to speak of the world as degraded by the mere presence of human nature within it. The aesthetic value of the world will not be reduced by mere contact with such a nature, but only by specific things which may or may not come from it.

Turning to fear, it is first worth noting that fear would be an atypical reaction to that which threatens particularly *aesthetic* disvalue. Nonetheless, someone who sees the aesthetic value of the world as important to her own well-being might legitimately be afraid of that which threatens to diminish its aesthetic worth. Fear attaches to the potential to harm, even when that potential might not be realized: a bear rushing at me is no less terrifying for the fact that it *might* mean me well. As such, the conception of human nature as potential beauty will not undercut any fear that would otherwise follow from its status as potential ugliness. Unlike viewing something with contempt or disgust, however, fearing something is not incompatible with seeing it as dignified. To view something as fearsome is not to see it as degraded. It is simply to see it as dangerous. Danger and dignity can, however, sit comfortably within the same nature.

we can say of the person who has the capacity to lead a noble life that she *is* such a noble life *in potentia*. Thus, if the potential to lead a noble life is dignified, the one who bears that potential will be dignified as well. An individual's sense of dignity will amount to awareness of herself as possessing the special significance that belongs to something capable of adding beauty to the world in a way that increases its worth. For an individual to see herself this way will be to see herself as entitled to a certain respect in light of her global significance. To possess a sense of dignity, then, is to have a certain respect for oneself, a respect that derives from one's status as a source of globally significant aesthetic value. Mill makes this connection between dignity and self-respect explicit in *On Liberty*, where the two terms are used almost interchangeably: Mill calls the choice of a base life expressive of "want of personal dignity and self-respect"(*CW* 18.279). Likewise, in *Principles of Political Economy*, Mill speaks of socialized labor as cultivating "a sense of personal worth and dignity"(*CW* 3.781), treating the sense of dignity as equivalent to a sense of one's own worth.[16]

The importance of this variety of self-respect is, I take it, what Mill has in mind when he indicates that happiness cannot be had in the absence of a sense of dignity. There are different glosses we might give of this aesthetic self-respect's importance, each of which suggests a different reckoning of how much losing it would cost us. The lowest stakes reading simply focuses on Mill's claim that self-respect's intrinsic value makes it a large part of happiness. In Mill's terms, the sense of dignity is a particularly high-quality pleasure: it constitutes such a large part of life's value that the portion of the human good left over after its loss would fall far short of what the idea of happiness leads us to expect.[17] Were the intrinsic value of this self-

[16] Hauskeller 2011: 443 similarly takes Mill to treat the sense of dignity as a sense of one's worth. Contra Hauskeller, however, I argue that Mill is well-positioned to explain this self-worth's importance.
[17] That Mill sees the sense of dignity as an incomparably large part of happiness is indicated by his suggestion that its value *explain*s the dignified person's unwillingness to exchange any of her higher

respect all that the denial of the best human life's nobility cost us, however, the pessimistic force of that denial would be relatively mild. This is clearly a form of weak pessimism: it suggests that life is less valuable than we might have hoped but not that it is not valuable at all. The affective and motivational consequences of such a claim might be quite limited: to know that life offers less benefit than you hoped might be significantly discouraging, but it would not promote a loss of interest in those benefits that might still be obtained.

Mill does not, however, see the loss of self-respect's intrinsic value as the only element of this claim's pessimistic force. Rather, Mill also suggests that this kind of self-respect plays an important role in enabling those with highly developed aesthetic sensibilities to take their lives seriously. For those to whom aesthetic value is a matter of importance, to view human life as aesthetically irrelevant is to view themselves with a certain contempt, as deeply insignificant from within their own value perspective. Such self-contempt, in painting the individual as beneath notice, also suggests that her life is not worth leading: the good of a trivial, insignificant thing is itself trivial and insignificant. Thus, in *A System of Logic*, Mill defends the pursuit of nobility on the grounds that it

> would go further than all things else towards making human life happy; both in the comparatively humble sense, of pleasure and freedom from pain, and in the higher meaning, of rendering life, not what it now is almost universally, puerile and insignificant – but such as human beings with highly developed faculties can care to have. (*CW* 8.952)

The situation is even worse for an aesthetically sensitive individual who really accepts the full force of the critics' charge, holding that human life not only fails to add aesthetic value to the

capacities for full satisfaction of her lower ones (*CW* 10.212, discussed briefly in Devigne 2006b: 79). The intrinsic value of the other higher pleasures is not enough to justify this choice unless the sense of dignity is appealed to. This suggests that the sense of dignity constitutes a part of happiness larger not only than that constituted by the combined value of all lower pleasures but than that constituted by the value of any single one of the other higher pleasures as well.

world but in fact diminishes its aesthetic worth. For the aesthetically sensitive person who accepts that even the best human life will be positively base – a "mean and groveling" existence standing as a disfiguring blot upon the earth – what follows is something closer to self-disgust than self-contempt. She figures herself as low not in a way that makes her irrelevant to the world, but in a way that makes her presence within the world a corruption of it. For such a person, the vision of the self as ignoble leaves life not just trivialized but condemned.

Here, then, we have a sense in which the denial of the best human life's nobility seems to approach strong pessimism: for the person of highly developed aesthetic sensitivities, the vision of even the best human life as lacking aesthetic value suggests that human life is either too trivial to be worth bothering with or too ugly to tolerate. The situation is somewhat complicated, however, as these stark consequences only follow for those both highly sensitive to and highly concerned about aesthetic value, not for people in general. Those who lack significant sensitivity to aesthetic value or put little stock on aesthetic modes of valuation will not experience life as not worth living just because it lacks aesthetic significance. As such, this may not seem to be a genuine form of pessimism at all let alone a form of strong pessimism: it is not a form of pessimism to say that happiness cannot be had by those who *avoidably* cultivate attachment to an excessively demanding value perspective. Such a claim would suggest not that human life is worth less to us than the concept of happiness suggests, but that attaining the happiness which human life makes available requires us to exercise caution about our valuational commitments.

Mill, however, has an answer to this objection. For although the problems considered above affect only a particular subset of human beings, Mill's larger account of happiness suggests that fully happy lives are available only to those within that subset.[18] The exercise of

[18] As we will see in chapter four, this worry brings Mill close to Nietzsche. Both Mill and Nietzsche think that real happiness belongs only to the aesthetically sensitive, and thus take problems which face this

our aesthetic capacities is, on Mill's account, a very large part of the human good. Thus, if it were the case that attachment to aesthetic values necessarily decreases one's attachment to human life, the pursuit of human happiness would be self-defeating: committed pursuit of that portion of the good still available to us would result in a loss of interest in obtaining even that portion. Here it is not just the sense of dignity itself that is lost but aesthetic appreciation in general. If human life is ignoble, there is no room in it not just for dignity but also for the exercise of all those aesthetic capacities the cultivation of which would cause us to experience dignity's absence as a serious loss. The question of whether this is strong pessimism or simply a quite stark form of weak pessimism comes to hinge on whether one thinks a life in which aesthetic appreciation played no role would still be worth living. As we will see in the next chapter, this is a question Mill seems to answer negatively in other work.

If a sense of dignity could not be found in even the best human life, life would be worth much less than expected for all of us and be barely of interest to others. Mill's discussion of the claim that the pleasure desirer's best life cannot be noble, then, seems to validate treating that claim as a pessimistic challenge. Mill has good reason to think the possibility of happiness depends on the particularly aesthetic potential of human life.[19]

subset of people to constitute challenges to the possibility of human happiness. A key difference, however, is that Mill thinks all people are *capable* of reaching the level of aesthetic sensitivity that makes these problems relevant. Mill's preoccupation with this threat thus does not express the same sort of elitism involved in Nietzsche's own focus on it. For discussion of Mill and Nietzsche's different approaches to this shared worry, see Miller 2010: 66-68 and Leiter 2018: 167-69 respectively.

[19] It is worth noting that accepting Mill's claims about the importance of the best human life's beauty does not entail accepting his claims about that beauty's source. The above might be accepted even while rejecting Mill's division between noble higher and base lower faculties, his equation of human beauty with virtue, etc.

III. The Second Challenge: Life as Noble but Unsatisfying

After responding to the challenge above, Mill turns his attention to a second challenge. Interestingly, however, this challenge inverts the claim that constituted the first. Above, Mill confronted the charge that the pleasure desirer's best life would be satisfying but ignoble. Here, he confronts the charge that this life would be noble but unsatisfying. In what follows, I will explain why Mill treats this charge as no less genuine a pessimistic challenge than its opposite.

That Mill understands the second challenge as a pessimistic challenge is clear. His discussion begins with an explicit identification of his opponents as pessimists who nonetheless endorse the possibility of human nobility. Thus, Mill notes that utilitarianism is opposed by

> another class of objectors, who say that happiness, in any form, cannot be the rational purpose of human life and action; because, in the first place, it is unattainable: and they contemptuously ask, What right hast thou to be happy? A question which Mr. Carlyle clenches by the addition, What right, a short time ago, hadst thou even *to be*? Next, they say, that men can do without happiness; that all noble human beings have felt this, and could not have become noble but by learning the lesson of *Entsagen*, or renunciation; which lesson, thoroughly learnt and submitted to, they affirm to be the beginning and necessary condition of all virtue. (*CW* 10.214)

I will consider this passage in more detail below. For the moment, however, it will suffice to note two things about the charge Mill confronts. It is clearly pessimistic in nature: the critics explicitly deny the possibility of human happiness. It is also clearly distinct from the charge raised above: the critics affirm the possibility of nobility, but portray that nobility as available only after happiness is renounced. Although both of these claims are put quite positively – happiness really is impossible, nobility really is available through renunciation – they have to be heard in the *ad hominem* context of *Utilitarianism*'s second chapter. These critics may well endorse the claims put forward here. What matters, however, is not that they endorse them, but that they take them

to be entailed by claims utilitarianism endorses. As will become clear, these critics too take their charge to follow from utilitarianism's theory of life: if pleasure is the sole object of human desire, then the best human life will be an unhappy one.

Mill initially states this charge as a generic pessimistic claim: he presents the objectors as denying the possibility of happiness directly, rather than pointing to a specific flaw in life. However, his later glosses of the charge and his strategy for responding to it make it clear that he has something more specific in mind: these critics deny life's ability to *satisfy*. Thus, Mill later restates the charge as a doubt "whether human beings, if taught to consider [pleasure] as the end of life, would be satisfied with such a moderate share of it"(*CW* 10.215).[20] On this statement, the charge seems to be that the utilitarian theory of life constitutes a form of pessimism because human life will never offer enough pleasure to satisfy a creature who desires nothing but pleasure. Mill's strategy in answering the charge seems tailored to this understanding of it. He argues both that people can be sufficiently satisfied by less pleasure than the critics think, and that human life is capable of containing more pleasure and less pain than is typical at present. As was made clear in the previous section, Mill denies any direct identity between happiness and contentment. Thus, Mill's efforts in this part of the text are best understood as aimed at countering not the generic pessimistic claim that happiness is impossible but a specific variety of pessimism: namely, that which denies the best human life's ability to satisfy.

[20] To avoid confusion, I have replaced Mill's use of the word happiness with the word pleasure. Mill uses the term happiness inconsistently: it sometimes refers to pleasure directly and sometimes refers to a life worth living. As used in the critics' charge, happiness refers to a life worth living. Thus, Mill counters by describing a *life* available to the pleasure-desirer and concluding that "A life thus composed, to those who have been fortunate enough to obtain it, has always appeared worthy of the name of happiness"(*CW* 10.215). In the modified quote, however, Mill must be equating happiness with pleasure directly. The worry expressed is incompatible with the critics' charge if happiness is not used in a different sense here than it was in their initial objection: the critics cannot claim both that happiness is *impossible*, and that we possess an unsatisfactorily small amount of it. Our possession of *any amount* of happiness, however small, would undermine the initial charge.

The claim that even the best human life is insufficiently satisfying might be heard in at least three different ways. One might say that life fails to satisfy if it fails to include any genuinely desirable good. On this understanding, talk about life's ability to satisfy is a proxy for talk about its completeness. A life which is unsatisfying in this sense may frequently satisfy the actual desires of the one leading it. It may, in fact, satisfy each and every desire she actually has, leaving her perfectly content from a psychological point of view. What matters from this perspective is not actual desires but hypothetical ones: a life is unsatisfying just in case there exists some good which the life does not include, and which the person leading the life *would* desire if she became properly aware of it.

On another understanding, the claim that life fails to satisfy might indicate that someone leading it will always possess at least one unsatisfied desire.[21] Here again, life may be seen as unsatisfying even if it satisfies many desires. What matters is the one unsatisfied desire left over, regardless of how many others were fulfilled. This perspective on satisfaction differs from the previous in focusing on actual, rather than hypothetical, desires. However, it shares the previous perspective's focus on completeness: on both understandings, a life is satisfying only if it satisfies *all* of an agent's desires. The only point of contention is whether desires the agent could hypothetically be brought to have ought to be counted in the assessment.

On a final option, the claim that life fails to satisfy might mean that it offers insufficient experience of desire satisfaction. On this understanding, desire-satisfaction is itself important, rather than as mattering only insofar as it removes the disvalued state of unsatisfied desire. It follows that this understanding need not share the previous two's focus on the complete and final

[21] In the context of pessimism, this claim is often associated with Schopenhauer, who suggests that our desires are continuously renewed in a way that rules out "a once-and-for-all satisfaction of all of our desires"(Reginster 2006: 11). As will be discussed later, this claim about humanity's insatiability is only a small part of Schopenhauer's account.

satisfaction of all desire. What matters is the *extent* of our opportunities for desire-satisfaction, and this will not reliably track the reduction of unsatisfied desire. Thus, a distinctive feature of this view is that it suggests life might be unsatisfying because it failed to *inspire* desire. An individual who possesses but one weak desire may easily attain complete and final satisfaction. Likewise, even if an individual's life contains only paltry goods, it will qualify as complete if those are the only goods conceivable. On the previous two understandings, then, life might be satisfying while still allowing very few opportunities for the actual experience of desire satisfaction. They focus on whether the individual's (real or hypothetical) desires are fully satisfied, but are not concerned with whether those desires are sufficiently extensive to make their satisfaction notable. On the present understanding, in contrast, a life's satisfying quality depends on the extent of the opportunities for satisfaction it allows. This will be a product of *both* the extent of the desires it provokes and the frequency with which those desires are fulfilled.

This third understanding of the claim that life cannot satisfy must be what Mill has in mind. He is explicitly interested in questions about whether life provides us with enough to desire. Thus, he worries that selfish interests diminish with age, a concern he counters by pointing to the possibility of developing desires focused on things other than oneself (*CW* 10.215). Such a reduction of desire is a threat to life's capacity to satisfy only on the third understanding of what this capacity entails. The second group of critics, then, claim that insufficient instances of desire satisfaction would be found in the pleasure desirer’s best life. What remains is to explain why Mill takes this claim as a pessimistic challenge: given that Mill does not identify happiness with contentment, why does he nonetheless grant that a life which offered few instances of desire satisfaction would be an unhappy one?

In answering this question, it will help to look more closely at the assemblage of claims Mill associates with the challenge. The critics are taken to claim: 1) that even the best human life is unsatisfying; 2) that individuals have no right to be happy, or even to exist; and 3) that true nobility is possible only for those who cease to seek their own happiness. I take it that Mill sees these three claims as united by a shared effect: namely, a reduction of the individual's interest in her own life. An individual whose life testifies to the truth of the first claim will, Mill suspects, undergo a naturalized version of the renunciation enjoined by the other two. She will lose interest in her life for psychological rather than moral reasons. The critics claim that we have no hope of retaining an interest in ourselves, but suggest this is a fortunate circumstance: true nobility begins only after interest in one's own life comes to an end.[22] Further support for this interpretation of the threat posed by insufficient satisfaction is found in Mill's characterization of his solutions to it. Thus, responding to the claim that life becomes less satisfying as it goes on, Mill counters that those with sympathetic concerns and intellectual passions "retain as lively an interest in life on the eve of death as in the vigor of youth" and find "sources of inexhaustible interest in all that surrounds [them]"(*CW* 10.215-16). This counter is relevant because Mill's worry is that when life ceases to satisfy it cease to *engage*.

Mill has good reason to connect a failure of engagement with insufficient satisfaction. On Mill's understanding of the claim that life cannot satisfy, a life which offers insufficient

[22] Carlyle defends the *Entsagen* view in something like these terms. Finding happiness impossible, we lose interest in ourselves and take interest in our work. Thus, he encourages renouncing interest in our own lives by noting that the rewards of such interest never satisfy: "Thou wilt never sell thy Life, or any part of thy Life, in a satisfactory manner. Give it, like a royal heart; let the price be *Nothing*: thou has then, in a certain sense got All for it!"(Carlyle 1843: 175). In replacing interest in our lives with interest in our work, we do not simply find a new object of desire. Rather, although our *desires* remain focused on pleasure, desire ceases to be our only motive. We transition from being automatons moved *by* our desires to being free, self-moving agents. Thus, Carlyle presents desire-based accounts of human motivation as fundamentally impoverished and degrading: "of Volition except as the synonym of Desire, we hear nothing; of 'Motives,' without any Mover, more than enough"(Carlyle 1831: 358).

satisfaction is one which offers insufficient opportunity for the fulfillment of desire. Life may fail an individual in this respect for either of two reasons: it may offer too little to desire, or it may allow the satisfaction of desires with insufficient frequency. In either case, the failure will leave the individual with little basis for engagement with her life. The one who finds little in life to desire expects nothing of it right from the start: she has no interest in her life, for it seems to have nothing to offer her. The one whose desires are never satisfied soon works her way around to the same position: the things that interest her have no place within her life, and her interest in them thus creates no interest in it. This is a version of what Reginster 2006 calls the problem of inspiration. The interest we take in our lives depends on our interest in the ends we hope to realize or enjoy within those lives. Taking an interest in our lives thus requires us to have ends we see as both valuable and potentially realizable within our lives (24-25). For the person who fails to find anything to desire, no end appears valuable. For the person whose desires are never met, no end appears realizable. In either case, an end which is both realizable and worthy of realization is absent. Thus, in either case, there is nothing to inspire engagement with one's life.

As Mill sees it, there are two possible results of such disengagement. The individual may simply give up on her life, lacking motive to maintain an existence from which she expects nothing (*CW* 10.214). Alternatively, an individual who was sufficiently swayed by the moralizing arguments for renunciation considered above might stick around, dutifully passing her life in noble displays of virtue and self-sacrifice despite finding no satisfaction in doing so. The possibility of this second option does not solve the problem, however. For Mill suggests that the reason for living provided by this sort of dutiful nobility and self-sacrifice is flawed in a way that renders it unstable. A sacrifice must be carried out for the sake of something or someone. This is what distinguishes it from mere imprudence. There is, after all, nothing beautiful or noble

about profligacy: it is the fact that the individual's good is relinquished for the sake of some valuable end that marks action off as sacrifice rather than squandering (*CW* 10.217-18). From the perspective of someone who sees no hope for satisfaction in life, however, there are no valuable ends sacrifice might serve. As Mill quite clearly indicates, unselfish desires are no less desires for their unselfishness. Thus, the person who finds no satisfaction in life can have no realizable unselfish desires either. Those unselfish ends that strike her as worthy of realization must be unrealizable, while those unselfish ends which are realizable must strike her as unworthy of realization. The person whose life offers no opportunity for satisfaction cannot engage in noble self-sacrifice: just as she cannot live for herself, neither can she truly live for anything else.[23] The claim that even the best human life cannot satisfy, then, seems to possess dire pessimistic force, leaving individuals without any stable motive to continue living.

IV. The Value of Understanding Pessimism

At the start of this chapter, I quoted the pessimistic fear that came upon Mill during his crisis: namely, the worry that there might be "a flaw in life itself." As our discussion has shown,

[23] It may be worth distinguishing Mill's critique from a similar argument of Bentham's. Like Mill, Bentham finds asceticism's elevation of self-sacrifice inconsistent (1988: 11-13). The ascetic claims that pleasure is harmful and pain beneficial. This suggests that benefitting another requires causing her pain. The ascetic, however, also considers intentionally causing another pain immoral. This renders her calls to self-sacrifice incoherent: if morality requires sacrifice for the benefit of others, then morality requires doing wrong. Mill points to a different inconsistency. The ascetic claims that ends we deem worthy of realization cannot be realized. Sacrifice, however, must be directed at realizing worthy ends. In recommending self-sacrifice, then, the ascetic recommends a kind of action she should consider impossible. The key difference is that Mill takes asceticism to hinge on a descriptive pessimistic premise while Bentham does not. Bentham thought asceticism originated in hope and fear: earthly happiness is renounced to win honor and avert divine punishment (1988: 9). Mill, in contrast, thought asceticism originated in despair: earthly happiness is renounced because it cannot be obtained (see, e.g., his suggestion at *CW* 27.666 that the increased availability of happiness will inevitably break asceticism's appeal). Mill and Bentham understand asceticism's grounds differently, and thus take different approaches to its critique.

however, pessimism does not rest on attributing any single flaw to life. Rather, there are multiple, sometimes quite opposed flaws which might undermine life's value. Thus, we have seen that Mill had good reason to treat each of two inverted claims about the defects of the best human life as bearing legitimate pessimistic force: happiness is equally outside our reach whether the best human life is satisfying but ignoble or noble but unsatisfying. Our discussion of Mill, then, has shown that pessimism is a plural concept. There will be many distinct pessimisms, each deriving its specificity and force from the attribution of a distinct flaw to the best possible human life. Our discussion has allowed us to develop an understanding of two such pessimisms, but many others remain unexamined.

More needs to be said, however, about the significance of this effort. What exactly is it that we gain from understanding pessimisms such as these? The straightforward answer to this question is that pessimism must be understood if it is to be assessed. The significance of assessing pessimistic charges is not, however, something our discussion has brought to the fore. Throughout, I bracketed questions about the accuracy of the pessimistic challenges under consideration, focusing instead on understanding what it is that makes them pessimistic challenges rather than critiques of some other kind. Thus, I attempted to bring out Mill's reasons for accepting the pessimistic force of the two charges he confronts, but gave little attention to his reasons for thinking that both charges misrepresent the best life available to the exclusive pleasure-desirer. It is my hope that this way of proceeding brought out an answer to the question "Why study pessimism?" that differs from the straightforward answer that pessimism must be understood before it can be assessed. For I take the preceding discussion to have shown that simply understanding why a pessimistic claim qualifies as a pessimistic claim is enough to teach us something important about the nature of a happy human life.

Each pessimistic claim suggests that the best human life is flawed in some specific respect. Each also presents itself as posing a specific threat to the possibility of human happiness. To understand a pessimistic claim *as* a pessimistic claim will be to grasp the link between the flaw it attributes to the best human life and the threat to happiness it poses. Thus, we understood the pessimistic force of the denial of the best human life's nobility only when we grasped the link between this denial and the loss of self-respect, and we understood the pessimistic force of the denial of the best human life's capacity to satisfy only when we grasped the link between this denial and the loss of interest in one's life. To grasp this link is to see exactly why a life cannot be worthy of the name happiness if it possesses the flaw attributed to it by the variety of pessimism under consideration.

It is, consequently, a fortunate circumstance that the history of philosophy has made a good number of interesting pessimistic claims available to us. Even if we think that many of these claims are ultimately false, condemning human life on the basis of flaws it need not possess, there is still much for us to learn from them. For we have seen that our knowledge of the things that make human life worth living is enhanced by understanding the flaws that *would* condemn it, regardless of whether or not any actually do. To survey these claims and attempt to understand exactly what qualifies them as pessimistic would be to learn a great deal about the many different ways that human life must be valuable if it is to be truly valuable to us.

In the rest of this dissertation, I will try to make a bit of progress on this project, investigating several pessimistic claims as a way of thinking about what makes life worth living. In particular, I will try to build on the promising suggestion that occupied the first half of this chapter: namely, that an investigation of pessimism will help us see the importance of particularly aesthetic value to human life.

Chapter 2: The Link Between Mill's Two Pessimisms

In the previous chapter, I argued that Mill recognized the threat posed by two distinct varieties of pessimism: one constituted by the claim that human life is unsatisfying, the other by the claim that human life is aesthetically insignificant. In this chapter, I argue that Mill's recognition of *both* of these pessimistic claims is no coincidence. Mill believed that human life must live up to particularly aesthetic values precisely because he believed only sensitivity to such values allows human life to engage.

I defend this view by offering a novel interpretation of Mill's crisis. I argue that the crisis centered on concerns about the *sustainability* of the interest we take in our ends. Mill feared that the interest we take in our ends is dissolved by their realization: our ends are engaging to *pursue*, but uninteresting to live with once realized. As we saw in the previous chapter, Mill believed that engagement depends on having ends of a particular kind: namely, ones we take to be *realizable*. With this in mind, Mill concluded that excessive frustration of our ends would undermine engagement. During the crisis, however, Mill came to fear that the realization of our ends posed a similar threat. Mill worried that, were this to be the case, we would have no way to motivate a lasting interest in our lives. The interest we take in our lives is built off the interest we take in the ends we either enjoy or pursue within those lives. Were these interests necessarily unsustainable, they would always either dissolve with the realization of their objects, or disconnect us from a life in which their objects could never be found.

Mill discovered a solution to this problem in aesthetic interest, which he took to be uniquely capable of surviving prolonged exposure to its realized object. Mill's concern about the pessimism of disengagement thus came to underwrite a belief in the central importance of aesthetic sensitivity to human happiness. This in turn led him to a new worry, a concern about

the self-contempt and disgust that might follow were the deliverances of this sensitivity about our own lives to be less than positive.

Having traced Mill's account of the link between these two pessimisms, I conclude by raising a problem for it. Mill compellingly argues that many of our interests are unsustainable, and that building an engaging life on the exclusive basis of any one of these unsustainable interests is a dubious prospect. Might it not, however, still be possible for the right *combination* of unsustainable interests to do this? Mill does not provide any reason to doubt this possibility, and Schopenhauer – a thinker who confronted the same concerns about the unsustainability of our interests that plagued Mill – provides us with positive reason to endorse it. As our discussion of Mill comes to a close, then, his claims about the importance of aesthetic valuing and aesthetic dignity are left in need of firmer foundations.

I. The Unsustainability of Our Interests as Mill's "Flaw in Life Itself"

In his *Autobiography*, Mill describes a crisis in his early life, a period when he ceased to believe in the possibility of his own happiness, and began to worry that happiness might be out of reach for humanity in general. As Mill put it, he came to fear not just that his own life was fatally flawed, but that "the flaw in my life, must be a flaw in life itself"(*CW* 1.149).[1] Mill's solution to this crisis, that which restored his faith in life's value, was poetry. Prior to his crisis, Mill shared the standard utilitarian belief that there was nothing special about aesthetic interest.

[1] Mill's worry is sometimes heard as a concern about the *moral* prospects of human beings rather than their hopes for happiness. Thus, Paul 1998 and Parkhurst 2013 both understand Mill's concern in terms of doubts about our ability to effectively enact utilitarian social reforms. During the crisis, however, Mill's concern is much broader: he is worried about the collapse of *all* interests, not just those involved in motivating moral action. Mill makes the broad scope of the crisis explicit, lamenting that during the crisis "neither selfish nor unselfish pleasures were pleasures for me"(*CW* 1.143).

Mill described Bentham as holding that "quantity of pleasure being equal, push-pin is as good as poetry"(*CW* 10.113). When his crisis began, Mill himself would have agreed. The discovery that this equivalence was a false one is what brought Mill's crisis to an end. Investigating the nature of Mill's crisis, then, will also reveal the basis of his belief that aesthetic interest is essential to human happiness. Mill feared that human life was unavoidably marred by a devastating flaw. The special contribution of aesthetic interest is meant to be its ability to remove this flaw. To identify the flaw that tormented Mill during his crisis, consequently, will also be to understand his account of the special contribution aesthetic interest makes to human life.

In identifying the flaw Mill attributed to human life during his crisis, a major obstacle is posed by the complexity of his presentation of it. Although Mill suggests he was struggling with a single problem with a single solution, his discussion involves confrontation with at least three different challenges. Thus, we first find Mill worrying about the dissolution of associational desire by analysis. Then, Mill worries about the limited possibilities for musical novelty. Finally, he worries that pleasure would be rendered impossible by the success of utilitarian social reforms. Understanding Mill's crisis requires identifying the common problem behind these three seemingly unrelated challenges.[2]

A close attention to Mill's description of these challenges and of the solution to them offered by poetry will, I take it, allow us to identify the common thread. The unifying problem is

[2] To the best of my knowledge, no commentator has made an effort to do this. Philosophical interest has focused on the first challenge, leading many to understand Mill's crisis as a problem wholly internal to associational psychology (see, for example, Anderson 1991, Paul 1998, Vogler 2001, Parkhurst 2013). Millgram 2011 discusses the second challenge as well, but treats it as a metaphor for the first. Setiya 2017 focuses on the third challenge, allowing him to see the problem's wider relevance, but leaving him with an incomplete picture of it. Heydt 2006 considers both the second and third challenges, leading him to reach much the same conclusion I will be defending (62-63). Mill's crisis is not the focus of Heydt's concern, however, and his discussion is highly compressed. I offer a detailed defense of the same basic reading, one that explains how it can make sense of the first challenge as well.

a concern that the interest we take in our ends is fundamentally unsustainable: the realization of our ends is incompatible with the preservation of our interest in them.[3] This is a problem for Mill because, as seen in the previous chapter, Mill thinks that engagement depends on our both having ends *and* realizing those ends with sufficient frequency to maintain a sense of their realizability. If the realization of our ends undermines our interest in them, then meeting *both* of the requirements for engagement will be a challenge. If our ends are realized, we will lose interest in them. If they are left unrealized, we will lose faith in their realizability. Either way, we are eventually left with nothing that strikes us as both doable *and* worth doing. This leaves us with no stable basis for engagement with our own lives.

At some points, Mill makes it fairly explicit that sustainability and engagement were at the heart of his crisis. Consider, for example, Mill's account of why the works of Byron failed to benefit him:

> The poet's state of mind was too like my own. His was the lament of a man who had worn out all pleasures, and who seemed to think that life, to all who possess the good things of it, must necessarily be the vapid uninteresting thing which I found it. (*CW* 1.151)

Byron and Mill were similar because both felt that coming to possess the good things of life undermined our interest in those things. As Mill's language emphasizes, the concern is about the *sustainability* of our interests: our interests *wear out* in the face of their realized objects. The *gratification* of our interests is what Mill fears: the good things of life cease to please precisely those who get the chance to enjoy them. This is a problem, Mill suggests, because it undercuts

[3] Although questions about the *durability* of our interests are widely seen as essential to Mill's crisis, the importance of *sustainability* is less commonly recognized. Setiya 2017 and Heydt 2006 are the exceptions, but both leave the account undeveloped. Setiya takes Mill's worry to center on the remedial structure of our interests. He notes that such interests aim at their own cancellation, but sees this as a side issue. Heydt explicitly identifies sustainability as the heart of Mill's crisis, but does so only in passing.

our engagement: life would be a "vapid uninteresting thing" if we could not sustain an interest in the goods it might contain.

My goal in the remainder of this section will be to demonstrate that this understanding of the crisis makes sense of the three different ways Mill presents it. I will argue that each of the challenges Mill confronts corresponds to a different worry about ways our interests might be unsustainably structured. Thus, I will argue that the first challenge highlights the unsustainability of interests rooted in false expectations, the second challenge highlights the unsustainability of interests rooted in novelty, and the third challenge highlights the unsustainability of interests rooted in privation. Mill's fear during the crisis was that all of our interests would have one of these three unsustainable structures or another like them, and thus that the interest we take in our ends would be unsustainable on the whole.

Before proceeding, I should note a feature of Mill's motivational theory. As we saw in the previous chapter, Mill holds that "pleasure and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends"(*CW* 10.210). Mill makes this normative claim on the basis of a descriptive one: to see something as an end just is, Mill claims, to represent it as pleasant.

> desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable, or rather two parts of the same phenomenon; in strictness of language, two different modes of naming the same psychological fact: that to think of an object as desirable (unless for the sake of its consequences), and to think of it as pleasant, are one and the same thing; and that to desire anything, except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant, is a physical and metaphysical impossibility. (*CW* 10.237-38)

That Mill equates desiring something as an end with representing it as pleasant explains why pleasure plays such a large role in the coming discussion. I am arguing that Mill's crisis centered on questions about the sustainability of the interest we take in our ends. Given the equation Mill draws between taking something as an end and expecting it to be pleasant, his concern about the

sustainability of our interest in an object will often find expression in doubts about the sustainability of our expectation that it will please. Mill's psychology allows these doubts about pleasure to function as proxies for doubts about the sustainability of our interest in ends: to cease representing our ends as pleasant once they are realized is, for Mill, no different from ceasing to be interested in them as ends once they are realized.[4]

A. The First Challenge: The Unsustainability of False-Expectation-Based Interests

The first challenge Mill discusses in the text concerns the sustainability of associational desire. This is the challenge Mill spends the most time on, and it has attracted more discussion than any other part of Mill's account. It is also, it seems to me, the challenge that is most easily misinterpreted: the concern about the sustainability of our interests is less clear here than elsewhere in the text. As such, it will be worth unpacking this challenge carefully: if I can show that concerns about sustainability are at the heart of Mill's worry about associational desire, it will be easy to see this same concern behind the other challenges as well. My claim, as noted above, is that Mill took the collapse of his associational desires to bring out a problem with interests that have a particular structure: namely, a basis in *false* expectations about the consequences of their objects' realization. To begin defending this reading, we will need to get a

[4] Brink 2013: 26-33 argues that Mill does not really equate desiring something as an end with expecting it to be pleasant. His efforts, however, rely on either conflating Mill's claims about habitual action with claims about action from desire (31-32), conflating Mill's arguments for the possibility of taking pleasure in virtue *itself* (as opposed to its consequences) with arguments for the possibility of desiring virtue without taking it to be pleasant at all (29), or ignoring the qualitative hedonism which lets Mill explain the sacrifice of large amounts of inferior pleasures for small amounts of superior ones without appeal to pleasure-free motives (27). I take it Brink's real aim is to resist the idea that Mill sees desire as *generated* only by the expectation of pleasure (27-28). This could be done without such violence to the text. Mill says nothing about desire's *generation* in the passage above: he claims that desire and expectation of pleasure are one and the same, not that desire is always a *consequence* of the expectation of pleasure.

clearer account of associational desire on the table. To do this, it will help to consider the case which most directly concerned Mill – his own – in some detail:

Mill's education had one central goal: to bring him to desire the realization of utilitarian social reforms above all else. Believing that desire was identical to the expectation of pleasure, Mill's teachers raised him to expect pleasure from these reforms' realization. Their means of doing this was *association*. Whenever the young Mill contributed to the realization of utilitarian social ends, he was given things he already found pleasant: most notably, the praise of his teachers. Constantly receiving these benefits when utilitarian goals were realized, Mill's mind came to move directly from the thought of these goals' realization to expectation of the pleasures of praise. The intermediary step, actually receiving praise, was elided.[5] The pleasure of praise came to be expected not just from receiving it, but also from the realization of the utilitarian social reforms that typically led to its receipt. The desire that accompanies pleasure's expectation ensured that the realization of utilitarian social reforms soon came to be no less an end for Mill than the receipt of praise: the same expectation of pleasure, and therefore the same level of desire, attached to both. The educational project was thus a success: with the help of association, Mill came to see the realization of utilitarian social reforms as his greatest end.

Mill's crisis began when he reflected on the state he would be left in by this end's realization:

> it occurred to me to put the question directly to myself, "Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?" And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, "No!" At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to

[5] See Millgram 2004: 169-171 for a concise account of the mechanism underlying this elision.

> charm, and how could there ever again by any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for. (*CW* 1.139)

Mill found that reflecting on the satisfaction of his greatest desire caused that desire to collapse. He attributed this to an epiphany about the object of that desire: the discovery that its realization would not actually be "a great joy and happiness" to him. Thinking about the realization of his end destroyed Mill's expectation that it would be a source of pleasure. Given the identification of desire with the expectation of pleasure, the loss of this expectation amounted to the loss of the desire itself.

As noted above, Mill took the collapse of this desire to be a product of its associational character: associational desires are, Mill suggests, as such incapable of surviving the kind of scrutiny that destroyed his own desire for utilitarian social reform. Moreover, Mill took the inability of associational desires to survive such scrutiny to point to a quite general problem with building lives around them: Mill feared the existence of "a flaw in life itself", not just a flaw in his own life and the lives of those particularly like him. My goal in the remainder of this section will be to show that taking Mill to be concerned about the *unsustainable* nature of our interest in the objects of associational desire – about the inability of that interest to survive the realization of this desire's objects – makes the best sense of each of these claims. I will begin by defending a novel account of Mill's claim that associational desires are undermined by *analysis*, arguing that Mill takes analytical habits to undermine associational desires due to the dependence of such desires on false expectations about the consequences of realizing their objects. Once this account of the analytical dissolution of associational desire is on the table, I will use it to argue that Mill's larger concern – the problem for human beings in general he takes his case to point toward – focuses on the unsustainability of interests with this false-expectation based structure.

A.1 The Destruction of Associational Desire by Analysis

My emphasis on concerns about the realization of associational desire's objects may seem out of place. Mill's own desire collapsed in the face of *reflection*, not realization. The immediate lesson he drew from its collapse concerned the threat to associational desire posed by *analytical habits*:

> For I now saw, or thought I saw, what I had always before received with incredulity – that the habit of analysis has a tendency to wear away the feelings: as indeed it has when no other mental habit is cultivated, and the analyzing spirit remains without its natural complements and correctives. The very excellence of analysis (I argued) is that it tends to weaken and undermine whatever is the result of prejudice; that it enables us mentally to separate ideas which have only casually clung together; and no associations whatever could ultimately resist this dissolving force, were it not that we owe to analysis our clearest knowledge of the permanent sequences in nature; the real connections between Things, not dependent on our will and feelings; natural laws, by virtue of which, in many cases, one thing is inseparable from another in fact; which laws, in proportion as they are clearly perceived and imaginatively realized, cause our ideas of things which are always joined together in Nature, to cohere more and more closely in our thoughts. Analytic habits may thus even strengthen the associations between causes and effects, means and ends, but tend altogether to weaken those which are, to speak familiarly, a *mere* matter of feeling. (*CW* 1.141-143)

Mill understands analysis as the process by which a cluster of ideas are broken up into their independent elements.[6] In the case of associational desire, analysis allows us to consider the pleasure we expect from desire's object separately from that object itself. By enabling these associated ideas to be considered separately, analysis puts us in a position to examine the relation between them. Such examination is, Mill suggests, destructive of associational desire: it reveals the associations on which it rests to be in some problematic sense arbitrary, "a *mere* matter of feeling".

[6] On this, see J.S. Mill's preface to his father's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (*CW* 31.95-97).

This arbitrariness is, on one common interpretation, *normative arbitrariness*.[7] When we hold associational desire's object and the pleasure we expect from it apart, we realize that there is no reason why that object *ought* to please. There is nothing objectively pleasing about the objects of associational desire. We do in fact take pleasure in them, but that pleasure is the product of historical accident. It is arbitrary: there is no reason why we *should* take pleasure in these objects rather than any others. The downside of associational desire on the standard view is its inability to withstand normative reflection of this kind. The pleasure we take in the objects of associational desire is purely subjective, "a *mere* matter of feeling". It is thus dissolved the moment we ask ourselves *why* we *ought to feel it*.

A first strike against this view is that the reflection that undermined Mill's desire is not presented as *normative*. Mill's desire is dissolved by a question about what *would* follow its satisfaction, not what *should* follow its satisfaction: "Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected this very instant: *would* this be a great joy and happiness to you?"(my emphasis). This question is not normative, it is *causal*: Mill asks if a particular cause – the realization of utilitarian reforms – will have a particular effect – his happiness.

With this in mind, it is worth revisiting the standard interpretation of Mill's claims about the tension between analysis and associational desire. A careful reading of the passage above makes it clear that the arbitrariness Mill takes analysis to uncover is not associational desire's lack of objective normative foundations. Thus, Mill does not explain the arbitrariness of the associations underlying such desire by contrasting them with the non-arbitrary nature of well-grounded normative views. Rather, he explains it by contrast with well-grounded *causal views*,

[7] Anderson 1991 and Vogler 2001 offer the clearest presentations of this reading.

with "knowledge of the permanent sequences in nature". The problem with associational desire is that it is arbitrary in the same sense that expecting to catch a cold when wet is arbitrary: it joins together things which are not "always joined together in Nature". Associational desire hinges on a false causal view, on the assumption that two things – realizing a particular object and experiencing a particular pleasure – are reliably linked when they are in fact independent of each other. It is thus destroyed by sound *causal reasoning*, which, for an empiricist like Mill, amounts to nothing more than inquiry into whether one event consistently follows upon another. This is, notably, something Mill elsewhere emphasizes analysis' roles in facilitating:

> It results from the preceding exposition that the process of ascertaining what consequents, in nature, are invariably connected with what antecedents, or in other words what phenomena are related to each other as causes and effects, is in some sort a process of analysis. . . . The order of nature, as perceived at first glance, presents at every instance a chaos followed by another chaos. We must decompose each chaos into single facts. We must learn to see in the chaotic antecedent a multitude of distinct antecedents, in the chaotic consequent a multitude of distinct consequents. (*CW* 7.379)

Mill views analysis as a precondition of sound causal reasoning: we cannot ask if two events follow each other as cause and effect unless we first hold those events apart in a way that lets us accurately track patterns in their appearance. It is my claim that Mill has nothing more than this in view when he suggests that analysis undermines associational desire. Associational desire depends on false causal beliefs. Analysis facilitates sound causal reasoning. The latter is thus destructive of the former, undermining it by undermining the causal illusions on which it rests.[8]

This change in our understanding of the arbitrariness of associational desire is significant. On the standard reading, Mill thinks the realization of associational desire's objects will be genuinely pleasing to anyone who has not engaged in analysis. Associational desire's instability

[8] Paul seems to understand this similarly. Thus, she suggests that Mill's problem would be resolved if the associations underlying our desires could "be regarded by the intellect as though they were *physical* associations"(1998: 103).

comes from something external – from analysis – rather than anything built into its own structure. On my reading, in contrast, the flaw is built into associational desire itself. The arbitrariness of associational desire stems from its dependence on false expectation: it rests on the *unjustified* feeling that a particular pleasure will follow its object's realization. In suggesting that associational desire rests on arbitrary causal beliefs, Mill claims that this expectation – the foundation of associational desire – is one that its objects cannot meet.

Why might Mill have thought that associational desire was destined to disappoint? Mill does not offer a fully explicit answer to this question, but he provides us with material to present one on his behalf. Associational desires rest on the expectation that a particular pleasure will be provided by the realization of a particular object. The link between this pleasure and this object is created by association, by the fact that pleasure has often accompanied the object in the past. There is, however, an asymmetry between the ability of association to generate the *expectation* of pleasure and its ability to generate the *experience* of pleasure. Due to this asymmetry, the satisfaction of associational desire is always felt to be a cheat: the pleasure it provides is never the one that we expected, and is in fact always *inferior* to the one that we expected. As a result, realizing the objects of associational desire undermines the way of representing them – namely, as highly pleasant – on which our interest in them depends.

To see this, it will be helpful to return to Mill's case. Early in life, Mill enjoyed the experience of praise. His memory of this pleasure underwrote a non-associational desire to enjoy more praise in the future. As he was reliably offered praise when utilitarian social goals were realized, however, this same memory came to underwrite an associational desire for the realization of those goals as well. These two desires had the exact same basis: recollection of the same past pleasures underlay both.

In desiring to actually enjoy further praise or realize additional utilitarian projects, however, Mill must have been hoping for something more than just this recollected pleasure. The recollected pleasure of some experience is typically taken to be a pale imitation of the actual pleasure of the experience.[9] This is part of why recollected pleasures generate desire to *repeat* the recollected experience, rather than just desire to enjoy recollection itself.

It is here, however, that the symmetry between associational and non-associational desires breaks down. For realizing utilitarian social reforms, unlike receiving additional praise, would not provide Mill with the fresh pleasure of actually enjoying praise anew. All it could offer are the pleasures of recollection. Utilitarian social reform would call Mill's memory of the pleasures of praise to mind. It would not, however, actually replicate those pleasures. It would not provide Mill with the pleasure he was expecting, instead offering one that would be felt as inferior if compared to his hopes. This is, I take it, what Mill has in mind when he suggests that associational pleasures "are immediately felt to be *insufficient*"(*CW* 1.147, my emphasis) when subject to scrutiny: the satisfaction of associational desire will always be a *letdown*, never providing anything more than a dim imitation of the pleasure we had anticipated. It can only offer the memory of past pleasure, a good fully available to us whether our associational desires are realized or not. It is this fact about associational desire that renders it unable to bear particularly causal reflection: if we realize that the object of our desire is desirable to us only because we *wrongly* expect it to provide us with a pleasure that it cannot in fact provide, our desire for it will collapse.

[9] J.S. Mill and his father both affirm this. Thus, James Mill claims that, "In contemplating a painful or pleasurable sensation as past, that is, remembering it, the mind is in general tranquil. The state is not, perhaps, a state of indifference; but it is not so far removed from it, as to call attention to itself, or require a name to mark it"(Mill 1869: 199). J.S. Mill agrees in an accompanying note, describing "the very slight emotion excited in most cases by the idea of a past pain"(*CW* 31.218).

A.2 Unsustainability as the Flaw in Associational Desire

In the previous section, I offered an account of Mill's claim that analysis undermines associational desire. Analysis has this effect, I suggested, because it facilitates causal reasoning. Sound causal reasoning undermines associational desire due to such desire's dependence on false expectations: the pleasure expected from the realization of associational desire's object is in fact provided by another object, and is thus unlikely to actually follow it realization.

This alone is not sufficient, however, to explain Mill's claim that reliance on associational desire poses a general threat to human happiness. For the above problem has an obvious solution: simply avoid engaging in the kind of analysis that puts associational desire in jeopardy. Mill clearly thinks it is possible to do this, presenting his tendency to subject his expectations to analysis as a side-effect of an unbalanced education. Making sense of Mill's concern requires explaining how the collapse of his associational desires points to a problem relevant even to those lacking his analytical habits.

My suggestion is that it does this by bringing out the *unsustainability* of the interest that such desires generate. The same defects that render associational desire vulnerable to dissolution by causal analysis also render our interest in its objects vulnerable to dissolution by realization. Associational desire's objects are ends for us only because we have false expectations about their realized state, expectations which will be undermined by their actual realization. This means that our interest in the objects of associational desire will last only as long as those desires remain unsatisfied. As we saw in the previous chapter, however, Mill also takes excessive dissatisfaction to undermine engagement. An individual whose engagement rests on interests rooted in

associational desire is thus left in a precarious situation: satisfaction and dissatisfaction both threaten her with motivational collapse.

To see that this is the structure of Mill's problem, it will help to consider his discussion of anti-self-consciousness theory. Mill presents anti-self-consciousness theory as a strategy to help those unavoidably dependent on associational desire make the best out of lives that will never leave the crisis fully behind. Understanding Mill's thought that anti-self-consciousness theory provides some relief from the crisis will help us grasp his concern about the consequences of associational desire's satisfaction. Understanding Mill's thought that anti-self-consciousness theory can never provide a complete solution to the crisis will help us grasp his concern about the consequences of its prolonged dissatisfaction.

Anti-self-consciousness theory is the view that the pleasures of life can be enjoyed only by those who see something other than those pleasures as their aim. Mill, notably, does not endorse this view: some people, Mill suggests, perhaps even the only people capable of real happiness, are able to pursue that happiness self-consciously.[10] Nonetheless, Mill does recommend anti-self-consciousness theory as the best strategy for the great number of people incapable of anything more than the kinds of interest whose inadequacies generated Mill's crisis: he describes it as "the best theory for all those who have but a moderate degree of sensibility and

[10] Commentators have taken Mill to endorse anti-self-consciousness theory shockingly often given the pains he takes to distance himself from it and the mess it makes of his account (see, for example, Paul 1998: 94, Mawson 2002: 398, and Setiya 2017: 33). Textually, Mill concludes his discussion by explicitly noting that anti-self-consciousness theory only applies to those with stunted capacities. He also adds distancing interjections throughout his presentation of the view, making it clear he only briefly endorsed it unqualifiedly: "Those only were happy (*I thought*) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness"(*CW* 1.145, my emphasis). Likewise, philosophically, if Mill endorsed anti-self-consciousness theory, his claims about the importance of aesthetic interest would lack motivation: if associational desire can solve the crisis as long as we interact with it differently, what need is there to turn to a new kind of interest as a solution?

of capacity for enjoyment, that is for the great majority of mankind"(*CW* 1.147).[11] It allows those unable to make use of the true solution to the crisis – aesthetic interest – to do as well as can be done without ever really leaving the crisis behind.

According to anti-self-consciousness theory, a pleasure will be available only to those who seek something other than that pleasure. It is tempting to understand this theory as recommending a form of interest in which the expectation of pleasure plays no role. As we have seen, however, Mill's psychology has no room for interests of this kind. There is a reason Mill presents his recommendation as a theory about *consciousness* rather than motivation: it calls for a change not in the nature of our motives, but in our awareness of those motives' nature. It is an *anti*-self-consciousness theory, i.e. a theory that asks us to understand ourselves poorly, encouraging *misunderstanding* of our motives. It is designed for those whose interests will never be able to "bear a scrutinizing examination"(*CW* 1.147). It proposes to help such people precisely by offering a strategy to keep such examination at bay.

This strategy is, notably, to fix one's attention on "an ideal end"(*CW* 1.147). The examples of such ideal ends that Mill provides include the happiness of others, the improvement of humanity, and the cultivation of some art or skill. The unifying feature of these ends is that they are inexhaustible: the happiness of others can always be increased still further, humanity can always be made still better, an art or skill can always be still more thoroughly mastered. The ideality of these ends consists in their infinite perfectibility, in the fact that they can *never be fully realized*. This, Mill suggests, is what makes them the perfect tool for keeping the scrutiny of our ends at bay. They do this by ensuring that one never enters a situation where confrontation with the reality of the state one has been striving toward is unavoidable. Questions are raised by

[11] Mill, importantly, takes incapacity in this area to be a consequence of education rather than nature.

the realization of a goal that was actively pursued: was it everything you expected? was it really worth all the effort? is one's life really better now than it was before? Ideal ends never raise such questions, for the simple reason that they are never fully realized. "Sure, my current level of skill as a writer is no real joy for me, but if I can only get a bit better then . . .": thoughts of this kind are always intelligible where ideal ends are concerned. This allows the pursuit of such ends to insulate desire from the effects of experience with its object.

This account of the strategy underlying anti-self-consciousness theory opens space to understand why Mill would both present the collapse of his own associational desires as a particular consequence of excessively analytic habits, and suggest that this collapse points to a wider problem for all who rely on associational desire. Mill's analytic habits led him to place himself artificially in a situation others might still enter by less intellectual means. Mill's crisis began when he asked himself the following question: "Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?"(*CW* 1.139). The fatal blow to Mill's desire was, in other words, an excessively clear-eyed projection of himself into a state in which that desire had been realized. Analytic habits allowed him to imagine life with desire's object more accurately than is typically possible in desire's grip. He thus raised in advance questions which are typically only raised after desire has been satisfied. The less analytically-minded will still ultimately be faced by these same questions: the difference is just that their confrontation waits on the actual realization of their end. The problem faced by the hyper-analytic is thus a foretaste of a wider problem facing those reliant on associational desire: such desire is always undermined by confrontation with its object. The hyper-analytic are distinguished only by their ability to carry this confrontation out in thought even while the actual

object remains absent: interests rooted in associational desire are just as threatened by the actual realization of those desires as they are by clear-eyed reflection on that realization. They are, in other words, unsustainable. This is the problem Mill takes anti-self-consciousness theory to respond to: it preserves the interest we take in our ends by blocking their realization.

That Mill does not take anti-self-consciousness theory to fully solve the crisis is a consequence of the way this strategy feeds into the other prong of the dilemma. The unsustainability of these interests is such that their durability can be bought only at the price of their dissatisfaction. This is a problem for reasons discussed in the previous chapter: my having an interest in an end only amounts to my having an interest *in my life* when I can see a way for my interest in that end to be expressed *within my life*. To see the force of this problem, it is important that the devotee of an ideal end be conceived in the way necessary for anti-self-consciousness theory to succeed: namely, as someone whose interest is really focused on the ideal end itself, and not on the activity by which that end is pursued. The object of a desire to engage in the activities by which an ideal end is pursued would be *realized* in the course of its pursuit. Anti-self-consciousness theory will thus do nothing to protect interest in these activities. The aspect of a life dedicated to the pursuit of ideal ends which is typically taken to make such a life *engaging* – namely, direct interest in the *pursuit* of those ends – is thus ruled out by anti-self-consciousness theory's basic strategy.[12] Even when the anti-self-consciousness strategy succeeds at keeping scrutiny at bay, it leaves us in a precarious position: our interest in life is preserved only by way of precisely the sort of irresolvable frustration that discourages such interest.

[12] This is why what I say above is consistent with Mill's praise of the pursuit of ideal ends elsewhere. What Mill praises is typically *aesthetic interest* in the *pursuit* of ideal ends, not associational desire for the realization of ideal ends. Mill suggests that the pursuit of ideal ends is bound up with our desire for nobility: it is part of what allows human beings to view themselves as aesthetically significant.

Mill suggests that anti-self-consciousness theory offers an *incomplete* solution to the crisis' first challenge. I have argued that this makes sense if the challenge is understood as expressing a concern about the unsustainability of interests rooted in associational desire. If such interests are undermined by the realization of their objects, then it is easy to understand Mill's thought that the most durable kind of associational interests would be those with objects that *can never be fully realized*. If such interests, like all others, cease to engage in the face of sufficiently intractable frustration, however, then it is also easy to understand Mill's thought that reliance on them could never fully repair associational desire's fundamental defect. Mill's discussion of anti-self-consciousness theory seems to validate my interpretation of the *general problem* posed by reliance on associational desire. To rest your engagement on such desire is quite dangerous even if you are free of Mill's analytic habits. The defect of associational desire that those habits led Mill to discover – its dependence on false expectations about the consequences of its objects' realization– renders it unsustainable. Interests with this false-expectation-based structure cannot survive their objects' realization, and this means that they cannot provide a stable basis for engagement. For the person who depends on them, realization and frustration both seem to threaten motivational collapse.

B. The Second Challenge: The Unsustainability of Novelty-Based Interests

Mill's first challenge focused on the unsustainable nature of interests with a particular structure: false-expectation-based interests would, Mill suspected, always be undermined by their objects' realization. The second challenge too deals with the worry that a certain kind of interest is unsustainable. The interest is, however, of a different kind: in the second challenge, Mill

struggles with the unsustainability of *novelty-based interest*, the kind of interest we take in things that are unfamiliar or surprising. Mill's worry about this kind of interest is part of the same crisis as his worry about associational desire precisely because both worries feed into a larger worry about sustainability.

The centrality of sustainability to the second challenge is fairly clear. Finding himself able to enjoy Weber and Mozart despite the collapse of his associational desires, Mill briefly hopes his interest in this music offers a way out of the crisis. This hope, however, is dashed by

> the thought, that pleasure of music (as is quite true of such pleasure as this was, that of mere tune) fades with familiarity, and requires either to be revived by intermittence, or fed by continual novelty. And it is very characteristic both of my then state, and of the general tone of my mind at this period of my life, that I was seriously tormented by the thought of the exhaustibility of musical combinations. (*CW* 1.149)

Mill's concern here is straightforwardly about the sustainability of this kind of musical interest: he worries that our pleasure in tune "fades with familiarity", i.e. that our interest in it is undermined by its own gratification. The source of the unsustainability is, however, quite different than that which caused problems for associational desire. Here, there is no suggestion that our interest in tune rests on false expectations: listening to music *does* provide us with genuine pleasure. The problem is that once we have enjoyed the initial realization of our end, we are left with no interest in continuing to interact with it: after we have listened to the tune enough to familiarize ourselves with it, we cannot enjoy continued engagement with the music. The problem with our interest in this case is thus its dependence on *novelty*. Tune grips us, Mill suspects, in a manner analogous to the way we might be gripped by a *suspenseful* narrative: it presents us with new and unexpected combinations of notes, leaving us excited to discover

which note will come next just as we might eagerly anticipate the next swerve in a thriller.[13] That interest in tune rests on novelty in this way renders it straightforwardly unsustainable. In gratifying our interest in it, our familiarity with it grows. Our interest was, however, grounded precisely in our lack of familiarity with it. As such, our interest fades as it is gratified: the more familiar with the tune we are, the less it surprises us, and thus the less it sustains an interest rooted precisely in ability to surprise.[14]

Mill notes that such novelty-based interests can be revived by time: as our memory of the music fades, its ability to present itself as novel will return. There will, however, have to be a gap, a period of "intermittence" during which our interest in the object is sufficiently diminished that it fades from memory. The possibility of reviving interests in this way is, consequently, unable to answer Mill's worry about engagement: even with their capacity for revival taken into account, the best a novelty-based interest can provide is pockets of engagement surrounded by periods of disaffection. One might, Mill suggests, attempt to get around this by alternating between a variety of musical interests – feeding interest by continual novelty as Mill puts it. He suspects, however, that there is a limit to how far one could get with this approach: music is only capable of so much variety, and a person who tried to fill a whole life this way would eventually come up short, finding nothing sufficiently novel around to keep her interest alive.[15]

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[13] Mill makes the connection between interest in *tune* and interest in *story* explicit in "What is Poetry?", distinguishing both from genuinely aesthetic interest.

[14] Heydt explains Mill's claims about the unsustainability of interest in tune using the idea of a "saturation point"(2006: 63). The idea seems to be that we can only take finite pleasure in a finite object. Pleasure in a sound (a finite object) eventually runs out. Ideal objects, in contrast, provide inexhaustible pleasure due to their own inexhaustibility. It is unclear, however, why the finitude or infinitude of an object should correspond to the limited or unlimited nature of the pleasure we can take in it. An explanation in terms of the structure of our interest seems more helpful than one in terms of features of that interest's objects.

[15] This is suggestive of Williams' argument against the value of immortality. Williams' worry that an immortal's interest would collapse in the face of "the repeated patterns of personal relations"(1973: 90) is of a kind with Mill's worry about "the exhaustibility of musical combinations." Mill's solution to his

The plausibility of this last claim is questionable – even the older Mill describes his worry about it during the crisis as exaggerated (*CW* 1.149). For the moment, however, the essential thing is just to note the continuity of the *problem* Mill deals with in the first and second challenges. In both cases, Mill worries about the unsustainable structure of a particular kind of interest. In both cases, the problem with this unsustainability is the obstacle to engagement it creates. The only difference is the type of interest Mill considers: in the first challenge, Mill struggles with the unsustainability of false-expectation-based interests; in the second, with the unsustainability of novelty-based interests. Together, both challenges feed into a single fear: that our interest in our ends might be unsustainable in all its forms, and thus that the engagement that rests on that interest might be unsustainable as well.

C. The Third Challenge: The Unsustainability of Privation-Based Interests

The third challenge feeds into the same concern, pointing to yet another type of interest unable to survive its own gratification. Thus, the third challenge focuses on the unsustainability of privation-based interest: interest in objects that concern us because they free us from a need. In it, Mill worries that life's allure might be undermined by the *success* of utilitarian reforms:

> I felt that the flaw in my life, must be a flaw in life itself; the question was, whether, if the reformers of society and government could succeed in their objects, and every person in the community were free and in a state of physical comfort, the pleasures of life, being no longer kept up by struggle and privation, would cease to be pleasures. (*CW* 1.149)

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crisis may, consequently, point toward an answer to Williams' argument: perhaps Williams, like the Mill of the crisis, was overlooking the differences between different kinds of interest, wrongly supposing that something like novelty-based interest would have to bear the burden of sustaining the immortal's engagement with her life.

To some extent, what Mill provides here is a general statement of the problem that tormented him during the crisis. It might, Mill worries, be "struggle and privation" that keep our interests alive: it might, in other words, be the frustration of our ends that preserves our interest in them, and their realization that destroys our interest. That this is what Mill most directly identifies as the "flaw in life itself" thus already provides significant support for my account of the crisis.

I take it, however, that Mill has something more specific in mind as well. Thus, Mill's concern at this point in the text is that our interests might be undermined by a fairly modest level of social reform, by the mere removal of dire poverty and political oppression. The concern is not with the results of bringing about a world of plenty and abundance where no obstacles stand in the way of realizing any end a person might have. It is rather that interest in our ends might be undermined if "every person in the community were free and in a state of physical comfort". Free people provided with the basic requirements of physical comfort might yet lack the means to realize all the objects of their associational desires or gratify their novelty-based interests: associational desires can have any object whatsoever, and commanding the resources necessary to avoid physical distress does not entail commanding the resources necessary to spend one's day reading thrillers. The reforms Mill describes are fundamentally *negative* in nature: they involve the removal of that distress which constitutes physical discomfort and typically follows upon political oppression. The objects that such reforms allow us to realize are, consequently, only those of similarly negative interests. This is why Mill emphasizes *privation* in his statement of the third challenge: the third challenge concerns the unsustainability of particularly privative desires, desires born out of a sense of distressing lack of some object.

I will discuss the unsustainability of such privation-based desires in much more detail in the coming chapter on Schopenhauer. For the moment, it will suffice to put the point relatively

broadly. One is interested in water only when thirsty. As soon as one drinks, one's thirst disappears, and one's interest in water along with it. Privation-based interests thus arrive on the scene with privation, leave with privation's removal, and return only when privation returns.[16] They are, consequently, a form of interest which leads us to care about an object only when we lack it: as soon as their object is attained, our interest in it is dissolved. Privation-based interests can, consequently, be a source of extended engagement only when extensively frustrated. Thirst motivates extended engagement only if hostile circumstances make it necessary to spend a great deal of time struggling for drink. This sort of dire situation, however, is itself a clear motive to disengagement, a temptation to give up on one's life as a truly recalcitrant object wholly unresponsive to one's wants and needs. To rely on privation-based interests, consequently, is to choose between a life of intolerably severe frustration and a life of satisfied disengagement: when adequately provided for, thirst can offer a few moments of interest a day in an otherwise uninteresting life; when ill provided for, thirst can dominate every waking moment, but only at the cost of rendering each one of those moments another temptation to give up on existence. The third challenge thus contributes to the crisis in exactly the same way as the other two: here again, Mill struggles with the unsustainability of a particular kind of interest, worrying that this unsustainability might undermine the engagement that our interests support.

[16] I here echo Reginter 2007's discussion of need-based desire's unsustainability, though I reject his conclusion that only object-based desire (desire based on prior judgment of an object's worth) can be sustainable (20).

II. Aesthetic Interest as the Solution to Mill's Crisis

Taken together, the three challenges Mill faces amount to an additive argument for the unsustainability of the interest we take in our ends. False-expectation-based interest is unsustainable; novelty-based interest is unsustainable; and privation-based interest too is unsustainable. If these are the only forms our interest can take, then our interest will be unsustainable on the whole.

An additive argument can be resisted in one of two ways. One can critique the analysis of the parts, or one can critique the division of the whole. Thus, escaping the crisis would require either showing that one of the varieties of interest already considered truly is sustainable, or that some other, more sustainable variety of interest exists. Mill takes the latter approach, breaking free of the crisis by rejecting the exhaustiveness of the tripartite division of interest that undergirded the three challenges. There is, Mill concludes, a fourth variety of interest, meaningfully distinct from the other three: aesthetic interest, the kind of interest we take in objects experienced as beautiful or noble.

If this variety of interest is to secure escape from the crisis, it must be sustainable: aesthetic interest can remove the flaw in life suggested by the three challenges only if it is able to survive the realization of its object. This is precisely what Mill praises aesthetic interest for doing. Thus, Mill claims Wordsworth offered him a path out of the crisis by showing him that aesthetic interest offered a "perennial" source of joy that would only be enhanced by the removal of obstacles to its gratification:

> In them ["states of feeling, and of thought colored by feeling, under the excitement of beauty"] I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings; which had no connection with struggle or imperfection, but would be

> made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed . . . I needed to be made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only without turning away from, but with a greatly increased interest in, the common feeling and common destiny of human beings. (*CW* 1.151-53)

In aesthetic interest, then, Mill finally finds a variety of interest that allows us to enjoy living with its realized object rather than simply chasing after its unrealized object. It offers, as Mill puts it, "permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation". The objects of aesthetic interest remain a source of lasting delight even when related to tranquilly: we can still enjoy them when they are fully realized and all "struggle or imperfection" involved in their pursuit has been removed.[17]

It is clear, then, that Mill takes aesthetic interest to be uniquely sustainable. What remains to be seen is why Mill thinks this. The first step in answering this question is to get a better sense of Mill's view of aesthetic interest. Once we understand what distinguishes this kind of interest from the ones discussed above, we can then ask why it remains untroubled by the challenges that made exclusive reliance on those varieties such a doubtful prospect.

A. The Nature of Aesthetic Interest

In his scant writings on aesthetics, Mill positions himself as a committed opponent of aesthetic formalism.[18] It is, Mill claims, "the vulgarest of all" aesthetic theories which "confounds poetry with metrical composition"(*CW* 1.343). It is not an object's form which constitutes it as an aesthetic object, but the kind of impact that it has on the spectator: namely, an

[17] This is even more explicit in the notes for Mill's speech on Wordsworth's value. Mill emphasizes, "My own change since I thought life a perpetual struggle – how much more there is to aim at when we see that happiness may coexist with being stationary and does not require us to keep moving"(*CW* 26.441).
[18] For helpful discussion of this, see Guyer 2014: 85-87.

emotional impact.[19] Thus, Mill suggests that any object whatsoever might be an aesthetic object as long as it was able to provoke an emotional response in some individual, declaring that

> Every truth which a human being can enunciate, every thought, even every outward impression, which can enter into his consciousness, may become poetry, when shown through any impassioned medium; when invested with the coloring of joy, or grief, or pity, or affection, or admiration, or reverence, or awe, or even hatred or terror; and, unless so colored, nothing, be it as interesting as it may, is poetry. (*CW* 1.348)

An aesthetic object is one invested with emotional significance. For Mill, then, to be interested in an object aesthetically it is necessary to be interested in it emotionally. For our purposes, the two can be viewed as interchangeable: for Mill, aesthetic interest is, at bottom, emotional interest.

That Mill identifies aesthetic interest with emotional interest explains his initially puzzling tendency to describe the lesson he learned from Wordsworth in two seemingly unrelated ways. At times, Mill claims that Wordsworth showed him "that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation"(*CW* 1.153). On this way of putting it, the lesson seems to be that happiness depends on taking an interest in natural beauty and works of art. At other times, however, Mill suggests that Wordsworth revealed "the paramount importance of the sympathies as a constituent of individual happiness"(*CW* 1.157). On this way of putting it, Mill seems to have interest in a different kind of object in mind: what is essential to happiness is not interest in art, but interest in other human beings. These two claims fit together because for Mill, although the *objects* of artistic contemplation and sympathetic concern may differ, the *kind of interest* one takes in those objects is fundamentally the same. Aesthetic contemplation and

[19] Mill uses the term emotion in a broader way than we tend to today. For him, it is a sort of catch-all term, covering any element of conscious life that is not a thought, sensation, or volition (*CW* 7.55). When I use the term emotion above, however, I want it to be heard as we tend to use the term now rather than as Mill himself would have used it. As I argue below, when Mill specifies the particular subset of emotional impacts relevant to aesthetic experience, he does so by honing in on precisely that set of psychic elements that we are likely to call emotions today.

sympathetic concern express the same basic type of interest: namely, emotional interest. It is the importance of this kind of interest – rather than any particular object of that interest – which Mill takes Wordsworth to reveal. This is why Mill is keen to emphasize that the lesson about aesthetic contemplation's importance he learned from Wordsworth was acquired "not only without turning away from, but with a greatly increased interest in, the common feeling and common destiny of human beings"(*CW* 1.153). To Mill's way of thinking, to grasp the importance of one of these things is to grasp the importance of the other. When valued *as modes of concern with a particular structure* rather than ways of relating to objects of particular kinds, aesthetic appreciation and sympathetic concern are interchangeable.[20]

To see the force of this point, it is worth noting how often our emotional experience of an object is also an aesthetic experience. Thus, to take Mill's example of "the sympathies", it does seem that part of what it is to view someone with love is to experience them as in some way beautiful: this aesthetic experience just comes with the emotion, seemingly inseparable from the perspective that constitutes it. Likewise with the antipathies: to view someone with disgust, for instance, seems to always involve experiencing them as in some way ugly. The emotion and the aesthetic experience once again seem inseparable.[21]

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[20] Had Mill developed his aesthetics in more detail, he would have needed to respond to standard questions about how emotions directed at aesthetic objects and ordinary objects differ (e.g., why our sympathy for a tragic character never causes us to rush the stage to save them in the way that sympathy for a real human being might).

[21] Anderson 1991:18 suggests that Mill takes aesthetic experience to involve first judging something to possess aesthetic value, then responding to that judgment via a sentiment that causes us to delight in the presence of things judged valuable in this way. This may be true in some important cases, but it reverses the order of Mill's general account. Mill holds that an object's aesthetic significance is *constituted* by our emotional interest in it: objects are aesthetically valuable insofar as we are emotionally interested in them, rather than provoking emotional interest insofar as they are judged aesthetically valuable. As discussed in the previous chapter, our sense of an object's aesthetic value or disvalue may also cause us to feel a variety of emotions about it: we may feel admiration and wonder for the aesthetically valuable, contempt and disgust for the aesthetically disvaluable, etc. Cases like this look similar to what Anderson describes, but it is important to emphasize that even here the initial sense of an object's aesthetic value will be a reflection of our either taking or failing to take an emotional interest in it.

Mill, unfortunately, never develops an account of the difference between emotions and other aspects of our psychic life. His examples of the kinds of interest which present their objects as aesthetically significant, however, make it clear what he has in mind. As we have seen, Mill identifies aesthetic interest with things like "joy, or grief, or pity, or affection, or admiration, or reverence, or awe, or even hatred or terror." There may be some room for dispute around the edges, but the full range of modes of concern typically united under the term emotion in its modern use seem to be in play. For Mill, then, aesthetic interest is to be equated with emotional interest in the ordinary modern sense of the term.[22]

B. The Sustainability of Aesthetic Interest

Now that we have a better sense of how Mill understands aesthetic interest, we can look into his claim that this kind of interest is uniquely sustainable, allowing us to remain engaged by its fully realized objects. The best way to do this will be to test aesthetic interest against the three challenges discussed above. These challenges suggested that an interest would be unsustainable if it possessed any of three structures: namely, if it was false-expectation-based, novelty-based,

[22] In a note to his father's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, Mill cites Ruskin as having correctly identified some of the features that cause us to experience objects as beautiful, things like the suggestion of "Infinity, Unity, Repose, Symmetry, Purity, Moderation, and Adaptation to Ends"(*CW* 31.224). Objects that suggest these ideas, Mill claims, inspire a powerful emotional response because they cause us to imagine a more perfect world than we encounter in experience. Heydt 2006 makes much of these remarks, suggesting that Mill relies on this tendency to reach beyond experience to distinguish the emotional response underlying aesthetic interest from other kinds of interest we might take in an object. This conclusion is too hasty, however, as Mill explicitly notes that Ruskin's list is incomplete. Mill quite rightly suspects that *some* aesthetically relevant emotions (most clearly wonder and awe) respond to things which point beyond the limits of human experience. He leaves the door open, however, for emotions responsive to other features to continue playing a role. The point of Mill's note is to show that we can explain the aesthetic properties of particular objects by pointing to particular features of those objects that cause them to provoke an emotional response. It is not to offer a full specification of those features, or to suggest that the only true emotions are the ones responsive to the features Ruskin identifies.

or privation-based. If aesthetic interest does not seem to possess any of these structures, none of Mill's worries about the sources of interest's unsustainability will apply to it.

Before proceeding, it is worth making a methodological point. As discussed above, Mill leans heavily on a conception of emotional interest that he himself does little to theorize. Mill tells us that aesthetic interest amounts to emotional interest, and that emotional interest has a significantly different structure from other kinds of interest. He does not, however, provide a positive account of this structure. This places a limit on what can be achieved in the coming discussion. I do not want to attribute any particular theory of the emotions to Mill, so I will instead try to make sense of his claim using relatively concrete examples. Given that my goal is *negative* – I am simply arguing that aesthetic interest is not (or at least not always) unsustainable in the three particular ways highlighted by the challenges – I hope that this will be sufficient. I aim to make it clear why aesthetic interest might have seemed like a plausible solution to the crisis given the particular concerns Mill was faced with, not to make a general defense of its sustainability. In order to make this relatively modest case as clearly as possible, I will attempt to support it using examples drawn from both traditionally aesthetic and traditionally emotional domains, showing that the unsustainable structures Mill was concerned with seem to mark neither our interest in artistic works nor our interest in the people important to us. With these methodological points out of the way, we can turn our attention back to the three challenges.

The first of the challenges suggested interests would be unsustainable if they depended on false expectations about the consequences of their objects' realization. The objects of aesthetic interest do not, I take it, standardly disappoint in this way. This is a place where Mill gives us a certain amount of positive theory to work with. Mill suggests that the pleasure we take in objects of aesthetic interest is *generated* by that interest: it is *because* we have invested an

object with emotional significance that it acts as a source of aesthetic pleasure. Thus, Mill claims that what it is for an object to be aesthetically pleasing is for it to be viewed "through any impassioned medium". As Mill emphasizes, *any* object whatsoever will generate aesthetic pleasure when viewed in this way. Aesthetic interest is, consequently, not a way of *guessing* at the set of objects independently suited to provide pleasure in the way that associational desire is. It cannot go wrong in picking out an object as a source of pleasure, because it *make*s its objects into sources of pleasure by its way of picking them out.[23]

The thought that there is something delightful about engaging with an object invested with emotional value regardless of its other properties – that there is, e.g., a certain delight in being with someone you love considered as such, even if that person's company is otherwise unrewarding – is, I take it, part of what motivates Mill's claim that emotional appreciation and aesthetic appreciation are one. The beloved individual seems in some way beautiful as long as we love them. In that regard, our interaction with them always provides at least one genuine delight. The same is true of a work of art: if I do not find the work beautiful, then I am not aesthetically interested in it; if I do find the work beautiful, then my interest is always at least rewarded by my experience of its beauty. I might interact with an individual or work of art in the *hope* of falling in love with the individual or finding the art beautiful, and these expectations

[23] None of the above is undermined by Mill's claim that association is often important to aesthetic experience (*CW* 31.223-26). Mill observes that an object might trigger aesthetic experience indirectly via association with a thought it calls to mind. To flesh out his example, say I encounter a stand of trees, and their height prompts me to consider the idea of infinity. My awe at this thought may then find expression in aesthetic pleasure. My aesthetic interest in the trees results from my expectation that they will provide an aesthetic experience that is in fact generated by something else, namely the thought of infinity. Why is gratification of aesthetic interest in the trees not then a letdown like the satisfaction of associational desire? The difference is that in this case association plays a causal role in not just the *expectation* of aesthetic pleasure, but also its *generation*. The trees do not remind me of a *prior* experience of awe. Rather, they remind me of an aesthetically interesting thought, and this thought generates a fresh, occurrent experience of awe in the same way any other emotionally significant object would.

might often be disappointed. This simply suggests that I may often fail to develop an emotional or aesthetic interest in some object while wishing to do so, not that I might often actually take an emotional or aesthetic interest in an object while finding that it leaves me cold.

This is not to say, of course, that interactions which gratify our emotional and aesthetic interests will always be found valuable on the whole. When such interactions disappoint, however, they will do so by falling short of external standards rather than internal ones. They may bring our other projects to ruin, but will not disappoint the expectations on which they are based. To switch to another of Mill's examples, our awe of a tornado's power will make it a source of a certain aesthetic delight even as our fear of the devastation it causes renders it a source of anxiety and distress. Our distress at the tornado's destructive potential will often outweigh our aesthetic delight in its awesome power. There is thus no guarantee that an object of aesthetic interest will benefit us, or even that our overall hedonic experience of it will be one of pleasure rather than pain. Nonetheless, even in cases like this, the gratification of aesthetic interest itself will not be experienced as a letdown or cheat: the tornado really will provide aesthetic pleasure as long as it really is an object of awe. In such a case, we may say that the gratification of our aesthetic interest was not worth it, but not that it was not real. In order to resolve the first challenge, this is already enough: as long as the gratification of aesthetic and emotional interests generally provides a genuine fresh pleasure, such interests will not regularly disappoint their own internal standards in the way that false-expectation-based interests do.

The second challenge suggested that an interest would be unsustainable if it was inspired by the novelty of its object, pulling us toward the unfamiliar and fading away once interaction with its object renders it no longer mysterious. Aesthetic interest does not seem to depend on novelty in this way. To see this, note the irrelevance to aesthetic interest of the great bane of

novelty-based interest: spoiling. Where my interest in a drama is novelty-based, it will wither in the face of revelations about the plot: novelty-based interest in an object fades away when that object can no longer surprise. In contrast, detailed knowledge of a drama's plot does nothing to discourage interest when that interest is aesthetic: *Romeo and Juliet* continues to engage even though we know they die at the end. The idea of dissolving this kind of interest by way of spoiling looks even stranger in more traditionally emotional cases: a lover unable to delight in her beloved because she looks the same as she did yesterday, or a parent unable to maintain interest in an overly consistent child. What one finds in such cases is often the opposite of this, delight in the self-similarity of the beloved individual, in the distinctive and familiar marks of her personality and appearance that shine through all her different behaviors and looks.

The third challenge suggests that interests will be unsustainable if they depend on privation. Objects that interest us only out of a sense of lack cease to engage as soon as their realization causes that lack to be filled. Aesthetic interest does not, however, seem to be privation-based in this way: one does not rush to the museum in distress every few hours in the way one might rush to the cafeteria. Emotions, unlike appetites, do not pass in and out of existence at regular intervals in a way suggestive of responsiveness to recurring needs. Nor, in many cases, is emotional interest accompanied by a sense of lack. Even when emotions do have a clear privative element, that privative element does not typically seem *essential* to the interest we take in their object: grief, e.g., looks like a situationally-specific expression of the same interest underlying non-privative feelings of love. Emotional and aesthetic interests can *generate* senses of lack, but they do not seem standardly *generated by* feelings of lack.[24]

[24] A full defense of this would require responding to reductive views like Schopenhauer's, which suggest that every emotion can be reduced to a complicated combination of privative appetites and thoughts, and every aesthetic pleasure can be reduced to *distraction* from preexisting pains.

Aesthetic interest, then, has a plausible claim to survive all three of the challenges underlying Mill's crisis. Through it, we seem able to stably appreciate fully realized goods rather than simply struggle in frustrated pursuit of things we lack. In aesthetic interest, then, Mill found what he was looking for: a way of being interested in an object capable of independently motivating a lifelong interest in our lives.[25]

III. Aesthetic Pessimism as a Successor Pessimism

Mill's crisis, then, taught him that enduring engagement would be possible only if aesthetic interests came to have a significant place in our motivational set. On Mill's view, however, aesthetic interests cannot simply be developed one by one. Rather, in order to have any aesthetic interests at all, it is necessary to cultivate a broader aesthetic sensitivity: the general openness to viewing the world through the emotions is something that must be developed before one can really see anything in this way. This is why Mill presents one of the main conclusions of his crisis as a lesson about *education*. Mill learns, as he puts it, the fundamental importance of *cultivating* our emotional sensitivity:

> The other important change which my opinions at his time underwent, was that I, for the first time, gave its proper place, among the prime necessities of human well-being, to the internal culture of the individual. I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and for action. I had now learnt by experience that the passive susceptibilities needed to be cultivated as well as the active

[25] There is, of course, a clear sense in which aesthetic interest might also fail to motivate lasting engagement. The objects of that interest will not always be available to us: the work of art may be destroyed or lost, the beloved individual may be distant or dead. These dangers are quite different from those dealt with here, however: they are external problems so to speak, threats to engagement posed not by the structure of our interests but by the world in which those interests are realized. As should become clear in the next section, that aesthetic interest helps us avoid one threat to our happiness does not mean it will not create new ones of its own.

> capacities, and required to be nourished and enriched as well as guided. (*CW* 1.147)

Different kinds of interest respond to different features of an object. To use an example of Mill's, a novelty-based interest in *Romeo and Juliet* might respond to the shocking swerves of its plot, while an aesthetic interest in the same play might respond to the love it depicts. A capacity to appreciate these different features of the work must be cultivated before the relevant kind of response is possible. Thus, if we are to respond to things aesthetically, a certain amount of "internal culture" will first be necessary: we need to acquire a sensitivity to the features of objects capable of triggering an emotional or aesthetic response before we are able to have one. This, notably, involves the development of a new set of "passive susceptibilities": what we need to develop is a capacity *to be affected* by things that would otherwise leave us cold. Thus, the contrast Mill draws with his previous focus on the active capacities: the essential thing here is openness to a new kind of valuational stimuli rather than a new way of responding to values already perceived. Developing emotional and aesthetic capacities is, Mill suggests, in an important way more similar to developing a new sense organ than developing a new muscle.

This analogy is significant: the consequences of developing a new sense organ are quite different from the consequences of developing a new muscle. This is because the level of control we have over the use of a muscle is far greater than the level of control we have over the use of a sense organ. If there are situations in which deploying our new muscle would be harmful, we can simply choose not to do so: its deployment will be under more or less direct volitional control. A fifteen-times increase in my jumping capacity will make it no more difficult for me to navigate the low-ceilinged building in which I used to reside: all I need do is choose not to jump. A new sense organ, in contrast, may cause problems. Sense organs are "*passive* susceptibilities"(my emphasis), and it is not directly up to me whether the environment I am in contains the kind of

stimuli to which one responds. A fifteen-times increase in my sense of smell might, consequently, make it much harder to deal with my previous environment than a similar increase in my ability to jump. If that environment contains features that make a negative impact on my new olfactory faculties, I will have no direct way to prevent myself from responding to them. I might use various *indirect* means to restrict my capacities – covering my nose, etc. – but the basic problem would remain: passive susceptibilities are not under full volitional control, so the acquisition of a new one always carries the risk of exposure to new kinds of distress.

It is, I take it, awareness of this that leads Mill to take the problem of aesthetic disrespect so seriously. His solution to the crisis suggests that happiness hinges on cultivating a new passive susceptibility, a capacity to appreciate those features of the world able to generate an emotional or aesthetic response. Like any passive susceptibility, however, the cultivation of this sensitivity carries its own risks. Mill's solution to the problem of life's ability to engage opens him up to the problem of its aesthetic and emotional significance: if aesthetic sensitivity is needed to make life engaging, then what is to be done if the deliverance of that sensitivity about human life turns out to be less than positive? How should beings who can only maintain a stable interest in life if they view it aesthetically deal with the possibility that their lives might seem insignificant or perhaps even positively bad when viewed from an aesthetic perspective? The pre-crisis Mill, who took aesthetic interest to have no special significance, could have simply responded to this threat by calling for the aesthetic perspective to be cast aside. After the crisis, however, this response was no longer an option. Thus, the charge that human life is necessarily base or aesthetically insignificant looks like a genuinely pessimistic charge for the post-crisis Mill in a way that it could not have for the pre-crisis Mill. This charge is, consequently, a sort of successor

pessimism: it gains its pessimistic status from the fact that attempts to deprive it of its force would generate another pessimism, pointing to distinct but no less serious flaws in human life.

That the two pessimisms Mill confronts in *Utilitarianism* relate in this way finds some support in the fact that Mill really did experience a successor crisis focused precisely on concerns about life's aesthetic value. Thus, in an often-neglected part of the *Autobiography*,[26] Mill describes a later relapse of his crisis. Mill's worries during this relapse focused on doubts about the freedom of the will, doubts Mill describes using his distinctive terminology for the aesthetic assessment of human life:

> during the later returns of my dejection, the doctrine of what is called Philosophical Necessity weighed on my existence like an incubus. I felt as if I was scientifically proved to be the helpless slave of antecedent circumstances; as if my character and that of all others had been formed for us by agencies beyond our control, and was wholly out of our power. . . . I pondered painfully on the subject, till gradually I saw the light through it . . . I saw that though our character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances; and that what is really inspiriting and ennobling in the doctrine of freewill, is the conviction that we have real power over the formation of our own character; (*CW* 1.175-177)

The details of Mill's views about free will do not concern us here. What is important is that Mill presents his worry as one about losing the "inspiriting and ennobling" features of belief in one's freedom. Nobility, recall, is an *aesthetic* term for Mill – when Mill worries about the loss of freedom's "ennobling" qualities, he is worrying that human life may be deprived of aesthetic value. A similar focus on the aesthetic consequences of the free will debate is clear from Mill's more detailed discussion of the issue in *A System of Logic*, a discussion which Mill directs the reader toward at the conclusion of the paragraph cited above. Thus, Mill notes that the theory of free will was invented because the alternative was found "humiliating to the pride and even

[26] Carlisle 1989: 139 and Millgram 2011 are, to the best of my knowledge, the only ones who discuss this second crisis in relation to the first.

degrading to the moral nature of man"(*CW* 8.836), and suggests that an inability to influence our own character "would be humiliating to our pride, and (what is of more importance) paralyzing to our desire for excellence"(*CW* 8.838). Throughout, the problem of free will is treated as equivalent to the problem of the possibility of virtue: Mill's worry about unfreedom is that it suggests someone might be fated to vice, unable to achieve excellence of character despite sincere desire for it. As discussed in the previous chapter, virtue is precisely what Mill takes the aesthetic value of human life to depend on. Thus, in worrying about the possibility of human virtue, Mill is worrying about the possibility that humanity might lack aesthetic worth.

Mill's crisis, then, having been apparently solved by the *possibility* of viewing life aesthetically, nonetheless returns to him in the form of a worry about the *consequences* of viewing life aesthetically. This second crisis is not something entirely new and unrelated, nor is it simply a return of the initial crisis.[27] It is, rather, a successor crisis, one properly inspired by the threat of a successor pessimism raised precisely by the solution to the first crisis. In the sustainability of aesthetic interest, Mill found a solution to the pessimism constituted by the claim that life is insufficiently engaging to maintain our interest in it. Contained within this solution was, however, a new pessimism and thus a new crisis: namely, that posed by the thought that even the best possible life might look trivial and undignified from the perspective of precisely that aesthetic sensitivity on which our interest in life depends.

[27] Millgram 2011 attempts to read the second crisis back into the first, suggesting that both deal with the same problem: the threat posed by the rigidification of character. This does not seem plausible as a reading of the first crisis, and renders Mill's proposed solution perplexing. The main virtue of poetry that Mill emphasizes – its capacity to generate a "perennial" and "permanent" form of interest – seems particularly inapt for resolving the danger of excessive motivational *stability*.

IV. Why Do We Need Sustainable Interests?

I have argued that Mill's crisis centered on a fear about the sustainability of the interest we take in our ends. I have suggested Mill had good reason to think that three major forms of interest – false-expectation-based interest, novelty-based interest, and privation-based interest – are unsustainable. He likewise had good reason to think that at least one major form of interest – emotional/aesthetic interest – might not be. This explains the unity of Mill's concerns during the crisis, makes sense of his proposed solution to it, and provides a clear foundation for Mill's later worries about the pessimism of aesthetic disrespect. These exegetical issues being settled, however, a significant philosophical issue remains. Mill thought that, in the absence of sustainable interests, human beings could not maintain a lifelong engagement with their own lives. Why exactly did he think this, and was he right to do so?

The structure of Mill's concern is clear until its final move. As discussed in the previous chapter, engagement hinges on finding a solution to Reginster's problem of inspiration: to be engaged, there must be ends that we view as both realizable *and* worthy of realization. As Mill sees it, this requires us to have ends that are in fact realized with a certain frequency. The realization of our ends thus plays an important role in preserving their ability to engage. Where our interest in an end is unsustainable, however, realization will destroy it. No such interest, consequently, will be able to motivate lifelong engagement. If our attempts to engage with its objects are constantly unsuccessful, they will cease to seem realizable. If our attempts to engage with its objects are successful, they will cease to seem worthwhile. Either way, the engagement an unsustainable interest provides will run out long before life does.

From the above reasoning, Mill concludes that our engagement with life will run out if it is based exclusively on unsustainable interests. It is worth emphasizing, however, that this is a conclusion drawn from the above reasoning rather than a restatement of it. For the above reasoning did not say anything about the prospect of grounding engagement in a *plurality* of unsustainable interests. All that was directly considered was the prospect of grounding engagement on a *single* unsustainable interest. Mill moves from the conclusion that no single unsustainable interest could motivate a lifelong engagement with our lives to the conclusion that such engagement could not be maintained on the exclusive basis of unsustainable interests. There is a gap here, and it is not immediately clear what Mill means to fill it.

In what follows, I will argue that Mill is unable to fill this gap: although he is right that lifelong engagement could not be generated by a single unsustainable interest, he is wrong to think that it could not be maintained on the basis of a combination of different unsustainable interests. I will first defend this conclusion negatively: I will consider a way Mill might try to fill this gap and argue that it is not successful. I will then offer a more positive argument for it by drawing on Schopenhauer's discussion of similar issues. Schopenhauer agrees with the Mill of the crisis that the interest we take in our ends is fundamentally unsustainable, and that this means the overly-complete realization of those ends would render life vapid and uninteresting. He does not, however, think that such disengagement will be the typical result of our interests' unsustainability. Instead, he presents an account of how different unsustainable desires might be combined to maintain engagement despite the obstacles Mill highlights. The plausibility of this account provides strong reason to reject Mill's conclusion that disengagement would be the inevitable result of exclusive reliance on unsustainable interests.

A. The Negative Argument: Motivational Specialization Cannot Fill the Gap

Mill suggests that, if our interests are unsustainable, the realization of their objects will eventually put us in a position where our interests run out. One reason this might be the case is if there were significant limitations on our capacity to form new interests and refresh old ones. An individual might only be able to take an interest in a fairly constrained set of objects. Or, even in the absence of firm limits on the interests an individual can form, the rate at which new interests are formed and old ones refreshed might be much lower than the rate at which existing ones burn themselves out.

There is some *prima facie* reason to think that Mill might accept a view of this kind. As discussed earlier, Mill frequently emphasizes the necessity of *cultivating* our sensitivity to new pleasures. Pleasures, on Mill's view, differ in kind in addition to degree. Our access to these different kinds of pleasure are, in many cases, provided by different faculties. When the relevant faculty has not been cultivated, we will be insensitive to the kind of pleasure that it provides. We will thus also typically be unable to take an interest in the kind of objects that an uncultivated faculty would have operated on: our experiences with those objects will leave us cold, as we will never have developed a sensitivity to their value. This is significant for our purposes, as Mill tends to suggest that the cultivation of our faculties is a fairly involved and drawn-out process. Thus, he likens the development of our sensitivity to a particular pleasure to the growth of a plant, suggesting that both can be sustained only by continuous care:

> It may be further objected, that many who begin with youthful enthusiasm for everything noble, as they advance in years sink into indolence and selfishness. But I do not believe that those who undergo this very common change, voluntarily choose the lower description of pleasures in preference to the higher. I believe that before they devote themselves exclusively to the one, they have already become incapable of the other. Capacity for the nobler feelings is in most natures

> a very tender plant, easily killed, not only by hostile influences, but by mere want of sustenance; and in the majority of young persons it speedily dies away if the occupations to which their position in life has devoted them, and the society into which it has thrown them, are not favorable to keeping that higher capacity in exercise. (*CW* 10.212-13)

Mill here suggests that our capacity for particular pleasures may be *permanently* destroyed by disuse. This may be taken to entail the inevitability of a sort of motivational specialization. The development of sensitivity to one end's value always carries a significant opportunity cost: in prioritizing that faculty's exercise, I deprive others of opportunity for expression. Due to their neglect, these other capacities fade away, and I am eventually left with sensitivity only to pleasures that have already played a significant role in my life. Devotion to a particular set of interests would, consequently, render the development of new interests difficult or impossible. The mere fact that I had focused on a particular kind of end for an extended period of time would discourage efforts to switch to a new kind once the first loses its charm.

Mill, then, has some reason to think human beings easily get stuck with limiting motivational profiles. The limits in question, however, are not the ones needed to make sense of Mill's worries about sustainability. Mill's claims suggest that we easily lose sensitivity to the value of *kinds* of ends that play little role in our lives. This in turn suggests that devotion to certain *kinds* of interest may make transitioning to different *kinds* difficult. Mill's claims about unsustainability, however, do not operate at the level of *kinds*, but of particulars. Gratification of our novelty-based interest in a particular tune, for example, does not undermine our interest in tunes generally. It simply undermines our interest in that specific tune. Our interest in the *kind* of object involved is unaffected. The difficulty of developing desire for new kinds of objects will not, consequently, be enough to explain why we are unable to replace old interests with new ones at a rate sufficient to render unsustainability unproblematic. If it remains possible for me to

replace interests that burn out with others of the same kind, then that will be enough to secure engagement. This should be possible as long as there remain new particular objects of desire among the classes of objects my sensitivities allow me to appreciate.

B. The Positive Argument: Schopenhauer on Engagement by Unsustainable Interests

Mill's psychology, then, does not offer a clear explanation for his doubts about the possibility of maintaining durable engagement on the exclusive basis of unsustainable interests. This, however, is just a negative point: it leaves open the possibility that there is some reason to endorse this view that is not obvious from Mill's account. To rule this out, we need to establish the plausibility of a positive view that contradicts it. For this reason, it will be helpful to consider Schopenhauer's account of how the average person remains stably engaged throughout life. Schopenhauer more or less grants the premises Mill uses to set up his problem. If his view is plausible, he will thus have provided us with an account of how Mill's premises can be endorsed even while the conclusion he drew from them is denied.

Schopenhauer agrees with the young Mill that the interest we take in our ends is fundamentally unsustainable. He also agrees that this means overly complete realization of our ends undermines interest in our lives: "want and boredom are the two poles of human life"(PP II: 295 [1]) as he puts it. Schopenhauer grants the other side of Mill's dilemma as well, acknowledging that unresolvable frustration of our goals has just as much power to turn us against our lives as too complete realization of them. All the pieces necessary to set up Mill's problem thus seem to be in place, and Schopenhauer does in fact think that *some* people will fall prey to one or the other prong of Mill's dilemma.

Nonetheless, Schopenhauer suspects that such cases will be quite rare: the unsustainability of the interest we take in our ends creates no *general* obstacle to engagement. This is because it is generally open to us to *combine* different unsustainable interests in a way that keeps life engaging enough to hold us. Thus, Schopenhauer suggests that "the happiest course through life"(WWR I: 368 [2]) consists in rapidly cycling through a series of privation-based interests. Each interest is gratified quickly enough that we never doubt the realizability of its object. Each is replaced quickly enough that we never feel the emptiness of life with its realized object. The rapid alternation of unsustainable interests, then, successfully pulls off the trick anti-self-consciousness theory could not quite manage. Like anti-self-consciousness theory, it successfully shields our ends from a "scrutinizing examination": after one end is realized, our attention is quickly diverted to a new one before we feel the insignificance of the first. Unlike anti-self-consciousness theory, however, it provides our ends with this insulation without requiring their frustration: each individual interest can be gratified as long as another is waiting in the wing to take its place. The rapid alternation of unsustainable interests thus puts us in a position where we always feel like there is something worthwhile to do, *even when there in fact is no such thing*. Our inability to engage with our realized ends constantly presents itself as the effect of *distraction* rather than lack of interest: we feel that our realized ends *would* be as engaging to enjoy as they were to pursue, but that we are unfortunately kept from attending to them by more pressing concerns. Our inability to appreciate our realized ends thus ends up *increasing* the interest we take in our unrealized ones: we feel motivated to resolve present problems both because of the direct interest we take in them, and because of our false belief that they are all that stands between us and a renewed interest in the goods we have already obtained. The alternation of unsustainable interests is thus, Schopenhauer suggests, highly effective at

keeping life engaging throughout its duration. Someone able to combine unsustainable interests in this way finds life a quite captivating – if not necessarily actually rewarding – affair.

As discussed above, Mill seems to have little reason to rule out our developing the extensive set of interests needed to support this strategy. Its plausibility as a path to enduring engagement thus undermines Mill's fear. Mill's worries about the pessimism of disengagement could be resolved even without recourse to sustainable interests: the right strategy for combining unsustainable interests will be just as effective at keeping this pessimism at bay. This raises a serious problem for Mill's account of the importance of aesthetic interest and aesthetic dignity. The basis of this importance was aesthetic interest's status as our *only* defense against the pessimism of disengagement. If other options for avoiding this pessimism are available, then aesthetic interest is reduced to the status of one means among many. The main conclusion Mill draws from the crisis – that aesthetic and emotional interests play an *essential* role in making life worth living – is deprived of its justification.

The task of the remainder of this dissertation will be to try and fill in this gap, uncovering an alternative defense of the claims Mill could not fully justify. Our first step in doing this will be to give closer attention to the view that brought the limitations of Mill's approach into relief. The next chapter will thus consist in an examination of Schopenhauer's account of human life. For, although Schopenhauer denies that this account threatens us with the pessimism of disengagement, he nonetheless takes it to threaten a pessimism of no lesser force. If particularly aesthetic modes of valuing play a more decisive role in responding to this pessimism, then concern about it may provide Mill's claims about the importance of aesthetic interest and aesthetic dignity with firmer foundations.

Chapter 3: Schopenhauer and the Pessimism of Aversion

A life may fail to be happy either by containing some significant ill, or by lacking some significant good. As such, there are two distinct ways for a claim about the best human life to constitute a form of weak pessimism: it might suggest that life necessarily contains some significant bad, or it might suggest that it necessarily lacks some significant good. In contrast, there is only one way for a claim about the best human life to constitute a form of strong pessimism: here the presence of the bad is required, not just the good's absence. Strong pessimism holds that even the best human life is worse for its possessor than no life at all. This can be the case only if life contains an insurmountable source of *disvalue*, something that causes it to actively harm its possessor rather than simply fail to provide her with sufficient benefit.

For the variety of strong pessimism put forward by Schopenhauer, the insurmountable source of disvalue that condemns human life is suffering.[1] Understanding Schopenhauer's pessimism, consequently, requires understanding why he takes suffering to be both inevitable and insurmountable, necessarily appearing within even the best human life and necessarily outweighing any benefits such a life might provide. In what follows, I argue that Schopenhauer takes an additive approach to establishing this thesis. He first relies on one claim about human life to establish a stark form of weak pessimism. He then combines that claim with two more to reach strong pessimism. Schopenhauer's claim that human valuing is essentially *aversive* establishes the good's absence from even the best human life. Establishing the bad's presence,

[1] Schopenhauer defends two varieties of suffering-based strong pessimism, as well as several varieties of weak pessimism not focused on suffering. The version I discuss is distinguished by its independence from Schopenhauer's skepticism about the distinction between individuals and the possibility of genuine being in a world of constant change. It might be described as Schopenhauer's unmetaphysical pessimism: it is his attempt to prove that life is not worth living even from the perspective of the ordinary view of the world as populated by distinct mid-sized objects that persist over time.

however, requires bringing in two more claims: namely, that all human beings are saddled with a will to attend, and that all human life depends on desire-directed maintenance activity for its existence. All three of these claims are needed to constitute Schopenhauer's account of human life as a form of strong pessimism. The first claim, however, has a special status: it alone is responsible for determining that Schopenhauer's account is a form of pessimism at all.

I. Suffering

On Schopenhauer's view, human life is condemned by the fact that we suffer from it. Before looking at Schopenhauer's reasons for embracing this claim, it will be important to get a clearer sense of what he means by it. In particular, it is essential that the term suffering be understood correctly. Schopenhauer makes two different uses of the term, sometimes equating suffering with pain, and sometimes equating it with frustration of the will. The difference between these two uses is significant. For Schopenhauer, pain is a kind of feeling, and feeling is an element of conscious life. Frustration of the will, in contrast, might be entirely unconscious: the will can be frustrated whether we are aware of it or not. On one understanding of the term, Schopenhauer condemns life because of the impact it has on our conscious experience. On the other, he condemns it due to an aspect of our condition of which we might be entirely unaware.

As I read him, Schopenhauer's critique relies on the pain view of suffering: it is because human life generates a suffering *consciousness* that it is to be rejected. Schopenhauer does not treat his claim that the will is incapable of complete satisfaction as sufficient to establish life's lack of value.[2] Rather, he works to show the consequences of this claim for conscious

[2] This is obscured by a peculiarity of Schopenhauer's terminology. Schopenhauer uses the terms happiness (*Glück*) and satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) interchangeably. This gives the impression that denying

experience. For Schopenhauer, life is bad precisely because it is *painful*. The painful experience of life is the insurmountable and unavoidable source of disvalue by which it is condemned.

The claim that life is not worth living if our overall experience of it is painful thus plays a central role in Schopenhauer's pessimism. Despite this claim's importance, however, Schopenhauer spends surprisingly little time defending it. His explicit efforts focus on suffering's inevitability more than its insurmountability: he says much about why suffering is the inevitable character of human life, but little about why a life from which we suffer is worse than no life at all. To fill this gap, commentators typically take Schopenhauer to assume ethical hedonism, identifying pleasure as the one thing capable of directly benefitting human beings and pain as the one thing capable of directly harming them.[3] From a hedonistic perspective, it is clear why life would be a harmful possession if suffering was the dominant character of our experience. For the hedonist, anything more painful than pleasant is in itself harmful. Thus, for the hedonist, if living is a more painful than pleasant experience, life too will be in itself harmful. As such, although Schopenhauer never explicitly identifies as a hedonist, attributing hedonism to him makes some sense of the lack of explicit argument in favor of the worthlessness of suffering existence. The worthlessness of suffering existence is sufficiently obvious from a hedonistic perspective that going through the argument may have seemed unnecessary.

I see no positive reason to deny the hedonistic reading of Schopenhauer: attributing hedonism to him has significant explanatory power, and seems compatible with his explicit

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the possibility of fully satisfying the will gets us all the way to pessimism. If no satisfaction, then no happiness. If no happiness, then pessimism. In equating happiness with satisfaction, however, Schopenhauer treats it as one element of life rather than a mark of its overall quality. That life cannot be happy in Schopenhauer's sense of the term, consequently, tells us little about its value to us. The impossibility of lasting satisfaction might, after all, be a good thing: if the act of satisfaction was beneficial, then the impossibility of lasting satisfaction would mean an inexhaustible source of benefit was available to us (this is Callicles' argument for insatiability at 494a-c of the *Gorgias*).

[3] See, e.g., Reginster 2006: 108 and Janaway 1999: 334.

positions. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Schopenhauer's views about the generation of pleasure and pain leave room for other accounts of why a painful life must be a harmful life. As will become clear in later sections of this chapter, Schopenhauer sees the experience of pain as intimately tied up with the experience of one's state as bad, and the experience of pleasure as intimately tied up with the experience of one's state as good. On this view of the origin of pain, for life to be experienced as a source of pain is for our experience of the states that compose it to be bad on the whole. States experienced as bad will have to outweigh states experienced as good in either degree, duration, frequency, or some combination of the three. Schopenhauer argues that this outweighing takes the form of absolute superiority in frequency: our experience of life is inevitably painful on the whole, because we necessarily experience some of the states that compose it as bad, and none of them as good.[4]

There is no need to appeal to any specifically hedonistic premises to conclude that life would not be worth living if experienced in this way. Rather, all that would be necessary are the following two claims: 1) that pain is harmful; and 2) that a good cannot (directly) benefit us if we are unable to appreciate its goodness. The first of these two thoughts – that pain is harmful – is fairly uncontroversial. The belief that pain is the *only* thing capable of harming a person is distinctive of hedonism. The belief that it is one of the things capable of harming a person is much more widespread. The second thought – that something can be of direct benefit to us only if we are capable of appreciating its value – is more controversial, but not because it relies on

[4] In making this claim, Schopenhauer need not deny that people sometimes take themselves to experience their state as good. Such cases simply involve the misinterpretation of indifference toward one's state: the experience of one's state as neither good nor bad is confused with the experience of it as good due to contrast with prior experience of it as bad. Schopenhauer draws heavily here on Plato's arguments about false pleasure in the *Philebus* and *Republic* IX. Like Plato, Schopenhauer distinguishes between a positive state, a neutral state, and a bad state. Those who lack experience with the positive state easily think that they are entering it whenever they move from the bad state to the neutral state.

hedonistic assumptions.[5] This thought gains its appeal not from any specific view about the kind of things that benefit human beings, but from reflection on the concept of benefit itself. When we say that something is valuable in the sense of beneficial, we mean that is able to *convey* value to somebody. The value of a beneficial object cannot remain contained within that object. Rather, the value of a beneficial object must be in some sense transferable: it must be possible for an individual to incorporate not just the object itself but also *the value of the object* into her life. For this transfer of value to occur, the individual must stand in the right relation to the valuable object: she must relate to it in a way that constitutes openness to its value. Appreciating the valuable thing's value may well play a role in constituting this relationship: part of what it is to be open to the value of a valuable thing is to actually value that thing yourself. This is an internalist view rather than a hedonist one, but it seems sufficient to support Schopenhauer's pessimism given his claim about how the states that constitute human life are experienced.

The claim that human life is sometimes experienced as painful and never experienced as pleasant may function as a direct denial of human life's value if hedonism is retained. Or, it may function as an indirect denial of life's value on merely internalist grounds, condemning life via the implied claim that it is sometimes experienced as bad and never experienced as good. The text underdetermines the interpretive issue, but little hinges on resolving it. Whether for hedonistic or internalist reasons, the claim that life is sometimes experienced as painful and never experienced as pleasant will function as an effective denial of life's value. It will, consequently, constitute a legitimate form of pessimism.

[5] Nor, does it rely on a subjectivist conception of value. The claim is not that anything experienced as valuable benefits, but that nothing benefits unless it is experienced as valuable. Subjective appreciation is a necessary condition of benefit, not a sufficient condition.

II. The Basic Structure of Schopenhauer's Pessimism

Now that we have a clearer sense of what Schopenhauer is trying to prove, we can consider how he attempts to prove it. Schopenhauer argues that human life is necessarily more painful than pleasant. His strategy for establishing this has three basic steps. Schopenhauer first divides human life into its constituent parts. He then considers whether each of those parts would be experienced as a source of pleasure, a source of pain, or a source of neither pleasure nor pain. Finally, he asks how we would experience the best possible whole that could be built from those parts: would it be experienced as a source of pain, a source of pleasure, or a source of neither pleasure nor pain?

This strategy's success hinges on the exhaustiveness of Schopenhauer's division: Schopenhauer must be able to say that the parts he has evaluated represent all that life has to offer. As such, I would like to present Schopenhauer's division of life into its constitutive elements in a way that makes its exhaustiveness clearer than is immediately apparent on the basis of his own terminology. Schopenhauer's own presentation of the division proceeds as follows:

> One can theoretically assume three extremes of human life and regard them as elements of actual human life. First, powerful willing, great passions . . . second, pure cognition, apprehension of Ideas, conditioned by the liberation of cognizance from service to the will: the life of genius . . . third, the greatest lethargy of will and therewith of cognizance bound to it, empty longing, life-rigidifying boredom. (WWR I: 376 [1])

In this passage, Schopenhauer suggests that there are three states available to conscious human beings: unsatisfied willing, boredom, and will-less cognition. To bring out the exhaustiveness of this division, I will refer to these states as interested engagement, disinterested engagement, and disengagement respectively. This division, though broad, is exhaustive. All conscious human

beings are either engaged or disengaged. All those who are engaged are either interestedly engaged or disinterestedly engaged.[6]

Schopenhauer's pessimism hinges on the claim that two of these states – interested engagement and disengagement – constitute forms of painful suffering, while the third – disinterested engagement – is neither pleasant nor painful. On its own, this already suggests a kind of pessimism. If the best that life has to offer is freedom from pain rather than pleasure, then the considerations raised in the previous section suggest that life can be no more than a neutral possession. Schopenhauer, however, supplements this claim with one more which generates the particularly stark variety of pessimism he is known for. Thus, Schopenhauer argues that no human life can be completely free of both painful states: either interested engagement or disengagement must have a place in any human life. If interested engagement and disengagement are both forms of suffering, then their unavoidability entails suffering's unavoidability. In a life whose other potential constituent is merely painless, the addition of even the smallest painful element will be sufficient to render life painful on the whole. Pleasure can compensate for pain, but no amount of painlessness can do so.

Schopenhauer's pessimism thus depends on an evaluation of the hedonic impact of each of life's three constituent elements, plus an argument that every life must contain at least one of the two painful elements. Explaining Schopenhauer's pessimism will, consequently, require explaining his reasons for making four different claims: 1) disengagement is necessarily painful;

[6] Janaway 1999: 327-332 offers an admirably clear account of Schopenhauer's part-wise strategy. This account has one defect: it simplifies Schopenhauer's division in a way that undercuts its exhaustiveness. Janaway presents Schopenhauer as dividing life into three basic states: striving, satisfaction, and boredom. Striving and boredom correspond to what I have called interested engagement and disengagement above. Satisfaction, however, is just one variety of disinterested engagement: aesthetic and ascetic experience are both, in Schopenhauer's view, forms of disinterested engagement that do not depend on the satisfaction of any will. Janaway's account, consequently, adds a gap into Schopenhauer's division of life, and thus also adds a hole into Schopenhauer's defense of his pessimism.

2) interested engagement is necessarily painful; 3) disinterested engagement is neither painful nor pleasant; and 4) all human lives are partially constituted by either interested engagement or disengagement. Explaining these claims will occupy the remainder of this chapter.

III. The Evaluation of Life's Constitutive Elements

A. Disengagement

I will begin by considering Schopenhauer's evaluation of disengagement, the state he typically refers to as boredom. Schopenhauer's identification of this state as a source of pain is not controversial: boredom is widely considered an unpleasant state.[7] Schopenhauer does not, however, rely on this consensus. Rather, he offers a particular account of what boredom is, and argues that such a state could not but be a painful one. Despite the common-sense nature of the evaluation this account supports, getting a clear grasp on it will play a key role in understanding Schopenhauer's pessimism. The other constituents of human life cannot be understood if boredom is not understood: boredom is disengagement, which is nothing more than the absence of engagement, a concept involved in the definition of the other two states. As such, it will be worth making sure we get the details of Schopenhauer's account of boredom right, even if the identification of boredom as a painful state could be arrived at via a less detailed account.[8]

Schopenhauer sees boredom as a problem belonging to those otherwise satisfied with their lot: it is when one has too little to desire that boredom strikes. To account for this, several

[7] Even accounts of boredom's value typically assume that it is unpleasant. When boredom is praised, it is for the productive motivational effects of our attempts to escape it (see, e.g., Elpidorou 2018).
[8] Skimming over Schopenhauer's view of boredom is not uncommon. Janaway 1999 and Beiser 2016 describe boredom's role in Schopenhauer's account without explaining what he takes boredom to be.

commentators have taken Schopenhauer to identify boredom with the dissatisfaction of a "will to will", a second-order desire to engage in the activity of pursuing the objects of first-order desire.[9] After first-order desires have been satisfied, it is no longer possible to engage in the activity of pursuing their objects. As we have a desire to engage in this activity, the satisfaction of our first-order desires entails the dissatisfaction of our second-order desire. We are, consequently, dissatisfied by satisfaction. This feeling of second-order dissatisfaction constitutes boredom.

Although this account gets a lot right, I take it that it ultimately mistakes one of boredom's effects for its essence. Schopenhauer does think that boredom typically finds expression in something like the will to will. He does not, however, think that the will to will is what boredom fundamentally is. To see what the will to will view leaves out, it will help to look back at the sentence on boredom in Schopenhauer's presentation of life's basic elements. Disengagement, Schopenhauer says, consists in "the greatest lethargy of will and therewith of cognizance bound to it, empty longing, life-rigidifying boredom." The will to will view can make sense of both the beginning and end of that sentence: "the lethargy of will" is the satisfaction of first-order desire; the "empty longing" is the second-order desire to have a desire. It cannot, however, make sense of the sentence's middle. Why does Schopenhauer identify the lethargy of *cognizance* bound to will as the primary consequence of the lethargy of will, only then moving on to discussion of empty longing? If the will to will view fully captures Schopenhauer's understanding of boredom, why does he not move directly from the lethargy of will to the experience of empty longing without need of the lethargy of cognition as an intermediary?

[9] For this reading, see Young 2005: 211. Reginster offers a subtly different but substantially similar view, suggesting Schopenhauer identifies boredom with the dissatisfaction of a desire to merely *have* first-order desires, rather than to *pursue the objects* of first-order desire (2004: 54-55; 2006: 120-126; 2007: 22-23). This distinction does not matter for my argument: the desire to desire and desire to pursue the objects of desire views are structurally equivalent, and they falter on the same points. See footnote 11 for one place where Reginster's view has more options for responding to my critique than other will to will accounts.

The answer to this question is, I suggest, that it is precisely this lethargy of cognition which Schopenhauer identifies with boredom. Disengagement describes a state where consciousness has nothing to occupy it and only a small portion of one's attention is deployed. This lethargy of cognizance is unpleasant to us: we find it distressing when consciousness is insufficiently occupied. We have something that might be called a will to attend, a desire for mental occupation the dissatisfaction of which explains boredom more directly than dissatisfaction of the will to will.

Schopenhauer makes no explicit mention of a will to attend, just as he makes no explicit mention of a will to will.[10] Nonetheless, there is direct textual evidence for attributing belief in such a will to Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer endorses the Aristotelian idea that we take pleasure in the unimpeded activity of a faculty or power (WWR I: 359; PP I: 334-335). Since Schopenhauer sees all pleasure as negative, however, this commits him to the view that the inactivity of a power is painful to us. Schopenhauer acknowledges this implication. Thus, he equates the pain of having our faculties insufficiently occupied with boredom:

> the original purpose of the forces which nature endowed man is the struggle against want and privation that beset him on all sides. When once this struggle is over, the unemployed forces then become a burden to him and so now he must *play* with them, that is, use them aimlessly, for otherwise he falls at once into the other source of human suffering, namely boredom. (PP I: 335 [2])

He then identifies "sensibility" as chief among the faculties that cause such boredom when left unused. The activities of sensibility include "observing, thinking, feeling, writing poetry, improving the mind, playing music, learning, reading, meditating, inventing, philosophizing, and so on"(PP I: 336 [3]), i.e. all the things which constitute mental occupation. Schopenhauer holds that pain entails dissatisfaction of some will. Thus, if the inactivity of sensibility is painful to us,

[10] Young borrows the phrase from Heidegger (2005: 211). Reginster constructs it by combining Schopenhauer's claim that life is essentially will with his claim that we possess a will to life (2006: 122).

we must possess a will to mental occupation. I call this a will to attend to emphasize that it cannot be satisfied by just any degree of sensibility's activity: counting sheep is no cure for boredom. The will to sensitivity is satisfied only by the *significant* occupation of our cognitive powers. I take this to be well captured by saying that it requires deployment of a significant portion of our attention, and I thus call it a will to attend.

As noted above, Schopenhauer sees consciousness as "bound to" will. By this, he means that desire is typically responsible for the activity of consciousness. Things grab our attention because we desire them, or because we must concern ourselves with them in order to attain things that we desire. Feelings and affects fill our mind (pains, pleasures, hopes, fears, etc.) in response to assessments of how we stand in relation to desired objects. As such, "lethargy of will" naturally leads to lethargy of consciousness. With the satisfaction of desire, we lose that which had previously directed our attention and are no longer inspired to those feelings which had previously filled our minds. Some people – those who, as Schopenhauer puts it, partake in the life of genius – are able to hold this lethargy off by way of disinterested engagement, replacing concern for how the world stands in relation to desire with direct interest in how the world is. Those who are unable to do this, however, are immediately given over to boredom once desire is satisfied. If consciousness is fully bound to will, then it will be left wholly unoccupied as soon as will no longer has a use for it. For those incapable of disinterested engagement, then, the satisfaction of this will to attend is incompatible with the satisfaction of all other desires.

Someone in this position who wishes to end the painful dissatisfaction of the will to attend has only one option: she must come up with something else to desire, some object – any object – the pursuit of which can occupy her mind. Consequently, where disinterested engagement is impossible, the will to attend finds expression in the will to will. Boredom finds

expression in a desire to desire, not because this desire to desire is what boredom is, but because developing a new desire is often the only means to fulfill the desire which boredom is. Empty longing is the chief expression of the lethargy of consciousness, which is in turn the chief consequence of the lethargy of will. It is the final step in a three-step process, and aims at liberation from the second step (lethargy of consciousness) by way of terminating the first (lethargy of will). The instrumental structure in play here – in which one wills to will because doing so is the only means to fulfill a separate will to be engaged – is brought out clearly by Schopenhauer's discussion of the behavior of those incapable of disinterested engagement:

> For the vast majority of people, however, purely intellectual enjoyments are not accessible. They are almost entirely incapable of the pleasure that lies in pure cognition: they are wholly involved in willing. If, therefore, something is to win their engagement, be *interesting* to them, it must (this indeed lies in the meaning of the word) somehow arouse their will, be it only through a distant and merely possible reference to it, but it can never remain entirely out of play, because their existence lies by far more in willing than in cognition: action and reaction are their single element. Innocent expressions of this characteristic can be drawn from trivial matters and everyday phenomena. Thus, for example, they inscribe their names at the spot of interesting sights that they visit, in order to have an effect on the spot since it had no effect on them. Further, they cannot easily merely contemplate some strange rare animal, but they have to stir it up, tease it, play with it, just in order to feel action and reaction. Most especially, however, this need for arousal of the will shows itself in the invention and preservation of card games, which is truly an expression of the pitiful side of humanity. (WWR I: 368-369 [4])

As is clear from the passage, to will and to be engaged are distinct phenomena. If they were one, then disinterested engagement would not be possible. Willing is but one of two means by which engagement might be achieved. What qualifies it to function as such a means is its connection with the activity of consciousness. Thus, it is only where consciousness is unable to occupy itself without the will's direction that willing is needed for engagement. In such cases, we find people willing instrumentally, as a means of occupying a mind that would otherwise fall into inactivity. Thus, the sightseer whose attention is not grabbed by the sight focuses instead on the project of

defacing it; the safari goer who feels nothing when gazing upon an animal, riles it up in order fill herself with the kind of feeling to which she is susceptible; etc. In each case, what one wants is not willing as such, but the motion of a consciousness which willing alone can move.

There are significant reasons to prefer this account of boredom to that which directly equates it with the will to will. My view retains the will to will account's ability to explain Schopenhauer's association of boredom with "empty longing" and "longing without any particular object"(WWR I: 209 [5]). At the same time, it can also explain other features of Schopenhauer's text which the will to will view cannot make sense of. I have mentioned some of these features of Schopenhauer's text already. Thus, the will to will account of boredom cannot make sense of Schopenhauer's presentation of the lethargy of cognizance as an important aspect of boredom, fails to explain Schopenhauer's claim that engagement can be achieved either by way of willing or by way of disinterested engagement, and does not capture Schopenhauer's suggestion that willing is often pursued instrumentally for the sake of setting consciousness in motion. Most importantly, however, the will to attend view is needed to make sense of Schopenhauer's repeated assertion that boredom only follows the complete satisfaction of desire because the satisfaction of desire fails to generate positive pleasure. I will have more to say about positive pleasure later on when discussing Schopenhauer's view of interested engagement. For the moment, it will suffice to note that Schopenhauer describes the positive as that which "makes itself felt"(PP II: 291-292 [6]), and indicates that "The concept signified by the word *feeling* has an altogether merely *negative* content, namely, that something present in consciousness is *not a concept*, *not abstract cognizance on the part of reason*"(WRR I: 84 [7]). When Schopenhauer claims that boredom might be averted by the presence of positive pleasure, then, he suggests that it depends not on the state of the will, but on what is "present in consciousness": even if our wills

were entirely satisfied, experiencing the right kind of feeling would be enough to hold boredom at bay. On the will to will view of boredom, the claim that boredom could be held off by a feeling seems nonsensical. No feeling could satisfy the will to will, and thus no feeling should be able to hold off boredom if boredom and the will to will are one.

Attributing the will to will view of boredom to Schopenhauer, consequently, requires finding some way to dismiss Schopenhauer's claims about the relation between boredom and positive pleasure. The best option is to point out that Schopenhauer's most explicit statements of the relationship between the two occur in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, a late work which perhaps reflects a different understanding of boredom than that developed in Schopenhauer's earlier writings.[11] This developmental thesis about Schopenhauer's understanding of boredom is not, however, particularly tenable: the dependence of boredom on the absence of positive good is already part of Schopenhauer's view in the original 1819 edition of *The World as Will and Representation*. Thus, consider the following:

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[11] Reginster 2006: 283 offers this developmental argument and suggests that the *Paralipomena* passages must be discounted to preserve boredom's status as a form of suffering. As Reginster rightly notes, Schopenhauer takes suffering to involve dissatisfaction of the will. Thus, for boredom to be suffering, it must be a matter of willing rather than feeling. The will to attend view resolves this problem, explaining how boredom might consist in the dissatisfaction of a will that absorbing feeling would reliably satisfy.

In a later paper (2007: 24), however, Reginster does attempt to reconcile his view with the *Paralipomena* material. The proposed reconciliation proceeds as follows. Positive goods are desired because of their value, while negative goods are desired because of our need. Satisfaction eliminates need, and thus desires based on need. It does not, however, eliminate value. It thus leaves desires based on value unscathed. Desire for positive goods, consequently, survives satisfaction while desire for negative goods does not (2007:20). Thus, the desire to desire account of boredom can explain Schopenhauer's claim that positive satisfaction would not bore.

This solution, notably, cannot reconcile other will to will accounts with the *Paralipomena* material: it only works if desire alone is enough to avoid boredom even absent desire-directed activity. This points to the main weakness of the solution, namely that it requires the desire to desire to be satisfied by precisely that function of desire which most clearly points toward my account. Although attraction to a positive good may well survive satisfaction, its role will change: it will transition from a source of striving to a source of feeling. Through it, I will *enjoy* the good I have obtained. But if this is all the desire to desire needs to satisfy it, then the desire to desire looks like nothing more than a desire for a source of absorbing feeling. This finds its best explanation in the will to attend. Section III.B, which considers Schopenhauer's account of desire and its elimination, will discuss these issues in greater detail.

> That all happiness is only of a negative, not a positive nature, that it can just for that reason not be lasting satisfaction and gratification, but always only redeems one from some pain or lack – upon which either a new pain, or even *languor*, empty longing and boredom, must follow – this also finds a confirmation in that true mirror of the essence of the world and of life, in art, especially in poetry. (WWR I: 375 [8])

Here we find Schopenhauer already claiming that the choice between boredom and dissatisfaction is a consequence of the absence of positive good from human life. Proponents of the will to will view of boredom, then, cannot explain away Schopenhauer's statements about the relation between boredom and positive good as the late development of a new theory. Rather, attributing the will to will view of boredom to Schopenhauer requires making the much less palatable claim that Schopenhauer consistently misinterpreted his own view of boredom, an error that began with his first discussion of the subject in *The World as Will and Representation* and persisted until his last discussion of it in *Parerga and Paralipomena*.

In contrast, if Schopenhauer understands boredom in terms of the will to attend, his claim that it could be averted by feeling is not at all mysterious. A feeling is something "present in consciousness": feelings occupy space in our minds, in some cases a great deal of space. To take clear cases, pain and pleasure are highly absorbing, capable of commanding attention in a way that little else can. A feeling capable of absorbing attention in this way would be an ideal cure for boredom on the will to attend view. If a sufficiently absorbing feeling could be experienced in the absence of unsatisfied will, then boredom could be easily avoided even when the will was fully satisfied. Understanding Schopenhauer as equating boredom with dissatisfaction of the will to attend, then, allows us to make sense of one of his most frequent claims about it, a claim which the will to will view requires us to dismiss as nothing more than a persistent error.[12]

[12] I have argued that there are strong textual reasons to attribute the will to attend view of boredom to Schopenhauer rather than the will to will view. This is fortunate, as this view is also preferable on

We have now arrived at an understanding of what disengagement consists in for Schopenhauer. This allows us to offer a clearer statement of his grounds for treating it as a painful state. Disengagement is a variety of dissatisfaction, namely dissatisfaction of the will to attend. For reasons that will become clear when interested engagement is discussed below, Schopenhauer views unsatisfied desire as necessarily painful. Given this view, disengagement is clearly a form of suffering, a variety of painful existence.

B. Interested Engagement

Schopenhauer views disengagement as a state where attention is insufficiently deployed and consciousness insufficiently occupied. Engagement will be the opposite state, one where attention has found an absorbing object. Unlike disengagement, which he views as uniformly painful, Schopenhauer does not think all kinds of engagement have the same hedonic impact. Schopenhauer distinguishes two types of engagement: interested engagement and disinterested

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philosophical grounds, making sense of two otherwise mysterious features of the phenomenon of boredom:

1) Intense feeling really can drive boredom off. Absorption in an experience – in pleasure or pain, in the affective element of an emotion, etc. – easily holds boredom at bay. As has been discussed above, the will to will account cannot explain this. The will to will view suggests boredom consists in desire for an activity. It cannot explain boredom's relief by *passive* experience, by absorption in something we *undergo* rather than do.

2) Boredom can be an obstacle to completion of a desired activity. Someone may have a strong desire to achieve success at an activity, but still find that activity boring. A student may long to pass a class, but find the assignments too dull to complete (Millgram 2004: 176 discusses similar cases). If boredom consisted in unsatisfied desire to engage in desire-directed activity, then an activity's internal features would have no impact on how engaging it was. Any two pursuits would be equally interesting as long as their objects were equally desired. Reginster (2006: 125-126) takes this to reveal a weakness in Schopenhauer's account (understanding boredom in terms of a desire to overcome challenging obstacles is suggested as an improvement, but this option fares poorly against the feeling objection raised above). As we have seen, however, there is no need to saddle Schopenhauer with an account that cannot handle such cases: they are well explained by the will to attend view. Where an activity is sufficiently simple and repetitive, capable of being carried out more or less automatically and thoughtlessly, it will fail to significantly occupy consciousness however desired success might be.

engagement. In each case, engagement is constituted by the activity of consciousness. What distinguishes them is the source of this activity. In interested engagement, consciousness is kept in motion by desire. In disinterested engagement, it is moved by some other force. As Schopenhauer likes to put it, interested consciousness performs labor in the service of will, while disinterested consciousness pursues projects at its own leisure (PP II: 69). Schopenhauer evaluates these states in starkly different terms: disinterested engagement is praised for granting the greatest relief from pain possible for human beings, while interested engagement is condemned as yet another form of suffering. Neither state, however, provides the sort of pleasure that might salvage the experience of human life. To see why this is the case, it will help to start by explaining Schopenhauer's assessment of interested engagement as necessarily painful.

The distinguishing feature of interested engagement is that desire is responsible for the activity of consciousness. I will argue that Schopenhauer takes desire to have an essentially aversive structure: it always expresses the rejection of one's present state. This analysis of desire justifies Schopenhauer's conclusion that engagement by desire will always be a form of suffering. It does this by establishing two points: 1) that unsatisfied desire is necessarily painful; and 2) that satisfied desire cannot engage.

Throughout his defense of pessimism, Schopenhauer sets up a sort of system of equations which reveals his understanding of desire. Thus, we find Schopenhauer drawing an equation between desire and lack: "desire, i.e. lack, is the antecedent condition of every enjoyment"(WWR I: 374 [9]). We also find him drawing an equation between lack and discontent with one's state: "all striving arises from a lack, from discontent with one's state"(WWR I: 364 [10]).[13] Solving the system, we get the identification of desire and discontent

[13] Janaway 1999: 329 and Reginster 2006: 111-112 helpfully emphasize the need to distinguish the superficially similar claims Schopenhauer makes about striving and desire. Schopenhauer suggests that

with one's state. Understanding Schopenhauer's conception of desire will, consequently, require us to understand what he means by "discontent with one's state".

There are two credible interpretations of this phrase. "Discontent with one's state" might simply be equivalent to discontent simpliciter. To be discontent is to possess some unsatisfied desire. To possess an unsatisfied desire is to want something beyond what one already has. Thus, to be discontent at all is to be discontent with one's state, to be unsatisfied with current conditions in the sense of wanting something beyond them. On this understanding of discontent with one's state, one might be discontent with one's state while still having an entirely positive attitude toward it. To be discontent with one's state would simply mean to feel some motive to enter a new one. This motive might be an aversion to some aspect of present circumstances: an experience of those circumstances as a source of disvalue, as in some way harmful. It could, however, just as well be an attraction to some aspect of alternative circumstances: a representation of those circumstances as a source of value, as beneficial in some way that present circumstances are not. The person who seeks additional benefits and the person who flees present harms are both discontent with their state on this understanding of the phrase.[14]

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striving originates in lack, and that desire is constitutive of lack. Striving and desire are conceptually distinct: there is a difference between wanting something (desire) and trying to acquire it (striving). As Reginster notes, this way of distinguishing striving and desire implies that striving originates in desire: striving stems from lack, and desire constitutes lack. Given this relation, an independent account of Schopenhauer's identification of striving as a painful state is unnecessary. Striving entails desire and desire is painful. Thus, striving will also be painful.

[14] The distinction I draw here between aversively structured desires and attractively structured desires should not be equated with Reginster 2007's distinction between need-based desires and object-based desires (20). Reginster's distinction concerns the *source* of a desire, while mine concerns the value experience a desire generates or constitutes. Thus, Reginster defines an object-based desire as one *brought about by* the value of its object, and a need-based desire as one *brought about by* our need for its object. In contrast, I define an attractive desire as one that causes some state to be experienced as positively beneficial, and an aversive desire as one that causes some state to be experienced as positively harmful. Reginster moves from the plausibility of the claim that all need-based desires will be aversive to the conclusion that only object-based desires will be attractive. This, however, rests on a false dichotomy. If my desire is not object-based, then something other than a prior judgment about an object's value must explain my desire for it. Need is not the only thing that could provide such an explanation, and this means

Alternatively, the phrase discontent with one's state might imply something more than discontent simpliciter: namely, the particular variety of discontent arising from aversion to some aspect of one's condition. On this understanding of the phrase, being discontent with one's state requires experiencing that state as in some way bad, as a source of disvalue rather than a merely surpassable source of value. On this view, discontent with one's state is necessarily constituted by a negative attitude toward that state, rather than a positive attitude toward a different one.

I will refer to these two different interpretations of the phrase as weak discontent and strong discontent respectively. On the weak discontent view, discontent with one's state simply means experiencing it as in some way inferior to another state. On the strong discontent view, discontent with one's state means experiencing it as in some sense bad, as worthy of rejection for its own sake rather than simply in comparison to a superior alternative.

I take it that *strong discontent* must be what Schopenhauer identifies with desire. This is clear both from the argumentative role he wants the equation of desire with discontent to play, and from the language he uses to describe this discontent. To start with the point about Schopenhauer's language, Schopenhauer equates the experience of discontent and the experience of lack. There is a difference between experiencing one's state as improvable and experiencing it as a state of lack: a state of lack is missing something it *needs* to contain, not just something it would be nice for it to contain. Thus, Schopenhauer equates lack and need, as well as need and desire: "the basis of all willing is need, lack, thus pain"(WWR I: 366 [11]); "under a new form, the desire, the need recommences"(WWR I: 368 [12]); etc. The language of need would not be appropriately applied to a state of lack viewed as in no way bad. Saying that someone needs

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that there may be forms of desire that are neither need-based nor object-based. It is unclear what would prevent some of these forms from being attractively-structured. Not all non-cognitivist views of desire are bound to equate desire with aversion in the way that Schopenhauer does.

something is a much stronger than saying she would benefit from having it: in the former case, it is suggested that the thing's absence is in some way intolerable, in the latter just that its absence is inferior to its presence. The other terms in the system of equations, then, seem to favor the strong discontent reading of discontent with one's state.

More critical than this point about Schopenhauer's language, however, is the importance of the strong discontent reading to Schopenhauer's argument: Schopenhauer's repeated transition from the claim that something entails lack, need, or discontent with one's state to the claim that it entails pain would be a non-sequitur unless he understood these terms as indicating strong discontent. In many of the passages considered above, Schopenhauer treats something entailing discontent as sufficient reason to conclude that it also entails pain. Thus, to review, Schopenhauer claims that: "all striving arises from a lack, from discontent with one's state, and so is suffering so long as it is not satisfied"(WWR I: 364 [10]); "the basis of all willing is need, lack, thus pain"(WWR I: 366 [11]); and "wanting to possess is the necessary condition under which not possessing something first becomes deprivation and generates pain"(WWR I: 124 [13]). In each case, the transition between discontent and pain is direct and without intermediary. It is, Schopenhauer seems to think, obvious that discontent with one's state entails the experience of pain: nothing needs to be said to justify the move from one to the other. The weak discontent reading cannot make sense of this. Weak discontent is compatible with an entirely positive attitude toward present conditions. To find another state more attractive than my current one is not necessarily to find my current state unattractive: that something could be better does not entail that it is in any way bad. It is not clear, consequently, why there should be anything distressing about weak discontent as such.

The most plausible way of resisting this conclusion is, I take it, the frustration account of weak discontent suggested by Reginster. On this view, weak discontent necessarily involves the frustration of desire, and thus also involves an unpleasant dissonance between the way the world is and the way one wants it to be (2004: 54; 2006: 112). This is not quite right, however: weak discontent requires the presence of unsatisfied desire, but not all unsatisfied desire is *frustrated* desire. A desire is unsatisfied if its object has not yet been attained, but frustrated only if some obstacle stands in the way of its attainment. Where I see no obstacles to the realization of my desire, the dissonance between the way the world is and the way I want it to be will not seem distressing. In the case of frustrated desire, this dissonance involves an experience of one's state as one of weakness and incapacity, of existence in a hostile world where what one wants cannot be obtained. In the case of unsatisfied but un-frustrated desire, in contrast, this dissonance does not seem to involve anything beyond a sense of potential and hopeful expectation. Further, some unsatisfied desires – namely, un-frustrated future-oriented desires – do not even entail dissonance between one's state and the state one wishes to be in. Thus, suppose I have a desire to finish this chapter by the end of the month. As long as I see no obstacles in the way of my accomplishing this goal, then the fact that this desire cannot be satisfied until the end of the month does not suggest any dissonance between present conditions and the conditions I desire. In such a case, everything is exactly how I want it to be despite the fact that one of my desires remains unsatisfied. The object of my desire is not an aspect of my present state, so the fact that my desire is unsatisfied indicates nothing about how satisfied I am with my present state.

Discontent with one's state, consequently, cannot do the work Schopenhauer needs it to do if it is understood as weak discontent. There is nothing distressing about weak discontent as such. Rather, distress enters into the picture only when the state one feels motivated to change is

experienced as in some way bad. In those cases, however, the basis of distress is as obvious as Schopenhauer seems to expect. The person experiencing strong discontent takes herself to be in a situation that is actively bad for her. Unlike the case where I experience my situation as good but improvable, confident expectation that things will eventually go my way is no comfort here. The current situation harms me for as long as it persists, and that is cause for distress regardless of how I expect things to develop in the future. It seems, then, that Schopenhauer must have strong discontent in mind when using terms like discontent with one's state. It is only when understood in this way that discontent with one's state can do the argumentative work Schopenhauer needs it to do, immediately establishing that things which entail it also entail pain.

When Schopenhauer equates desire and discontent with one's state, then, he equates it with strong discontent. Desire, as Schopenhauer sees it, is essentially a kind of aversion. It is the experience of some aspect of your present state as intolerable, as a source of disvalue which harms you for as long as it remains within your life. Schopenhauer takes desire to possess an essentially negative structure: it always aims away from the bad rather than toward the good. It is, at bottom, always a motive toward flight rather than pursuit.

We have already seen part of this claim's significance for Schopenhauer's evaluation of interested engagement. Desire, as a form of strong discontent, is painful. Thus, insofar as interested engagement requires the presence of desire, interested engagement will be a form of suffering. It might seem, however, that this is resting the case too early. Even if desire is aversion to one's condition and therefore painful when unsatisfied, that pain will cease once satisfaction occurs. Interested engagement is a state where cognition is kept active by desire – not by *unsatisfied* desire, but by desire in any form. Thus, interested engagement might still have something to offer us: the benefits of the state in which consciousness is kept in motion by

satisfied desire might outweigh the harms generated by the state in which consciousness is occupied by unsatisfied desire. Here too, however, the aversive structure of desire gives Schopenhauer an answer. The state just imagined is impossible: satisfied desire cannot keep consciousness in motion. Desire ceases to engage the moment it ceases to pain.

Schopenhauer identifies desire with aversion, but not with just any kind of aversion: an aversion counts as a desire only when directed against some aspect of one's state. In placing this limit on the set of aversions which qualify as desires, Schopenhauer suggests that there is something incoherent about the idea of satisfied desire. Given the aversion account of desire, the satisfaction of desire would consist in the modification of one's state in a way that eliminates the aspects of it to which one is averse. It would, consequently, consist in the removal of that aspect of one's aversion that constituted it as desire: namely, the fact that its object was an aspect of one's state. My aversions might survive their satisfaction, but their status as desires would not. Thus, Schopenhauer draws little distinction between desire satisfaction and desire elimination: "With satisfaction, however, the desire and consequently the enjoyment cease"(WWR I: 374 [14]); "all happiness and satisfaction is negative, that is, the mere elimination of a desire and the ending of a pain"(PP II: 292 [15]). Schopenhauer's analysis of desire as aversion to one's state, consequently, allows him to pose a direct objection to the claim that satisfied desire might engage. It follows from his definition of desire that satisfied desire does not exist at all, and consciousness cannot be kept in motion by a non-existent psychological force.

This is more than just a definitional point. Schopenhauer has good reason to think that aversion can occupy consciousness only when directed against some aspect of one's state. To see this, consider three different ways desire might keep consciousness occupied: it can act as a

source of striving, a source of salience, or a source of feeling. Aversion can fill all three of these roles when directed against an aspect of one's present state, but can otherwise fill none of them.

Striving consists in the active effort to achieve some end. Striving occupies consciousness by setting a problem for it: if we are to achieve an end, we must correctly identify and implement the means which allow its achievement. Where identification and implementation are sufficiently difficult, striving keeps the mind busy. Planning and deliberation command attention before the task is attempted, and careful focus on the activity is necessary once implementation begins. It is clear that aversion can generate striving only when directed against one's state: striving involves attempting to *change* one's state, and aversion pushes toward a change in circumstances only when current circumstances involve exposure to the object of one's aversion. If I am wandering under the desert sun, my aversion to heat may act as a source of striving, pushing me to enter less scorching conditions. That same aversion to heat may persist after I transfer to an arctic expedition, but its status as a source of striving will not. A concern to avoid the heat pushes me to implement a change when heat is present, but not when it is absent.

Salience reflects an object's relevance to our concerns. A salient object is one we take some piece of our fortune to attach to. An object that possesses such significance commands our attention in a way that other objects do not. The world is, consequently, fairly engaging for the person who finds it populated with many salient objects. For an object to possess salience in this way is distinct from it having relevance to our striving. The fulfillment of my desire may well depend on something beyond my control. This uncontrollable object will nonetheless command my attention: if the news I expect is critical enough, a whole day can be filled by an unringing phone. When directed against one's state, aversion can focus one's gaze in this way. As has been discussed, aversion to one's state functions as an impulse toward change. Even where you are not

undertaking efforts to effect that change yourself, you will still have reason to watch the objects on which that change depends with an eager eye: any change in them will also be a change in the quality of your life. Where circumstances are viewed unfavorably, this attentiveness can take the form of either hopeful expectation of improvement or anxious concern about further decline. Where circumstances are viewed favorably, in contrast, anxious concern about decline is the only form such attentiveness can take. This anxious concern is just another way of being averse to one's state: it is an aversion to a particular insecurity that it contains, to the way that it threatens exposure to something else to which one is averse. Aversion that is not directed against some aspect of one's state, then, is able to act as a source of salience only if it generates further aversion that *is* directed against one's state. If the doctor has already called and told me that the surgery went well, it is only fear of further complications that will keep me glued to the phone. The experience of my situation as bad because it threatens me with something to which I am averse replaces the experience of my situation as bad because it contains something to which I am averse. This new aversion to the threatening aspects of my situation is what focuses my gaze.

Schopenhauer has a somewhat capacious understanding of feeling, equating it with anything present to consciousness in a non-conceptual way (WRR I: 84). The paradigm cases of feeling for Schopenhauer are pleasure and pain. As discussed earlier, the experience of at least these two feelings is highly engaging: pleasure and pain are absorbing, commanding our attention in a way that few other things can. It has already become clear that aversion is capable of generating one of these absorbing feelings when directed against our state: to experience one's condition as is in some way bad is distressing, and the pain of this distress is more than capable of occupying our minds. It is also clear enough that aversion cannot continue to generate this pain when no longer directed against our state. The distress generated by the experience of my

state as bad will not outlast that experience: if my state ceases to offend, my distress at its offensiveness will cease as well. If aversion is to generate feeling when not directed against our state, it will have to do so in some other way. The natural thought is that, just as aversion generated pain when directed against one's state, it might generate pleasure when directed toward it. Aversion causes the state it aims away from to be experienced as intolerable. Perhaps it also causes the state it aims toward to be experienced as delightful.

This is, however, to misconstrue the structure of aversion. Aversion is not a two-way impulse: it is not directed against one state and toward another. Rather, it is entirely unidirectional: it pushes away from a particular state, and that is all it does. Fleeing one thing always takes you toward another, but that does not mean that every flight contains an aspect of pursuit. The movement-toward is simply an incidental result of the movement-away. It is one of flight's consequences, not one of its aims. Aversion does not involve taking a favorable attitude toward states to which one is not averse. It is indifferent toward all states other than the one it opposes, moving us toward those states not because it presents them as a source of value, but because entering them is the only way to avoid the state it presents as a source of disvalue. It is, consequently, unclear why aversion to one state would cause you to take pleasure in another. Aversion leaves you indifferent to all states but the one it is directed against, and there is nothing particularly delightful about being in a state to which you are indifferent. Aversion that is not directed against one's state, consequently, is unable to generate absorbing feeling. It produces no pleasure to fill the gap in consciousness left by the pain of aversion to one's state.

Schopenhauer's way of putting this is to say that satisfaction is negative, while dissatisfaction is positive. Dissatisfaction involves the presence of something to which we are averse. Satisfaction consists in the mere removal of this disvalued thing, rather than its

replacement with something to which we are attracted. Satisfaction is a negative state, one defined by the absence of the bad rather than the presence of the good. This prevents it from making any impact on our feelings: satisfaction removes a source of pain, but does not replace it with a source of delight. Thus, Schopenhauer claims that:

> We feel desire just as we feel hunger and thirst; but as soon as it has been satisfied, it is like a savored morsel of food that, the moment it is swallowed, ceases to exist for our feeling . . . For only pain and lack can be positively felt and therefore give notice of themselves; well-being, to the contrary is merely negative. Just for this reason we are not, as such, aware of the three greatest goods of life, health, youth, and freedom, so long as we possess them, but only after we have lost them; for they too are negations. (WWR II: 639 [16])

Feeling ceases with satisfaction precisely because satisfaction has a negative structure, because our satisfaction consists in nothing more than the absence of that to which we are averse. States that satisfy us are valued merely as negations of other states. It is not that we find anything appealing about health, youth, and freedom; rather, we simply cannot tolerate sickness, age, and constraint. Thus, although the latter states pain us, the former leave us cold: dissatisfaction causes us to suffer, while satisfaction generates no feeling whatsoever. A key consequence of this difference between satisfaction and dissatisfaction is that dissatisfaction holds our attention in a way that satisfaction cannot:

> If our whole body is healthy and sound except for some sore or painful spot, we are no longer conscious of the health of the whole, but our attention is constantly directed to the pain of the injured spot and all the comfort and enjoyment of life vanish. In the same way, when all our affairs turn out the way we want them to go with the exception of one that runs counter to our intentions, this one affair constantly recurs even when it is of little importance. We often think about it and pay little attention to all the other more important things that are turning out in accordance with our wishes. Now in both cases what is injuriously affected is the will, in the one case as it objectifies itself in the organism, in the other, as it is objectified in man's efforts and aspirations. In both we see that the satisfaction of the will always operates only negatively and therefore is not directly felt at all; but at most we become conscious of it when we reflect on the matter. On the other hand, what checks and obstructs the will is something positive which therefore makes its presence known. (PP I: 404-5 [17])

If desire has a negative structure – i.e., if aversion is its only form – then its capacity to engage via feeling generation inevitably ceases with its satisfaction.

Schopenhauer's aversive theory of desire, then, gives him all he needs to complete his evaluation of interested engagement. Interested engagement is that state where consciousness is kept in motion by desire. On the aversive theory of desire, unsatisfied desire is necessarily painful while satisfied desire is unable to engage. The aversive theory of desire, then, lets Schopenhauer establish that interested engagement is a necessarily painful state, one which entails the distressing experience of aversion to one's condition.

C. Disinterested Engagement

Disinterested engagement refers to any state in which something other than desire is responsible for the activity of consciousness. Disinterested engagement is, consequently, a negative term in the same sense that feeling was identified as a negative term above: its referents are united by lacking a particular feature, rather than by having one. Schopenhauer sees this state as divisible into three broad subcategories: aesthetic experience, relief, and ascetic experience. The exact differences between these subcategories are not essential for our purposes. Suffice it to say that they are significant: there is a considerable gap between contemplating a beautiful object, recalling past pain from a position of present comfort, and resting in beatific repose. For Schopenhauer, however, these are all forms of disinterested engagement, states where desire plays no direct role in maintaining the activity of consciousness.[15] Given the divide between

[15] The direct qualifier is significant. The *idea* of desire can be an object of aesthetic contemplation. The *memory* of desire is essential to relief. It is only occurrent desire that can play no role in disinterested engagement. The images of that desire presented in art and memory can continue to have an impact.

these subcategories, understanding Schopenhauer's evaluation of disinterested engagement will require us to think less about what it is and more about what it is not. The various kinds of engagement united under the label disinterested engagement are tied together only by their exclusion of desire as a source of consciousness' activity. As such, disinterested engagement will be subject to a unified evaluation only if the exclusion of this source of activity is sufficient to determine a state's hedonic value. Schopenhauer does see disinterested engagement as subject to a unified evaluation: he takes it to have no hedonic impact whatsoever, to be a source of neither pain nor pleasure.[16] Explaining Schopenhauer's evaluation of disinterested engagement will, consequently, require explaining why he thinks that a state can be a source of neither pain nor pleasure unless it involves the desire-directed activity of consciousness.

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[16] Guyer 2008: 9-10 and Young 2005: 215, 263 take Schopenhauer to view some forms of disinterested engagement as sources of positive pleasure. Each cites a distinct textual basis for this claim.

Guyer points to a passage where Schopenhauer indicates that aesthetic pleasure can come from either of two sources: "the source of aesthetic enjoyment will nonetheless sometimes lie more in apprehension of the Idea cognized, sometimes more in the blessedness and spiritual repose of pure cognition, liberated from all individuality and the pain proceeding from it"(WWR I: 259 [18]). As Guyer reads this passage, the pleasures of apprehension are positive pleasures: Schopenhauer distinguishes them from the negative pleasure of anesthetizing individuality's pains. That cognition sometimes pleases for reasons other than its anesthetizing effects does not, however, mean that it sometimes pleases positively. Schopenhauer takes the pleasures of *satisfaction* to be no less negative than those of anesthetization. Elsewhere (e.g., at PP I: 338), Schopenhauer notes that some people have a specific desire to engage in particular kinds of cognitive activity. These desires are no less aversive, and thus no less painful than any other desires. For those saddled with such cognitively-oriented desires, the pleasures of cognition will derive from two different sources: from the specific satisfaction of their cognitive desires and from the general anesthetization of all of their desires. The pleasures derived from both sources will, however, be merely negative pleasures.

Young points to a passage in *On the Basis of Morality* where Schopenhauer cites Plato as someone who shared his insight into the negativity of human pleasure: "the nature of satisfaction, enjoyment, and happiness consists solely in the removal of a privation, the stilling of a pain; and so these have a *negative* effect. Therefore, need and desire are the condition of every pleasure or enjoyment. Plato recognized this, and excepted only pleasant odors and intellectual pleasures"(OBM: 146 [19]). At no point in this passage, however, does Schopenhauer endorse Plato's identification of the pleasures of scent and contemplation as positive pleasures. Schopenhauer is not equating his view with that of Plato. Rather he is citing Plato as someone who agreed with him up to a point: Schopenhauer recognizes the negativity of human pleasure; Plato also recognized this, but with some reservations. Schopenhauer positions himself as carrying Plato's insight further than Plato himself did: he accepts Plato's critique of the pleasures of the body, but denies his comforting suggestion that better pleasures are provided by the mind.

The first step in this explanation is getting a clearer sense of exactly what the exclusion of desire as a source of conscious activity involves. What disinterested engagement excludes is not desire as such: Schopenhauer's claim is not that disinterested engagement is unavailable unless desiring has ceased. The continued presence of desire within the state of aesthetic experience is one of the things Schopenhauer uses to distinguish it from the other subcategories: the artistic genius is not a saint, and remains saddled with desire in a way the saint does not. Gazing at the pyramids will neither end my aversion to excess heat, nor take me out of the desert: at least in the artistic case, disinterested engagement changes neither one's aversions nor the aspects of one's state to which one is averse.[17] What disinterested engagement does change even in the artistic case, however, is the focus of one's attention. Desire is not excluded, but *attention to desire* is. Gazing at the pyramids can neither free me from nor make me less averse to the heat. It can, however, distract me from both the heat and my aversion to it. Attention is limited: consciousness is only capable of presenting so much at a time. Disinterested engagement is the state which results when something unrelated to desire monopolizes attention so thoroughly that desire and its consequences entirely fade from view. As Schopenhauer puts it: "pure will-less cognition is reached insofar as consciousness of other things is so highly potentiated that consciousness of our own selves disappears"(WWR II: 417 [20]). In disinterested engagement, consciousness finds itself overwhelmed. Desire may remain, but consciousness no longer has any room for it. Disinterested engagement is a state where desire plays no role in the activity of consciousness. This is compatible with desire being present, as long as it is thoroughly ignored.

[17] The will to attend, as well as any desires to learn or to undergo aesthetic experience, are exceptional cases. Even here, however, disinterested engagement does not eliminate desire in general, just those desires which happen to have objects directly related to cognitive activity.

Schopenhauer, consequently, tends to portray disinterested engagement as *anesthetizing*. It does not eliminate desire, but it does eliminate the pain of desire. It allows human beings to reach a state similar to that which Schopenhauer associates with plants and stones, a condition in which a lack of consciousness keeps dissatisfaction from generating suffering:

> In itself, knowledge is always painless. Pain concerns the *will* alone and consists in checking, hindering, or thwarting this; yet an additional requirement is that this checking be accompanied by knowledge . . . Now according to this, only that which is inorganic and also the plant are incapable of feeling pain, however often the will may be checked in both. On the other hand, every animal, even an infusorian, feels pain because knowledge, however imperfect, is the true characteristic of animal existence. (PP II: 297-98 [21])

The previous section has put us in a good position to understand how the pains of desire might be anesthetized in this way. We have seen that Schopenhauer equates desire with the experience of one's state as in some way bad, and views attention to this experience as what causes desire to be felt as pain. The redirection of attention away from desire frees us from this distressing experience of our state, and thus from the distress that this experience causes. Disinterested engagement's anesthetizing effects must go beyond this, however, if it is to be entirely free of both pleasure and pain. To achieve hedonic neutrality, disinterested engagement must insulate us from all the pleasures and pains to which human beings are susceptible, not just those of desire.

As Schopenhauer sees it, however, there is no difference between showing that disinterested engagement insulates us from the pains of desire and showing that it insulates us from hedonic experience in general. For on Schopenhauer's view, the pains of desire are the only hedonic experience to which human beings are susceptible.[18] Human beings, on Schopenhauer's view, are susceptible to exactly one kind of genuine pain, and exactly zero kinds of genuine

[18] I thus agree with Reginster, who notes that Schopenhauer is not only explicitly committed to the claim that desire implies pain, but also implicitly committed to the claim that pain implies desire (2006: 108).

pleasure. Explaining Schopenhauer's assessment of disinterested engagement, consequently, requires first explaining his claim about the uniformity of human hedonic experience.

We have already seen evidence of the thought lying behind this claim: namely, that genuine pain can be generated only by the experience of one's state as in some way bad, genuine pleasure only by the experience of one's state as in some way good. Thus, in the previous section we saw that pleasure was excluded from interested engagement on the grounds that someone engaged in this way cannot experience her state as a source of value. This argument works only if the experience of one's state as a source of value is either a necessary precondition of the experience of pleasure or constitutive of that experience. Otherwise, the fact that satisfaction is essentially negative, consisting in the removal of something experienced as bad rather than the attainment of something experienced as good, would not be grounds for concluding that the "pleasures" of satisfaction are also essentially negative, consisting in the mere absence of pain rather than the presence of genuinely positive pleasure. The underlying assumption is that true pleasure can come only from the experience of one's state as in some way good, just as true pain can come only from the experience of one's state as in some way bad. For Schopenhauer to say that the pains of desire are the only hedonic experiences available to us, then, is for him to say that desire is our only way of assigning a value to our state. It is, in other words, for him to say that desire is our only way of valuing, of taking things to be either good or bad.

It is clear that Schopenhauer holds this view. This is made explicit in his arguments against the freedom of the will, where Schopenhauer emphasizes that taking something to be good or bad is a consequence of willing or not willing it rather than the reverse (WWR I: 345). The apparent variety in human modes of valuation is illusory: our value judgements merely express the values put forth by our emotions and passions; our emotions and passions merely

express the values put forth by a few basic appetites; and these appetites too merely express the values posited by one ultimate aversion, the fundamental will to life. Thus, Schopenhauer's account of the experience of dishonor as bad proceeds as follows. Human beings are fundamentally averse to death. This aversion is never itself directed against our state: we are never conscious of our state and dead at the same time. Nonetheless, this basic aversion to death is the source of many aversions that can be directed against our state: thanks to our aversion to death, we are also averse to any state that seems to *threaten* us with death. We thus experience the absence of food, water, shelter, and the other basic necessities of survival as bad: these things threaten us with exposure to the object of our fundamental aversion. The derivative experience of these things as bad constitutes our basic appetites, the aversions underlying hunger, thirst, etc. Insofar as we experience the absence of the basic necessities as bad, we also experience the absence of things we believe we need in order to acquire those basic necessities as bad. One of the things access to the basic necessities often depends on is the support of other human beings. The support of other human beings in turn often depends on their attitude toward us. As such, our experience of the absence of the basic necessities as bad finds expression in the experience of the ill opinion of others as bad. The basic will to life thus converts itself into love of honor.[19] At each step, the superficially new valuation is simply the combination of the already existing valuation provided by the will to life with a new value-free thought. The love of honor is able to function as a form of valuing, to assign a value to honor, only because the basic aversion to death is contained within it. All instances of valuing are, on Schopenhauer's view, capable of this sort of reduction: they can all be analyzed into the basic desire for the preconditions of survival and

[19] Schopenhauer's account of how love of honor is constructed out of the basic appetites is found at PP I: 355-356. The clearest statement of Schopenhauer's general view that all the complex passions and emotions of humanity are built from the combination of a few basic appetites with value-free thoughts is found at PP II: 293-295.

reproduction plus some thoughts about how those preconditions might be realized.[20] As such, the apparent diversity of human modes of valuation is illusory. The presence of desire within each one is what constitutes them as forms of valuing rather than assemblages of value-free thoughts.

We can now complete Schopenhauer's argument against the possibility of experiencing either pleasure or pain in the state of disinterested engagement. Disinterested engagement is a state where desire has no impact on consciousness. As we have seen, Schopenhauer sees desire as the only form of valuing available to human beings. As such, disinterested engagement is a state in which *valuing* makes no impact on consciousness. Valuing is what causes us to experience things as valuable or disvaluable, as good or bad. Where valuing makes no impact on consciousness, consequently, the experience of things as good or bad is also excluded. On Schopenhauer's view, the experience of one's state as positively good is a prerequisite of the experience of positive pleasure and the experience of one's state as positively bad is a prerequisite of the experience of positive pain. Thus, by preventing us from experiencing things as valuable or disvaluable, disinterested engagement also prevents us from experiencing pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain belong to creatures capable of experiencing the world through the lens of valuing. Disinterested engagement gives human beings the opportunity to remove this lens, allowing us to enjoy an equanimity otherwise reserved for plants and stones.

[20] This account might seem to suggest that human beings only directly value one thing: life. Other things are valued only instrumentally, as the means by which life might be obtained. Schopenhauer relies on a sort of associationism to get around this, suggesting we come to directly desire things which frequently help fulfill the will to life. Thus, discussing those who declare that "honor is dearer than life itself", Schopenhauer remarks that, "vanity, like avarice, causes us to forget the end in the means"(PP I: 355-356 [22]).

IV. The Inevitability of Suffering

Schopenhauer has argued that human life can be divided into three states: disengagement, interested engagement, and disinterested engagement. He has offered an independent assessment of the hedonic value of each of these states: disengagement and interested engagement are necessarily painful, while disinterested engagement is necessarily free of both pain and pleasure. What remains is to see how these independent evaluations of life's pieces justify Schopenhauer's conclusions about how we experience life as a whole. Given that disengagement, interested engagement, and disinterested engagement are the three building blocks from which a human life can be constructed, why must pain inevitably be the overall hedonic impact of such a life?

Human life will be painful on the whole if the painful parts of it outweigh the pleasant parts. As we have seen, however, a human life can contain no pleasant parts. Two of the parts out of which a human life can be built are painful, and one is neither pleasant nor painful. None, however, are pleasant. As such, the inclusion of any painful part within a human life will render it painful on the whole. In hedonic calculus, the painful plays the role of a negative value, the pleasant plays the role of a positive value, and the neither painful nor pleasant plays the role of zero.[21] However many times you add zero to a negative, the result remains negative. A human life will, consequently, be painful on the whole if either disengagement or interested engagement play any role in its composition. The question of whether human life is necessarily painful hinges on the possibility of building such a life exclusively out of disinterested engagement.

There are, Schopenhauer suspects, a variety of reasons to think that this would be impossible. A structure built entirely out of disinterested engagement would not cohere: other

[21] Beiser 2016: 55 describes hedonic calculus in similar terms.

blocks are needed, either as scaffolding or as ligaments. Schopenhauer has one major objection to the possibility of leading a life completely insulated from desire, as well as a series of more local objections to the possibility of constructing a life entirely out of any of the three main subvariants of disinterested engagement. I will begin by going through these more local points.

As noted above, Schopenhauer takes there to be three main varieties of disinterested engagement: aesthetic experience, relief, and ascetic experience. Aesthetic experience protects us from the pain of desire by overwhelming consciousness: it takes us to such a high level of absorption in some object that our capacity for attention is fully spent. This kind of feverish activity is, Schopenhauer suggests, simply not sustainable. Consciousness gets burned out. It needs to take a break (WWR I: 232). The second it does, however, desire returns to awareness. It was excluded only because consciousness' resources were entirely occupied elsewhere. As such, it slips back into awareness the moment those cognitive resources are freed up.

Relief, meanwhile, is not conceivable absent prior experience of pain. It is defined with reference to such prior experience: it is a condition in which the mere painlessness of one's state becomes a source of interest by way of contrast with the memory of previous painful experience.

Ascetic experience is available only to those who have renounced the will to life, thereby freeing themselves from the endless series of desires that express it. As Schopenhauer sees it, painful experience has a necessary role to play in precipitating this renunciation. Thus, Schopenhauer identifies two paths by which renunciation might be achieved. On the one hand, the experience of immense personal suffering might break the will, showing it that life will never provide what it seeks. On the other, increasing identification with the suffering of others can lead to the realization that, even if things went perfectly in one's own life, life as a whole would still

be worthy of rejection. In either case, suffering must be felt: the question is just whether that suffering comes in the form of suffering with another or is limited to one's own misfortune.

Of the three main varieties of disinterested engagement, then, two can only be had after prior painful experience, and one can only be had for brief periods of time. The two that can only be had after painful experience cannot fit in a pain-free life. This leaves the one that can only be had for brief interludes with no painless states to alternate with. Schopenhauer, consequently, has the option of simply iterating his general approach: dividing disinterested engagement into three sub-states just as he previously divided life into three states, and showing that a pain-free existence could not be built on the basis of any possible combination of those sub-states.

In addition to this partwise approach, Schopenhauer also has a more direct argument against the possibility of constructing a life entirely on the basis of disinterested engagement. Thus, Schopenhauer suggests that will is essential to all life. In making this claim, Schopenhauer does not simply rely on his metaphysical thesis that will is the essence of all things. Rather, Schopenhauer has something more specific to say about the relationship between will and life in particular.[22] Thus, Schopenhauer notes that life ceases unless it is actively maintained: a human being who no longer eats or drinks will not be a human being for long.[23] Such maintenance

[22] The claim that Schopenhauer's conclusion relies on the view that will is essential to all life is not distinctive of my account. See, for example, Migotti 1995: 648, Janaway 1999: 329, and Odell 2001: 73-74. What is distinctive of my account is the suggestion that, when Schopenhauer relies on this view here, he means it in a fairly prosaic sense, as an expression of commonly accepted facts about life in particular rather than sweeping metaphysical theses about existence in general. This is not an insignificant difference. As discussed in note 1 above, the pessimism I have been describing is distinguished from Schopenhauer's other pessimisms by its independence from his controversial metaphysical theses: it is an argument for the inevitable misery of human beings even when conceived as distinct individuals who persist over time. It would thus create a serious problem for Schopenhauer's project if his argument relied on a shocking metaphysical thesis about the fundamental identity of all things with the will.

[23] See, e.g., the following passage: "The constant striving that constitutes the essence of every phenomenon of will, however, obtains its first and most general foundation on the higher levels of objectification in the fact that will here makes its appearance to itself as a living body, with the iron command to nourish it"(WWR I: 366 [23]).

activities will not be undertaken in the absence of desire's guidance. As was discussed above, desire functions as the source of striving: purposeful action originates in desire, and no one attempts to achieve something unless they want to achieve it. Life, consequently, is incompatible with the long-term absence of desire's guidance. A human being who ceased to be moved by desire would quickly fade away, dissipating out of sheer neglect. This is precisely the fate that befalls those true ascetics who achieve the only kind of suicide of which Schopenhauer approves: the termination of life due to sheer indifference to existence rather than desire for non-existence.[24] As Schopenhauer notes, "just as our walking is constantly impeded falling, the life of our body is only continuingly impeded dying, ever postponed death"(WWR I: 365 [25]). This impeding is active: it takes the form of purposeful, end-directed activity under the guidance of desire. It is, consequently, incompatible with the serene indifference typical of disinterested engagement, a state where desire can have no impact. A complete human life cannot, therefore, be constructed exclusively on the basis of disinterested engagement.[25] To remain in this state for more than a brief period of time is to fail to perform the desire-directed maintenance activity on which life depends. Disinterested engagement can, consequently, enter life only as an interlude or a coda: it can be a temporary break after which desire returns to force, or the final dissolution

[24] Schopenhauer describes this saintly suicide as follows: "complete denial of the will can reach the degree where even the will that is needed for maintenance of the body's vegetative life, through the intake of nourishment, falls away. Far from this sort of suicide arising from the will for life, such an utterly resigned ascetic merely ceases to live because he has altogether ceased to will"(WWR I: 465 [24]). The requirements of life's maintenance are such that to cease to live and to cease to will are one and the same.
[25] Tamsin Shaw presents the limitations of what she calls the "obliviousness" strategy for escaping suffering in similar terms. This strategy, she suggests, "must either be temporary or, if prolonged, will be incompatible with any purposeful functioning in the world"(Shaw 2014: 358). This leads Shaw to conclude that the "obliviousness" strategy could be effectively employed only by a permanently idle leisure class. Schopenhauer's conclusion is more radical. Even the members of such a leisure class, Schopenhauer suggests, depend on "purposeful functioning" for their survival.

of a life which desire had previously maintained. A life built entirely out of disinterested engagement is impossible, precisely because such a life would immediately collapse into death.

Human life cannot be made out of disinterested engagement alone. This means that one of the two painful states must play some role in its composition: disengagement, interested engagement, or both will find a place in each and every human life. Human life will, therefore, inevitably be painful on the whole, a source of distress unredeemed by delight. We have, then, reached the ultimate conclusion of Schopenhauer's pessimism: life is inevitably something from which we suffer, something which we sometimes experience as bad and never experience as good. It is, consequently, either for hedonic reasons or because of the impossibility of receiving benefit from that which we do not value, something that it is worse to have than to lack.

V. The Flaws in Human Life

I have offered an explanation of Schopenhauer's pessimism. I have not, however, offered the kind of explanation I promised at the start of this chapter. I have not yet explained how Schopenhauer's pessimism follows from the attribution of a particular flaw or set of flaws to human life. Now that we have the whole of his account in view, offering an explanation of this kind will finally be possible.

Schopenhauer gives a complicated account of human life, attributing a variety of features to it in order to explain why it is necessarily composed of particular parts, as well as why those parts necessarily have a particular hedonic impact. The question to be answered is which of these features constitute Schopenhauer's account as a form of pessimism. To answer this question, it

will help to quickly review these features. Thus, let us look back at Schopenhauer's four main claims, and attempt to identify the features he attributes to human life in order to justify them.

Schopenhauer claims that disengagement is painful. This claim hinges on the supposition that human beings are subject to the will to attend: for anyone who has not achieved the life-ending will-lessness of the true ascetic, insufficient deployment of attention is distressing.

Likewise, Schopenhauer claims that interested engagement is painful. This claim hinges on the supposition that human desire has the structure of aversion rather than attraction. As a result, engagement by unsatisfied desire is painful, and engagement by satisfied desire is impossible.

Schopenhauer also claims that disinterested engagement is neither painful nor pleasant. This claim hinges on the supposition that desire is the only form of human valuing. Given the background assumption that positive pleasure and positive pain are generated only by the experience of one's state as positively good and positively bad respectively, this ensures that positive pleasure and pain will be unavailable where desire has no impact on consciousness.

Finally, Schopenhauer claims that some experience of either interested engagement or disengagement is unavoidable. This claim hinges on the supposition that human life depends on desire-directed maintenance activity, and is thus incompatible with permanent insensitivity to desire's urgings.

Schopenhauer, then, attributes four different features to even the best human life: 1) it will contain the will to attend, 2) any desire it excites will be aversive in nature, 3) any valuing it involves will take the form of desire, and 4) it will be maintained by desire-directed activity. The equation Schopenhauer draws between desire and valuing allows the second and third features to be combined. Thus, we can restate the list as follows. Even the best human life will: 1) contain

the will to attend, 2) involve only an aversive from of valuing, and 3) be maintained by desire-directed activity.

Which of these three features of Schopenhauer's account of human life constitutes it as a pessimistic account? The answer to this question is complicated. Any account of human life which attributes feature (2) to it will be a pessimistic account. This is not true of features (1) and (3): an account of human life which attributed these features to it without feature (2) would be entirely compatible with optimism. Nonetheless, although any account of human life which attributes feature (2) to it will be a pessimistic account, its pessimism may be of much weaker kind than the severe variety Schopenhauer defends. To reach this strong pessimism, the full set of all three features is necessary.

To see that it is Schopenhauer's attribution of feature (2) to human life which constitutes his account as pessimistic, it will help to look at how Schopenhauer's account would change if his attribution of each of the three features was denied. Thus, suppose that human beings were free of the will to attend. If this were the case, then disengagement would cease to be painful. It would not, however, become pleasant. A source of the experience of one's state as bad would be removed, but no capacity to experience one's state as good would replace it. A pain-free life of alternation between disengagement and disinterested engagement would become possible. This life would not harm, but it also would not benefit. Living as a human being would no longer be worse than not living at all, but it would also be no better than not living at all. Rejecting life's dependence on desire-directed maintenance activity would have the same result. It would allow the construction of a complete human life out of disinterested engagement. Disinterested engagement, however, is neither painful nor pleasant, neither a source of harm nor a source of benefit. The possibility of the best possible human life being a life of uninterrupted disinterested

engagement, then, still leaves us with pessimism. Even if both claims are denied, the same result follows. Sources of pain are removed, but no sources of pleasure are added. Human life and complete non-existence remain perfectly matched in value.

When the claim that human life is unable to excite non-aversive forms of valuing is denied, in contrast, the situation looks quite different. Attraction-type valuing is capable of generating the experience of one's state as positively good. It can thus act as a source of positive pleasure and delight. As such, it opens the possibility of human life having something to offer the one who lives it. This transition to optimism can occur even if both of Schopenhauer's other claims about human life are retained. Thus, the claim that human life depends on desire-directed maintenance activity undermines life's value only if there is a necessary connection between relying on desire for engagement and the experience of pain. Dependence on desire for engagement will be necessarily painful in this way only if the will to attend is present *and* desire is unavoidably aversive in structure. On the aversion model of desire, engagement by unsatisfied desire is painful and engagement by satisfied desire is impossible. Thus, the consciousness that relies on aversive desire to orient it will always be a suffering consciousness, feeling either the pains of dissatisfaction or the pains of boredom. On the attraction-model of desire, in contrast, engagement by unsatisfied desire need not be painful, and engagement by satisfied desire need not be impossible. The consciousness that relies on attraction-based desire to orient it need not be a suffering consciousness, and may even be a happy one.

Schopenhauer's attribution of an exclusively aversive variety of valuing to human life is thus responsible for constituting his account as a pessimistic account. Even where all other features of Schopenhauer's account are left fixed, denying this one feature is sufficient to convert Schopenhauer's account into an optimistic one. As we have seen, this is not true of any other

feature or combination of features of Schopenhauer's account. As such, Schopenhauer's attribution of an exclusively aversive type of valuing to human life should be seen as playing a special role in his pessimism. It is because he embraces this claim, and this claim alone, that Schopenhauer is a pessimist.

That having been said, the role played by Schopenhauer's other claims in determining the *kind* of pessimist that he is should not be underestimated. Schopenhauer's claim that all human valuing is aversive rules out the possibility of benefitting from leading a human life. The absence of benefit is enough to get us to pessimism, justifying the claim that living as a human being is worth no more than not living at all. It is not, however, enough to get us to strong pessimism: it cannot justify the claim that living as a human being is actually worth *less* than not living at all. As noted at the start of this chapter, for this conclusion the presence of harm, not just the absence of benefit is necessary. The claim that all human valuing is aversive in nature cannot get us to the necessity of harm on its own. It is compatible with the possibility of a pain-free life of complete satisfaction paired with mental inactivity, or of constant existence in the state of disinterested engagement. To reach the claim that life is inevitably harmful, Schopenhauer's other two claims about it are necessary. The presence of the will to attend is needed to make satisfied disengagement a form of suffering. The dependence of life on desire-directed maintenance activity is needed to rule out a life of painless disinterested engagement. Schopenhauer's account of human life is, consequently, constituted as a form of pessimism by the attribution of a single flaw to life, but as the particular, shockingly strong form of pessimism that it is only by the attribution of a set of three flaws to it.

Chapter 4: Two Pessimisms in Nietzsche

Few things about Nietzsche's work are as clear as his commitment to resisting Schopenhauer's verdict on human life. Less clear, however, is Nietzsche's understanding of that verdict's grounds. Nietzsche opposes a kind of pessimism, arguing that human life need not possess a flaw Schopenhauer sees as essential to it. The identity of this flaw and the pessimism based around it is not, however, always transparent.

In what follows, I will argue that Nietzsche opposed precisely the form of pessimism I attributed to Schopenhauer in the previous chapter: namely, that constituted by the claim that aversion is the basic structure of human valuing. To make Nietzsche's concern about this variety of pessimism clear, I will consider the means he uses to oppose it: his appeal to tragic psychology, the variety of aesthetic experience involved in the appreciation of tragic drama and similar works of art. I will argue that Nietzsche takes tragic psychology to answer Schopenhauerian pessimism because it enables human passion to get beyond aversion and achieve a new, attractive structure.

Notably, although Nietzsche takes the possibility of undergoing this variety of aesthetic experience to answer the pessimism of aversion, he does not take it to answer the threat posed by pessimism as such. On the contrary, he takes the indispensability of aesthetic modes of valuing to generate an urgent need to respond to another variety of pessimism, one internal to the aesthetic perspective itself. Aesthetic experience need not be positive, and the aesthetic perspective will undermine the value of human life if life proves aesthetically insignificant. It is thus unsurprising that pinning down Nietzsche's understanding of pessimism has proved

difficult: Nietzsche, like Mill, recognizes and opposes not one pessimism, but at least two, one of which threatens from within the same perspective that answers the threat posed by the other.[1]

Nietzsche, then, uses his engagement with Schopenhauer's pessimism to ground the same two claims that interested Mill. Aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic dignity both play an essential role in making life worth living. Aesthetic appreciation is needed to hold the pessimism of aversion at bay. Aesthetic dignity is needed to keep this concern for aesthetic value from generating debilitating forms of self-contempt and self-disgust.

I. In Defense of the Anti-Pessimist Reading

In what follows, I attempt to identify two varieties of pessimism that were of particular concern to Nietzsche. Underlying this effort is the assumption that Nietzsche viewed pessimism as a serious enough threat to be worth resisting. Although opposition to the pessimist's verdict is commonly taken to play a large role in Nietzsche's thought,[2] a few features of his work seem to speak against this reading.[3] It will be worth considering these features, both in order to defend the anti-pessimist reading of Nietzsche on which my project depends, and in order to clarify just what I take Nietzsche's anti-pessimism to involve.[4]

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[1] This point has been made previously with respect to nihilism in Nietzsche (see, for example, White 1987, Reginster 2006, van Tongeren 2018).

[2] See, for example, Nussbaum 1999: 369, Came 2005: 41, Reginster 2006: 21, Gemes and Janaway 2012: 289, Leiter 2018: 155.

[3] Reginster raises the possibility that someone might deny the anti-pessimist reading of Nietzsche in response to some of these features (2006: 52).

[4] Before proceeding, it is worth noting a methodological principle governing my selection of textual evidence. I am interested in Nietzsche's mature thought about pessimism and aesthetics. As such, I do not rest arguments on work with unclear relationships to Nietzsche's mature thought. Early (pre-*Daybreak*) works, *Nachlass* material, and *Zarathustra* are not typically cited in the main text: Nietzsche's views change notably after *Human All Too Human*; the *Nachlass* offers no way to distinguish material

The first evidence that might be cited against the anti-pessimist reading is the fact that Nietzsche sometimes seems to advocate pessimism. In a few places – notably, the preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, the preface to the second volume of *Human All Too Human*, and *Gay Science* 370 – Nietzsche praises something he calls either "pessimism of strength"(BT "Attempt" 1 [1]) or "*Dionysian* pessimism"(GS 370 [2]). Nietzsche presents this pessimism as both his distinctive historical discovery and his great hope for the future, associating it with the pre-Socratic culture whose passing he mourns and the Dionysian philosophy whose arrival he heralds. Although Nietzsche is careful to distinguish this Dionysian pessimism from contemporary varieties, his praise of it nonetheless suggests that he has no objection to pessimism as such. If he shares Schopenhauer's verdict on human life, then his opposition to Schopenhauer's variety of pessimism must be incidental, a side effect of disagreement with some other aspect of his view.[5]

A closer examination of the text, however, makes it clear that Nietzsche's Dionysian pessimism does not commit him to a negative verdict on human life. When Nietzsche praises this pessimism, he uses the word in a way that makes no direct contact with either my own usage or that of Nietzsche's contemporaries. Thus, note how Nietzsche glosses the term:

> Is there such a thing as a pessimism of strength? An intellectual preference for the hard, horrific, evil, problematic aspects of existence which stems from well-being, from overflowing health, from an *abundance* of existence? (BT "Attempt" 1 [1])

Pessimism here is not a judgement, a negative answer to the question of whether human beings can experience life as a benefit. Rather, it is "an intellectual preference", a propensity to confront life's horrifying aspects. In praising this sort of pessimism, Nietzsche suggests a particular

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Nietzsche meant to publish from material he meant to burn; and *Zarathustra* presents the (themselves notably evolving) views of a character distinct from Nietzsche himself.

[5] Dienstag 2006 reads Nietzsche this way, seemingly due to his anachronistic definition of pessimism. Dienstag understands pessimism as doubt about the inevitability of human progress. Nietzsche may well be a pessimist on this definition of the term, but it is not a definition he would have been familiar with.

approach to questions about life's value, not a particular answer to those questions. The Dionysian pessimist is someone who *acknowledges* the terrible truths about human life, not someone who condemns life on the basis of those truths. The apparent tension between the anti-pessimist reading and Nietzsche's praise of Dionysian pessimism rests on a terminological confusion: when Nietzsche praises pessimism, he stipulates a different definition for the term than that which the anti-pessimist reading employs. Nietzsche explicitly acknowledges this difference in later writing. Thus, he notes that tragedy – the art form he associates with the "pessimism of strength"(BT "Attempt" 1 [1]) – "is so far from proving anything about Hellenic pessimism in Schopenhauer's sense of the term that in fact it serves as the decisive refutation and *counter-example* to Schopenhauerian pessimism"(TI "Ancients" 5 [3]). Pessimism "in Schopenhauer's sense of the term" is completely distinct from, and in fact refuted by, the Dionysian pessimism that Nietzsche embraces. They are not two species of a single genus, but two unrelated concepts joined by a single word. Nietzsche can thus be an anti-pessimist and a Dionysian pessimist at once: he wishes to establish that human beings can experience life as a benefit, he simply believes that reflection on life's least appealing aspects will help us value it.[6]

A second feature of Nietzsche's work that might give pause about the anti-pessimist reading is his suggestion that happiness plays, or ought to play, little role in human life. This aspect of Nietzsche's view finds its most famous expression in his rebuke of the utilitarians: "If

[6] Nietzsche's self-description as a strong or Dionysian pessimist is found in published work only in 1886 and 1887. By 1888, he has a new term for his outlook, identifying as a "tragic philosopher". Thus, when discussing *The Birth of Tragedy* in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche notes that "I have the right to understand myself as the first *tragic philosopher* – which is to say the most diametrically opposed antipode of a pessimistic philosopher"(EH "BT" 3 [4]). Given the clarificatory comment, Nietzsche seems aware of the misleading impression created by the previous year's terminology. Tellingly, one of the only post-1887 references to "pessimism of strength" is from a *rejected* draft of this section of *Ecce Homo* (entry 14[25] from the spring, 1888 notebooks). Van Tongeren 2018: 39 also notes this change in Nietzsche's terminology, though seemingly not its consequences for Nietzsche's anti-pessimism.

you have your '*why*?' in life, you can get along with almost any '*how*?'. People *don't* strive for happiness, only the English do"(TI "Arrows" 12 [5]). Given this lack of regard for happiness, Nietzsche seems to have little reason to take pessimism seriously. Nietzsche, one might think, is not interested in whether life benefits the one who leads it. Rather, he admires only those who are hard on themselves, pursuing lives that embody a kind of excellence that can be obtained only at great personal cost, and thus only after concern for happiness has been cast aside.[7]

Here again, however, the objection stems from a peculiarity in Nietzsche's terminology. Although Nietzsche sometimes puts his critique of happiness quite unequivocally, at other times he takes care to qualify these statements: Nietzsche rejects the significance of happiness only on a particular understanding of the term, an understanding which he himself does not share. Consider the way Nietzsche presents his critique of utilitarianism in a place that allows for more nuance than the two-line aphorism considered above:

> Whether it is hedonism or pessimism, utilitarianism or eudaemonism – all these ways of thinking that measure the value of things in accordance with *pleasure* and *pain*, which are mere epiphenomena and wholly secondary, are ways of thinking that stay in the foreground and naïvetés on which everyone conscious of *creative* powers and an artistic conscience will look down not without derision, nor without pity. . . . You want, if possible – and there is no more insane "if possible" – *to abolish suffering*. And we? It really seems that *we* would have it higher and worse than ever. Well-being as you understand it – that is no goal, that seems to us an *end* a state that soon makes man ridiculous and contemptible – that makes his destruction *desirable*. (BGE 225 [6])

A particular conception of happiness, popular among Nietzsche's contemporaries, is dismissed here. It is clear, however, that Nietzsche does not share the conception of happiness he dismisses. It is "well-being as *you* [utilitarians, hedonists, pessimists, etc.] understand it" that is rejected, not "well-being as *we* understand it", or well-being simpliciter.[8] The conception of happiness

[7] On this reading, Nietzsche embraces the *Entsagen* view of Carlyle discussed in chapter one, note 22.
[8] Nussbaum 2008: S89 similarly notes that when Nietzsche critiques English happiness, he assumes a limited use of the term, one roughly drawn from the conception employed by Benthamite utilitarianism.

Nietzsche attributes to the utilitarians is marked by three features, all of which are clear from the passage above: passivity, hedonism, and negativity. Nietzsche's utilitarian understands happiness passively insofar as she defines it purely in terms of the *feelings* life generates, treating all activity as irrelevant except insofar as it generates these feelings.[9] She understands it hedonistically insofar as the particular feelings she considers relevant are pleasure and pain. She understands it negatively insofar as the particular balance of pleasure and pain she aims for is one where pain is completely absent. For Nietzsche's utilitarian, happiness is just another word for *painlessness*, for the absence of a particular kind of harmful feeling from one's life. When Nietzsche trivializes happiness, he should be understood as doing so only insofar as happiness is understood in this passive, hedonic, and negative sense.

When happiness is not understood in this impoverished sense, Nietzsche is more than willing to defend its importance. Thus, it is not only Nietzsche's Last Men who claim to have discovered happiness. The same claim is made by his Hyperboreans, a group among whom Nietzsche includes himself, and who are defined by the contrast between their view of happiness and that of Nietzsche's contemporaries:

> We are Hyperboreans, - we are well aware how far off the beaten track we live. . . We have discovered happiness, we know the way, we have found the way out of the labyrinth of whole millennia. Who *else* has found this? – Maybe the modern man? . . . *This* modernity made us ill – this indolent peace, this cowardly compromise, the whole virtuous filth of the modern yes and no. . . . We thirsted

[9] The passivity of utilitarian happiness is given less emphasis in BGE 225 than its hedonism and negativity. As such, it may be worth noting another passage where passivity plays a dominant role in distinguishing a conception of happiness Nietzsche respects from one he holds in contempt:

> as full human beings, overloaded with power and therefore *necessarily active*, they [the nobles] likewise did not know how to separate activity out from happiness, – for them being active is of necessity included in happiness (whence *eu prattein* takes its origins) – all of this is very much in opposition to "happiness" on the level of the powerless, oppressed, those festering away with poisonous and hostile feelings, in whom it essentially appears as narcotic, anesthetic, calm, peace, "Sabbath," relaxation of mind and stretching of limbs, in short, passively. (GM I.10 [7])

Note that passive happiness is merely happiness in quotation marks.

> for lightning and action, we stayed as far away as possible from the happiness of weaklings, from "resignation" . . . Formula for our happiness: a yes, a no, a straight line, a *goal* . . . (A 1 [8])

Happiness, when not defined negatively as the absence of pain and distress (i.e., when not equated with "peace" and "resignation"), is something Nietzsche considers highly significant. Understood in this way, happiness offers exactly what utilitarian happiness was faulted for failing to provide: a goal, rather than an end.[10] Nietzsche's dismissal of utilitarian happiness as insignificant, then, does not suggest a similar dismissal of pessimism. What it suggests is that the pessimism which concerns Nietzsche will not rely solely on the impossibility of negative hedonic happiness to critique human life.[11] The problem of pessimism is, as Nietzsche puts it, "the problem of the *value of existence"*(GS 357 [10]). Nietzsche can take this problem seriously even while holding a particular way of approaching it in contempt.

A final objection to the anti-pessimist reading focuses on Nietzsche's suggestion that questions about life's value are ultimately unanswerable. This aspect of Nietzsche's view comes out most clearly in his discussion of the *consensus sapientum* against life's value:

> The *consensus sapientium* – I see this with increasing lucidity – proves least of all that the wisest men were right about what they agreed on: instead, it proves that they were in *physiological* agreement about something, and consequently adopted – *had* to adopt – the same negative attitude towards life. Judgments, value judgments on life, for or against, can ultimately never be true: they have value only as symptoms, they can be taken seriously only as symptoms – in themselves, judgments like these are stupidities. You really have to stretch out your fingers and make a concerted attempt to grasp this amazing piece of subtlety, that *the value of life cannot be estimated*. Not by the living, who are an interested party, a bone of contention even, and not judges; not by the dead for other reasons. – It is

[10] Nietzsche's combination of strong contempt for negative happiness with strong appreciation of positive happiness is particularly clear in *Zarathustra*. The prophet anticipates "The hour when you say: What good is my happiness! It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment. But my happiness should justify existence itself!"(Z "Prologue" 3 [9]). Negative happiness – "wretched contentment", mere lack of dissatisfaction – is condemned. It is condemned, however, only in the name of a higher form of happiness whose value would be unparalleled.

[11] Note that Schopenhauer does not do this: he relies on both the impossibility of negative hedonic happiness *and* the impossibility of finding positive value to make up for negative happiness' loss.

> an objection to a philosopher if he sees a problem with the *value* of life, it is a question mark on his wisdom, an un-wisdom. (TI "Problem" 2 [11])

Nietzsche suggests that judgments about life's value lack epistemic merit. The verdict is always determined by features of the individual making the judgment, rather than features of the thing being judged. Such judgements are, consequently, unworthy of serious consideration. They are "stupidities", and "can be taken seriously only as symptoms". To take them seriously in any other way would, Nietzsche suggests, be a kind of folly unworthy of a philosopher. The anti-pessimist reading of Nietzsche seems to present him as foolish in precisely this sense, as taking seriously the kind of claims about life's value that are unworthy of serious concern.[12]

At no point in the passage, however, does Nietzsche actually claim that judgments about life's value are unworthy of serious concern. He simply specifies the particular sense in which they are worthy of serious concern: namely, as symptoms, as expressions of the psychology of those who make them. The function of this passage is to introduce an examination of one such judgment about life's value: Socrates' deathbed suggestion that life is a disease. It is intended to tell us what to expect from that examination: not an analysis of the rational grounds of Socrates' critique, but an attempt to identify features of Socrates' psychology which made a negative attitude toward life inevitable for him. The passage is *not* meant to tell us that an examination of Socrates' judgment is not worth undertaking. It simply cautions against a tempting but unproductive way of undertaking it. The passage is, consequently, less a dismissal of the problem of pessimism, than a statement of Nietzsche's particular interpretation of that problem.[13]

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[12] This argument leads May 2011: 99-100 to reject many versions of the anti-pessimist reading. May is right to push this critique against some of these accounts: Nietzsche is not interested in *justifying* belief in life's value, and accounts that suggest otherwise should be rejected. May overreaches, however, in suggesting that Nietzsche is similarly uninterested in the *psychological* prerequisites of life's affirmation. See discussion at Leiter 2018: n. 8.

[13] Reginster 2014 makes a similar point. As Reginster reads the passage, however, the takeaway is that Nietzsche wants to explain how life can be affirmed even by those who lack confidence in its value.

For Nietzsche, the question will never be, "Is there something about life which (logically) forces us to adopt a negative attitude toward it?". Rather, it will be, "Is there something about us which (psychologically) forces us to adopt a negative attitude toward life?"[14] The wisest men of the past "had to adopt" a negative attitude toward life. The problem of pessimism, insofar as it concerns Nietzsche, is whether all human beings are bound to do the same.

Nietzsche, then, takes a distinctive approach to opposing pessimism. For him, opposing pessimism means arguing that the psychological type represented by the wise men of the past is not the only type possible. Thus, Nietzsche describes his strategy as follows:

> it was then that I hit upon the aphorism "a sufferer has as yet no right to pessimism," and that I engaged in a tedious, patient campaign against the unscientific first principles of all romantic pessimism, which seeks to magnify and interpret individual, personal experiences into "global judgements," universal condemnations. (HH II "Preface" 5 [12])

Pessimists carry out an unjustified generalization, moving from the observation that some people necessarily experience life as a burden to the conclusion that experiencing life in this way is unavoidable for all. Nietzsche pushes back against this generalization, arguing that the psychological features which explain the suffering of those who suffer from life are not properly treated as features of human psychology as such. As Nietzsche puts it, the question he asks when encountering a judgment against life's value is, "Which type of life is making value judgments here?"(TI "Morality" 5 [13]). The implicit follow-up is always: and are other types of life, types which judge differently, possible for human beings? In taking this approach, Nietzsche does not engage in the kind of folly he critiques. He never treats judgments about life's value as reflective

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When Nietzsche claims that the "*the value of life cannot be estimated"*, however, he is making an epistemic point not a psychological one. Judgments about life's value may be wholeheartedly endorsed despite their epistemic weakness.

[14] On this, I agree with Came 2005: 42, Gemes 2008: 461, May 2011: 91-92, and Leiter 2018: 156. Nietzsche's efforts to establish life's value should be understood psychologically rather than logically: he means to show that we *can* value life, not that we are logically justified in doing so.

of anything other than the psychology of those who make them. His philosophical engagement is never with the judgment itself, but with the psychological generalization that it inspires, with the claim that those elements of individual psychology that produce judgments against life's value should be treated as elements of human psychology as such. He treats pessimism as a claim about human psychology, and opposes it with psychological claims of his own.

The anti-pessimist reading of Nietzsche, then, seems to survive all three objections. In answering them, however, I may have laid the groundwork for one more. The anti-pessimist reading of Nietzsche suggests not just that Nietzsche opposes pessimism, but that this opposition plays a significant role in his thought. I have argued that Nietzsche understands pessimism as a psychological claim to the effect that human beings are incapable of experiencing life as a beneficial possession.[15] In so doing, it may appear that I have defended the claim that Nietzsche opposes pessimism only by undermining the claim that this opposition played a significant role in his thought. For it may seem that pessimism, if understood as Nietzsche understands it, is so obviously false that no serious effort could go into its refutation. The vast majority of people act in ways that suggest life is of great value to them: they try to live as long as they can, engage in efforts to improve and maintain the quality of their lives, honestly express satisfaction with their existence, etc. Responding to an unjustified generalization may take serious work when it appears supported by the majority of cases, or at least by the most prominent ones. When the most obvious and numerous cases push against a generalization, however, little needs to be said against it. It can be thrown aside with a scoff and a dismissive comment about the generalizer's

[15] As discussed above, experiencing life as a beneficial possession does not require having a rational warrant for belief that one benefits from existence. What is required is *valuing* life in a certain way, where valuing is understood as primarily an affective matter. To experience life as beneficial is to be *attracted* to it, to desire it as a source of positive happiness. Someone attracted to life in this sense will, Nietzsche suggests, be distinguished by distinctive psychological stances: gratitude to or for one's life, for example.

dishonesty or lack of common sense. The anti-pessimist reading needs to explain why Nietzsche thought that the pessimistic generalization called for more than this sort of offhand response.

Fortunately, an explanation has already been suggested by our discussion of Nietzsche's view of happiness. Nietzsche's apparent contempt for happiness followed from the suspicion that his contemporaries were using the term in an impoverished sense: they were defining it negatively rather than positively, in terms of the absence of some ill (pain) rather than the presence of some good. Nietzsche, in contrast, embraced a positive conception of happiness, suggesting that there is a big difference between experiencing life as largely harmless and experiencing it as a truly beneficial possession. Once the distinction between these two ways of approaching life's value is on the table, however, it is more difficult to interpret the *prima facie* evidence against the pessimistic generalization. Purely negative values – values expressive of aversion rather than attraction, and corresponding to the experience of life as at best harmless rather than truly beneficial – would be able to generate all of those widespread features of human behavior which seem to provide obvious counterexamples to the pessimist's view. Aversion, as long as it remains focused on particular aspects of one's life rather than one's life as a whole, provides a motive for continuous engagement with life even by those for whom it is most consistently distressing.[16] It picks out particular things as the obstacles to one's happiness and sources of one's suffering, promising that all will be well once those obstacles are removed. A purely negative activity, an endless struggle to remove the bad from one's life, is able to keep human beings in motion just as well as the pursuit of positive goals. It is even able to motivate genuine claims to find life satisfying and genuine belief that happiness has been achieved: there may be moments when obstacles are largely overcome, and life looks fairly harmless. This is the

[16] This, recall, was part of what undermined Mill's worries in chapter two's concluding section.

Schopenhauerian vision of the world, and it is also Nietzsche's understanding of the way most of his contemporaries live their lives.[17] Nietzsche, consequently, has good reason to think that the pessimistic generalization requires serious and extended critique. As he sees it, pessimism is not an obviously fallacious generalization from a minority of cases in the face of a clear preponderance of evidence on the other side. Rather, it is a quite tempting generalization from the vast majority of cases in the face of a few easily missed counter-examples.[18]

The anti-pessimist reading of Nietzsche, then, really has survived confrontation with all three objections. In answering these objections, we have also gained a better sense of how we should understand the pessimism Nietzsche opposes, and the manner in which he opposes it. Pessimism, insofar as it concerns Nietzsche, is the claim that experiencing life as a truly beneficial possession is psychologically impossible for human beings. To experience life as truly beneficial amounts to experiencing it as a potential source of *positive* happiness. In claiming that the experience of life as a source of positive happiness is unavailable to human beings, Nietzsche's pessimist makes an unjustified psychological generalization: the pessimist points to psychological features that really do prevent some people from experiencing life in this way, and suggests that these features belong to human psychology as such. In opposing pessimism, Nietzsche argues that the features of human psychology which the pessimists point to are either idiosyncrasies of particular types of people or avoidable consequences of circumstances that

[17] This is what Reginster 2006 misses by placing his problem of inspiration at the heart of Nietzsche's concerns. As discussed in chapters one and two, the problem of inspiration is a remarkable tool for thinking about engagement. For Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, however, engagement is not the main issue. Having ends that are both realizable and worthy of realization is not enough to let us positively value our lives. For this, the kind of interest we take in these ends is decisive: do we feel that they are worth realizing because doing so will remove positive harm, or because it will provide positive benefit?

[18] Note, however, that the proportions do not really matter. All that is needed to justify taking the pessimistic generalization seriously is reason to doubt the *prima facie* evidence against it. The possibility of explaining engagement by appeal to aversive values and desires is sufficient to undercut this evidence. The important thing is that aversion *could* play this role, regardless of how frequently it actually does.

could plausibly change: they reveal flaws in particular types of human life, but not in human life as such. As Nietzsche's praise of Dionysian pessimism makes clear, he will argue that extensive illusion regarding life's horrors is *not* essential to avoiding these flaws.[19] Confrontation with life's terrible aspects will be typical of those capable of experiencing life as a source of positive happiness. With these general features of Nietzsche's understanding of pessimism in mind, we can now consider the particular varieties of pessimism that he confronts.

II. Tragic Psychology as Counter-*Example* to the Pessimistic Generalization

I have already pointed toward the variety of pessimism I see as Nietzsche's primary concern: the pessimism of aversion, the same worry about the structure of human values and desires which underwrote Schopenhauer's critique of human life. It is clear that Nietzsche takes aversively structured desires to underwrite much human behavior. Above, I suggested that awareness of such desires' inability to generate the experience of life as beneficial is what let Nietzsche take the pessimistic generalization seriously. If this is correct, Nietzsche's primary pessimistic target will be the claim that our dominant values and desires are inevitably aversive.

In what follows, I support this reading by considering Nietzsche's main objection to Schopenhauerian pessimism: namely, his appeal to *tragic psychology*, the variety of aesthetic experience involved in the appreciation of tragic drama and similar works of art. I argue that Nietzsche takes tragic psychology to answer Schopenhauerian pessimism because he takes it to play a unique role in enabling human desire to get beyond aversion. It does this, Nietzsche suggests, by enabling us to value *passions* from which we would otherwise suffer.

[19] This is not to say that Nietzsche denies the importance of illusion. Only the necessity of a particular kind of illusion is denied: namely, illusion about the ways in which life can be terrible.

Nietzsche presents tragic psychology as playing two different roles in pessimism's defeat: it is both the chief counter-*example* and the chief counter-*force* to Schopenhauer's pessimism. As a counter-*example,* Nietzsche suggests that the ability to create and appreciate tragic art falsifies the pessimistic generalization. The pessimist observes that some people lack capacities needed to experience life as a benefit. Tragic psychology proves the illegitimacy of generalizing from these cases to a conclusion about the psychological limits of human beings as such. As a counter-*force*, Nietzsche suggests that the kind of aesthetic experience involved in tragedy's appreciation is *causally responsible* for pessimism's defeat. It is not just that this kind of aesthetic experience *reveals* our possession of capacities that undermine the pessimistic generalization, but that it plays a key role in the development and maintenance of those capacities. I consider these claims in turn, arguing that both express Nietzsche's concern about the pessimism of aversion and belief that avoiding it hinges on the ability to value our passions.

The first step in this argument is establishing that Nietzsche really does take the psychology of tragedy to play an essential role in blocking the pessimistic generalization. This is easily done, for Nietzsche explicitly cites humanity's capacity to create and appreciate tragedy as the decisive evidence against Schopenhauer. This point is forcefully made in *Twilight's* concluding section, a section Nietzsche later describes as recounting his discovery of "the psychology of tragedy"(EH "BT" 3 [15]):

> The psychology of the orgiastic, as an overflowing feeling of life and strength where even pain acts as a stimulus, gave me the key to the concept of *tragic* feeling, a concept that had been misunderstood by Aristotle and even more by our pessimists. Tragedy is so far from proving anything about Hellenic pessimism in Schopenhauer's sense of the term that in fact it serves as the decisive refutation and *counter-example* to Schopenhauerian pessimism. Saying yes to life, even in its strangest and harshest problems; the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest types – *that* is what I called Dionysian, *that* is the bridge I found to the psychology of the *tragic* poet. *Not* to escape horror and pity, *not* to cleanse yourself of a dangerous affect by violent

> discharge – as Aristotle thought –: but rather, over and above all horror and pity, so that *you yourself may be* the eternal joy in becoming, – the joy that includes even the eternal *joy in negating*. (TI "Ancients" 5 [3])

The details of this account of tragic psychology are difficult to parse. I will do my best to elucidate them later by appealing to passages where Nietzsche presents this psychology in plainer language. At the moment, however, what is essential is simply the following: tragic psychology, the particular variety of aesthetic experience involved in the creation and appreciation of tragic art, is "the decisive refutation and *counter-example* to Schopenhauerian pessimism". To understand Nietzsche's account of this psychology, consequently, will also be to understand his conception of Schopenhauerian pessimism. Whatever tragic psychology's distinctive features are, the claim that these things are outside humanity's psychic reach will constitute the pessimism that Nietzsche denies.

My task in this section will be to answer two questions about Nietzsche's understanding of tragic psychology: 1) what does Nietzsche take the distinctive features of tragic psychology to be?; and 2) why are these features essential to the experience of life as a beneficial possession?

A. Delight in Passion as the Distinctive Feature of Tragic Psychology

Our first question is what Nietzsche takes the distinctive features of tragic psychology to be. This is best answered by considering a number of passages where Nietzsche offers relatively concrete accounts of tragedy's life-affirming nature. In these passages, one factor is consistently emphasized: tragedy reveals our ability to value our lives precisely because it reveals our ability to value our *passions.*

Before proceeding, it will help to note some features of Nietzsche's conative terminology. The view I am defending focuses on *passions* (*Leidenschaften, Passionen*). Nietzsche uses the term passion to describe a particular kind of affect (*Affekt*). Affect is a fairly broad term: it covers any occurrent psychological state (a desire, a feeling, an emotion, etc.) expressive of the deep-rooted psychological dispositions Nietzsche refers to as instincts (*Instinkte*) or drives (*Triebe*).[20] Passion is a much narrower term. It refers only to affects that involve a particular kind of desire, namely one which might be described as an "unconditional urge"(GS 123 [16]). To qualify as a passion, the motivation provided by a desire must be unconditional in at least two senses: a passion is a desire that motivates even when pursuit of its object is neither *useful* nor *safe*. On the first of these points, Nietzsche emphasizes that a desire counts as a passion only when it motivates pursuit of its object as an *end* rather than a means.[21] On the second point, Nietzsche emphasizes that a desire counts as a passion only when the one in its grip no longer takes certain dangers into account:

> An animal that protects its young at the risk of its life, or that during the mating period follows the female even into death, does not think of danger and death; its reason also pauses, because the pleasure in its young or in the female and the fear of being deprived of this pleasure dominate it totally: the animal becomes more stupid than usual—just like those who are noble and magnanimous. They have some feelings of pleasure and displeasure that are so strong that they reduce the intellect to silence or to servitude: at that point their heart displaces the head, and one speaks of "passion." (GS 3 [17])

A passion, then, is a desire strong enough to override or silence the kinds of considerations typically able to check the pursuit of desire's objects. A passion continues to move us even when this undermines our other projects. In particular, it continues to move us even when this puts

[20] On this distinction between affect and drive/instinct, see Katsafanas 2013, Leiter 2019, and Riccardi 2021. I know of no similarly detailed account of Nietzsche's use of the term passion.
[21] Thus, GS 123 treats the claim that knowledge is no longer valued as a mere means interchangeably with the claim that we now have a *passion* for knowledge.

ordinary *negative* goods and the *negative* happiness of an easy and comfortable life in serious risk. Thus, Nietzsche presents passions as uniquely *dangerous* precisely due to their psychological dominance:

> All these morals directed at the individual person to promote what people call his "happiness" – are they anything other than recommendations for constraint, in proportion to the degree of danger in which the individual person lives his life? or cures for his passions, his good and bad tendencies to the extent that they have will to power and want to play master? (BGE 198 [18])

Passions are desires that "want to play master", desires that require us to pursue their objects no matter the cost. For an individual to develop a passion is thus reasonably treated as an increase in the "degree of danger" in which she lives. To live in the grip of passion is to no longer make the negative happiness of a safe and comfortable life one's priority. It is to be willing to do things that put precisely the happiness of *painlessness* ("what people call [] 'happiness'" in the passage above) at risk.

My claim is that Nietzsche takes appreciation of tragedy to reveal our ability to value desires of precisely this dangerous kind. In a particularly forceful presentation of this view in *Daybreak*, Nietzsche suggests that tragic drama imbues passion with a new attractive force:

> Whoever thinks that Shakespeare's theater has a moral effect, and that the sight of Macbeth irresistibly repels one from the evil of ambition, is in error: and he is again in error if he thinks Shakespeare himself felt as he feels. He who is really possessed by raging ambition beholds this its image with *joy*; and if the hero perishes by his passion this precisely is the sharpest spice in the hot draught of this joy. Can the poet have felt otherwise? How royally, and not at all like a rogue, does his ambitious man pursue his course from the moment of his great crime! Only from then on does he exercise "demonic" attraction and excite similar natures to emulation – demonic means here: in defiance *against* life and advantage for the sake of a drive and idea. Do you suppose that Tristan and Isolde are preaching *against* adultery when they both perish by it? This would be to stand the poets on their head: they, and especially Shakespeare, are enamored of the passions as such and not least of their *death-welcoming* moods – those moods in which the heart adheres to life no more firmly than does a drop of water to a glass. It is not the guilt and its evil outcome they have at heart, Shakespeare as little as Sophocles (in Ajax, Philoctetes, and Oedipus): as easy as it would have

> been in these instances to make guilt the lever of the drama, just as surely has this been avoided. The tragic poet has just as little desire to take sides *against* life with his images of life! He cries rather: "it is the stimulant of stimulants, this exciting, changing, dangerous, gloomy and often sun-drenched existence! It is an *adventure* to live – espouse what party in it you will, it will always retain this character!" (D 240 [19])

Tragedy, Nietzsche suggests, expresses the attitude of someone who is "enamored of the passions as such". This love is passed to the viewer not by causing the development of new passions, but by changing the experience of passions already possessed: *Macbeth* does not turn its viewers into ambitious people; rather, it causes those already "possessed by raging ambition" to experience that ambition differently. Importantly, it does this not by glorifying passion's objects, but by glorifying the passions themselves – the poets, again, are "enamored of the passions *as such*"(my emphasis). It is not satisfied passion, content in the possession of its object, that tragedy holds before us. Rather, tragedy's great achievement is to present *struggling, unsatisfied passion* as a source of joy. It thus causes us to delight not just in passion's objects and passion's satisfaction, but in the experience of passion as such. In so doing, tragedy speaks in favor of life's value even while presenting its most disastrous possibilities, and in fact even while encouraging us to live in a way that increases the risk of such disasters. The tragic poet thus presents the perfect Nietzschean response to Schopenhauerian pessimism, namely one that is entirely compatible with Dionysian pessimism, i.e. an acknowledgement of and concern with precisely the terrible aspects of life.[22] It is my claim that, when Nietzsche says tragic psychology is the decisive counter-example to Schopenhauerian pessimism, it is this feature of that psychology which he has in mind. In the appreciation of tragedy, we reveal an ability to value our passions. In valuing our passions, we are able to value our lives.

[22] As Nietzsche puts it in *Twilight*, "The tragic artist is *not* a pessimist, – he says *yes* to the very things that are questionable and terrible, he is *Dionysian* . . ."(TI "Reason" 6 [20]).

This reading is borne out by a variety of places where Nietzsche identifies tragedy's passion-valorizing effects as precisely the aspect of tragic psychology the Schopenhauerian pessimist must misunderstand in order to maintain her view. Thus, Nietzsche offers the following response to Schopenhauer's suggestion that tragedy encourages renunciation:

> Schopenhauer taught that the overall aim of art was "to free yourself from the will", and he admired the great utility of tragedy in "teaching resignation". – But this – I have already suggested – is a pessimist's optic, his "evil eye" –: you need to ask artists themselves. *What is it about himself that the tragic artist communicates?* Doesn't he show his *fearlessness* in the face of the fearful and questionable? – This is in itself a highly desirable state; anyone who knows it will pay it the highest honors. He communicates it, he *has* to communicate it, provided he is an artist, a genius of communication. The courage and freedom of affect in the face of a powerful enemy, in the face of a sublime hardship, in the face of a horrible problem, – this *victorious* state is what the tragic artist selects, what he glorifies. (TI "Skirmishes" 24 [21])

It is precisely blindness to tragedy's passion-valorizing effects that constitutes the "pessimist's optic". Schopenhauer rightly notes that tragedy presents us with many of life's most horrible possibilities. Maintaining his pessimism, however, requires him to miss the fact that tragedy presents these horrible possibilities as a means of bringing out the worth of that passion which confronts them: tragedy presents the horrors of human life only in order to celebrate passion's ability to retain its shine even in the face of such horrors. It is "the courage and freedom of *affect* in the face of a powerful enemy"(my emphasis) that tragedy communicates, and it is precisely this which the pessimist must misunderstand to interpret it as supporting her view. The same point is made in Nietzsche's critique of Wagner's efforts to interpret his own early tragedies as expressions of Schopenhauerian doubts about life's value. Holding on to Schopenhauerian pessimism in the face of his own works required Wagner to overlook that which was in fact most essential to them: their celebration of passion as the greatest of goods.

> What happened to him [Wagner] has happened to many artists: he misinterpreted the characters that he himself had created and misunderstood the philosophy that

> was implicit in his most characteristic works of art. Until the middle of his life, Richard Wagner allowed himself to be led astray by Hegel. Later, the same thing happened to him a second time when he began to read Schopenhauer's doctrine into his characters and to apply to himself such categories as "will," "genius," and "pity." Nevertheless, it will remain true that nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of Schopenhauer than what is distinctively Wagnerian in Wagner's heroes: I mean the innocence of the utmost selfishness, the faith in great passion as the good in itself —in one word, what is Siegfried-like in the countenance of his heroes. (GS 99 [22])

It is, then, a consistent claim of Nietzsche's that the aspect of tragic psychology incompatible with the pessimistic generalization is its valorization of passion. It is because people are able to value their passions in the way required to create and genuinely appreciate tragic art that pessimism falls short.

This reading receives further support from Nietzsche's periodic suggestion that the psychology of music is no less hostile to pessimism than that of tragedy.[23] For it is precisely their common valorization of passion that Nietzsche takes to bind music and tragedy together. Thus, in *BGE* 106 [25], Nietzsche remarks that "In music the passions enjoy themselves." Elsewhere, Nietzsche likens the speeches of tragedy to the songs of genuine opera, presenting them as two means of achieving passion's beautification:

> The Greeks (or at least the Athenians) liked to hear people speak well. Nothing distinguishes them so thoroughly from non-Greeks as does this truly greedy craving. Even of passion on the stage they demanded that it should speak well, and they endured the unnaturalness of dramatic verse with rapture. In nature, passion is so poor in words, so embarrassed and all but mute; or when it finds words, so confused and irrational and ashamed of itself. Thanks to the Greeks, all of us have now become accustomed to this unnatural stage convention just as we tolerate, and tolerate gladly, thanks to the Italians, that other unnatural convention: passion that sings. (GS 80 [26])

[23] E.g., in his famous comment that "Without music, life would be a mistake"(TI "Arrows" 33 [23]), his discussion of music's "world-transfiguring affirmative character"(EH "CW" 1 [24]), his joke that Schopenhauer's flute playing undermines his pessimism (BGE 186), etc.

Music and tragic drama are bound together by this shared effect, by their common ability to turn passion into something beautiful. If delight in passion is the core of tragic psychology, then we can make sense of Nietzsche's claims about music's role in undermining pessimism in the same terms that we made sense of Nietzsche's claims about tragic drama's role in undermining pessimism: the appreciation of music too involves feeling the value of passion, and it is precisely passion's value that must be felt if life is to be experienced as a benefit.

As a final confirmation of this reading, it is worth noting that it explains much of the language Nietzsche uses in the difficult *Twilight* passage with which we began. Nietzsche's descriptions of tragic pleasure in terms of "the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility" and "the eternal joy in becoming" can be understood as poetic ways of describing delight in passion itself. To delight in passion *itself*, as opposed to merely delighting in passion's satisfaction, is to take joy in a sort of will, in the continued pressure of a motive rather than the final stability of an endpoint. As Nietzsche puts it in *Daybreak*, a truly valued passion is one that "at bottom fears nothing but its own extinction"(D 429 [27]). In delighting in it, our hope is that it be inexhaustible, that we are able to live always under its pressure, the stable being offered by motiveless indifference ruled out by the continued force of passion within our lives. This same point explains why Nietzsche places so much emphasis on the contrast between his view of tragic psychology and Aristotle's: it is essential to Nietzsche that tragic psychology involves a longing for the *enduring* experience of passion rather than quick relief from it. The role of tragedy is precisely "*not* to cleanse yourself of a dangerous affect by violent discharge – as Aristotle thought". Tragedy does the exact opposite of this: it turns our passions – our "*dangerous* affect[s]"(my emphasis) – into something we love and cling to rather than something we long to escape. Tragedy achieves this effect, bringing us to delight in passion itself rather

than just its satisfaction, by showing us how passion continues to shine even when it brings disaster in its wake. To return to an earlier example, *Tristan and Isolde* brings us to delight in love precisely by showing us how love brings its heroes to ruin. As Nietzsche puts it, tragic appreciation involves "the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest types." The depiction of Tristan and Isolde's doom is essential to the tragedy's efficacy. Their love *must* lead to ruin if the work is to bring us to delight in love itself, rather than simply directing us to the low hanging fruit of delight in love's satisfied state.[24]

Nietzsche suggests that tragic psychology offers the chief counter-example to Schopenhauerian pessimism because it offers the clearest proof of our ability to value our passions, to love and delight in them in a way which leads us to long for their preservation rather than their extinction. He must, then, identify Schopenhauerian pessimism with the claim that we cannot value our passions in this way. It will be the task of the next section to explain Nietzsche's belief that a genuine variety of pessimism would follow were this inability to value passion actually essential to human psychology.

B. Why Do We *Need* to Value Our Passions to Experience Life as a Benefit?

Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauerian pessimism focuses on the pessimists' premises rather than their conclusions. He aims to find a counter-example to their claims about the limits of human psychology, rather than argue that life could still be experienced as a benefit within

[24] Young 1992 and Ridley 2019 suggest that Nietzsche's discussion of tragic psychology in TI "Ancients" 5 can only be understood as a reversion to metaphysical ideals he has officially renounced. This impression is the result of putting Nietzsche's last discussions of tragedy in dialogue with his first while jumping over all the development in the middle. In *Twilight*, Nietzsche repurposes the poetic language of *The Birth of Tragedy* to express the non-metaphysical account of tragic psychology he developed in passages like *Daybreak* 240.

those psychic limits. In the previous section, I argued that Nietzsche identifies Schopenhauerian pessimism with the claim that valuing passion is a human impossibility. This leaves us with a question: why is Nietzsche willing to grant that, were this premise true, the pessimists' conclusions would follow? Why, in other words, does Nietzsche think human beings need to value their passions in order to value their lives?

A straightforward answer to this question by direct appeal to the pains of disvalued passion – the experience of passion is inevitable, thus a life in which passion is experienced painfully will be an inevitably painful life – will be unsuccessful. This is true, first of all, because Nietzsche does *not* take the experience of passion to be inevitable. *Desire* may be inevitable for all who live, but not all desire rises to the level of passion. A passion is a desire of a particularly dangerous kind: namely, one strong enough to motivate pursuit of its object at the cost of ordinary negative goods. Nietzsche is more than willing to grant that many people lead lives free of passion in this sense. Thus, describing the average person's inability to understand the passions of exceptional individuals, Nietzsche notes the following:

> What distinguishes the common type is that it never loses sight of its advantage, and that this thought of purpose and advantage is even stronger than the strongest instincts; not to allow these instincts to lead one astray to perform inexpedient acts—that is their wisdom and pride. (GS 3 [17])

On Nietzsche's view, average people are marked by a lack of passion. Their commitment to safety and ordinary negative goods – to "advantage" as Nietzsche puts it – is "even stronger than the strongest instincts". To be common is, in other words, to be dominated by desire for ordinary negative goods in a way that renders passion psychologically impossible. Nietzsche's concern, then, cannot be that we must value our passions because they are inevitable and life cannot be valued if one of its inevitable elements is inevitably distressing. Passion, on Nietzsche's view, is not *inevitable* at all.

Beyond this, however, even were the experience of passion inevitable, direct appeal to the distress disvaluing passion might cause still could not explain Nietzsche's concern about it. As we just saw, Nietzsche insists that pain will be an element of any valuable life. It is precisely the passionate – those who disregard the comforts prioritized by the common – who are able to live well. This is a point Nietzsche makes frequently, especially in his many critiques of what he calls "the religion of pity":

> If you, who adhere to this religion, have the same attitude toward yourselves that you have toward your fellow men; if you refuse to let your own suffering lie upon you even for an hour and if you constantly try to prevent and forestall all possible distress way ahead of time; if you experience suffering and displeasure as evil, hateful, worthy of annihilation, and as a defect of existence, then it is clear that besides your religion of pity you also harbor another religion in your heart that is perhaps the mother of the religion of pity; the *religion of comfortableness*. How little you know of human *happiness*, you comfortable and benevolent people, for happiness and unhappiness are sisters and even twins that either grow up together or, as in your case, *remain small together*. (GS 338 [28])

A life where comfort is rejected is, Nietzsche suggests, *happier* than one where it is embraced. A happy life is *more painful* than an unhappy life, and to remove that pain would be destructive of its value. It cannot, consequently, be Nietzsche's view that the devaluation of passion deprives life of its value because it renders life painful. Adding disvalued passion to human life would not present any obstacle to our valuing it as long as it was still possible for us to experience the pains associated with those passions as outweighed or otherwise justified by life's beneficial elements.

The straightforward response's limits suggests two questions our account must answer: 1) why are we unable to experience a passion-free life as positively beneficial?; and 2) why are we unable to experience the pains of disvalued passion as outweighed or otherwise justified by life's beneficial elements?

Although it is important to keep these two questions apart, I take it that they share a single answer. A life in which passion is absent and a life in which passion is disvalued are both

lives dominated by aversion and the pursuit of merely negative goods. In the case of a passion-free life, this follows clearly enough from Nietzsche's definition of passion. A passion is a desire with sufficient strength to overcome commitment to the ordinary negative goods summed up by the terms comfort and safety. In the absence of such a desire, concern for ordinary negative goods dominates the psyche. A life devoted to such goods need not be terribly distressing: it may contain little positive bad. There will, however, never be much more to say for it than that. It will be a life spent trying to reach the neutral state, a more or less difficult struggle to keep one's peace from being disturbed. At best, it will have nothing more to offer its possessor than an existence felt to be *almost* as good as non-existence would have been. This is why Nietzsche tends to treat his critique of the passion-free life as an engagement with slightly more honest Stoics, ones willing to admit that they are proposing indifference to one's own life as the best state of being, rather than pretending that the passion-free life is truly happy in a positive sense[25]:

> What fantasies about the inner "misery" of evil people moral preachers have invented! What *lies* they have told us about the unhappiness of passionate people! "Lies" is really the proper word here; for they knew very well of the over-rich happiness of this kind of human being, but they kept a deadly silence about it because it refuted their theory according to which all happiness begins only after the annihilation of passion and the silencing of the will. Finally, regarding the prescription of all these physicians of the soul and their praise of a hard, radical cure, it should be permitted to ask: Is our life really painful and burdensome enough to make it advantageous to exchange it for a Stoic way of life and petrification? We are *not so badly off* that we have to be as badly off as Stoics. (GS 326 [29]; see also, GS 12)

Stoics, on Nietzsche's view, sacrifice positive good for the sake of negative good, giving up happiness for the sake of painlessness. This, Nietzsche suggests, is what passion-free life

[25] Nietzsche's challenge to Stoicism is helpfully presented in Mollison 2019. Mollison misses an important aspect of that challenge, however, by equating Nietzsche's objection to Stoic devaluation of passion with his general objection to Stoic devaluation of suffering (see, especially, 101 n.13). Passion has an importance to Nietzsche beyond its status as one source of suffering among many.

amounts to: living a life that is at best *harmless* rather than happy. As such, if human beings are to positively value their lives, they will need to be able to positively value *lives of passion*.

Here we return to our second question. Given that human beings are unable to positively value lives that are passion-free, why must they also be able to positively value their passions themselves? Why can someone distressed by their passions not nonetheless positively appreciate a life in which those passions are contained?

Before turning to this question, it will help to be more explicit about what keeps us from experiencing passion-free existence as *positively* beneficial. A passion-free existence will not be experienced as a source of significant positive value because the desires and other affects that determine our value experience of it will be *aversive* in nature. The dominant motive in a passion-free life is an impulse to flee things experienced as bad: pain, distress, danger, etc. This is a problem because Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, takes the experience of something as valuable to be something we have by way of our affects and desires: it is only because something is the object of an affect which figures it as beneficial that we are able to delight in its presence within our life.[26] As Schopenhauer argued, however, only certain kinds of desire cause their objects to be experienced as beneficial in a positive sense. Desires are able to do this only when structured as attractions rather than aversions: some desires cause their objects to be experienced as of positive value, others merely as sources of relief. Through the former set of desires, life with desire's object is experienced as in some respect wonderful and beneficial. Through the latter, life with desire's object is merely experienced as in some respect neutral, as innocuous and harmless but not positively good. Thus, a life dominated by aversive desires – as all passion-free lives are – will never be experienced as a source of positive value. If a life of passion is to do

[26] On this point, see, for example, chapter three of Leiter 2019 and Riccardi 2021.

better on this score, it is essential that those passions be structured differently. A life of passion will offer the possibility of experiencing life as a source of positive value only if those passions generate attractive value experiences rather than aversive ones. If our passions are simply aversive desires with sufficient strength to motivate the sacrifice of more common aversive desires' objects, then a life of passion will offer no advantage over a life that is passion-free.

This is the situation Nietzsche thinks we would be in were disvaluing our passions unavoidable. Where passion is not experienced as positively valuable, the objects we value through our passions will not be experienced as positively valuable either. This is a consequence of the general feature of desire Nietzsche points to when he claims that "In the end one loves one's desire and not what is desired"(BGE 175 [30]). Love of desire has a priority over love of desire's object, as it is only through love of desire that desire's object can be loved. Desires which we suffer rather than enjoy are always stuck at the level of aversion, and thus their objects are always stuck at the level of negative goods and balms. This is as true of unconditional desires, of passions, as it is of any others.

To see why this would be the case, it will help to emphasize that the difference between attraction and aversion is not that attraction pushes us toward its object while aversion pushes us away from its object. Thus, Schopenhauer's clearest cases of aversively structured desire were hunger and thirst, both of which push us toward an object: hunger pushes us to seek food rather than flee it, and likewise with thirst and drink. Rather, the real difference between attraction and aversion is the nature of the push they provide: attraction pushes us by making us experience or expect to experience some state as positively good, while aversion pushes us by making us experience or expect to experience some state as positively bad. Thus, hunger and thirst count as aversive desires because their way of moving us toward their objects is to make the absence of

those objects unpleasant. The hungry person seeks out food and the thirsty person drink, but they do so only because they experience hunger and thirst as distressing states and wish to bring them to an end.[27] The question is *how* a desire moves us, not where: does it cause us to experience the absence of its object as a disaster or its presence as a delight?

It is clear which of these two forms of motivation is provided by a passion we *suffer* rather than enjoy. We experience these passions as a burden. We wish to be rid of them. As such, their satisfaction comes to be valued negatively, as the best means to remove passion from experience. You cannot both want passion to cease and to continue experiencing passion's object through passion's eyes: to want to end the experience of passion is also to want to see passion's object return to insignificance. Wherever passion's experience generates desire for passion's end, consequently, passion will be experienced as aversion, as an impetus to obtain an object as a means of escaping an intolerable situation (namely, that constituted by the experience of passion) rather than entering a wonderful one. In his discussion of hostility's spiritualization, Nietzsche makes it clear that he understands the spiritualization of passion to involve precisely this sort of transition between aversive and attractive modes of relating to passion's object:

> Another triumph is our spiritualization of *hostility*. It involves a deep appreciation of the value of having enemies; basically, it means acting and reasoning in ways totally at odds with how people used to act and reason. Thus the church has always wanted to destroy its enemies: but we, on the other hand, we immoralists and anti-Christians, think that we benefit from the existence of the church. . . We act the same way towards the "inner enemy": we have spiritualized hostility there too, and have come to appreciate its *value* . . . Nothing is more foreign to us than that one-time desideratum of "peacefulness of the soul", the Christian desideratum; there is nothing we envy less than the moral cow and the fat happiness of good conscience. You give up the *great* life when you give up war. (TI "Morality" 3 [31])

[27] To see hunger and thirst's aversive structure, it is important to separate them from desire for tasty food and drink, the social experience of sharing a meal, etc. As Plato notes in *Republic* IV, hunger and thirst do not aim at these things themselves: their objects are food and drink simpliciter. We often welcome hunger and thirst because we need them to satisfy desires for tasty food, social eating, etc. They are, however, typically unpleasant on their own.

In valuing hostility, we see hostility's object – "war"[28] – as part of what makes life great. Before hostility was valued, war was valued only negatively, as a means to quiet the disturbing desire for war. Thus, the Church aimed to destroy its enemies totally, hoping to not merely satisfy the drive to hostility, but also deprive it of future opportunities for excitement. They longed only for the war to end all war, as distress at their hostile drives caused them to value war negatively, as a means to bring their desire for war to an end.

The case of hostility is, I take it, meant to generalize: where passion is experienced as a misfortune, its objects will always be experienced as no more than sources of relief. Thus, Nietzsche presents negative conceptions of happiness as symptoms of suffering from passion throughout his work. This comes out most clearly in his accounts of those unable to endure the tension between conflicting passions. In BGE 200, Nietzsche offers the following description of those in possession of "opposite, and often not merely opposite, drives and value standards that fight each other and rarely permit each other any rest":

> Such human beings . . . will on average be weaker human beings: their most profound desire is that the war they *are* should come to an end. Happiness appears to them, in agreement with a tranquilizing (for example, Epicurean or Christian) medicine and way of thought, pre-eminently as the happiness of resting, of not being disturbed, of satiety, of finally attained unity, as a "sabbath of sabbaths", to speak with the holy rhetorician Augustine who was himself such a human being. (BGE 200 [32])[29]

Notably, Nietzsche's view is *not* that negative conceptions of happiness are the inevitable expression of conflict among the passions. Rather, this follows only when this conflict results in passion being experienced as suffering. A quite different, highly positive conception of

[28] Notably, internal and cultural conflict (the struggle for self-control, Nietzsche vs. the church) are both "war" in the sense relevant to this drive.
[29] "The Problem of Socrates" chapter of *Twilight*, GM I.10, and the end of Z I.5 offer similar accounts.

happiness is expected from those able to continue valuing their passions in spite of (or even *because* of) their opposition:

> But when the opposition and war in such a nature have the effect of one more charm and incentive of life – and if, moreover, in addition to his powerful and irreconcilable drives, a real mastery and subtlety in waging war against oneself, in other words, self-control, self-outwitting, has been inherited or cultivated, too – then those magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable ones arise, those enigmatic men predestined for victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is found in Alcibiades and Caesar (BGE 200 [32])

The arrangement of the passions – their existence in a state of conflict or unity – is not what distinguishes those who long for rest from those with the highest ambitions. The difference, rather, is whether those passions are felt as a source of misery or experienced as "one more charm and incentive of life". If the latter, life may be loved both for the passions it excites and the positive happiness expected from passion's objects. If the former, passion will be experienced as a burden and its objects as mere negative goods, significant only as relief from the pain of living in passion's grip.

A life that excited only disvalued passions would, consequently, lack significant positive good. The objects of all dominant desires would be valued only negatively, as a means of bringing those distressing desires to an end. The complete devaluation of passion thus returns us to Schopenhauer's world, to a picture of life on which desire is experienced as harmful, and little is experienced as beneficial in a way that might justify undergoing such harm. The devaluation of passion returns us, in other words, to the pessimism of aversion. It is clear, then, why Nietzsche would take the claim that human beings are incapable of valuing their passions to constitute a form of pessimism. This claim entails another claim, the pessimistic force of which Schopenhauer had already demonstrated: namely, the claim that humanity is dominated by exclusively aversive values and desires.

III. Tragic Psychology as Counter-*Force* to Aversion

I have argued that Nietzsche takes tragic psychology to undermine Schopenhauerian pessimism's central generalization. It does this by revealing humanity's capacity to value its passions. Nietzsche sees this as significant because he accepts Schopenhauer's analysis of the problems that would follow were aversion the basic structure of human desire, and holds that disvalued passions are always structured aversively. To suffer from passion is to experience the source of one's values as something harmful, and thus to aim at nothing better than the negative happiness of indifference.

Nietzsche, however, does not present tragic psychology as playing a merely evidential role in pessimism's defeat. He also takes it to play a causal role: it is not just that our capacity to appreciate tragic art *reveals* the falseness of Schopenhauerian pessimism, but that this capacity is *responsible* for the falseness of Schopenhauerian pessimism. Thus, Nietzsche claims not only that tragedy proves the pre-Socratic Greeks were not pessimists, but that it was what allowed them to avoid pessimism. This is *The Birth of Tragedy*'s main thesis, and Nietzsche continues to present that book as offering "the first lesson in how the Greeks put pessimism behind them, – how they *overcame* it"(EH "BT" 1 [33]). Tragedy, Nietzsche suggests, is not just evidence *that* the Greeks overcame pessimism; it is also *how* they overcame it. Thus, in the *Birth of Tragedy*'s late preface, Nietzsche praises his younger self for raising the question of why the Greeks experienced tragic art as a *need*: "The most accomplished, most beautiful, most envied type of men so far, the most persuasive of life's seductions, the Greeks – what? they were the people who *needed* tragedy? Even more – art? To what end – Greek art? . . ."(BT "Attempt" 1 [34]). It is not just that tragedy demonstrated Greek love of life, but that it was a pre-condition of that

love: the Greeks *needed* tragedy, they could not have affirmed life in its absence. Likewise, when Nietzsche claims that "Without music, life would be a mistake"(TI "Arrows" 33 [23]), he suggests music is necessary to us. Life would be a *mistake* were we incapable of appreciating music: were we unable to appreciate music, we would also be unable to appreciate our own lives. Nietzsche describes art in general and tragic art in particular as the chief source of our love of life: "Is the artist's most basic instinct bound up with art, or is it bound up much more intimately with *life*, which is the meaning of art? Isn't it bound up with the *desirability of life*? – Art is the great stimulus to life"(TI "Skirmishes" 24 [21]). Here we are in the territory of Nietzsche's famous claim that "the existence of the world is only *justified* as an aesthetic phenomenon"(BT "Attempt" 5 [35]). The significance of that "only" should not be overlooked: Nietzsche claims not just that aesthetic experience offers the clearest evidence of our ability to value our lives, but that it is *only* because of aesthetic experience that we are able to value our lives.

An explanation is needed, then, not just of Nietzsche's claim that tragic psychology reveals the falsity of the pessimism of aversion, but also his claim that it is *responsible* for that falsity. In providing this explanation, we will need to understand Nietzsche's answer to two questions: 1) why do human beings tend to disvalue their passions?; and 2) how might a particular kind of aesthetic experience counter this tendency, allowing us to value passions we would otherwise come to despise.

A. Hostility to Passion as Humanity's Default State

Nietzsche often emphasizes ascetic morality's role in turning human beings against their passions and desires. As such, it is tempting to read him as taking this hostility to lack deep roots

in human psychology. We suffer from passion due to the negative influence of the ascetic ideal, and would default to a healthy love of passion were that negative influence removed. In what follows, I will argue that this is not the case. On Nietzsche's view, human beings are subject to a natural tendency to disvalue their passions. Resisting this tendency requires finding a positive counter-force to push in the opposite direction. The disvaluation of passion is humanity's default state, the result of innate features of human psychology left unchecked. Valuing passion requires active efforts to overcome these innate psychological tendencies.

To establish this, we need to look more closely at Nietzsche's account of how we come to value or disvalue our passions. In this regard, it is first worth noting that Nietzsche takes our experience of a passion to be wildly underdetermined by its nature. A passion is a desire strong enough to motivate pursuit of its object even at the cost of ordinary negative goods. As such, the basic identity of a passion is determined by its object. To return to the *Macbeth* case, if I have a sufficiently strong desire for *status*, then I am experiencing the passion of ambition. If you know my passion's object, you also know what passion it is. The basic identity of the passion I am experiencing, however, settles little about how I will experience it. This comes out particularly clearly in Nietzsche's account of the historical battle that has been fought over human sexuality as expressed in the passion he calls "eros" or "sensuality". This battle had no power to change eros' basic identity: its fundamental object, sexual activity, has always remained the same. Nonetheless, the battle still had a tremendous effect on the way eros is experienced. Thus, Nietzsche supposes eros was first experienced as a sort of folly, as a disastrous but guiltless affliction: sexuality is the example given when Nietzsche remarks that "All passions go through a phase where they are just a disaster, where they drag their victim down with the weight of their stupidity"(TI "Morality" I [36]). Later, under the influence of the futile Christian effort to

destroy eros, it came to take the form of lust and be experienced as a kind of guilt and sin: "Christianity gave Eros poison to drink: he did not die of it but degenerated – into a vice"(BGE 168 [37]). Finally, a counter movement succeeds in transforming eros into something that can be experienced positively, allowing it to take the form of love: "The spiritualization of sensuality is called *love*: it represents a great triumph over Christianity"(TI "Morality" 3 [31]). Throughout his description of this battle, Nietzsche emphasizes that a new passion never arrives on the scene: eros "did not die" when given Christianity's poisons; love is still sensuality, even if it has been spiritualized; and the experience of sexuality as foolish intemperance is but one "phase" in the passion's lengthy history. The object of sensuality remains fixed. Nonetheless, a transformation has occurred which radically changes the way we experience it.[30] Our experience of a given passion is thus highly plastic: the same desire that torments us when experienced as folly or lust might be our life's greatest joy when experienced as love.[31] Experience of a passion can develop

[30] Schact 1983 argues that Nietzsche equates "spiritualization" with sublimation. Thus, on Schact's reading, when Nietzsche speaks of love as the spiritualization of sensuality, he means that love is sublimated sensuality. Essential to sublimation is the idea of redirection to a new object: a sublimated passion ceases to push toward its original aim, redirecting its force toward an object originally associated with a different desire. This understanding of spiritualization is, consequently, incompatible with my account of sensuality's transformation. I suggested that Nietzsche understands sensuality's transformation as a case where the way we experience a passion changes while the object of that passion remains fixed. On Schact's reading, the modification of sensuality's object is precisely what Nietzsche is interested in.

Fortunately for my reading, the interpretation of spiritualization as sublimation is incompatible with Nietzsche's main example of spiritualization in *Twilight*: the spiritualization of hostility already discussed above. It may look like spiritualization changes hostility's object: originally, it aimed at the destruction of the enemy; now, it aims at preservation of our conflict with them. As we have seen, however, this change in behavior toward one's enemies is merely a side effect of a change in our attitude toward hostility. We no longer want to destroy our enemies because we want to keep the experience of hostility alive, just as we previously wanted to destroy them in order to bring the painful experience of hostility to an end. The object of hostility remains the same throughout: it wants to fight some enemy. All that has changed is whether we experience desire for that object in a way that encourages us to secure opportunities for its excitement and extension or in a way that encourages us to try for a quick once-and-for-all satisfaction in the hopes of never being bothered by it again. The spiritualization of sensuality can easily be understood in similar terms. It is the transition from the attitude of someone hoping to bring a bothersome attraction to an end via quick satisfaction to the attitude of the lover who wants nothing more than to continue viewing her beloved through attraction's eyes her whole life long.

[31] See Leiter 2019: 74-78 for discussion of Nietzsche's views about the plasticity of affective experience.

in any number of ways. Our question is how this experience will develop when passion unfolds without the influence of art. Will our experience of the passions develop in a way that allow us to value and enjoy them, or in a way that causes them to be felt as a kind of suffering?

Nietzsche's answer to this question is clear: where our experience of passion does not develop under art's influence, passion will ultimately be felt as a form of suffering. This is true even where avoidable negative influences – such as those of ascetic morality – are not in play. Thus, recall that Nietzsche did not present the ascetic ideal as responsible for sensuality's initial fusion with pain. Rather, sensuality was already fused with pain before the ascetic ideal was called in: we were distressed by sensuality experienced as *folly* even before we came to experience it as lust. Ascetic moralities are not responsible for humanity's initial hostility to passion. Rather, the reverse is the case. Human beings' preexisting hostility to passion is partially responsible for their embrace of ascetic moralities:

> All passions go through a phase where they are just a disaster, where they drag their victim down with the weight of their stupidity – and a later, much later phase where they marry themselves to spirit, where they "spiritualize" themselves. People used to fight against the passions because the passions were so stupid: people conspired to destroy them, – all the old moral monsters are unanimous on that score: "*il faut tuer les passion"* ["It is necessary to kill the passions"]. The most famous formula for this is in the New Testament, in that Sermon on the Mount, where, incidentally, things are certainly not viewed *from a higher perspective*. When it comes to sexuality, for instance, it says: "if your eye offends you, pluck it out"; fortunately, Christians do not follow this rule. Nowadays, to *destroy* the passions and desires just to guard against their stupidity and its unpleasant consequences strikes us as itself a particularly acute form of stupidity. We have stopped admiring dentists who *pluck out* people's teeth just to get rid of the pain. (TI "Morality" I [36])

Ascetic morality is presented as a strategy for dealing with the preexisting experience of suffering from passion. The ascetic priests are like dentists proposing to remove injured teeth as a way of removing pain, an analogy that works only if the passions these priests call on us to remove were already felt as a source of pain prior to their arrival. The priests offer a radical

remedy for passion's pre-existing decay.[32] The initial problem – the experience of passion as a form of suffering – arises as a result of passion's "unpleasant consequences", consequences which exist prior to any artificial imposition of negative consequences by the ascetic priests. It is, Nietzsche suggests, inevitable that passions initially be felt as misfortunes due to these unpleasant consequences. Thus, note the universal scope of Nietzsche's claim that "*All passions* go through a phase where they are just a disaster, where they drag their victim down with the weight of their stupidity"(my emphasis). The transition to a situation where passion can be valued is always "a later, much later phase", something that requires the passions to be actively transformed by the process he calls spiritualization. The next section will consider this process and offer an account of aesthetic experience's role in the spiritualization of passion. For the moment, however, our task is simply to explain why – prior to their aesthetic spiritualization – hostility to passion would inevitably develop out of its unavoidable "unpleasant consequences".

Nietzsche, unfortunately, does not go into detail about the mechanism in play here, saying little about how our experience of a passion is influenced by undergoing its unavoidable unpleasant consequences. He does, however, go into detail about how our experience of a passion might be formed by its avoidable unpleasant consequences: namely, those artificially imposed by the ascetic priests. Using these accounts of passion's intentional impoverishment as our guide, we should be able to develop an account of its unintentional impoverishment as well. In this regard, it will be particularly helpful to consider Nietzsche's discussion of the way that criminalization of a drive's expression can lead to a transformation of the affects that express it:

> The criminal type, this is a strong type of person under unfavorable conditions, a strong person made ill . . . His *virtues* are ostracized by society; his liveliest drives quickly fuse with depressive affects, with suspicion, fear, dishonor. But this is almost the *recipe* for physiological degeneration. When somebody is forced into

[32] Nietzsche makes the same point elsewhere, claiming that the idea of sin gained influence by providing people with a new means of *interpreting* their already existing suffering (see, e.g., GM III.16, A 23).

> secrecy and suspense, forced to be cautious and sly for a long time just to do what he does best and likes to do most, he will become anemic; and because he only ever experiences danger, persecution, and disaster from his instincts, even his feeling turns against these instincts – he feels them fatalistically. (TI "Skirmishes" 45 [38]).

On this picture, passions are transformed via association with the affects and experiences that most often accompany their expression. The criminal is someone with instincts that are strong enough to find expression in passions, in desires that retain their force even when it would be highly dangerous to act on them. These passions are, however, quickly transformed into a source of suffering by the consequences of this danger. The person who finds disaster, pain, and humiliation as the most frequent results of expressing a passion soon begins to experience that passion as itself disastrous, painful, and humiliating. The distinction between the passion and what results from its expression becomes blurred: association causes the mere experience of the passion to be felt as suffering, regardless of whether the doleful results that tend to accompany it actually follow. The criminal thus unwillingly undergoes a less cognitive version of the fourth strategy for "limit[ing] the vehemence of a drive" that Nietzsche discusses in *Daybreak* 109. Nietzsche there describes the possibility of controlling a drive by way of:

> the intellectual artifice of associating its gratification in general so firmly with some very painful thought that, after a little practice, the thought of its gratification is itself at once felt as very painful (as, for example when the Christian accustoms himself to associating the proximity and mockery of the Devil with sexual enjoyment or everlasting punishment in Hell with a murder for revenge, or even when he thinks merely of the contempt which those he most respects would feel for him if he, for example, stole money; or, as many have done a hundred times, a person sets against a violent desire to commit suicide a vision of the grief and self-reproach of his friends and relations and therewith keeps himself suspended in life: – henceforth these ideas within him succeed one another as cause and effect). (D 109 [39])

The criminal's passions are transformed via the same basic associational mechanism. The difference, however, is that in her case the fusion occurs via painful experiences rather than

painful thoughts. No "intellectual artifice" is needed to bring the expression of passion together with pain, guilt, and shame. The structure of her society ensures that these are often the actual results of passion's expression, not merely the imagined ones. Through this associational process, passion begins to be felt "fatalistically", as nothing more than the foretaste of pain to come. One begins to suffer from passion itself, not simply from its possibly unfortunate results. Passion is thus transformed via habituation and conditioning: the experiences that frequently accompany a passion's expression ultimately become part of the way that we experience the passion itself.

This mechanism – the transformation of passion by association with its consequences – should operate no less effectively when those consequences are not artificially imposed. Where suffering is often the result of passion's expression, passion itself comes to be felt as nothing more than a foretaste of suffering. This is true whether passion's unpleasant consequences are imposed by ascetics or simply fall out of the ineliminable risks of life in passion's grip. This is significant, as Nietzsche understands passion precisely in terms of its ability to expose us to such risks. A passion is a *dangerous* desire, an unconditional urge which forces us to pursue its object even at the cost of misfortune. As discussed earlier, Nietzsche *endorses* the Stoic view that passion cannot be had without vulnerability to pain: he calls on us to accept vulnerability for passion's sake rather than pretending one can be had without the other. As Nietzsche is aware, passion really does have many "unpleasant consequences": it causes us to care about things we cannot control, to take risks we would not otherwise take, to pursue contradictory ends, to experience dissatisfaction, fear, anger, etc. There is, consequently, a natural tendency for passions to cause painful experiences and negative emotions. By association, the passions that repeatedly lead to these pains come to be felt as painful themselves. Ascetic morality simply

exaggerates a problem which would develop in any case, actively encouraging the already highly probable fusion of passion with pain. The valorization of passion, consequently, cannot be treated as the default condition of human life: love of the passions would not spring forth on its own if some contingent inhibiting factor was removed. The tendency toward devaluation is internal to the passions themselves. Some positive counterbalance to that tendency will be necessary if there is to be a possibility of stably possessing the passions in their valorized form.

B. Aesthetic Experience as Positive Counterbalance to Passion's Associational Decay

What remains, then, is to explain Nietzsche's thought that a variety of aesthetic experience can provide this counterbalance. In the preceding sections, we focused on Nietzsche's views about the nature and importance of tragic art's effects. Here, our question will not be *what* impact tragedy has or *why* that impact matters. Rather, the question at hand is *how* tragedy has that impact. Nietzsche claims that a variety of aesthetic experience enables us to value our passions: how does it do this?[33]

The best way to answer this question is to think about what distinguishes the particular kind of aesthetic experiences capable of having this effect. What distinguishes Nietzsche's chief

[33] I agree with Nussbaum 1999 that art's passion-valorizing effects are the key to Nietzsche's anti-pessimistic aesthetics. In this section, my goal is to explain how these effects work in the particular case of tragedy and music. In doing so, I give less attention than Nussbaum to the way art helps reconcile us with creative illusion. Although Nietzsche sees hostility to illusion as incompatible with life's affirmation, he claims aesthetic experience is needed even when this hostility is absent (e.g., among the *pre-Socratic* Greeks). Nussbaum effectively captures Nietzsche's views (laid out in places like GS 107) about art's value to a certain kind of person: namely, someone both highly committed to the value of truth and aware that illusion plays an essential role in our affective lives. As I read him, however, Nietzsche does not think this is the only kind of person for whom art is a necessity.

examples of anti-pessimistic art forms – tragedy and music – from other sources of aesthetic experience? What is distinctive of the relationship between these arts and the passions?

One tempting answer – that these arts are uniquely suited to the *excitation* of passion, engaging us passionately in a way other arts do not – is ruled out by a prominent feature of Nietzsche's aesthetics. Nietzsche views the excitation of passions and desires as essential to *all* aesthetic experience, not just the special kind provided by music and tragic art. Thus, Nietzsche consistently opposes the theory that aesthetic experience is disinterested, suggesting that "*the excitement of the will* ('of interest') by the beautiful"(GM 6 [40]) is an integral part of aesthetic appreciation. This excitement of the will, Nietzsche emphasizes, amounts to nothing more than the excitement of perfectly ordinary passions and desires. Beautiful objects do not inspire some special aesthetic passion; rather, they excite a variety of ordinary passions depending on the object in question, the way the object is beautified, and the set of passions the spectator or artist is prone to. Thus, Nietzsche opposes Kantian claims about art's disinterestedness by pointing to the case of Pygmalion (GM III.6), claims Schopenhauer experienced beauty as a trigger for the drive to contemplation (GM III.8), suggests music excites all affects (TI "Skirmishes" 10), identifies architecture as an expression of and trigger for the will to power (TI "Skirmishes" 11), etc. Nietzsche, then, cannot take the excitation of passion to be what distinguishes passion-valorizing art forms. All arts are capable of exciting passion, but only some bring us to value it.

What, then, marks the relationship of passion-valorizing arts to passion beyond their ability to excite it? Nietzsche's answer seems to be that, in addition to exciting passion, these arts also depict it. Passion-valorizing arts are distinguished by depicting the very same passions they excite. Thus, we saw Nietzsche suggest that in watching *Macbeth* "He who is really possessed by raging ambition *beholds this its image* with joy"[my emphasis]. The ambitious viewer of

Macbeth's delight does not derive solely from the excitation of her ambition, nor solely from features of the play unrelated to her ambition (e.g., its formal properties). Rather, she takes pleasure in seeing the image of the very ambition she feels. Her ambition is excited and depicted at once, and this convergence is essential to the play's effect. The unambitious person, unable to muster a passional response to the play, would not feel this joy. Neither, however, would the ambitious person experiencing ambition without the play's depiction of it. The depiction and the excitation have to go together for the relevant aesthetic experience to occur.

The accounts of tragedy's life affirming effects in the other passages discussed above were similarly structured. In *Twilight* "Skirmishes" 24, the tragic poet transforms our experience of passion because he "communicates" something about it, namely its "courage and freedom . . . in the face of a powerful enemy". Wagner's tragedies are in tension with his pessimistic ideals because of the attitudes toward passion embodied by their characters: *Tristan and Isolde* causes its audience to view love as the greatest of goods only by depicting characters who embody this belief in love's value. In Nietzsche's claim that "In music the passions enjoy themselves", passion is the *object* of musical enjoyment: it is what we delight *in* while listening to music, not just what we value as a result of musical delight in some other object. In GS 80, Nietzsche suggests we go to opera not just to have our passions excited by singing, but to encounter "passion that sings". Nietzsche, then, seems to think we owe passion's valorization to the appreciation of art that depicts passion in addition to exciting it.

To explain how passion-depicting works of art have this effect, it is necessary to say more about Nietzsche's account of aesthetic experience. I have already noted one feature of this account, namely Nietzsche's thought that aesthetic experience involves passion's excitation. Beyond this, Nietzsche also claims that aesthetic experience involves a variety of pleasure, one

he has three main ways of describing.[34] Thus, Nietzsche sometimes describes aesthetic pleasure as sublimated sexual pleasure, noting that

> the peculiar sweetness and fullness characteristic of the aesthetic condition might have its origins precisely in the ingredient "sensuality" . . . sensuality is thus not suspended at the onset of the aesthetic condition, as Schopenhauer believed, but rather only transfigures itself and no longer enters consciousness as sexual stimulus. (GM III.8 [42])

Elsewhere, Nietzsche presents aesthetic pleasure as self-delight and pride in humanity's value:

> Anyone trying to think about this feeling [beauty] in abstraction from the pleasure human beings derive from humanity will immediately lose any sense of orientation. "Beauty in itself" is an empty phrase, not even a concept. In beauty, human beings posit themselves as the measure of perfection; in select cases they worship themselves in it . . . the judgement "beautiful" is the *vanity of their species* . . . (TI "Skirmishes" 19 [43])

Finally, Nietzsche sometimes presents aesthetic pleasure as anticipatory pleasure, as delight in the expectation of happiness. He endorses Stendhal's claim that "the beautiful *promises* happiness"(GM III.6 [44]), a view which matches his own description of beauty as "the *imitation of happiness"*:

> Supposing that beauty in art is always to be understood as the *imitation of happiness* – and this I hold to be the truth (D 433 [45])[35]

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[34] It may seem I am missing a fourth account, the description of aesthetic pleasure as intoxication (*Rausch*) central to Richardson 2004 and Leiter 2018. As I read him, however, Nietzsche sees intoxication as a *precondition* of aesthetic experience, not an element of it. This is explicit in TI "Skirmishes" 8: "One physiological *precondition* is indispensable for there to be art or any sort of aesthetic action or vision: intoxication"(my emphasis [41]).

[35] Ridley 2011 claims Nietzsche rejects Stendhal's view. Nietzsche describes Stendhal as "a real 'spectator' and artist"(GM III.6). Since Nietzsche takes aesthetic theories to go astray by focusing on spectators rather than artists, Ridley takes the description of Stendhal as "a real 'spectator'" to indicate unreliability. It is unclear, however, why Nietzsche would think that someone able to understand aesthetic experience from both the spectator's perspective and the artist's would have a weaker grasp on it than someone who understood it purely artistically. Just a few sections later in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche claims that the more perspectives we bring to a subject, the better we will understand it (GM III.12). In any case, the match between the view attributed to Stendhal and the view affirmed as Nietzsche's own in *Daybreak* confirms his endorsement. See also entry 25[154] in the 1884 *Nachlass* for a particularly explicit embrace of Stendhal's view: "'Beauty' – it is a promise of happiness. Stendhal. And that should be unselfish! Disinterested! What is beauty? Exactly as Stendhal rightly had it!"[46].

These seemingly divergent accounts are not plausibly understood as either changes or unnoticed inconsistencies in Nietzsche's view: they are often presented right alongside each other. Understanding Nietzsche's conception of aesthetic pleasure thus requires grasping the unity of these three accounts.

To do this, it helps to start with the first account: Nietzsche's description of aesthetic pleasure as sexual pleasure or "sensuality". For sensuality – at least as expressed in love, "the spiritualization of sensuality"(TI "Morality" 3 [31]) – neatly combines the ways of delighting in an object emphasized by the other accounts. Through love, we see the object of our affection as something wonderful. We view them as elevated to the heights, and our perception of their value is essential to the pleasure we take in them. This elevating, valorizing aspect of love is, Nietzsche suggests, one that likens lovers to artists:

> *Wherein we become artists*. – He who makes an idol of someone tries to justify himself in his own eyes by elevating this person to an ideal; in the process he becomes an artist so as to have a good conscience. If he suffers, he suffers not from *not knowing* but from self-deception, from the pretense of not knowing. – The inner distress and joy of such a person – and all passionate lovers are of their number – is not to be measured with an ordinary measure. (D 279 [47])

Seeing another elevated to the level of an ideal is, Nietzsche indicates, an essential element of a lover's joy. A lover delights in the object of her affection in part because she views them as immensely valuable. Creating and maintaining this valorizing view of an object is, Nietzsche suggests, also essential to artistic activity: an aesthetic object too must be viewed as possessing a lofty value if it is to be a source of delight. This is the aspect of aesthetic pleasure Nietzsche emphasizes in TI "Skirmishes" 19, when he presents it as a form of worship, as delight in something seen as "the measure of perfection".[36]

[36] Taken too far, these points about the role of idealization in love and aesthetic experience may seem troubling. Is Nietzsche's thought that lovers and artists simply project their ideals onto an object? If so, do we only value the objects of romantic and aesthetic interest via representations that make no contact with

Pleasure in the object of love, however, involves more than just this. Through love, the beloved is seen as possessing an immense and worship-worthy value. For all its elevation, however, this value is viewed not with distancing awe, but with hope, with anticipatory pleasure and delight. The lover sees herself as in some way permeable to the immense value of the beloved, as able to incorporate that value into her life in a way that makes it better. This is a way of viewing oneself that offers both anticipatory pleasures *and* prideful self-delight: the lover delights in herself as the kind of being to whom such a lofty good might be accessible. Thus, in a passage comparing love to avarice, Nietzsche notes that self-delight hinges on belief in our capacity to incorporate truly valuable goods into our lives:

> Our pleasure in ourselves tries to maintain itself by again and again changing something new *into ourselves*; that is what possession means. (GS 14 [48])

The pleasure a lover takes in her beloved seems to neatly combine the various elements Nietzsche associates with aesthetic pleasure: in it, prideful self-delight and hopeful expectation of happiness are combined. The beloved offers this delight because they are seen as offering a kind of value which is both *elevated* and *accessible*. The lover sees her beloved as valuable in the highest degree, and she sees herself as potentially open to that value. In this way, she feels both anticipatory pleasure in the hopeful expectation of receiving something of immense worth into her life and prideful self-delight in awareness of her own capacity to receive it. In claiming that aesthetic pleasure is a variety of sexual pleasure, I take it that Nietzsche means to suggest that our delight in aesthetic objects stems from viewing them in this same way, as possessing value that is both immense and available to us.

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those objects' reality? As we will see in the next chapter, this is not what Nietzsche has in mind. Idealization is a matter of *emphasis* rather than projection: the claim is simply that, in viewing an object with love or aesthetic appreciation, we focus in on those of its features that make life with it appealing. The lover's representation is selective rather than falsifying.

This account of aesthetic pleasure is well suited to the idea we have been trying to explain: that works of art which depict the very passions they excite are uniquely equipped to effect passion's valorization. For such works seem perfectly designed to generate the experience of passion as possessing a particular kind of value: namely, aesthetic value. In their manner of depicting passion, such works enable us to experience passion as worthy of wonder: the tragedian "glorifies" passion by, for example, bringing out its "courage and freedom . . . in the face of a powerful enemy"(TI "Skirmishes" 24 [21]). At the same time, however, these works also excite the very passions they glorify. Thus, even as they elevate passion to a great height, they also make it clear that its value is very much within our reach. Passion-depicting works of art, consequently, put us in a position to experience the passions they depict in just the way necessary to turn those passions into aesthetic objects: under their influence, passions are felt with the particular combination of wonder and expectation of happiness that Nietzsche takes to underly aesthetic delight. In turning passion into an object of aesthetic appreciation, such works effect precisely that transformation of passion which Nietzsche's remarks about its spiritualization lead us to expect. For Nietzsche presents spiritualized passions not just as ones we are able to enjoy, but more specifically as ones we are able to enjoy aesthetically. Thus, he complains that Christianity neglected to ask "how can a desire be spiritualized, beautified, deified"(TI "Morality" 1 [36]), a charge which suggests a neat equivalence between a desire's spiritualization and its beautification.

Tragedy and other passion-depicting works of art, then, provide a counter-balance to passion's associational decay because they turn passion into an aesthetic object, allowing us to delight in the beauty of life in passion's sway even as we acknowledge the many dangers and potentially unpleasant consequences of leading such a life. In so doing, these arts provide a

decisive answer to the pessimism of aversion. Under the influence of these arts, human beings *can* value their passions. Under the influence of these arts, then, space is finally opened up for the pursuit of genuinely positive goods to play a dominant role in human life.[37]

IV. The Dangers of the Aesthetic Perspective

We have seen that Nietzsche was deeply concerned about a variety of the pessimism of aversion, namely that constituted by the claim that human beings are incapable of valuing their passions. Nietzsche found a solution to this pessimism in a kind of aesthetic experience: in the appreciation of passion-depicting works of art, human beings come to experience their own passions as aesthetically valuable. Nietzsche thus took aesthetic appreciation to play a vital role in human life. Given this belief, it is unsurprising that Nietzsche puts a great deal of effort into defending humanity's aesthetic capacities against value systems that encourage their repression, opposing any and all positions hostile to the embrace of illusion and perspective on which aesthetic experience depends. Nietzsche, consequently, stands as one of the great defenders of the aesthetic perspective, consistently arguing that truly aesthetic values should play a large role in coloring our experience of the world.

[37] Leiter 2018 also defends aesthetic pleasure's importance to Nietzsche's anti-pessimism. Leiter's paper, however, contains an ambiguity: at times it emphasizes aesthetic pleasure's attractive role, at others its anesthetic role. If attraction is emphasized, my account fits well with Leiter's, though there is still disagreement about how aesthetic pleasure has this attractive effect: Leiter emphasizes direct attraction to aesthetic pleasure, while I emphasize the attraction to passion that such pleasure enables. If anesthetization is emphasized, however, my account diverges significantly from Leiter's. Anesthetization cannot enable life to be felt as a positive benefit, and Nietzsche is often critical of the anesthetic use of art (see, e.g., EH "HH" 3, D 269). I have discussed this with Leiter, and he agrees that aesthetic pleasure's attractive effects should be emphasized: these are what give it a real advantage over the ascetic ideal, permitting it to enable life's affirmation rather than simply hold suicidal nihilism at bay.

Surprisingly, however, it is precisely the aesthetic perspective that Nietzsche presents as the source of his own greatest temptation to pessimism. This is because beauty is not all that this perspective makes available. Along with susceptibility to beauty also comes susceptibility to aesthetic contempt and aesthetic disgust. In what follows, I will trace Nietzsche's account of the threats posed by these two aesthetic attitudes. I will argue that Nietzsche, like Mill, is concerned about the loss of self-respect that would follow for the aesthetically sensitive individual were human beings incapable of meeting their own aesthetic standards. Nietzsche too understands the claim that even the best human life lacks aesthetic value as a pessimistic claim. Were human beings incapable of seeing themselves as potential bearers of aesthetic worth, experiencing life as a benefit would be as impossible within the aesthetic perspective as without it.

A. Which Contempt and Disgust?

Throughout his work, Nietzsche highlights the threats posed by contempt and disgust for humanity. Often, Nietzsche describes the dangers posed by these attitudes in highly personal terms, as the great obstacles to his own efforts to maintain a positive attitude toward life:

> My danger is *disgust* with people. (EH "Destiny" 6 [49])

> There are days when I am haunted by a feeling that is blacker than the blackest melancholy – a *contempt for humanity*. (A 38 [50])

> What is it that I in particular find utterly unbearable? That with which I cannot cope alone, that causes me to suffocate and languish? Bad air! Bad air! That something deformed comes near me; that I should have to smell the entrails of a deformed soul! How much else can one not otherwise bear . . . But from time to time grant me – assuming that there are heavenly patronesses beyond good and evil – a glimpse, grant me just one glimpse of something perfect, completely formed, happy, powerful, triumphant, in which there is still something to fear! Of a human being who justifies man *himself*; a human being who is a stroke of luck,

> completing and redeeming man, and for whose sake one may hold fast to *belief in man*! (GM I.12 [51])

At other times, however, Nietzsche makes it clear that this fear is no mere personal idiosyncrasy: disrespect for humanity is, Nietzsche suggests, a threat not just to his own ability to value life, but to that of human beings generally. Thus, the personal account of Nietzsche's own difficulties with disgust for the human in the *Genealogy of Morality* passage considered above is bracketed by two separate passages describing such disgust as the great danger facing modern humanity:

> who would not a hundred times sooner fear if he might at the same time admire, than *not* fear but be unable to escape the disgusting sight of the deformed, reduced, atrophied, poisoned? And is this not *our* doom? What causes *our* aversion to "man"? – for we *suffer* from man, there is no doubt. – Not fear; rather that we have nothing left to fear in man; that the worm "man" is in the foreground and teeming; that the "tame man," this hopelessly mediocre and uninspiring being, has already learned to feel himself as the goal and pinnacle, as the meaning of history, as "higher man." (GM I.11 [52])

> the reduction and equalization of the European human conceals *our* greatest danger, for this sight makes tired . . . Precisely hear lies Europe's doom – with the fear of man we have also forfeited the love of him, the reverence toward him, the hope for him, indeed the will to him. The sight of man now makes tired – what is nihilism today if it is not *that*? . . . We are tired of *man* . . . (GM I.12 [51])

Nietzsche takes the loss of respect for humanity to pose a general threat to the possibility of experiencing life as something of value: the "we" and "our" here are quite expansive, large enough to slip easily between the claim that such disgust with the human is "*our* doom" and the claim that "Precisely here lies Europe's doom". The pessimism of aversion, then, is not the only variety of pessimism Nietzsche acknowledges. The claim that human beings necessarily view humanity with a certain kind of disgust or contempt also constitutes a variety of pessimism for Nietzsche. Were such disrespect for the human psychologically necessary, the experience of life as a beneficial possession would be a psychological impossibility.

To understand Nietzsche's reasons for acknowledging this claim's pessimistic force, it will first be necessary to identify the particular kinds of disgust and contempt that it involves. Contempt and disgust function in a variety of different registers, depending on the value perspective which generates them. Contempt always views its object as base and disgust always views its object as base-making.[38] The relevant concept of baseness, however, must be specified by a particular set of values. Thus, something morally insignificant but aesthetically significant would appear morally contemptible but aesthetically dignified; something which made the world uglier but left its moral value unchanged would appear aesthetically disgusting but morally pure; and so on for any other sets of potentially divergent value perspectives.

As already indicated, I take Nietzsche to be concerned about particularly aesthetic contempt and disgust: the vision of humanity as either base or base-making from within the aesthetic perspective is what Nietzsche sees as incompatible with experiencing life as something of value. This is already suggested by the prevalence of aesthetic terminology in the passages above. Note the emphasis on sight ("The *sight* of man now makes tired"), on humanity as a sorry spectacle and the desire to see a more beautiful vision of the human being ("a *glimpse*, grant me just one *glimpse* of something perfect"). Elsewhere, the point is more explicit. Thus, Nietzsche presents the experience of humanity as ugly as responsible for the same tiredness and depression here associated with contempt and disgust for the human. For example, he offers the following account of the importance of individual self-satisfaction to humanity at large:

> one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold. Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we others will be his victims, if only by having to endure his ugly sight. For the sight of what is ugly makes one bad and gloomy. (GS 290 [53])

[38] On this point, see note 15 in chapter one.

Elsewhere, Nietzsche suggests that the effects of exposure to human ugliness should be "measured with a dynamometer": it is precisely tiredness and depression that are its main effects:

> the only thing ugly is a *degenerating* person, – this defines the realm of aesthetic judgement. – Physiologically, everything ugly weakens and depresses people. It reminds them of decay, danger, deadly stupors; it actually drains them of strength. The effect of ugliness can be measured with a dynamometer. Whenever someone is depressed, he is sensing the proximity of something "ugly". His feeling of power, his will to power, his courage, his pride – these sink with ugliness and rise with beauty. (TI "Skirmishes" 20 [54])

Nietzsche's description of the consequences of viewing humanity with contempt and disgust neatly match his description of the consequences of viewing humanity as aesthetically offensive. As such, I take it that these passages should be viewed as different ways of presenting the same problem. The contempt and disgust that concern Nietzsche are particularly aesthetic contempt and aesthetic disgust, the sort of disrespect for humanity that would follow for the aesthetically sensitive individual who was unable to experience human life as possessing aesthetic worth.[39]

B. The Consequences of Aesthetic Contempt and Disgust

Nietzsche's main concern about these attitudes has already become clear: they have a depressive effect, generating a certain tiredness in those who experience them. These terms are

[39] Nietzsche's interest in human life's beauty has often been emphasized (see, for example, Foot 1994, Church 2015, and Leiter 2018). Leiter and Church in particular draw attention to the special role life's beauty plays in the aesthetic justification of existence, emphasizing that it contributes to affirmation in ways that art cannot. Leiter and Church seem to go too far in this direction, however, leaving art with no special role to play in Nietzsche's account. I take it to be a virtue of my reading that I can explain why Nietzsche presents *both* art and human beauty as essential to life's affirmation: art plays a key role in undermining the pessimism of aversion, while human beauty is essential to undermining the pessimism of aesthetic disrespect. I can thus explain why Nietzsche says that life without *music* would be a mistake rather than life without Beethoven, while still recognizing Leiter and Church's point that Nietzsche would likely make the same claim about figures like Beethoven as well.

quite vague, however, and the nature of the tiredness in question needs to be specified. I take it that in suggesting these attitudes lead to depression and tiredness, Nietzsche means to indicate that they produce a *generalized* demoralizing effect. They encourage inactivity, not by diminishing the force of any single passion or drive, but by diminishing the force of all drives at once. This is quite different from the effect of passion's fusion with pain. That one suffers from passion is itself a motive to satisfy passion, if only as a means of bringing one's suffering to an end. For the pessimism of aversion, the problem is that human beings are held firmly in the grip of passions they do not want. Here, in contrast, the problem is that passion's grip has become too loose. Under the influence of contempt and disgust for humanity, motives become weaker, and objects of desire cease to appear desirable. This is why Nietzsche often speaks of nihilism here rather than pessimism. Carried to its furthest limit, contempt for humanity would cease to cause us to suffer from life, and instead render us indifferent to it.[40]

Like Mill, Nietzsche takes aesthetic disrespect for humanity to have this demoralizing effect because of the impact it has on individuals' attitudes toward their own potential. The person who feels that humanity will never amount to anything necessarily feels the same way about herself. Likewise, for the still worse off person who feels that humanity will only amount to something horrifying and repulsive. Thus, we saw Nietzsche suggest that human ugliness reduces the self-confidence and self-respect of the *spectator*: "Whenever someone is depressed, he is sensing the proximity of something 'ugly'. His feeling of power, his will to power, his courage, his pride – these sink with ugliness and rise with beauty"(TI "Skirmishes" 20 [54]). To feel contempt or disgust for another human being is, Nietzsche suggests, to put one's own pride

[40] As I use the term, the nihilism in question is still a variety of pessimism. It is simply a variety of weak rather than strong pessimism, ruling out human happiness by ensuring that existence is experienced as no better than non-existence, even if it also ensures that it is experienced as no worse than non-existence.

and will in jeopardy. This is because other human beings, when viewed as representatives of one's own type, present themselves as embodiments of one's own potential: in seeing them, you get a glimpse of what you yourself might be able to do or be. Coming to view other instantiations of one's type with contempt and disgust, consequently, amounts to coming to view parts of one's own potential with contempt and disgust. This need not be a problem as long as one is still able to view other parts of one's potential with reverence and respect: that which has the potential to contribute something wonderful and significant to the world continues to inspire respect even if it might also fail to make this contribution or end up contributing something disastrous instead.[41] Thus, Nietzsche suggests he would be able to bear exposure to those who disgust him as long as he was allowed "just one glimpse of something perfect, completely formed, happy, powerful, triumphant, in which there is still something to fear! Of a human being who justifies man *himself*"(GM I.12 [51]). One glimpse would be enough here, as that would be sufficient to establish the *possibility* of human beauty. This possibility would in turn be sufficient to justify humanity considered *as potential*, establishing that human beings really *can* amount to something worthwhile, regardless of whether any significant number of them actually do.[42] In the absence of such visions of the good one might become, however, experience with disrespected instantiations of one's type can become a serious problem, making it difficult to believe in the potential one bears. Thus, Nietzsche ultimately concludes that ugliness repels us because it causes us to feel that our type is in decline:

> Ugliness is understood as a sign and symptom of degeneration: anything vaguely reminiscent of degeneracy causes us to judge the thing "ugly". . . . A *hatred* leaps up: what is it that people hate when this happens? But there is no doubt: *the decline of their type*. (TI "Skirmishes" 20 [54])

[41] For a defense of this claim, see note 15 in chapter one.
[42] Church 2015 similarly emphasizes the importance of "exemplars"(295) – figures who help secure belief in humanity's potential – to Nietzsche's aesthetic justification of existence.

Where every instantiation of one's type is experienced as ugly in this way, this revulsion comes to be directed against the type itself, and thus against oneself as yet another instantiation of that type. One comes to experience oneself as the sort of thing from which nothing good can be hoped. One comes, in other words, to view one's own potential with contempt or disgust.

In addition to the direct costs of experiencing one's potential in this way – loss of self-respect, constant exposure to something one finds aesthetically distressing, etc. – contempt and disgust for one's own potential also naturally result in the sort of generalized demoralizing effect Nietzsche emphasizes above. It does this by causing everything that one can achieve to be experienced as not worth achieving: if the best you can do is either insignificant or bad, then the fact that you are able to do something is itself evidence that it is not worth doing. This puts us back in the area of Reginster's problem of inspiration, and we have already seen Nietzsche himself describe the problem in similar terms: in our contempt for humanity, we suffer from the experience of the human as a "hopelessly mediocre and *uninspiring* being"(GM I.11 [52], my emphasis). We lose, as Nietzsche puts it "the hope for [man], indeed the will to [man]"(GM I.12 [51]). Insofar as we are ourselves human beings, the loss of the will to humanity amounts to the loss of our will to realize our own potential. We cease to hope for anything from this potential, and thus cease to will its realization. We no longer expect that anything of value would come from realizing even humanity's greatest potential within our lives. This general feeling of trivialization, of the insignificance or active badness of anything that one could possibly achieve, stands as a general disincentive to action, figuring all possible objects as either unachievable or unworthy of achievement. As such, it is well described as a source of tiredness, of a general lethargy that discourages action of any kind.

C. Why Is There No Aesthetic Either/Or?

Nietzsche, then, seems to have good reason to think that viewing the human with aesthetic contempt or aesthetic disgust is incompatible with experiencing life as a benefit. These attitudes necessarily rebound onto the person who feels them, leading both to the loss of their self-respect, and to a loss of appreciation for any other goods that their lives might yet have contained.

Notably, however, this claim – that human beings cannot both value life and feel aesthetic contempt or disgust for humanity – is not the same as the claim I attributed to Nietzsche at the start of this section: namely, that human beings cannot both value life and view humanity as either ugly or aesthetically irrelevant. There is a gap between taking humanity to lack aesthetic value and viewing humanity with aesthetic contempt or disgust. The one follows from the other only when the world is viewed through the lens of aesthetic values. For the person who was either insensitive to or unconcerned about aesthetic value, the fact that human life necessarily appears ugly or worthless from within the aesthetic perspective would be irrelevant. One feels contempt or disgust only for things that are insignificant or degrading from the perspective of values which are themselves felt to be significant – no one is bothered by the fact that they are unable to live up to the standard set by values they themselves do not hold. The claim that human beings necessarily view humanity with aesthetic contempt or disgust might, consequently, be recognized as a genuine pessimistic claim even while the pessimistic status of the claim that humanity necessarily appears ugly or aesthetically insignificant is denied. The relation between the latter claim and the former could be broken simply by throwing off the aesthetic perspective and ceasing to view aesthetic value as a genuine kind of value. This, notably, is precisely

Nietzsche's solution to the threat posed by the vision of humanity as morally worthless. Thus, Nietzsche suggests that discovering humanity's inability to live up to moral standards leaves us with a choice: "Either abolish your reverences or – *yourselves*!"(GS 346 [55]). Having presented this choice, Nietzsche then raises a question: "The latter would be nihilism – but would not the former also be – nihilism? – This is *our* question mark"(GS 346 [55]). It is clear that in the case of morality Nietzsche answers this question in the negative: our reverences can be denied without generating a new nihilism to succeed the one held off by their denial. It would seem, then, that Nietzsche should take a similar option to be available here as well. If humanity cannot live up to aesthetic standards, then the situation is clear: "either abolish your reverences or – *yourselves!*" Either toss the aesthetic perspective aside, or let your attachment to life collapse under the weight of aesthetic contempt and disgust.

We have already seen, however, that Nietzsche has cause to resist such an aesthetic either/or: here pessimism or nihilism really would be waiting on both sides of the dilemma. For, as we saw in section III above, Nietzsche takes the aesthetic perspective to play an essential role in avoiding the pessimism of aversion. As such, if human beings were faced with such an either/or in the aesthetic domain, abolishing our reverences really would be as disastrous as abolishing ourselves: experiencing life as a benefit would be just as impossible without the values that generate aesthetic contempt and disgust as with them. Nietzsche, consequently, has good reason to treat the claim that humanity is unable to live up to its own aesthetic standards differently than he does the claim that humanity is unable to live up to its own moral standards. The former claim constitutes a form of pessimism while the latter does not, because human beings need to view life aesthetically in order to value it while we do not need to view life

morally in order to value it.[43] For Nietzsche, as for Mill, the claim that humanity falls short of its own aesthetic standards serves as a sort of successor pessimism. It is a claim that constitutes a variety of pessimism only because of the requirements of meeting the threat posed by another variety of pessimism. Its threat begins precisely where the threat posed by the pessimism of aversion ends: with the assumption of the aesthetic perspective. Human beings cannot value life while experiencing humanity as aesthetically insignificant, but this is only because they cannot value life without viewing it through the lens of aesthetic values.

[43] I have presented none of Nietzsche's arguments against the necessity of the moral perspective here. It remains open, consequently, that Nietzsche should have treated the threat of moral disgust and contempt more like he treats the threat of aesthetic disgust and contempt. I have only argued the reverse point, that Nietzsche had good reason not to treat aesthetic disgust and contempt more like he treats moral disgust and contempt.

Chapter 5: On Nietzsche's Claim that "the Beautiful Promises Happiness"

In the last chapter, I presented Nietzsche's account of aesthetic experience's importance to human well-being. Valuing our lives in a positive sense requires experiencing at least some things as *beautiful*: namely, passion-depicting works of art and the passions they depict.

In presenting this account of beauty's importance, I largely took Nietzsche's word about its nature. Nietzsche claimed that beautiful objects are experienced as *promising happiness*: a beautiful object is taken to possess an immense value which nonetheless might enter one's life in a way that makes it better. This particular understanding of beauty is what justifies Nietzsche's claim that passion-depicting works of art let us feel the beauty of our passions. In celebrating the same passions they excite, such works both bring out passion's value and show us that this value might find a place in our own lives. They thus help us experience passion's beauty *on Nietzsche's understanding of beauty*. As Nietzsche was aware, however, this understanding of beauty is controversial. Fully making sense of Nietzsche's account of beauty's importance requires saying more about why he thought of it as he did.

In this chapter, I will present Nietzsche's reasons for claiming that the beautiful promises happiness. These reasons are *explanatory*: Nietzsche embraces this view of beauty because it makes sense of significant aesthetic phenomena. Nietzsche offers two separate explanatory arguments in favor of his position, and endorses a third argument developed by Stendhal. Nietzsche's own arguments focus on the motives and practices of representational artists. On the side of motives, representational artists sometimes create out of *gratitude* to subjects they find beautiful. On the side of practice, representational artists tend to highlight features of their subjects that make life with them seem appealing. Nietzsche takes his view to be well-positioned to explain these artistic phenomena. Stendhal's argument, meanwhile, focuses on variance in

aesthetic taste. Such variance is, Stendhal suggests and Nietzsche affirms, easily understood using an aesthetic theory that lets variance in aesthetic taste track variance in taste in lives.

In presenting these explanatory arguments, Nietzsche aims to establish his view's superiority over *disinterested* aesthetic theories. The phenomena Nietzsche highlights are, he suggests, difficult to understand if a sharp line is drawn between the interest we take in beautiful objects and the interest we take in our own lives. Kant famously claimed that aesthetic interest was distinguished by a lack of regard for the existence of its object. What Kant rules out here is precisely what Nietzsche emphasizes: the relevance to aesthetic experience of the feeling that your life would be improved were the beautiful object to find a place within it.[1] Nietzsche has Zarathustra assert the following:

> Where is there beauty? Wherever I *must will* with all my will; where I want to love and go under that an image might not remain mere image. (Z II.15 "On Immaculate Perception" [1])

For Nietzsche, beauty involves wishing "that an image might not remain mere image": it involves being attracted to something not as a mere thought, but as a potential part of a life you wish to have. For this reason, it also always involves desire: to see something as beautiful is to desire it and a life that contains it.[2] This is precisely what *disinterested* theories of beauty – which assert that aesthetic experience is desire-free – deny. Nietzsche's explanatory arguments aim to adjudicate the dispute between these contrasting views of beauty. They suggest that beauty always involves a kind of desire: namely, desire for a life containing the beautiful object.[3]

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[1] Nussbaum 1999 makes the same point: Nietzsche rejects the Kantian idea that appreciating an object aesthetically means "refus[ing] to ask what role the object might play in the agent's particular life"(360).
[2] These desires might, of course, be outweighed by other desires. This view does not entail that seeing something as beautiful always requires actually attempting to incorporate it within your life. Simply that it always involves seeing the appeal of doing so. Similar points are discussed in Nehamas 2007: 53-54.
[3] This is helpfully discussed in Leiter 2018: 163. For Nietzsche, aesthetic experience attracts us not just to the beautiful object itself, but to a life containing further experience with that object.

Before considering these arguments in detail, I should note two things about this chapter's scope. First, I am only concerned with Nietzsche's views about *beauty*. The term aesthetic value is sometimes equated with beauty, and sometimes used to track the overall value of works of art. The latter use is in one respect narrower than the former and in one respect broader: it excludes everything but art from the aesthetic domain, but it gives all aspects of an artwork's significance a role in assessing it. Although Nietzsche grants that works of art have much to offer beyond their beauty – Stendhal and Dostoevsky are Nietzsche's favorite *psychologists*[4] – it is only his views about beauty that matter at present. When I speak about aesthetic experience, aesthetic value, etc. below, it will always be beauty and the experience of beauty that I have in mind. Artists, similarly, will be treated as creators of *beautiful* work. This is the characterization relevant to Nietzsche's explanatory arguments: Nietzsche commends his account as explaining phenomena characteristic of those who create *beautiful representations*. That the artistic domain may be much larger than this is no problem, as understanding art and artists is not my goal here. My interest is in the experience of beauty. This experience may well be illuminated by focusing on a subset of artists who deal with it particularly directly.

This chapter, then, will be focused on Nietzsche's view of beauty, not his larger views about art and artists. Even where beauty is concerned, however, a partial account will be sufficient. My interest is in Nietzsche's claim that experiencing something as beautiful involves taking it to promise happiness. There may also be many other aspects of the experience of beauty, and indeed even of Nietzsche's view of the experience of beauty. None of these other aspects are relevant, however. This one aspect of Nietzsche's conception of beauty is all that his account of passion's transformation requires. It is thus all that we need to make sense of here.

[4] See, e.g., EH "Clever" 3, EH "CW" 3, TI 45.

These qualifications out of the way, we can now consider Nietzsche's defense of his claim that the beautiful promises happiness. I will begin with the argument focused on the *motives* of artistic creation. It is through this argument that Nietzsche's general argumentative strategy – his focus on the *explanatory power* of his view – becomes the most clear.

I. The First Explanatory Argument: Gratitude as an Effect of Beauty on Artists

Nietzsche claims that his account of beauty is well-positioned to explain a distinctive *effect* beautiful objects have on artists. In at least some artists, beautiful objects excite feelings of *gratitude*. This gratitude is expressed in a desire to praise the objects that inspired it, celebrating them by creating works of art that capture their worth.[5] The object of gratitude is typically experienced as a source of benefit. As such, an account of aesthetic value which ties that value to the anticipation of benefit easily explains the gratitude *toward* beautiful objects that plays a role in motivating artistic activity.

A. What Effect of the Beautiful Is Nietzsche's View Meant to Explain?

In *Genealogy* III.6, Nietzsche argues that aesthetic experience is an interested state: desiring an object is part of experiencing it as beautiful.[6] This follows, Nietzsche claims, from

[5] I treat the terms praise (*loben*), celebrate (*feiern*), and glorify (*verherrlichen*) as interchangeable in this context: all refer to presenting something in a way that brings out its value. In TI "Skirmishes" 24, for example, Nietzsche asks, "Doesn't [art] praise? Doesn't it glorify?[*lobt sie nicht? verherrlicht sie nicht?*]", treating the two as equivalent.

[6] This claim may seem implausible if heard the wrong way. The claim is not necessarily that in viewing a beautiful work of art we desire that artwork. Rather, we might instead desire the object which the artwork represents as beautiful. A beautiful work of art is, for Nietzsche, typically one that *beautifies* something. Thus, he speaks of art as "world-transfiguring"(EH "CW" 1 [2]): great artworks turn *other things* into

the fact that beautiful objects are experienced as beneficial.[7] Nietzsche endorses Stendhal's view that "the beautiful *promises* happiness", and suggests that any object experienced as promising happiness also excites desire:

> Stendhal, as noted, a no less sensual but more happily-formed nature than Schopenhauer, emphasizes a different effect of the beautiful: "the beautiful *promises* happiness" – to him it is precisely the *excitement of the will* ("of interest") by the beautiful that seems to be the fact of the matter. (GM III.6 [4])

At least in this context, "the excitement of the will" is nothing more than the excitation of desire. Thus, in the surrounding text, the arousal of sexual desire serves as the chief example of the will's excitation. Nietzsche's claim in this passage, then, is that Stendhal's view of beauty licenses an immediate move to the conclusion that beautiful objects excite desire. If beautiful objects are experienced as promising happiness, then our experience of them will be an interested one. We have already seen why Nietzsche takes this to be the case: to see an object as promising happiness is to desire it and a life that contains it.

Nietzsche, then, takes the interested nature of aesthetic experience to follow from Stendhal's view of beauty. For this to matter, however, we need reason to think that Stendhal's view of beauty is correct. Nietzsche provides this by pointing to the view's *explanatory power*: it makes sense of effects of beautiful objects that otherwise remain mysterious. More specifically,

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aesthetic objects. The desire Nietzsche associates with the aesthetic state is often desire for those transfigured objects rather than the art itself.

[7] Reginster 2014: 35 suggests that Nietzsche distinguishes experiencing something as *promising* happiness from experiencing it as beneficial. To experience something as merely promising happiness is to experience it as merely *possibly* beneficial, as a potential source of happiness worthy of further investigation but not yet valued with any real confidence. This reading is undermined by the way Nietzsche puts related points elsewhere. Consider, for example, the following passage from GS 85: "These select things and states, whose value for human happiness *is considered safe and assured*, are the artists' objects"(my emphasis [3]). The subjects of the artists' work – the things they consider beautiful – are precisely those they are fully confident contribute to happiness.

it explains effects that beautiful objects have on *artists*. Thus, he suggests Kant and other critics of Stendhal's view are only able to maintain their position by overlooking artists' experiences:

> Kant, like all philosophers, instead of envisaging the aesthetic problem starting from the experiences of the artist (the one who creates), thought about art and the beautiful from the viewpoint of the "spectator" and thus, without it being noticed, got the "spectator" himself into the concept "beautiful". If only this "spectator" had at least been sufficiently familiar to the philosophers of the beautiful, however! – namely as a great *personal* fact and experience, as a wealth of most personal intense experiences, desires, surprises, and delights in the realm of the beautiful! But I fear the opposite was always the case: and thus we receive from them, right from the beginning, a definition in which, as in that famous definition Kant gives of the beautiful, the lack of a more refined self-experience sits in the form of a fat worm of basic error. "The beautiful," Kant said, "is what pleases *without interest*." Without interest! Compare this definition with one made by a real "spectator" and artist – Stendhal, who in one place calls the beautiful *une promesse de bonheur*. (GM III.6 [5])

This passage is best understood as mounting an *explanatory* challenge to disinterested aesthetics. Nietzsche never denies the importance of defining beauty in a way that makes sense of its effects on non-artists: in addition to overlooking artists' experiences, it is cited as a further defect of Kant's view that it even overlooks the experiences of genuine spectators. Stendhal's authority to speak about the beautiful derives from his familiarity with the perspective of *both* artists and genuine spectators: we should trust what Stendhal says about beauty because he has been affected by it in a wide variety of ways. The criterion for distinguishing between these views is the range of beauty's effects that they take into account. The superiority of Stendhal's view thus consists in its explanatory power, in the fact that it allows us to explain effects of beautiful objects that Kant overlooks.

This conclusion receives further support from the pains Nietzsche takes to establish that Stendhal's view explains even the effect beautiful objects have on someone like Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer found that aesthetic experience calmed his most distressing desires. Although Nietzsche considers the calming effect of aesthetic experience to be marginal and insignificant –

"Schopenhauer described *one* effect of the beautiful, the will-calming one – is it even a regularly occurring one?"(GM III.6 [4]) – he nonetheless still recognizes it as an effect such experience might have. As such, an inability to account for it would be a strike against any view of the beautiful defended on explanatory grounds. Nietzsche's effort to show that even this calming effect of beauty can be explained by Stendhal's thesis makes a great deal of sense on this understanding of the argumentative strategy being employed.[8]

In GM III.6, then, Nietzsche defends his view as best explaining effects beautiful objects have on both artists and genuine spectators. Nietzsche suggests, however, that starting from artists' experiences will best bring out the merits of his view. As such, our question will be the following: why does Nietzsche takes the effect of beautiful objects on artists to be well explained by the claim that such objects are experienced as beneficial? As a first step to answering this question, we will need to identify the particular effect of beauty on artists that Nietzsche takes his view to explain. Unfortunately, Nietzsche is not very clear on this point in GM III.6. He emphasizes that artists are creators, describing the artist as "the one who creates". It seems likely, consequently, that the effect in question is bound up with artists' creative activity. Little is said, however, about how this activity is to be thought of, or why the claim that beautiful objects are experienced as beneficial provides the best explanation for it.

Previous scholarship has proposed two ways to fill this gap, both of which fall short for similar reasons. Thus, Reginster 2014: 24-25 and Soll 1998: 107-111 suggest Nietzsche means to emphasize the joy artists find in creative activity itself, pointing out that such activity necessarily

[8] Nietzsche claims that those who find happiness in contemplation will experience as beautiful only that which triggers their drive to contemplation (GM III.8). This has the indirect result of calming other desires by pushing them out of a consciousness that another, more powerful desire has fully occupied. Schopenhauer confuses the relief he feels at an enjoyable desire driving out a distressing one with the relief of entering a desire-free state.

involves desire because the activity is itself desired. Janaway 2002: 33 and Young 1992: 122-123, meanwhile, suggest Nietzsche intends to emphasize the importance of active interpretation in artistic creation. As Nietzsche argues in GM III.12, such interpretation depends on affectively constituted perspectives, and thus on the desires that generate those perspectives.

These views capture something important about Nietzsche's understanding of creative activity, and would perhaps succeed as Nietzschean arguments for the impossibility of carrying such activity out in a disinterested manner. Nietzsche's claim, however, was not that desire is inevitably involved in creative activity. Rather, it was that desire is inevitably generated by beautiful objects. These theses about desire's role in creative activity are thus irrelevant to Nietzsche's point. As Young 1992: 121 notes, the Reginster-Soll thesis is one even Schopenhauer is happy to grant. There is no tension between the claim that desire plays no role in our experience of beauty and the claim that it plays a significant role in the activity by which artists communicate that beauty to others. For an analogous case, note the lack of tension between the claim that sound plays no role in the experience of silence and the claim that sound might play a significant role in describing that experience to others. The irrelevance of Nietzsche's point on these interpretations becomes even more clear when we recall that Nietzsche's claim was not simply that beautiful objects necessarily provoke desire, but that they necessarily provoke desire *because* they are experienced as beneficial. This idea plays no role in either account. Benefit has no presence in the Janaway-Young view, and on the Reginster-Soll approach it attaches to creative activity rather than beautiful objects. If Nietzsche is not completely confused about the goal of his argument, we need to find another way of relating his views about the creative activity of artists to his claim that such activity is best explained by the idea that beautiful objects are experienced as beneficial.

A promising option is suggested by Ridley 2011: 319–35, who focuses on the role beautiful objects play in *motivating* artists' activity. As Ridley rightly notes, Nietzsche does not see beauty as entering into artistic activity solely as its endpoint, in the form of beautiful works of art. Rather, Nietzsche also takes the experience of beauty to play an important role in inspiring such activity: artists produce beautiful works at least in part as a reaction to beauty they have already experienced.[9] Unfortunately, Ridley's ability to make sense of such creation from beauty is hindered by confusion about Nietzsche's attitude toward Stendhal, whose claim that the beautiful promises happiness Ridley takes Nietzsche to deny.[10] In what follows, I will see what can be made of Ridley's approach if this interpretive error is avoided. Like Ridley, I will argue that it is creation *from* beauty that Nietzsche takes his view to explain. More specifically, I will argue that Nietzsche takes his view to explain a variety of creation from beauty especially characteristic of artists: creation from *gratitude* to a beautiful object.

B. Art as Praise

Nietzsche claims that attention to the creative activity of artists reveals the explanatory power of his claims about beauty. I have suggested that one feature of this creative activity which Nietzsche's view explains is its frequent motivation *by* beauty. Artists, Nietzsche thinks,

[9] On Ridley's account, Nietzsche sees artistic creation as the artist's reaction to his own beauty (2011: 331). As we will see below, Nietzsche also allows artists to be inspired by the beauty of other people and things. These things will, however, always be experienced as offering a value which is *available* to the artist herself. Beautiful objects are experienced as promising happiness, which is to say that they are viewed as a *source* of value rather than just a reserve of it. Thus, Ridley is right to read Nietzsche as claiming that there is always an element of self-celebration in the artist's celebration of beauty. The artist figures herself as in some way permeable by the value she celebrates: its value is of a kind that can enter her life and make it better. For discussion of this point, see section III.B of the previous chapter.
[10] See discussion in note 35 to the previous chapter.

sometimes craft their works in response to experiences of beauty. They express their sense that an object possesses aesthetic value by celebrating it, by creating a work of art that functions as a praise of its worth: the beautiful work of art is a way of giving thanks to a beautiful object external to the work itself. The motive for creating a work that celebrates a beautiful object in this way is, Nietzsche thinks, gratitude toward it. It is this feeling of gratitude toward aesthetic objects that Nietzsche's account aims to explain.

My main reason for reading Nietzsche's claim this way is that it is precisely art's status as praise which he focuses on when putting the *Genealogy*'s method for understanding beauty into practice. Thus, in "Skirmishes" 24 of *Twilight*, Nietzsche considers the question of art's purpose. Explaining how a psychologist would answer this question, Nietzsche provides an explicit example of what is involved in "envisaging the aesthetic problem starting from the experiences of the artist". In so doing, he shows us what he takes these distinctive artists' experiences to be. Foremost among them is an impulse to praise:

> A psychologist, on the other hand, will ask: what does art do? Doesn't it praise? Doesn't it glorify? Doesn't it select? Doesn't it have preferences? All of this *strengthens* or *weakens* certain value judgments . . . Is this just incidental? accidental? completely unconnected to the artist's instinct? Or: isn't it the presupposition for an artist *to be able to* . . . ? Is the artist's most basic instinct bound up with art, or is it bound up much more intimately with *life*, which is the meaning of art? Isn't it bound up with the *desirability of life*? – Art is the great stimulus to life: how could art be understood as purposeless, pointless, *l'art pour l'art*? (TI "Skirmishes" 24 [6])

Nietzsche suggests that the impulse to praise is the first feature a competent psychologist would notice when attempting to understand artists' creative activity. Other elements of that activity – e.g., the selective and interpretive elements Janaway 2002 emphasizes – are presented as no less essential. These other elements, however, only support Nietzsche's conclusion if understood *as a consequence* of artistic activity's fundamental character as praise. That artists present their

subjects selectively tells us nothing about art's purpose. Selection tells us that there *is* a purpose, but not what that purpose is. Despite the language of the last sentence, Nietzsche's claim is not just that art has *a* purpose. *L'art pour l'art* does not really deny this: it claims that art is its own purpose, not that art has no purpose at all. In rejecting *l'art pour l'art*, Nietzsche's claim is specifically that art has an *external* purpose, that it is created for the sake of something outside of itself. What is decisive for this point is not just that the artist selects, but that the principle of her selection is determined by the impulse to praise something external to her work. The details of this selectivity will be discussed below: they play an essential role in the second explanatory argument. For now, the key point is just the following: the most thorough sketch of an artist's aesthetic Nietzsche provides suggests it is precisely the role of praise in artistic creation that such an aesthetic is meant to highlight. It is this feature of artistic experience that the psychologist takes note of, and that she demands any aesthetic theory be able to explain.

This is further confirmed at the section's end. Nietzsche critiques pessimistic views of tragedy for failing "to ask artists themselves" what tragedy aims at, suggesting that understanding tragedy requires taking artists' experiences into account. Nietzsche's idea of what this will teach us is telling:

> The courage and freedom of affect in the face of a powerful enemy, in the face of a sublime hardship, in the face of a horrible problem, – this *victorious* state is what the tragic artist selects, what he glorifies. The martial aspects of our soul celebrate their saturnalia in the face of tragedy; anyone who is used to suffering, anyone who goes looking for suffering, the *heroic* man praises his existence through tragedy, – the tragedian raises the drink of sweetest cruelty to him alone. (TI "Skirmishes" 24 [6])

What we learn when we "ask artists themselves", is that praise, glorification, and celebration are the central impulse of even tragic art. It is these features of artistic creation that the device of asking artists themselves is designed to direct us toward. Nietzsche tells us to "ask artists

themselves" before making any claims in the realm of aesthetics because doing so ensures that our aesthetic theories never overlook the central role of the impulse to praise in artistic creation.

This emphasis on praise as the distinctive activity of artists is consistent with Nietzsche's portrayal of them elsewhere. A particularly clear statement of this is found in *Gay Science* 85:

> Artists continually *glorify* – they do nothing else – all those states and things that are reputed to give man the opportunity to feel good for once, or great, or intoxicated, or cheerful, or well and wise. These select things and states, whose value for human happiness is considered safe and assured, are the artists' objects. Artists always lie in wait to discover such objects and draw them into the realm of art. What I mean is that they are not themselves the appraisers of happiness; rather they try to get close to those who make the appraisals, with the utmost curiosity and the urge to utilize these appraisals immediately. Since they have, in addition to this impatience, also the big lungs of heralds and the feet of runners, they are also always among the first to glorify the new good; and they therefore appear to be the first to call it good, to appraise it as good. But this is, as I have said, an error: they are merely quicker and louder than the real appraisers. – But who are the real appraisers? – The rich and the idle. (GS 85 [3])

Nietzsche identifies glorification as the artist's distinctive activity. He gets close to identifying it as the artist's *only* activity ("they do nothing else"). This impulse to glorify puts a limit on the objects of art. Art is always about something the artist takes to promise happiness: "things and states, whose value for human happiness is considered safe and assured, are the artists' objects." Beautiful objects always fall into this category: they are among the objects taken to promise happiness, and thus among the artists' proper objects. I will have more to say below about why Nietzsche takes objects that promise happiness to be particularly capable of inspiring artistic creation. For the moment, the important point is just this: all that is distinctive of artists is a particular response to such objects, namely an urge to praise them coupled with a capacity to express this praise effectively (their "big lungs" as Nietzsche puts it here, or status as a "genius of a communication" as he put it in TI "Skirmishes" 24).[11]

[11] One feature of GS 85 may seem problematic for my account. Nietzsche emphasizes that artists praise objects taken to promise happiness *by others*: they praise objects that "are reputed" to provide happiness.

Nietzsche consistently suggests artistic creation is fundamentally a form of praise, an effort aimed at celebrating a value external to the work of art itself. It should, consequently, be unsurprising that it is this impulse he expects an artist's aesthetic to highlight. The impulse to praise through creative work is the artist's distinctive feature. An aesthetics that starts from the experience of artists will thus be one that takes this impulse as its primary explanandum.

C. Gratitude as Explanation for the Artist's Impulse

Nietzsche sees the artist's impulse to praise as the primary explanandum of an artist-focused aesthetic theory. In claiming his view of beauty is responsive to the experience of artists, Nietzsche suggests that it is well-suited to explaining the ability of beautiful objects to inspire this impulse to praise. His view of beauty makes sense of the fact that artists are sometimes moved to *praise* it.

To see why Nietzsche thinks this, it will help to consider a few passages where he is explicit about what he takes to explain the artist's impulse. Underlying the artist's impulse to praise is, Nietzsche suggests, *gratitude*. The strongest statement of this is found in Nietzsche's epilogue to *The Case of Wagner,* where he suggests that gratitude is the essence of *all* great art:

> noble morality, master morality, is rooted in a triumphant *self*-directed yes, – it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life, it needs sublime symbols and practices too, but only because "its heart is too full". All *beautiful*, all *great* art, belongs here: the essence of both is gratitude. (CW "Epilogue" [7])

Are artists, then, marked out by an impulse to praise things they themselves experience as beneficial, or just to flatter the values their wealthy patrons embrace? Everything Nietzsche says is consistent with the first option. Nietzsche is making a claim about the *sequence* in which values spread throughout society. This interest in the order of adoption explains Nietzsche's emphasis on the fact that artists praise things already reputed to be beneficial by others. Artists, like the vast majority of people on Nietzsche's view, hold *derivative* values. This is, however, no strike against the *sincerity* with which their values are held. I am grateful to Scott Jenkins for pressing me on this point.

Art is an expression of gratitude to something deeply valued. It is an effort to provide a valued object with "sublime symbols and practices", honoring it in appreciation of what it has done for you.

The same point is made in *Gay Science* 370, where Nietzsche suggests that gratitude provides the best explanation for the artistic impulse to immortalize:

> The will to immortalize also requires a dual interpretation. It can be prompted, first, by gratitude and love; art with this origin will always be an art of apotheoses, perhaps dithyrambic like Rubens, or blissfully mocking like Hafiz, or bright and gracious like Goethe, spreading a Homeric light and glory over all things. (GS 370 [8])

Nietzsche distinguishes two types of creators, both of whom aim to immortalize their subjects. Genuine artists, described in the passage above, immortalize positive views of their subject as a means of celebrating them. Pseudo-artists, in contrast, immortalize negative views of their subjects as a means of revenge. For genuine artists, then, the impulse to immortalizes is a species of the impulse to praise: it is a desire to make your subject's value clear for all eternity. What underlies this desire is, Nietzsche suggests, gratitude. When genuine artists feel compelled to immortalize a subject, they do so out of appreciation for everything it has given them. A celebratory work of art is a way of giving thanks, of acknowledging just how much value a valuable object has added to your life.

The celebratory work of art is thus produced with the same motive Nietzsche takes to explain his own production of *Ecce Homo*:

> On this perfect day, when everything is ripe and the grapes are not the only things that are turning brown, I have just seen my life bathed in sunshine: I looked backwards, I looked out, I have never seen so many things that were so good, all at the same time. It is not for nothing that I buried my forty-fourth year today, I had *the right* to bury it, – all its living qualities have been rescued, they are immortal. The *Revaluation of all Values*, the *Dionysian Dithyrambs*, and, for recuperation, the *Twilight of the Idols* – all gifts of this year, of the last three

> months, in fact! *How could I not be grateful to my whole life?* And so I will tell myself the story of my life. (EH "Dedication" [9])[12]

Nietzsche presents his motive for producing *Ecce Homo* as gratitude to his life. His life has given him a great deal – looking back on it, he finds it filled with "so many things that were so good" and feels that the last three months alone provided many "gifts" of inestimable value. As an expression of appreciation for all that his life has given him, Nietzsche is moved to create a work of art celebrating that life. He tells himself the story of his life as a way of thanking it, of expressing his appreciation to it. He offers it the gift of immortality as thanks for all the many gifts it has given him. The thought that gratitude explains the artist's impulse to praise, then, seems to be one Nietzsche takes quite seriously. It plays a central role both in his general discussion of artists and in his presentation of his own artistic activity.[13]

D. How does Nietzsche's Account Explain Beauty's Ability to Inspire Gratitude?

Nietzsche takes celebratory creation to be motivated by artists' gratitude toward their subjects. In claiming his account of beauty explains beauty-inspired creative activity, then, Nietzsche suggests it explains artists' tendency to respond to beautiful objects with gratitude.

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[12] Nietzsche does not himself title this *Vorbemerkung*, which falls between *Ecce Homo*'s contents and first chapter. However, the placement and tone suggest a dedicatory role. I am grateful to Jessica Berry for advice on this point.

[13] It may be helpful to distinguish Nietzsche's view from the quite similar account of artistic motivation defended by his contemporary, the British critic John Ruskin. Like Nietzsche, Ruskin held that "All great art is praise"(1877: 1). Such praise, Ruskin suggested, must be motivated by the artist's love and gratitude for the objects she celebrates. The difference between Ruskin's view and Nietzsche's own centers on that last preposition. On Ruskin's view, artists are grateful *for* the objects they celebrate *to* the divinity who created those objects. On Nietzsche's view, artists are grateful directly to the objects themselves without any need for a divine intermediary. As a historical point, it should be noted that Nietzsche was aware of Ruskin's position, and took a clear interest in it. He found an excerpt from Ruskin's work in Taine's *Notes on England*, and considered it sufficiently significant that he copied it into his notebooks for later use (see entry 25[139] in the spring 1884 notebooks).

Nietzsche's claim, in other words, is that his theory of beauty explains our feeling gratitude to beautiful objects.

How it does this is easy to see. In gratitude, we perceive an object as having done something for us, as having given us a gift. Gratitude is a response to something seen as offering benefit and adding to our good. This is already enough to motivate the claim about beauty Nietzsche emphasizes in *Genealogy* III.6. Objects seen as beneficial inspire feelings of gratitude. Thus, the feelings of gratitude *to* beautiful objects underlying beauty-inspired artistic creation make perfect sense if artists typically experience beautiful objects as beneficial. Attention to the effect of beauty on artists provides straightforward support for Stendhal's view once the particular effect of beauty Nietzsche is interested in has been identified.

It may seem that the above overlooks a feature of gratitude. On many accounts, gratitude cannot be inspired by just *any* object we take to be beneficial. Rather, gratitude is inspired only by *agents* we take to be beneficial, perhaps even only by agents we take to benefit us freely and intentionally.[14] On this view of gratitude, Nietzsche's account of beauty looks insufficient to explain beautiful objects' capacity to inspire it. It is not enough for beautiful objects to be experienced as beneficial. If they are to inspire gratitude, they must also be understood as agents.

A thorough response to this point would require a more detailed account of Nietzsche's conception of gratitude than I am able to provide here. For the moment, it will suffice to note that Nietzsche does not share the view that gratitude can only be provoked by agential objects. In the *Ecce Homo* passage considered above, we saw Nietzsche declare himself "*grateful to my whole life*"(EH "Dedication" [9]). Although Nietzsche is an agent, Nietzsche's whole life certainly is

[14] For the most famous statement of this view of gratitude, see Strawson 2003: 76.

not. Elsewhere, Nietzsche suggests that agential-objects are often invented after the fact to provide pre-existing feelings of gratitude with a target that is more easily thanked:

> A people that still believes in itself will still have its own god. In the figure of this god, a people will worship the conditions that have brought it to the fore, its virtues, – it projects the pleasure it takes in itself, its feeling of power, into a being that it can thank for all of this. Whoever has wealth will want to give; a proud people needs a god to *sacrifice* to . . . On this supposition, religion is a form of gratitude. People are grateful for themselves: and this is why they need a god. (A 16 [10])

The feeling of gratitude exists prior to the god. The god is brought in because it is easier to thank a god than to thank one's own life and the conditions that led to it: anyone capable of sacrifice can provide a god with its due compensation, but you need to be an artist to celebrate a non-agent effectively. What is essential for our purposes is that non-agential objects – people's lives and the conditions that lead to them – are sufficient to *generate* feelings of gratitude all on their own. An agential-object commonly plays a role in enabling that gratitude to be expressed. It is not, however, in any way a precondition of gratitude's existence.[15] It is clear that the view Nietzsche expresses in this passage is no fluke: he himself repeatedly identifies the same non-agential objects responsible for the gratitude of these ancient peoples as the primary targets of his own gratitude. We have already seen Nietzsche affirm the gratitude he feels toward his own life. Later on in *Ecce Homo*, he expresses gratitude to the month which allowed him to write *The Gay Science* (EH "GS") and the location which enabled him to conceive of the *Anti*-Christ (EH "TI" 3). He likewise expresses gratitude for his enemies, not because of any intentional good they have done him, but because of what his battle against them has allowed him to accomplish (EH "Wise" 7; CW "Epilogue"). All of this is summed up in a formula in the *Case of Wagner*:

[15] In his account of *ressentiment*, Nietzsche suggests that sufferers have a natural impulse to blame others for their suffering, and that this often leads them to *invent* perpetrators even where none really exist (see, e.g., GM III.15). His account of gratitude has a parallel structure: the happy have an impulse to thank others for their happiness, and this can lead them to invent benefactors even where none really exist.

> Bizet makes me fertile. Everything good makes me fertile. I do not know any other gratitude, and I do not have any other *proof* for what is good. (CW 1 [11])

Note the absence of any agential limitation here – "everything good" is a source of the only kind of gratitude Nietzsche claims to know. This gratitude takes as its object *whatever* provides the conditions for Nietzsche to live a life to which he is attracted. Whether it be a month or a place, music or an enemy, *anything* that provides the conditions necessary for Nietzsche to live the kind of life he values will be a suitable inspiration for gratitude as he understands it.[16]

The impulse to thank seems to be what Nietzsche considers decisive here. If our experience of an object as beneficial finds expression in an impulse to celebrate it, praise it, glorify it, immortalize it, sacrifice to it, or otherwise do something to return good for good, then gratitude is being felt. There might seem to be something quite irrational in such gratitude: how can you return good to something unable to receive it? What use is Nietzsche's thanks to Sils Maria or *Carmen*? These kinds of considerations govern debates about the type of gratitude it is *appropriate* to feel.[17] Nietzsche, however, is not interested in when we *ought* to feel gratitude. All that matters to him is when we actually feel it. His suggestion is that feelings of gratitude can in fact be prompted by anything we take to enrich our lives. We can tell that this is the case

[16] It may be worth noting that this view of gratitude has some modern defenders. See, e.g., McAleer 2012, Boleyn-Fitzgerald 2016, and Steinhart forthcoming. McAleer and Boleyn-Fitzgerald think that targeted gratitude – gratitude *to* something – does not require an agential object for either its generation or its expression. Steinhart agrees that an agential object is unnecessary for the generation of targeted gratitude, but denies that targeted gratitude can be effectively expressed without an agential object.

[17] Thus, McAleer 2012 and Boleyn-Fitzgerald 2016 defend gratitude to non-agential objects on the grounds that it expresses a virtue, while Manela 2016 and Rush 2020 critique it by suggesting it involves illegitimate anthropomorphizing. The key question for all of these accounts is whether gratitude to non-agents would be a valuable emotion to experience. Only Boleyn-Fitzgerald is interested in what might be seen as a prior question: namely, is this potentially valuable emotion one that we actually experience with any frequency (2016: 113-115)?

because people are moved to thank all kinds of objects that meet this description, celebrating them via art or whatever other tools are at their disposal.[18]

On Nietzsche's view, that we are attracted to a life (or that we take an object to play a role in making a life to which are attracted available) is enough to inspire our gratitude to that life or object. A view of beauty on which the beautiful promises happiness is thus one that makes beautiful objects' capacity to inspire gratitude exceptionally easy to explain.

E. What Does the First Argument Achieve?

Having seen how the first explanatory argument works, we can now ask how it furthers Nietzsche's larger argumentative goal. Nietzsche demonstrates that his view of beauty explains an effect of beautiful objects: namely, the inspiration of gratitude. In demonstrating this, Nietzsche has a larger goal in mind: establishing his view's superiority over disinterested aesthetic theories. What does the first explanatory argument contribute to this larger project?

A view of beauty defended on explanatory grounds will gain force as the number and significance of aesthetic phenomena it explains increases.[19] In this respect, the first explanatory

[18] That people are moved to celebrate beneficial non-agential objects is not a terribly controversial claim. What is controversial is the suggestion that this impulse to celebrate expresses an impulse to thank. Although Nietzsche is committed to this controversial thesis, it is worth noting that rejecting it does little damage to his argument. All Nietzsche needs to get his case off the ground are the following two claims: 1) artists are moved to celebrate beautiful objects; and 2) this impulse to celebrate would be well-explained by beautiful objects prompting *some* benefit-responsive emotion. Nietzsche suggests that gratitude fills this explanatory role, but any other benefit-responsive emotion would do just as well. A distinction might be drawn between gratitude and a broader form of appreciation: gratitude prompts us to *thank* beneficial agential objects, while appreciation prompts us to celebrate beneficial objects of any kind for reasons unrelated to giving thanks. If this distinction holds, then the argument can just be run again substituting this broader appreciation in whenever gratitude is mentioned. The claim that the beautiful promises happiness will explain the ability of beautiful objects to prompt *any* benefit-responsive emotion. Nietzsche just considers gratitude the most likely candidate.

[19] For helpful discussion of Nietzsche's use of explanatory arguments and some suggestions about what might be involved in claiming that one explanatory argument is superior to another, see Leiter 2019: 23.

argument offers strong support for Nietzsche's view. Given Nietzsche's account of artistic motivation, the phenomenon Nietzsche explains is a significant one. Gratitude toward beautiful objects inspires much artistic activity. A view of beauty which failed to make sense of such gratitude would be poorly positioned to make sense of all the artistic activity that such gratitude promotes. For a concrete case, consider the obstacle overlooking this motive poses to understanding Nietzsche's own artistic output. *Ecce Homo* is sometimes read as a work of madness, in part because scholars have difficulty explaining the over-the-top self-celebration that characterizes the work.[20] Viewed as an expression of gratitude to a beautiful object, however, *Ecce Homo* is no longer baffling. Of course *Ecce Homo* is filled with over-the-top praise for Nietzsche's life: the entire work is an effort to thank that life. Gratitude to beautiful objects thus has a sort of lynchpin status: it is an aesthetic phenomenon which must be appealed to in order to explain many other aesthetic phenomena. Showing that his view of beauty explains gratitude to beautiful objects thus does much to burnish the explanatory credentials of Nietzsche's view.

That Nietzsche's view of beauty has significant explanatory power, however, is not enough to establish its superiority over alternatives. If disinterested views of beauty do as well at explaining beauty's gratitude-inspiring effects, then the first explanatory argument will not directly support the superiority of Nietzsche's view. It will establish it as a contender, a credible option for making sense of the aesthetic realm. It will, however, do little to adjudicate the dispute between it and other positions equally capable of explaining the same phenomena.

Considered on its own, the first explanatory argument may well be limited in this way. This limitation is a consequence of the argument's focus on aesthetic experience's *effects*.

[20] Hollingdale 1965: 238 and Ridley 2005: ix-x both suggest that growing madness underlies Nietzsche's self-praise, though neither thinks that *Ecce Homo*'s philosophical significance should be dismissed on these grounds. For a survey of efforts to respond to these doubts, see Whitmire 2021: 340-43.

Disinterested theories of beauty are committed to a particular view of what aesthetic experience involves. They deny that seeing an object as beneficial is *part* of seeing it as beautiful. This view about what aesthetic experience involves is, however, compatible with any number of views about aesthetic experience's c*onsequences*. They can thus hold that, although seeing an object as beneficial is no part of seeing it as beautiful, it is nonetheless a regular result of doing so. To take the simplest case: disinterested pleasure is still pleasure, and there is nothing mysterious about seeing pleasant objects as beneficial. Thus, Schopenhauer can say that, although the experience of beauty involves a suspension of interest in all benefit, the relief this suspension provides is naturally felt as the greatest of benefits once we return to our ordinary, non-aesthetic point of view. Disinterested views of beauty just have to push the effect Nietzsche highlights a bit further down the causal chain. Nietzsche claims that seeing an object as beneficial is part of viewing it as beautiful, and thus that gratitude toward an object can be a direct effect of its beauty. Disinterested accounts cannot claim this, but they can still identify gratitude toward an object as an *indirect* effect of its beauty: the experience of beauty provides us with relief, pleasure, insight, etc. and our gratitude for these goods explains our gratitude toward beautiful objects.

This limitation of the first explanatory argument is a consequence of its focus on beauty's effects. In the absence of a way to distinguish direct effects of experiencing something as beautiful from indirect ones, disinterested theories can always use this style of buck-passing explanation: effects of beautiful objects that seem difficult to understand without reference to benefit and desire can always be treated as indirect effects, as the results of beauty's results rather than its parts.[21] The second explanatory argument seems designed to make up for this limitation of the first. Thus, it focuses on the *causes* of an object's beauty rather than its effects.

[21] For discussion of this approach to defending disinterested theories of beauty, see Riggle 2016: 11.

II. The Second Explanatory Argument: The Selectivity of Beautiful Representation

In the last section, I argued that Nietzsche finds support for his account of beauty in the ease with which it explains a common motive of artistic creativity: namely, *gratitude* to an object experienced as beautiful. Such gratitude, Nietzsche suggested, finds expression in an effort to celebrate the beautiful object. This celebration takes the form of *valorizing representation*: the artist gives thanks for the object by depicting it in a way that brings out its worth.

When successful, such representations are themselves beautiful. It is here that Nietzsche finds the second piece of evidence for his account. Representations are, Nietzsche notes, necessarily selective: a depiction inevitably highlights some details of the thing depicted while brushing over others. As such, representations always raise a question: why were these particular features of the subject emphasized rather than others? Nietzsche takes his account to put us in a good position to answer this question where beautiful representations are concerned.[22] Beautiful representations are *valorizing representations*: the details they emphasize are ones that make life with their subjects appealing. Nietzsche's account easily explains this principle of selection. Experiencing an object as beautiful involves experiencing it as promising happiness. If this is the case, then emphasizing features of a subject which present it as a source of happiness will be a clear aid to presenting it as beautiful. Disinterested accounts have a more difficult time here: if desire and the hope for happiness have no role to play in the experience of beauty, then why do the creators of beautiful representations reliably emphasize those features of their subjects which lead us to desire them as sources of happiness?

[22] As noted at the start of this chapter, this is an important qualification: Nietzsche takes his account to put us in a good position to answer this question *only* where *beautiful* representations are concerned.

A. The Explanandum: The Selectivity of Beautiful Representation

Nietzsche's second explanatory argument points to his account's success at explaining the kind of selectivity involved in beautiful representation. To see the force of this argument, we first need to clarify what Nietzsche is trying to explain. Nietzsche's account explains why artists emphasize certain details of their subjects over others. Why grant that this is a phenomenon in need of explanation?

Nietzsche holds that all representation – beautiful or otherwise – is selective. This follows from what Leiter 2019: 89-99 calls the Busy World Hypothesis: the set of things that are true about any object is vast, far exceeding the limits of our representational capacities.[23] As a result, our representations are always partial: we fix our attention on some features of the object under consideration while skimming over others. This is not to say that representation necessarily *falsifies*, just that it necessarily *simplifies*. The features of an object that win our attention may well be represented with great accuracy. Many others, however, will be denied a significant presence in our picture of the object.

Nietzsche saw this selectivity as a general feature of all representation, applying as much to mental representations as artistic ones. For our purposes, the general claim is unnecessary. It is enough that Nietzsche clearly saw selectivity as essential to artistic representation. Nietzsche

[23] Leiter might put the point more moderately: it is not the set of things that are true about any single object that exceeds our representational capacities, but the set of things that are true about the world. On this view, Nietzsche's claim is, e.g., that there are too many books for you to study all of them, not that any given book has too many features for you to focus on all of them. I think the text supports a stronger reading than this. Nietzsche's claim is not that many different perspectives are needed to ensure coverage of a wide array of distinct cognitive targets, but that many different perspectives are needed to ensure full coverage of any single cognitive target: "the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on *one and the same matter*, that much more complete will our 'concept' of this matter, our 'objectivity' be"(GM III.12 [12], my emphasis). That being said, little hinges on this question here. My claims about the selectivity of specifically artistic representation do not turn on the selectivity of all representation.

makes this position explicit in TI "Skirmishes" 8. Nietzsche suggests artistic representation always involves a kind of *idealization* of the subject. He describes this idealization as follows:

> We can get rid of a prejudice here: contrary to common belief, idealization does *not* consist in removing or weeding out things that are small and incidental. Much more decisive is an enormous drive to *force out* the main features so that everything else disappears in the process. (TI "Skirmishes" 8 [13])

Nietzsche describes artistic representation as selective in precisely the sense laid out above: some features of the subject are highlighted while others are overlooked or pushed into the background. Nietzsche suggests this is primarily a matter of *emphasis* rather than active exclusion: that some features of the subject are overlooked is a byproduct of the effort to bring others into focus.[24] We do not yet need that level of detail though. The broader point is sufficient at present: artistic representation is *selective representation*. It necessarily emphasizes some features of its subject over others.

This thesis about the selectivity of artistic representation is not one Nietzsche spends much time defending.[25] In part, this may be because it follows straightforwardly from his larger claim about the selectivity of *all* representation. Alternatively, it may simply be a consequence of this claim's relatively uncontroversial nature. Thus, I take it that the selectivity of artistic representation can safely be put forward more or less as a brute fact. The artistic depiction of an object is almost always *simpler* than the object it depicts: however rich and complicated an

[24] This fits with the *valorizing* nature of beautiful representation: Nietzsche treats *indirect* renunciation as one of affirmation's most typical expressions. On this, see especially GS 304, tellingly titled "By doing we forego"[14].

[25] Nietzsche strongly critiques literary naturalism (see, e.g., TI "Skirmishes" 7). This may look like a defense of artistic selectivity, as the naturalists aim at objectivity in their representations. The objectivity they advocate does not, however, involve presenting the subject down to the last detail. It simply involves choosing the details to include more or less arbitrarily. This allows the artist to avoid privileging certain *kinds* of details over others, but not to avoid privileging some specific details over others. Nietzsche's dispute with the naturalists is thus not about the selectivity of artistic representation, but about the principle of selection characteristic of beautiful representation: he denies that a representation created by selecting details of a subject at random is likely to be a beautiful one.

artistic representation may be, it will rarely if ever capture *each and every* feature of its subject. Even among the features included in an artistic representation, some tend be highlighted over others: "where does the artist direct our attention?" is an introductory-level question in art analysis. This selectivity is what distinguishes artistic representation from replication: it offers a particular view of its subject rather than a copy of it.[26]

Artistic representation, then, is typically selective representation. This has implications for artistic practice: in creating her work, the artist needs to select, to emphasize some features of her subject over others. This fact about artistic practice is what gets Nietzsche's question on the table. Given that artists have to select features of their subjects to highlight, why do they select some features rather than others? More specifically, why do the creators of *beautiful representations*, tend to highlight the particular features of their subjects that they do?

B What Do the Features Highlighted by Beautiful Representations Bring Out?

Like all artistic representations, beautiful representations highlight some features of their subjects over others. Nietzsche takes his account of beauty to make sense of the kind of features such representations tend to highlight. This hinges on a view about what those typically highlighted features are like: we cannot ask why artists tend to select the kind of details they do unless we first ask what kind of details they tend to select. My goal in this section will be to spell out Nietzsche's answer to this question. Nietzsche, I argue, claims that artists tend to emphasize those features of their subjects that make life with them seem appealing.

[26] Even works of art that carefully reproduce ordinary objects (e.g., Warhol's Brillo Box) do this. By presenting these objects as works of art, they cause us to focus on different features of them than we would when encountering them on a store shelf.

To see this, it will help to consider the way Nietzsche builds from a general claim about beauty in TI "Skirmishes" 22 to a more specific claim about beautiful representation in TI "Skirmishes" 24. This stretch of passages forms the heart of the second explanatory argument. It is framed as a critique of disinterested aesthetics, beginning with a challenge to Schopenhauer's claim that viewing an object aesthetically means viewing it without desire. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche suggests, can make no sense of the kind of things that inspire our aesthetic interest:

> [Schopenhauer] sees [beauty] as a momentary redemption from the "will" – it is an enticement to permanent redemption . . . He considers it particularly valuable as a redemption from the "focal point of the will", from sexuality, – he thinks that the drive to procreate is *negated* by beauty . . . Bizarre saint! Someone is contradicting you, and I am afraid that it is nature. Why are the tones, colors, smells, and rhythmic movements of nature beautiful in the first place? What does beauty *bring out*? – Fortunately, a philosopher contradicts him too. No less an authority than the divine Plato (– as Schopenhauer himself calls him) asserts something else: that all beauty is a temptation to procreate, – that this is precisely the *proprium* of its effect, from the most sensual all the way up to the most spiritual . . . (TI "Skirmishes" 22 [15])

Nietzsche's interest here is in natural beauty. Nonetheless, the basic question is the same one we have been considering. When we find a natural object beautiful, we focus on particular features of it: on the tone of a birdsong, the color and smell of a rose, the swaying of a bough in the wind, etc. Nietzsche wants to know what features like these "bring out": what exactly is it about beautiful objects that is brought to the fore by the features we tend to focus on when appreciating them aesthetically? This is our question about the selectivity of artistic representation relocated to the level of individual attention. When we find an object beautiful, we focus on some of its features over others. In the case of artistic beauty, this is the result of the artist directing our attention. In the case of natural beauty, the external direction is absent, but the end result is the

same.[27] In either case, our question remains. Experiencing an object as beautiful involves focusing on some of its features: why those rather than others?

Nietzsche's answer is that the features we focus on when finding an object beautiful are united by a common effect: they all generate a "temptation to procreate". The straightforward meaning – the features we focus on when finding an object beautiful are ones that inspire sexual interest – likely is *part* of what Nietzsche intends here.[28] It is not, however, all that he has in mind. The phrase Nietzsche uses to describe the interest beautiful objects provoke – they are "a temptation to procreate" – has broader implications. Schopenhauer treated sexual desire as the "focal point of the will" because he took it to involve more than just desire to engage in sexual activity. Its real importance came from its role as a desire to *procreate*: sexual desire was the highest form of life affirmation because it involved a longing for the *continuation* of life.[29] Through its connection with procreation, sexual desire looked like an endorsement of life: it expressed a sense of life's value, a feeling that passing it on was an act of generosity rather than cruelty. When Nietzsche talks about the temptation to procreate in this Schopenhauerian context, he brings these Schopenhauerian associations on board. This is clear from the way Nietzsche uses the term later on in *Twilight* during a discussion of the Dionysian rites:

> The *fundamental fact* of the Hellenic instinct – its "will to life" – expresses itself only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state. What did the Hellenes guarantee for themselves with these mysteries? *Eternal life*, the

[27] Nietzsche suggests that seeing a natural object as beautiful always involves acting like an artist in shaping our representation of it. This is particularly explicit in GS 299: "*What one should learn from artists* – How can we make things beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they are not? And I rather think that in themselves they never are. Here we could learn something from physicians, when for example they dilute what is bitter or add wine and sugar to a mixture—but even more from artists who are really continually trying to bring off such inventions and feats"[16]. The remainder of the passage presents several artistic techniques which, if used to guide the attention rather than the brush, might enable us to find beauty in the objects around us.

[28] As discussed in chapter four, Nietzsche sees the pleasures of aesthetic and sexual interest as structural analogues. In some places, Nietzsche suggests the relation is more than analogy. See, e.g., GM III.8.

[29] On this, see, e.g., WWR I: 383-387.

> eternal return of life; the future promised by the past and the past consecrated to the future; the triumphal yes to life over and above all death and change; the *true* life as the overall continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality. . . . It gives religious expression to the most profound instinct of life, directed towards the future of life, the eternity of life, – the pathway to life, procreation, as the *holy* path . . . (TI "Ancients" 4 [17])

Although this passage is quite complicated, one thing seems clear: Nietzsche strongly identifies the desire to procreate with the desire for life. For Nietzsche, as for Schopenhauer, a temptation to procreate is not fundamentally something that inspires a desire for sex. It is something that inspires a desire for *life*. Nietzsche's basic claim in TI "Skirmishes" 22, then, is that what unifies the features we focus on when finding an object beautiful is the way they bring out life's desirability. They can do this, I take it, only by bringing out the desirability of life *with* the object: the features of an object we focus on when finding it beautiful are precisely those that make life with that object seem appealing. The charge against Schopenhauer is that his conception of beauty leaves him no way of explaining this fact.

In TI "Skirmishes" 24, Nietzsche presses the same charge against a formalist account of artistic motivation. The details of this account and Nietzsche's critique of it will be discussed in the next section. For the moment, we just need to note the continuity of Nietzsche's descriptive claim. In TI "Skirmishes" 22, Nietzsche suggested that, when finding an object beautiful, we focus on those of its features which make life with it seem appealing. TI "Skirmishes" 24 suggests that artists highlight these same features when producing beautiful representations:

> A psychologist, on the other hand, will ask: what does art do? Doesn't it praise? Doesn't it glorify? Doesn't it select? Doesn't it have preferences? All of this *strengthens* or *weakens* certain value judgments . . . Is this just incidental? accidental? completely unconnected to the artist's instinct? Or: isn't it the presupposition for the artist *to be able to* . . .? Is the artist's most basic instinct bound up with art, or is it bound up much more with *life*, which is the meaning of art? Isn't it bound up with the *desirability of life*? – Art is the great stimulus to life: how could art be understood as purposeless, pointless, *l'art pour l'art*? (TI "Skirmishes" 24 [6])

Nietzsche makes a series of descriptive claims here about beautiful representations. They are selective: they "have preferences", privileging some aspects of their subject over others. The overall effect of this selectivity is the strengthening or weakening of certain value judgments. The overall effect of this change in value judgments is a kind of *praise*: beautiful representations ultimately present their subjects as highly valuable.[30] This praise is made in a particular register: beautiful representations present their subjects as *beneficial*, as among the things that make life *desirable*. Beautiful art thus functions as a "stimulus to life" in exactly the same way that all beauty was said to function as a "temptation to procreate": it increases our attraction to life by increasing our attraction to goods life might contain, inspiring us to live by making us feel there are things worth living with.

As confirmation of this, it is worth returning to the discussion of tragedy which concludes the section. This is the passage, already dealt with above, where Nietzsche argues that tragedies depict misfortunes in order to highlight the value of the passions that confront them. What is worth noting is that the immediate function of this passage – the reason Nietzsche makes these claims in this particular section of the text – is to shore up his account of artistic selectivity. It is intended to answer a question about the kind of things that artists choose to represent:

> One question is left: art also presents a lot that is ugly, harsh, questionable in life, – doesn't this seem to spoil life for us? (TI "Skirmishes" 24 [6])

The critic suggests Nietzsche is overgeneralizing. Beautiful representations sometimes highlight features of their subject that make life with them seem attractive. At other times, however, they present things which repel us from life: they "spoil life for us" rather than bringing out its desirability. Nietzsche needs to answer this charge about tragedy because he takes many

[30] The weakening of value judgements relevant to praise is presumably either the weakening of *negative* value judgements about the subject, or the depreciation of *other things* for the sake of contrast.

tragedies to be genuinely beautiful works, *and* acknowledges that these tragedies direct our attention toward genuinely horrifying aspects of life. That this combination of views creates a *prima facie* problem for Nietzsche's account is already enough to tell us what that account is. Nietzsche claims that artists emphasize features of their subjects which make life with them seem desirable. This is why he must explain how even the presentation of life's horrifying aspects can *help* an artist bring out the value of life with her subject.[31]

C. The Explanatory Argument

As Nietzsche sees it, beautiful representations tend to highlight features of their subjects that make life with them appealing. This tendency is the second explanatory argument's explanandum. Why is it precisely these features that artists tend to emphasize? Nietzsche's view of beauty is well-positioned to answer this question. Disinterested accounts have less success.

To see how this argument unfolds, we should return to TI "Skirmishes" 24. This time, however, our interest is not in Nietzsche's descriptive account, but in the way he uses that account to reject "*l'art pour l'art"*. Nietzsche sees *l'art pour l'art* as a slogan of artistic formalism. Thus, he speaks elsewhere of "the capacity for artistic passions and devotion to 'form', for which the phrase *l'art pour l'art* (along with a thousand others) was invented"(BGE 254 [18]). In *l'art pour l'art*, formalism blends into a claim about the *purpose* for which art is created. The suggestion is not just that a work's aesthetic value depends solely on formal considerations, but that formal considerations are all that *motivate* art's creation: "devotion to 'form'" is what inspires artistic production. It is an implication of this view that the work itself,

[31] As discussed in the last chapter, Nietzsche refers to this as "strong" or "Dionysian" pessimism: an attention to life's horrifying aspects which *supports* love of life rather than diminishing it.

rather than something external to it, is what interests artists and motivates their creative activity. The idea of *l'art pour l'art* is thus a natural opponent of didactic and moralizing views of art's purpose: the art *itself* is the good artists aim at, not the *effect* it has on the audience. It is, however, in equal tension with Nietzsche's claim that art is created out of an impulse to praise a good external to the work itself. The formalists Nietzsche is responding to assert that art is created out of sheer delight in form. They thus deny external goods any role in motivating artistic creation: artists do not hope to *realize* an external good as the moralists and didacts suggest, but neither do they hope to *celebrate* one as Nietzsche claims.

Nietzsche rejects this position using a two-part explanatory argument. For our purposes, this argument is more complex than it needs to be. Nietzsche moves from a descriptive claim about artistic selectivity to an explanatory claim about artistic purpose, and from that claim about artistic purpose to another explanatory claim about beauty. It would, however, have been open to him to skip the intermediate step: the descriptive claim about selectivity supports the explanatory claim about beauty all on its own. Doing this would have undermined the argument *as a critique of l'art pour l'art*: artistic purpose, not beauty, is the direct focus of the *l'art pour l'art* view. Nietzsche thus had reason to go through the intermediate step even if our goals in this chapter make it unnecessary. In what follows, I will present the argument in its two-part form, and then explain why I think it supports Nietzsche's view of beauty even without the middle step.

Let us begin then by tracing the first step of the argument: Nietzsche's transition from his descriptive claim about artistic selectivity to his explanatory claim about artistic purpose. To follow this argument, it will help to once again consider the relevant text of TI "Skirmishes" 24:

> Once you exclude the purposes of sermonizing and improving people from art, it does not follow even remotely that art is totally purposeless, aimless, senseless, in short *l'art pour l'art* – a worm swallowing its own tail. "Better no purpose at all than a moral purpose!" – those are just words of passion. A psychologist, on the

> other hand, will ask: what does art do? Doesn't it praise? Doesn't it glorify? Doesn't it select? Doesn't it have preferences? All of this *strengthens* or *weakens* certain value judgments . . . Is this just incidental? accidental? completely unconnected to the artist's instinct? Or: isn't it the presupposition for the artist *to be able to* . . .? Is the artist's most basic instinct bound up with art, or is it bound up much more with *life*, which is the meaning of art? Isn't it bound up with the *desirability of life*? – Art is the great stimulus to life: how could art be understood as purposeless, pointless, *l'art pour l'art*? (TI "Skirmishes" 24 [6])

Nietzsche's objection to *l'art pour l'art* is that it renders artistic practice mysterious. Nietzsche observes a convergence in the *content* of beautiful representations: they tend to highlight features of their subjects that make life with them appealing. On the *l'art pour l'art* view, this can only be a peculiar fluke. As Nietzsche puts it, the *l'art pour l'art* view makes the content of a work *incidental*: what unifies artists and drives them to create is delight in *form* alone. Anything common to their practice will be the result of this shared interest in form: this interest is what unites artists, and thus what will explain any convergence in their behavior. Nietzsche's charge is that appeal to a common interest in form will never be enough to explain the convergence in *content* that he observes in beautiful art. A work's formal properties do not determine its content to a degree that allows appeal to the former to explain the aspects of the latter which interest Nietzsche. To take the simplest case, that a poem is in iambic pentameter says little about how it portrays its subject: valorizing and depreciating representations fit equally well in the same meter. An interest in things like meter, then, will not be enough to explain privileging valorizing aspects of a subject: a representation might be a triumph *at the level of form* even while presenting its subject in a demeaning light. The formalism of *l'art pour l'art* thus renders artists' tendency to valorize their subjects mysterious: if valorization of the subject is irrelevant to representational artists' goals, why is it nonetheless such a central part of their practice?

Nietzsche suggests that a new account of artistic purpose is needed to resolve this mystery. Creators of beautiful representations actively work to valorize their subjects. Explaining

this convergence requires taking them to have a purpose to which this practice answers. As discussed above, Nietzsche has a candidate to fill this explanatory role: the common purpose shared by those who create beautiful representations is a desire to praise goods external to the work they are creating. This motive directly explains these artists' tendency to highlight features of their subjects that bring out the value of living with them. This practice is an easily identified means to the end they seek to achieve. It is thus not surprising that they tend to converge on its use: there is nothing mysterious about people with a common end coming to employ a common means. A feature of artistic practice which looked baffling on the *l'art pour l'art* account thus makes perfect sense on Nietzsche's. This gives us some reason to prefer Nietzsche's view of artistic motivation to that of his formalist opponents, and brings the explanatory argument's first step to a close. We have seen how Nietzsche transitions from a descriptive claim about artistic practice to an explanatory claim about artistic purpose. We can now see how he moves from this claim about artistic purpose to a second explanatory claim about beauty.

Nietzsche has argued that the impulse to praise plays a significant role in motivating artistic creation. In the first part of this chapter, we saw him use this claim to ground an explanatory argument focused on beauty's role in *inspiring* artistic creation. Here, however, Nietzsche points to a different argument, one that focuses on beauty's role as the *endpoint* of artistic creation rather than its origin. Nietzsche is aware that the explanatory argument traced above seems to have simply replaced one mystery with another. Creators of beautiful representations converge on valorizing their subjects. Nietzsche explains this convergence in artistic practice by suggesting it follows a convergence in artistic motive: the creators of beautiful representations tend to valorize their subjects because they tend to be motivated by a desire to celebrate those subjects. This convergence in motive, however, is no less surprising

than the convergence in practice it explains. Why exactly is an impulse to praise one's subject typical of those who create beautiful representational art?

Nietzsche's answer is simple: what explains this motive's prevalence among those who create beautiful representations is that it facilitates success in doing so. Representations created out of an impulse to praise are more likely to be beautiful than those created in response to other motives. Thus, it is no more surprising that creators of beautiful representations tend to be moved by an impulse to praise than it is that painters tend to have steady hands: the features that facilitate success in a particular craft will tend to be found among its successful practitioners. This is, I take it, what Nietzsche has in mind in his elliptical comment about the "presupposition" of artistic activity. Having presented his account of praise's role in artistic practice, Nietzsche asks the following: "Is this just incidental? accidental? completely unconnected to the artist's instinct? Or: isn't it the presupposition for the artist *to be able to* . . .?" The suggestion is, I take it, that the impulse to praise should be viewed as a core part of "the artist's instinct" because it plays a central role in enabling artistic success. It is a presupposition of the artist's ability to do what she does: namely, create *beautiful* art.

It is here that Nietzsche's view of beauty finds its second source of support: it lets us understand why an impulse to praise is an asset to artistic success. Nietzsche claims that the beautiful promises happiness, arguing that finding something beautiful involves seeing the appeal of a life that contains it. On this view of beauty, it is clear why the impulse to praise would facilitate the production of beautiful art. A beautiful representation will be a valorizing representation: to represent something as beautiful will be to present it in a way that brings out the value of living alongside it. The impulse to praise both encourages artists to present their subjects in this way and helps put them in a position to do so effectively. It encourages

emphasizing valorizing aspects of the subject for reasons discussed above: the impulse to praise provides artists with an end for which this kind of selectivity is an obvious means. It helps put artists in a position to implement this means effectively by guiding their own view of their subjects: the desire to praise something renders salient precisely those of its features relevant to bringing out its worth. The impulse to praise is thus an invaluable aide in the production of beautiful art *given Nietzsche's understanding of beauty*: the aspects of the subject relevant to praising it are exactly the ones relevant to representing it as beautiful *if representing something as beautiful involves representing it as promising happiness.* Nietzsche's account of beauty thus allows him to tie-off the chain of mysteries we have been dealing with. It can explain the convergence in artistic practice by appeal to a convergence in artistic motive, and the convergence in artistic motive by appeal to aesthetic fact: successful artists tend to highlight valorizing features of their subjects because they tend to be motivated by an impulse to praise them, and they tend be motivated by this impulse to praise because it facilitates artistic success.[32]

As noted above, I take it that this argument would run just as well if the middle step were elided and Nietzsche moved directly from his descriptive claim about artistic practice to his explanatory claim about beauty. Nietzsche's explanation of successful representational artists' convergence on the impulse to praise relies on a more general explanatory view. It is a specification of something like the following thought: the concentration of a characteristic relevant to success at a task among those who have found success at that task is plausibly explained in terms of that characteristic's relevance to task-success. Nietzsche's account of beauty thus provides an explanation for the tendency of successful artists to share *any* characteristics relevant to depicting their subjects as appealing to live with. The impulse to praise

[32] As a reminder, in this specific context, successful artists are those who create *beautiful* art.

does not have any special status here: it is just one of a potentially quite large number of characteristics relevant to artistic success given Nietzsche's account of beauty. The tendency to highlight features of one's subject that make life with them seem appealing is, I take it, another such characteristic. This was already essential to Nietzsche's argument: the impulse to praise facilitated artistic success precisely because it encouraged emphasizing features of this kind. Nietzsche's descriptive claim about artistic practice is thus already enough to support his explanatory claim about the nature of beauty. Whatever motivational origin the tendency to highlight appealing features of one's subject might have, the concentration of this tendency among representational artists will be explicable in terms of its relevance to success in producing beautiful representations.

This is significant not just because it simplifies the second explanatory argument, but because it opens more space between it and the first explanatory argument. Unlike the first argument, the second does not hinge on claims about artistic motivation. It thus provides Nietzsche's account with support that can be accepted even by those who reject his motivational view. Suppose artists tend to feel little about their subjects, valorizing them for purely imitative reasons: they are familiar with the beautiful works of others, know that such works tend to highlight appealing features of their subjects, and follow the same practice in hopes of finding the same success. Even still, the second argument encounters no difficulty: that imitating this particular practice is a good path to artistic success will still be well explained by its relevance to beauty as Nietzsche understands it. The descriptive claim about representational practice is thus all Nietzsche needs to get the second explanatory argument off the ground.

D. What Does the Second Argument Achieve?

Above, I suggested that the first explanatory argument was insufficient to advance Nietzsche's case against disinterested aesthetics. It established the explanatory credentials of Nietzsche's view, but failed to identify weaknesses in the credentials of its rival. This limitation stemmed from the first explanatory argument's focus on beauty's *effects*. Even if some of those effects are difficult to explain unless beautiful objects are typically viewed as beneficial, this posed no difficulty for disinterred accounts of beauty. Such accounts are committed to the claim that viewing an object as beneficial is no *part* of viewing it as beautiful. They are not, however, committed to the claim that viewing an object as beneficial is no *consequence* of viewing it as beautiful. They can always explain away seemingly benefit-dependent effects of beautiful objects by suggesting they are really the effects of its effects.

The second explanatory argument blocks buck-passing explanations of this kind. It does this by switching from questions about beauty's effects to questions about how it is effected. The second argument treats beauty as the *endpoint* of a creative process. It asks what understanding of beauty makes sense of the fact that beautiful objects commonly result from a particular kind of artistic practice. This puts disinterested accounts in a difficult position. Nietzsche asks why a tendency to highlight valorizing features of their subjects is so common among successful artists. Like beautiful objects' tendency to provoke gratitude, this phenomenon seems difficult to explain absent a link between seeing an object as beautiful and seeing it as beneficial. Unlike the case of gratitude, however, this link cannot be pushed down the causal chain and treated as an effect of beauty's effects. If bringing out the appeal of life with an object is part of *making it* beautiful, then this appeal cannot be treated as a mere *result* of its beauty. This limits

disinterested accounts' options for explaining away the link between beauty and benefit. If Nietzsche's descriptive claim is accepted, disinterested views are left in the unenviable position of explaining why successful artists tend to engage in a practice irrelevant to their success.

It is, of course, open to disinterested accounts to deny the descriptive claim Nietzsche challenges them to explain. The claim that beautiful representations tend to highlight features of their subjects that make life with them appealing is not uncontroversial. Truly defending it requires detailed examination of individual works of beautiful representative art, and Nietzsche offers little detailed art analysis of this kind. He does, however, offer a framework for handling the case he expects to cause the most difficulty for his account: namely, tragedy. This framework seems to be a strong one: as discussed in the previous chapter, Nietzsche seems correct that placing her subject in a terrible situation may well *help* an artist highlight that subject's value.[33] It is implausible to think that all tragic art has this valorizing aim, but it is also implausible to think that all tragic art is beautiful. Nietzsche only needs to defend seeing the typical work of *beautiful* tragic art in these terms to have successfully handled the most challenging case for his account. If he can do this, Nietzsche's descriptive claim will be on good footing, and denying it will no longer offer disinterested aesthetics an easy escape from the argument.

The second explanatory argument, then, adds a great deal to Nietzsche's case. It points to a real advantage of his view: Nietzsche's view of beauty makes sense of a significant aesthetic phenomenon that disinterested views have difficulty with. The first explanatory argument

[33] Ruskin took a similar approach to the case of tragedy, noting that "we express our delight in a beautiful or lovely thing no less by lament for its loss, than gladness at its presence, much art is therefore tragic or pensive; but all true art is praise"(1877: 3). This is not quite the valorizing effect of tragedy that Nietzsche emphasizes, but the basic point is the same. That tragic representations can be beautiful representations stands in no tension with the claim that beautiful representations are valorizing representations. This is because mourning a subject's loss or depicting its confrontation with unfavorable circumstances can be a highly effective way of bringing out its value.

showed that Nietzsche's view has significant explanatory power, allowing it to stand as a credible rival to disinterested theories. The second explanatory argument goes beyond this, giving us a tool to adjudicate the competition the first argument sets up. The argument Nietzsche borrows from Stendhal continues this effort, once again focusing on questions about how things come to be experienced as beautiful in a way that blocks disinterested theories from deploying the buck-passing arguments that are their standard defense.

III. Stendhal's Explanatory Argument: Differences in Aesthetic Taste

I have presented two arguments Nietzsche uses to defend his view of beauty. These arguments both appear in relatively late work: the first finds its clearest expression in the *Genealogy* and the second in *Twilight*. Nietzsche, however, endorsed this view of beauty at a much earlier date: it found clear expression in places like *Daybreak* 433 (discussed below) long before he presented his own arguments in its favor. That Nietzsche endorsed this view prior to presenting his own arguments for it should not surprise us. Nietzsche's view of beauty is not original to him: he explicitly adopts it from Stendhal, who had already developed a way of defending the position. Stendhal's approach fits well with Nietzsche's eventual strategy: like Nietzsche, Stendhal defended his view of beauty on explanatory grounds. This defense focused on the phenomenon of aesthetic variance: differences in aesthetic taste between individuals and changes in aesthetic taste over the course of an individual's life. Stendhal used his account of beauty to explain cases of aesthetic variance, and treats his success in doing so as the chief support for his position. There is evidence that Nietzsche found this argument persuasive: he deploys his view of beauty to explain aesthetic variance in ways that exactly parallel Stendhal's

original defense. Nietzsche, then, seems to have endorsed a third argument in his view's favor: the view's ability to make sense of aesthetic variance should be counted among Nietzsche's reasons for endorsing it.

A. Stendhal's Argument

To get this third argument in view, we should first say a bit more about aesthetic variance. To put the phenomenon broadly: different individuals have an easier time seeing the beauty of different objects. Even where a single individual is concerned, aesthetic taste may change over a lifetime: an object that seemed positively ugly when first encountered may eventually hold great charm and vice versa. Taken together, these individual differences can add to up to differences in aesthetic standards between cultures and changes in cultural standards over time. This kind of variance is widespread, and aesthetic theorists have been keen to show that their views explain its prevalence. Thus, Hume suggests aesthetic experience depends on the *active cultivation* of aesthetic taste, Schopenhauer suggests aesthetic experience depends on *unequally distributed* cognitive capacities, Kant suggests aesthetic experience depends on a judgment *guided by no fixed rules*, etc. In each case, there is an effort to show that the thinker's view makes aesthetic experience hinge on something sufficiently variable to explain the variance we observe in individuals' actual experiences of beauty.

Stendhal's account has the same structure. However, he traces aesthetic variance to a different source.[34] Differences in aesthetic taste, Stendhal suggests, track differences in taste in lives. Thus, Stendhal explains differences between ancient and modern sculpture as follows:

[34] For a discussion of Stendhal's place in the larger French debate about aesthetic variance, see Talbot 1985: 46-60. Stendhal offers a new solution to what was seen as an increasingly vexing problem.

> Beauty is only a *promise* of happiness. The happiness of a Greek was different to that of a Frenchman of 1822. See the eyes of the Medici Venus and compare them with the eyes of the Magdalen of Pordenone (Stendhal 1920: 60 n.56 [19])

Stendhal identifies finding something beautiful with taking it to promise happiness. On this account, the ease with which you find something beautiful will correspond to the ease with which you see the appeal of a life that contains it. Our aesthetic preferences are thus hostage to our hopes: we find beauty where we expect happiness to be found. Such hopes vary wildly between individuals and change dramatically over the course of an individual life. Stendhal, then, finds himself in a good position to claim that his view makes aesthetic experience hinge on something sufficiently variable to explain the sharp differences we observe in individuals' aesthetic tastes. Variance in aesthetic taste tracks variance in taste in lives, and taste in lives is more than variable enough to do the relevant explanatory work.

The concrete case of aesthetic variance that most interests Stendhal concerns lovers' estimation of their partners' beauty. Lovers tend see their partners as highly beautiful. This often involves significant aesthetic variance at both inter-personal and intra-personal levels. Inter-personally, lovers tend to estimate the beauty of their partners more highly than strangers do. Intra-personally, lovers tend to estimate the beauty of their partners more highly than they themselves did upon initially meeting them. Such cases cannot, Stendhal suggests, be waved away by suggesting there has been a covert change in the object of evaluation. It is not just that the stranger's evaluation focuses on looks while the lover's takes a wider view on the person as a whole. Rather, a lover may come to see beauty in the very same features of her partner that struck her as ugly when first encountered as a stranger. Thus, in the passage to be discussed below, Stendhal focuses on the case of change in a lover's attitude toward a particular feature of his beloved's appearance: namely, a smallpox mark.

Stendhal recommends his view by demonstrating its success at handling this kind of case. He does this by showing how the general claim above – change in aesthetic taste tracks change in taste in lives – suggests a more specific one about the aesthetic impact of positive experience with an object:

> Alberic meets in a box at the theatre a woman more beautiful than his mistress (I beg to be allowed here a mathematical valuation) – that is to say, her features promise three units of happiness instead of two, supposing the quantity of happiness given by perfect beauty to be expressed by the number four.
>
> Is it surprising that he prefers the features of his mistress, which promise a hundred units of happiness *for him*? Even the minor defects of her face, a small pox mark, for example, touches the heart of the man who loves, and, when he observes them even in another woman, sets him dreaming far away. What, then, when he sees them in his mistress? Why, he has felt a thousand sentiments in presence of that small-pox mark, sentiments for the most part sweet, and all of the greatest interest, and now, such as they are, they are evoked afresh with all incredible vividness by the sight of this sign, even in the face of another woman.
>
> If ugliness thus comes to be preferred and loved, it is because in this case ugliness is beauty. (Stendhal 1920: 60 [20])

Stendhal's view of beauty suggests that seeing the beauty of an object requires seeing the appeal of a life that contains it. Positive experience with an object thus naturally increases one's sense of its aesthetic worth: it is easy to see the appeal of making something part of your life when your life has already been enriched by your interactions with it. Alberic comes to feel the beauty of his lover's smallpox mark because it has figured prominently in experiences through which his life has been consistently enhanced. He has "felt a thousand sentiments in presence of that small-pox mark, sentiments for the most part sweet, and all of the greatest interest". As a result, it is easy for him to see the appeal of a life in which that mark plays a role. It is thus also easy for him to see the mark as a thing of great beauty. His estimation of the mark's aesthetic worth has changed, precisely because his taste in lives has changed. Positive experience showed him the value of living with something he initially failed to appreciate. His aesthetic taste then changed to match his hopes: he came to expect happiness from a new source, and therefore to see beauty

in a new place. Stendhal thus motivates his account of beauty by suggesting that it is well-positioned to explain the kind of aesthetic variance found in the realm of life where most people's strongest aesthetic experiences are located.

B. Nietzsche's Embrace of Stendhal's Argument

Stendhal defends his view of beauty by pointing to the ease with which it explains aesthetic variance. There is reason to think that, in addition to endorsing Stendhal's view of beauty, Nietzsche also endorsed this approach to defending it. Thus, we find Nietzsche using his view of beauty to explain cases of aesthetic variance in ways that exactly parallel the cases Stendhal used to motivate his account.

Like Stendhal, Nietzsche suggests that change in artistic taste can be explained by change in taste in lives. Thus, just as Stendhal suggested that differences in ancient and modern sculpture might be traced to differences in ancient and modern views of happiness, Nietzsche suggests that a change in the way we imagine happiness explains realism's newfound appeal:

> *Seeing with new eyes*. – Supposing that beauty in art is always to be understood as the *imitation of happiness* – and this I hold to be the truth – in accordance with how an age, a people, a great, self-regulating individual imagines happiness: what does the so-called *realism* of contemporary artists give us to understand as to the happiness of our own age? *Its* kind of beauty is undoubtedly the kind of beauty we can most easily grasp and enjoy. Is one not then obliged to believe that *our* happiness lies in realism, in possessing the sharpest possible senses and in the faithful interpretation of actuality – thus not in reality, but in *knowledge of reality*? (D 433 [21])

The details of Nietzsche's discussion of realism are not important at present. What is important is how clearly Nietzsche replicates Stendhal's explanatory strategy. Experiencing something as beautiful involves taking it to promise happiness. As a result, the ease with which you find

something beautiful corresponds to the ease with which you feel the attraction of a particular kind of life. Our aesthetic preferences are hostage to the way we "imagine[] happiness". Such imaginings differ between ages, peoples, and individuals. This explains aesthetic variance: in D 433, changes in the popularity of artistic styles over time. All this is just a restatement of Stendhal's claim that aesthetic taste tracks taste in lives.

In addition to endorsing this general claim, Nietzsche even endorses Stendhal's manner of applying it to concrete cases. Thus, Stendhal's account of how we come to see the beauty of our lovers finds an exact parallel in Nietzsche's account of how we come to see the beauty of things we know:

> *Knowledge and beauty* – If, as they still do, people as it were reserve their reverence and feeling of happiness for works of imagination and dissembling, we ought not to wonder if the opposite of imagination and dissembling makes them feel cold and disconsolate. The delight produced by even the smallest definite piece of real progress in knowledge, which science as it is now bestows so abundantly and already upon so many – this delight is for the present not *credited* by all those who have accustomed themselves to finding delight only in relinquishing reality and plunging into the depths of appearance. These believe reality is ugly: but they do not reflect that knowledge of even the ugliest reality is itself beautiful, nor that he who knows much is in the end very far from finding ugly the greater part of that reality whose discovery brought him happiness. For is anything "beautiful in itself"? The happiness of the man of knowledge enhances the beauty of the world and makes all that exists sunnier; knowledge casts its beauty not only over things but in the long run into things – may future mankind bear witness to the truth of this proposition! (D 550 [22])

The world, which may initially strike us as ugly, comes to seem beautiful due to our delight in knowing it. Nietzsche explains this change by pointing to the following: coming to delight in knowing something changes our sense of its impact on our happiness. Knowledge, even knowledge of ugly things, is itself a source of delight. As we come to know something we find ugly, our interactions with that thing become a source of delight for us. We thus come to see it as part of our happiness: experience with it leads us to view it as a source of joy, and thus to be

attracted to a life that contains it. This in turn changes our sense of the object's aesthetic worth: thanks to our positive experience interacting with it, we come to see it as beautiful. As Nietzsche puts it, "he who knows much is in the end very far from finding ugly the greater part of that reality *whose discovery brought him happiness*"(my emphasis). We find beauty where we expect happiness to be found, and this means that an object which contributes to our happiness will not seem ugly for long. Nietzsche thus explains our coming to find beautiful that which initially struck us as ugly in the exact same way Stendhal does: positive experience with an object brings out its beauty by bringing out the value of a life that contains it.

There is good reason, then, to treat Stendhal's explanatory argument as a third source of support for Nietzsche's view of beauty. The explanation of aesthetic variance Stendhal uses to motivate his view is one Nietzsche seems to endorse, applying it freely in his own work.

C. What Does the Third Argument Achieve?

The phenomenon dealt with by the third explanatory argument is quite broad. Aesthetic variance is a summary term, covering an array of distinct but related phenomena. To take the cases above, phenomena as different as changes in artistic taste, changes in the feeling of an individual's beauty, and changes in the feeling of the world's beauty all fit under this heading. Aesthetic variance thus takes many forms. Disinterested accounts are better positioned to explain some of those forms than others. As a result, the third explanatory argument's contribution can be thought of in two different ways. Considered as an explanation of aesthetic variance's *existence*, it simply shows that Nietzsche's view can match disinterested accounts' explanatory power. Considered as an explanation of the specific forms of aesthetic variance we observe,

however, it supports the superiority of Nietzsche's approach by highlighting a type of aesthetic variance disinterested accounts are ill equipped to handle.

As noted above, explaining aesthetic variance has been a standard goal of aesthetic theory. Disinterested aesthetics have been as keen to provide such explanations as any others. In principle, there is no reason why these explanations should not be successful. Nothing about disinterested views prevents them from making aesthetic experience depend on something sufficiently variable to explain the existence of aesthetic variance. There are many aspects of individuals that differ and change: taste in lives is just one of many sources of variety. Where the phenomenon being explained is the mere *existence* of aesthetic variance, then, disinterested accounts do just fine. Taken in this way, the third explanatory argument simply establishes that Nietzsche's view is on a level with disinterested accounts. His view too makes beauty hinge on something sufficiently variable to explain the existence of extensive variance in aesthetic response between individuals and over time. Establishing parity on this point is not insignificant: the importance that aesthetic variance has played in aesthetic theory makes it a particularly crucial phenomenon to explain. Nonetheless, thought of in this way, the third explanatory argument can do no more than help establish parity between Nietzsche's view and its rivals.

The situation changes, however, when the specific kinds of aesthetic variance that the third argument focuses on are considered. Nietzsche and Stendhal are both particularly interested in the way positive experience with an object can change our sense of its beauty. Stendhal highlights the way lovers discover each other's beauty in discovering how much they add to each other's lives. Nietzsche highlights the way knowers discover the world's beauty in discovering the joy of knowing it. Disinterested accounts of beauty seem ill-positioned to explain these kinds of phenomena. If seeing the value of living with an object is not part of seeing it as beautiful,

then why should discovering the value of living with an object be such an effective path to discovering its beauty?

In answering this question, disinterested accounts might suggest that positive experience changes our sense of an object's beauty only indirectly, by changing how we attend to it. As we come to value an object, we come to enjoy dwelling on it. We take the time to consider it in detail, rather than skimming over it as we rush to more important concerns. This enables us to notice aesthetically relevant features of the object that would otherwise have been overlooked. If lovers are particularly sensitive to the beauty of those they love, this is simply because they are particularly attentive to those they love.

The difficulty with this response is twofold. First, although it explains why positive experience might *change* our sense of an object's beauty, it does not explain the reliably *positive* nature of this change. Increased attention to an object would explain increased awareness of *any* aesthetically relevant features it might have. These features might be positive ones, but they also might be negative ones. In Stendhal's example, Alberic comes to delight in features of his lover that initially struck him as imperfections. It is not clear why simply dwelling on these imperfections would lead him to delight in them. Unless something causes these features to no longer be experienced as imperfections, attending to them is more likely to diminish Alberic's sense of his lover's beauty than enhance it.

The second difficulty with this response is that it undermines a standard approach to motivating disinterested views. Disinterested views need to motivate drawing a sharp distinction between the interest we take in objects of desire and the interest we take in aesthetic objects. One promising way to do this is suggesting that there is a significant difference between the way we attend to objects we desire and the way we attend to aesthetic objects. When an object is viewed

through desire, we focus on the wrong features of it, only seeing aspects of the object relevant to using it or making it our own. The desiderative view of an object is thus too impoverished to support a genuinely aesthetic experience of it.[35] If this is true, then the attention-based explanation of this aesthetic variance cannot be correct. Discovering the appeal of living with an object may encourage increased attention to it. This attention will, however, be of the wrong kind. My longing to dwell on these objects will be a product of my desire for them. If attending to an object in this desire-directed way can enhance my sense of its aesthetic value, then a central motive of disinterested aesthetics is undermined. If it cannot do so, then it also cannot explain how positive experience with an object might help me see its beauty.

If the attention-based explanation is unsuccessful, it is still open to disinterested theories to deny the phenomenon, asserting that positive experience with an object does not tend to increase our sense of its beauty. It seems implausible, however, to deny that the kind of cases Stendhal describes really do occur. As such, the disinterested theorist's best option is to suggest that, although Stendhal and Nietzsche have a genuine phenomenon in view, it is not a genuinely *aesthetic* phenomenon. Thus, defenders of disinterested views sometimes suggest that beauty is a term with sharply divergent uses. On the one hand, there is a prosaic use of the term beauty that tracks our experience of people and things we find appealing. On the other hand, there is a more rarified use of the term beauty that tracks our experience of genuinely aesthetic objects. On the first use, beauty is an interested experience. On the second, a disinterested one.[36] With this distinction, disinterested accounts can grant Stendhal's claim that lovers discover each other's beauty as they discover their importance to each other's happiness. They can even grant that this

[35] Schopenhauer has a view like this, as do more modern distance theories (see discussion in Young 2014 and Dickie 1964 respectively).
[36] Janaway 2002: 31, drawing on claims in Bell 1969: 89-90, critiques Nietzsche's view on these grounds.

change is well-explained by the way our feelings of beauty track our taste in lives. They simply need to follow up these concessions by noting that the beauty involved in cases like this is not the genuinely aesthetic beauty which disinterested accounts explain.

It seems to me that Stendhal and Nietzsche have no need to contest this last argument. In granting that their view of beauty is the one relevant to the way lovers experience their loves and knowers experience their knowledge, disinterested accounts would be granting Stendhal and Nietzsche all the terrain they are interested in occupying. Granting that their view does the better job at explaining these kinds of aesthetic phenomena is granting its superiority as an account of the only kind of beauty either takes to play a sufficiently important role in human life to make accounting for it worthwhile.

IV. The Value of Aesthetic Experience

In the previous chapter, I traced Nietzsche's argument for the importance of aesthetic experience. This argument centered on the essential role a particular kind of art plays in enabling us to value our passions. Works of art which excite the very passions they depict enable us to see our passions as beautiful, and seeing the passions as beautiful enables us to value them despite the difficulties of life in their grip. These claims about the salutary effects of passion-depicting works of art depended on a particular view of beauty. Works that excite the same passions they depict help us feel passion's beauty because they simultaneously valorize the passions and make it clear that their value is accessible to us. This beautifies the passions because finding something beautiful involves taking it to possess a lofty value which might nonetheless enter our lives in a way which makes them better. Works of art that celebrate the passions they excite are perfectly

designed to bring out passion's beauty, because they are perfectly designed to bring out just how big a role passion might play in making our lives desirable.

Everything hinged, then, on Nietzsche's claim that the beautiful promises happiness. Above, I argued that Nietzsche had compelling reason to make this claim. Through a series of arguments, Nietzsche establishes the explanatory scope of his view, and brings out its superiority to the disinterested views that stand as its major opponent. Explanatory arguments are never fully decisive: there are always additional phenomena to test them against, and their strength is diminished if they fail to explain any of them. A rigorous defense of Nietzsche's view would require going through concrete aesthetic phenomena in much larger numbers and much greater detail than Nietzsche himself ever does. This would be a valuable project, and it is one that some philosophers have made progress on.[37] It is not, however, my project here. For my project, what I have argued above is sufficient.

Nietzsche has compelling reasons for understanding beauty as he does. On their own, these reasons may not be enough to decisively settle any questions about beauty's nature. They are, however, more than enough to justify taking Nietzsche's view of beauty seriously. They are, consequently, also more than enough to justify taking seriously Nietzsche's claims about the salutary effects of passion-depicting works of art. If we have reason to take those claims seriously, then we also have reason to take seriously his larger account of the central role aesthetic experience plays in defeating the pessimism of aversion. This means that Nietzsche has successfully provided what we were after: a way of making good on Mill's promising suggestion that investigating the problem of pessimism would help us understand the crucial roles aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic dignity play in making life worth living.

[37] See, e.g., Sartwell 2006: 9-27, Nehamas 2007.

Appendix A: Text in the Original Language

Overview

[1]

„Eine vierte Frage wäre, ob auch Schopenhauer mit seinem Pessimismus, das heisst dem Problem vom Werth des Daseins, gerade ein Deutscher gewesen sein müsste.“(GS 357)

Chapter 2

[1]

„denn freilich sind Noth und Langeweile die beiden Pole des Menschenlebens.“(PP II: 316)

[2]

„Daß Wunsch und Befriedigung sich ohne zu kurze und ohne zu lange Zwischenräume folgen, verkleinert das Leiden, welches Beide geben, zum geringsten Maaße und macht den glücklichsten Lebenslauf aus.“(WWR I: 416)

Chapter 3

[1]

„Man kann drei Extreme des Menschenlebens theoretisch annehmen und sie als Elemente des wirklichen Menschenlebens betrachten. Erstlich, das gewaltige Wollen, die großen Leidenschaften . . . Sodann zweitens das reine Erkennen, das Auffassen der Ideen, bedingt durch Befreiung der Erkenntniß vom Dienste des Willens: das Leben des Genius . . . Endlich drittens, die größte Lethargie des Willens und damit der an ihn gebundenen Erkenntniß, leeres Sehnen, lebenerstarrende Langeweile . . .“(WWR I: 425-426)

[2]

„Nun ist die ursprüngliche Bestimmung der Kräfte, mit welchen die Natur den Menschen ausgerüstet hat, der Kampf gegen die Noth, die ihn von allen Seiten bedrängt. Wenn aber dieser Kampf ein Mal rastet, da werden ihm die unbeschäftigten Kräfte zur Last: er muß daher jetzt mit ihnen spielen, d. h. sie zwecklos gebrauchen: denn sonst fällt er der andern Quelle des menschlichen Leidens, der Langenweile, sogleich anheim.“(PP I: 353)

[3]

„Drittens, die Genüsse der Sensibilität: sie bestehn im Beschauen, Denken, Empfinden, Dichten, Bilden, Musiciren, Lernen, Lesen, Meditiren, Erfinden, Philosophiren u.s.w.“(PP I: 354)

[4]

„Dem bei weitem größten Theile der Menschen aber sind die rein intellektuellen Genüsse nicht zugänglich; der Freude, die im reinen Erkennen liegt, sind sie fast ganz unfähig: sie sind gänzlich auf das Wollen verwiesen. Wenn daher irgend etwas ihnen Antheil abgewinnen, ihnen interessant seyn soll, so muß es (dies liegt auch schon in der Wortbedeutung) irgendwie ihren Willen anregen, sei es auch nur durch eine ferne und nur in der Möglichkeit liegende Beziehung auf ihn; er darf aber nie ganz aus dem Spiele bleiben, weil ihr Daseyn bei Weitem mehr im Wollen als im Erkennen liegt: Aktion und Reaktion ist ihr einziges Element. Die naiven Aeußerungen dieser Beschaffenheit kann man aus Kleinigkeiten und alltäglichen Erscheinungen abnehmen: so z.B. schreiben sie an sehenswerthen Orten, die sie besuchen, ihre Namen hin, um so zu reagiren, um auf den Ort zu wirken, da er nicht auf sie wirkte: ferner können sie nicht leicht ein fremdes, seltenes Thier bloß betrachten, sondern müssen es reizen, necken, mit ihm spielen, um nur Aktion und Reaktion zu empfinden; ganz besonders aber zeigt jenes Bedürfniß der Willensanregung sich an der Erfindung und Erhaltung des Kartenspieles, welches recht eigentlich der Ausdruck der kläglichen Seite der Menschheit ist.“(WWR I: 417)

[5]

„mattes Sehnen ohne bestimmtes Objekt“(WWR I: 234)

[6]

„Ich kenne demnach keine größere Absurdität, als die der meisten metaphysischen Systeme, welche das Uebel für etwas Negatives erklären; während es gerade das Positive, das sich selbst fühlbar machende ist.“(PP II: 312-313)

[7]

„Der Begriff, den das Wort Gefühl bezeichnet, hat durchaus nur einen negativen Inhalt, nämlich diesen, daß etwas, das im Bewußtseyn gegenwärtig ist, nicht Begriff, nicht abstrakte Erkenntniß der Vernunft sei“(WWR I: 93)

[8]

„Daß alles Glück nur negativer, nicht positiver Natur ist, daß es eben deshalb nicht dauernde Befriedigung und Beglückung seyn kann, sondern immer nur von einem Schmerz oder Mangel erlöst, auf welchen entweder ein neuer Schmerz, oder auch languor, leeres Sehnen und Langeweile folgen muß; dies findet einen Beleg auch in jenem treuen Spiegel des Wesens der Welt und des Lebens, in der Kunst, besonders in der Poesie.“(WWR I: 424)

[9]

„Denn Wunsch, d.h. Mangel, ist die vorhergehende Bedingung jedes Genusses.“(WWR I: 423)

[10]

„Denn alles Streben entspringt aus Mangel, aus Unzufriedenheit mit seinem Zustande, ist also Leiden, so lange es nicht befriedigt ist;“(WWR I: 411)

[11]

„Die Basis alles Wollens aber ist Bedürftigkeit, Mangel, also Schmerz“(WWR I: 414)

[12]

„unter einer neuen Gestalt stellt sich der Wunsch, das Bedürfniß wieder ein“(WWR I: 416)

[13]

„daß also dieses Haben-wollen die nothwendige Bedingung ist, unter der allein das Nicht-haben zur Entbehrung wird, und den Schmerz erzeugt.“(WWR I: 138)

[14]

„Mit der Befriedigung hört aber der Wunsch und folglich der Genuß auf.“(WWR I: 423)

[15]

„Hingegen das Gute, d.h. alles Glück und alle Befriedigung, ist das Negative, nämlich das bloße Aufheben des Wunsches und Endigen einer Pein.“(PP II: 313)

[16]

„Wir fühlen den Wunsch, wie wir Hunger und Durst fühlen; sobald er aber erfüllt worden, ist es damit, wie mit dem genossenen Bissen, der in dem Augenblick, da er verschluckt wird, für unser Gefühl dazuseyn aufgehört. . . . Denn nur Schmerz und Mangel können positiv empfunden werden und kündigen daher sich selbst an: das Wohlseyn hingegen ist bloß negativ. Daher eben werden wir der drei größten Güter des Lebens, Gesundheit, Jugend und Freiheit, nicht als solcher inne, so lange wir sie besitzen; sondern erst nachdem wir sie verloren haben: denn auch sie sind Negationen.“(WWR II: 1376-77)

[17]

„Wenn der ganze Leib gesund und heil ist, bis auf irgend eine kleine wunde, oder sonst schmerzende Stelle; so tritt jene Gesundheit des Ganzen weiter nicht ins Bewußtseyn, sondern die Aufmerksamkeit ist beständig auf den Schmerz der verletzten Stelle gerichtet und das

Behagen der gesammten Lebensempfindung ist aufgehoben. – Eben so, wenn alle unsere Angelegenheiten nach unserm Sinne gehn, bis auf eine, die unsrer Absicht zuwider läuft, so kommt diese, auch wenn sie von geringer Bedeutung ist, uns immer wieder in den Kopf: wir denken häufig an sie und wenig an alle jene andern wichtigeren Dinge, die nach unserm Sinne gehn. – In beiden Fällen nun ist das Beeinträchtigte der Wille, ein Mal, wie er sich im Organismus, das andere, wie er sich im Streben des Menschen objektivirt, und in beiden sehn wir, daß seine Befriedigung immer nur negativ wirkt und daher gar nicht direkt empfunden wird, sondern höchstens auf dem Wege der Reflexion ins Bewußtseyn kommt. Hingegen ist seine Hemmung das Positive und daher sich selbst Ankündigende.“(PP I: 431)

[18]

„Dennoch aber wird die Quelle des ästhetischen Genusses bald mehr in der Auffassung der erkannten Idee liegen, bald mehr in der Seeligkeit und Geistesruhe des von allem Wollen und dadurch von aller Individualität und der aus ihr hervorgehenden Pein befreiten reinen Erkennens“(WWR I: 290)

[19]

„Hingegen besteht die Natur der Befriedigung, des Genusses, des Glüds, nur darin, daß eine Entbehrung aufgehoben, ein Schmerz gestillt ist. Diese wirken also negativ. Daher eben ist Bedürfniß und Wunsch die Bedingung jedes Genusses. Dies erkannte schon Platon, und nahm nur die Wohlgerüche und die Geistesfreuden aus.“(OBM: 210)

[20]

„Zum reinen willenlosen Erkennen kommt es also, indem das Bewußtseyn anderer Dinge sich so hoch potenzirt, daß das Bewußtseyn vom eigenen Selbst verschwindet.“(WWR II: 1128)

[21]

„Erkenntniß ist, an sich selbst, stets schmerzlos. Der Schmerz trifft allein den Willen und besteht in der Hemmung, Hinderung, Durchkreuzung desselben: dennoch ist dazu erfordert, daß diese Hemmung von der Erkenntniß begleitet sei. . . . Demzufolge nun ist nicht nur das Unorganische, sondern auch die Pflanze keines Schmerzes fähig; so viele Hemmungen auch der Wille in Beiden erleiden mag. Hingegen jedes Thier, selbst ein Infusorium, leidet Schmerz; weil Erkenntniß, sei sie auch noch so unvollkommen, der wahre Charakter der Thierheit ist.“(PP II: 319-20)

[22]

„Wird mit Emphase ausgerufen, ‚über's Leben geht noch die Ehre,‘ so besagt dies eigentlich: ‚Daseyn und Wohlseyn sind nichts; sondern was die Andern von uns denken, das ist die Sache.‘ . . . Auch ist aus dem Obigen leicht einzusehn, daß sie zum Vergessen des Zwecks über die Mittel gehört, so gut wie der Geiz.“(PP I: 375-376)

[23]

„Das stete Streben aber, welches das Wesen jeder Erscheinung des Willens ausmacht, erhält auf den höheren Stufen der Objektivation seine erste und allgemeinste Grundlage dadurch, daß hier der Wille sich erscheint als ein lebendiger Leib, mit dem eisernen Gebot, ihn zu nähren“(WWR I: 414)

[24]

„Es scheint jedoch, daß die gänzliche Verneinung des Willens den Grad erreichen könne, wo selbst der zur Erhaltung der Vegetation des Leibes, durch Aufnahme von Nahrung, nöthige Wille wegfällt. Weit entfernt, daß diese Art des Selbstmordes aus dem Willen zum Leben entstände, hört ein solcher völlig resignirter Asket bloß darum auf zu leben, weil er ganz und gar aufgehört hat zu wollen.“(WWR I: 525)

[25]

„Sehen wir es nun aber auch von der physischen Seite an; so ist offenbar, daß wie bekanntlich unser Gehen nur ein stets gehemmtes Fallen ist, das Leben unseres Leibes nur ein fortdauernd gehemmtes Sterben, ein immer aufgeschobener Tod ist“(WWR I: 413)

Chapter 4

[1]

„Giebt es einen Pessimismus der Stärke? Eine intellektuelle Vorneigung für das Harte, Schauerliche, Böse, Problematische des Daseins aus Wohlsein, aus überströmender Gesundheit, aus Fülle des Daseins?“(BT “Attempt” 1)

[2]

„Dass es noch einen ganz anderen Pessimismus geben könne, einen klassischen — diese Ahnung und Vision gehört zu mir, als unablöslich von mir, als mein proprium und ipsissimum: nur dass meinen Ohren das Wort ‚klassisch‘ widersteht, es ist bei weitem zu abgebraucht, zu rund und unkenntlich geworden. Ich nenne jenen Pessimismus der Zukunft — denn er kommt! ich sehe ihn kommen! — den dionysischen Pessimismus.“(GS 370)

[3]

„Die Psychologie des Orgiasmus als eines überströmenden Lebens- und Kraftgefühls, innerhalb dessen selbst der Schmerz noch als Stimulans wirkt, gab mir den Schlüssel zum Begriff des tragischen Gefühls, das sowohl von Aristoteles als in Sonderheit von unsern Pessimisten missverstanden worden ist. Die Tragödie ist so fern davon, Etwas für den Pessimismus der Hellenen im Sinne Schopenhauer’s zu beweisen, dass sie vielmehr als dessen entscheidende Ablehnung und Gegen-Instanz zu gelten hat. Das Jasagen zum Leben selbst noch in seinen

fremdesten und härtesten Problemen; der Wille zum Leben, im Opfer seiner höchsten Typen der eignen Unerschöpflichkeit frohwerdend — das nannte ich dionysisch, das errieth ich als die Brücke zur Psychologie des tragischen Dichters. Nicht um von Schrecken und Mitleiden loszukommen, nicht um sich von einem gefährlichen Affekt durch dessen vehemente Entladung zu reinigen — so verstand es Aristoteles —: sondern um, über Schrecken und Mitleid hinaus, die ewige Lust des Werdens selbst zu sein, — jene Lust, die auch noch die Lust am Vernichten in sich schliesst…"(TI "Ancients" 5)

[4]

„In diesem Sinne habe ich das Recht, mich selber als den ersten tragischen Philosophen zu verstehn — das heisst den äussersten Gegensatz und Antipoden eines pessimistischen Philosophen."(EH "BT" 3)

[5]

„Hat man sein warum? des Lebens, so verträgt man sich fast mit jedem wie? — Der Mensch strebt nicht nach Glück; nur der Engländer thut das."(TI "Arrows" 12)

[6]

„Ob Hedonismus, ob Pessimismus, ob Utilitarismus, ob Eudämonismus: alle diese Denkweisen, welche nach Lust und Leid, das heisst nach Begleitzuständen und Nebensachen den Werth der Dinge messen, sind Vordergrunds-Denkweisen und Naivetäten, auf welche ein Jeder, der sich gestaltender Kräfte und eines Künstler-Gewissens bewusst ist, nicht ohne Spott, auch nicht ohne Mitleid herabblicken wird. . . . Ihr wollt womöglich — und es giebt kein tolleres ‚womöglich' — das Leiden abschaffen; und wir? — es scheint gerade, wir wollen es lieber noch höher und schlimmer haben, als je es war! Wohlbefinden, wie ihr es versteht — das ist ja kein Ziel, das scheint uns ein Ende! Ein Zustand, welcher den Menschen alsbald lächerlich und verächtlich macht, — der seinen Untergang wünschen macht!"(BGE 225)

[7]

„und ebenfalls wussten sie, als volle, mit Kraft überladene, folglich nothwendig aktive Menschen, von dem Glück das Handeln nicht abzutrennen, — das Thätigsein wird bei ihnen mit Nothwendigkeit in's Glück hineingerechnet (woher εὖ πράττειν seine Herkunft nimmt) — Alles sehr im Gegensatz zu dem ‚Glück' auf der Stufe der Ohnmächtigen, Gedrückten, an giftigen und feindseligen Gefühlen Schwärenden, bei denen es wesentlich als Narcose, Betäubung, Ruhe, Frieden, ‚Sabbat', Gemüths-Ausspannung und Gliederstrecken, kurz passivisch auftritt."(GM I.10)

[8]

„Wir sind Hyperboreer, — wir wissen gut genug, wie abseits wir leben. . . . Wir haben das Glück entdeckt, wir wissen den Weg, wir fanden den Ausgang aus ganzen Jahrtausenden des Labyrinths. Wer fand ihn sonst? — Der moderne Mensch etwa? . . . An dieser Modernität waren

wir krank, — am faulen Frieden, am feigen Compromiss, an der ganzen tugendhaften Unsauberkeit des modernen Ja und Nein. . . . Wir dürsteten nach Blitz und Thaten, wir blieben am fernsten vom Glück der Schwächlinge, von der ‚Ergebung' . . . Formel unsres Glücks: ein Ja, ein Nein, eine gerade Linie, ein Ziel…"(A 1)

[9]

„Die Stunde, wo ihr sagt: ‚Was liegt an meinem Glücke! Es ist Armuth und Schmutz, und ein erbärmliches Behagen. Aber mein Glück sollte das Dasein selber rechtfertigen!'"(Z "Prologue" 3)

[10]

„Eine vierte Frage wäre, ob auch Schopenhauer mit seinem Pessimismus, das heisst dem Problem vom Werth des Daseins, gerade ein Deutscher gewesen sein müsste."(GS 357)

[11]

„Jener *consensus sapientium* — das begriff ich immer besser — beweist am wenigsten, dass sie Recht mit dem hatten, worüber sie übereinstimmten: er beweist vielmehr, dass sie selbst, diese Weisesten, irgend worin physiologisch übereinstimmten, um auf gleiche Weise negativ zum Leben zu stehn, — stehn zu müssen. Urtheile, Werthurtheile über das Leben, für oder wider, können zuletzt niemals wahr sein: sie haben nur Werth als Symptome, sie kommen nur als Symptome in Betracht, — an sich sind solche Urtheile Dummheiten. Man muss durchaus seine Finger darnach ausstrecken und den Versuch machen, diese erstaunliche finesse zu fassen, dass der Werth des Lebens nicht abgeschätzt werden kann. Von einem Lebenden nicht, weil ein solcher Partei, ja sogar Streitobjekt ist und nicht Richter; von einem Todten nicht, aus einem andren Grunde. — Von Seiten eines Philosophen im Werth des Lebens ein Problem sehn bleibt dergestalt sogar ein Einwurf gegen ihn, ein Fragezeichen an seiner Weisheit, eine Unweisheit."(TI "Problem" 2)

[12]

„denn damals war es so, wo ich mir den Satz abgewann: ‚ein Leidender hat auf Pessimismus noch kein Recht!', damals führte ich mit mir einen langwierig-geduldigen Feldzug gegen den unwissenschaftlichen Grundhang jedes romantischen Pessimismus, einzelne persönliche Erfahrungen zu allgemeinen Urtheilen, ja Welt-Verurtheilungen aufzubauschen, auszudeuten…"(HH II "Preface" 5)

[13]

„Daraus folgt, dass auch jene Widernatur von Moral, welche Gott als Gegenbegriff und Verurtheilung des Lebens fasst, nur ein Werthurtheil des Lebens ist – welches Lebens? Welcher Art von Leben?"(TI "Morality" 5)

[14]

„einen Willen zum Nichts, einen Widerwillen gegen das Leben“(GM III.28)

[15]

„In wiefern ich ebendamit den Begriff ‚tragisch‘, die endliche Erkenntniss darüber, was die Psychologie der Tragödie ist, gefunden hatte, habe ich zuletzt noch in der Götzen-Dämmerung Seite 139 zum Ausdruck gebracht.“(EH “BT” 3)

[16]

„jener unbedingte Hang und Drang“(GS 123)

[17]

„Die gemeine Natur ist dadurch ausgezeichnet, dass sie ihren Vortheil unverrückt im Auge behält und dass diess Denken an Zweck und Vortheil selbst stärker, als die stärksten Triebe in ihr ist: sich durch jene Triebe nicht zu unzweckmässigen Handlungen verleiten lassen — das ist ihre Weisheit und ihr Selbstgefühl. Im Vergleich mit ihr ist die höhere Natur die unvernünftigere: — denn der Edle, Grossmüthige, Aufopfernde unterliegt in der That seinen Trieben, und in seinen besten Augenblicken pausirt seine Vernunft. Ein Thier, das mit Lebensgefahr seine Jungen beschützt oder in der Zeit der Brunst dem Weibchen auch in den Tod folgt, denkt nicht an die Gefahr und den Tod, seine Vernunft pausirt ebenfalls, weil die Lust an seiner Brut oder an dem Weibchen und die Furcht, dieser Lust beraubt zu werden es ganz beherrschen; es wird dümmer, als es sonst ist, gleich dem Edlen und Grossmüthigen. Dieser besitzt einige Lust- und Unlust-Gefühle in solcher Stärke, dass der Intellect dagegen schweigen oder sich zu ihrem Dienste hergeben muss: es tritt dann bei ihnen das Herz in den Kopf und man spricht nunmehr von ‚Leidenschaft‘.“(GS 3)

[18]

„Alle diese Moralen, die sich an die einzelne Person wenden, zum Zwecke ihres ‚Glückes‘, wie es heisst, — was sind sie Anderes, als Verhaltungs-Vorschläge im Verhältniss zum Grade der Gefährlichkeit, in welcher die einzelne Person mit sich selbst lebt; Recepte gegen ihre Leidenschaften, ihre guten und schlimmen Hänge, so fern sie den Willen zur Macht haben und den Herrn spielen möchten;“(BGE 198)

[19]

„Wer da meint, Shakespeare’s Theater wirke moralisch und der Anblick des Macbeth ziehe unwiderstehlich vom Bösen des Ehrgeizes ab, der irrt sich: und er irrt sich noch einmal, wenn er glaubt, Shakespeare selber habe so empfunden wie er. Wer wirklich vom rasenden Ehrgeiz besessen ist, sieht diess sein Bild mit Lust; und wenn der Held an seiner Leidenschaft zu Grunde geht, so ist diess gerade die schärfste Würze in dem heissen Getränke dieser Lust. Empfand es der Dichter denn anders? Wie königlich, und durchaus nicht schurkenhaft, läuft sein Ehrgeiziger vom Augenblick des grossen Verbrechens an seine Bahn! Erst von da ab zieht er ‚dämonisch‘ an

und reizt ähnliche Naturen zur Nachahmung auf; — dämonisch heisst hier: zum Trotz gegen Vortheil und Leben, zu Gunsten eines Gedankens und Triebes. Glaubt ihr denn, Tristan und Isolde gäben dadurch eine Lehre gegen den Ehebruch, dass sie Beide an ihm zu Grunde gehen? Diess hiesse die Dichter auf den Kopf stellen: welche, wie namentlich Shakespeare, verliebt in die Leidenschaften an sich sind, und nicht am geringsten in ihre todbereiten Stimmungen: — jene, wo das Herz nicht fester mehr am Leben hängt, als ein Tropfen am Glase. Nicht die Schuld und deren schlimmer Ausgang liegt ihnen am Herzen, dem Shakespeare so wenig wie dem Sophokles (im Ajax, Philoktet, Oedipus): so leicht es gewesen wäre, in den genannten Fällen die Schuld zum Hebel des Drama's zu machen, so bestimmt ist diess gerade vermieden. Ebensowenig will der Tragödiendichter mit seinen Bildern des Lebens gegen das Leben einnehmen! Er ruft vielmehr: ‚es ist der Reiz allen Reizes, dieses aufregende, wechselnde, gefährliche, düstere und oft sonnendurchglühte Dasein! Es ist ein Abenteuer, zu leben, — nehmt diese oder jene Partei darin, immer wird es diesen Charakter behalten!'"(D 240)

[20]

„Der tragische Künstler ist kein Pessimist, — er sagt gerade Ja zu allem Fragwürdigen und Furchtbaren selbst, er ist dionysisch…"(TI "Reason" 6)

[21]

„Geht dessen unterster Instinkt auf die Kunst oder nicht vielmehr auf den Sinn der Kunst, das Leben? auf eine Wünschbarkeit von Leben? — Die Kunst ist das grosse Stimulans zum Leben: wie könnte man sie als zwecklos, als ziellos, als l'art pour l'art verstehen? — Eine Frage bleibt zurück: die Kunst bringt auch vieles Hässliche, Harte, Fragwürdige des Lebens zur Erscheinung, — scheint sie nicht damit vom Leben zu entleiden? — Und in der That, es gab Philosophen, die ihr diesen Sinn liehn: ‚loskommen vom Willen' lehrte Schopenhauer als Gesammt-Absicht der Kunst, ‚zur Resignation stimmen' verehrte er als die grosse Nützlichkeit der Tragödie. — Aber dies — ich gab es schon zu verstehn — ist Pessimisten-Optik und ‚böser Blick' —: man muss an die Künstler selbst appelliren. Was theilt der tragische Künstler von sich mit? Ist es nicht gerade der Zustand ohne Furcht vor dem Furchtbaren und Fragwürdigen, das er zeigt? — Dieser Zustand selbst ist eine hohe Wünschbarkeit; wer ihn kennt, ehrt ihn mit den höchsten Ehren. Er theilt ihn mit, er muss ihn mittheilen, vorausgesetzt, dass er ein Künstler ist, ein Genie der Mittheilung. Die Tapferkeit und Freiheit des Gefühls vor einem mächtigen Feinde, vor einem erhabenen Ungemach, vor einem Problem, das Grauen erweckt — dieser siegreiche Zustand ist es, den der tragische Künstler auswählt, den er verherrlicht."(TI "Skirmishes" 24)

[22]

„Ihm ist es ergangen, wie es schon manchem Künstler ergangen ist: er vergriff sich in der Deutung der Gestalten, die er schuf, und verkannte die unausgesprochene Philosophie seiner eigensten Kunst. Richard Wagner hat sich bis in die Mitte seines Lebens durch Hegel irreführen lassen; er that das Selbe noch einmal, als er später Schopenhauer's Lehre aus seinen Gestalten herauslas und mit ‚Wille', ‚Genie' und ‚Mitleid' sich selber zu formuliren begann. Trotzdem wird es wahr bleiben: Nichts geht gerade so sehr wider den Geist Schopenhauer's, als das eigentlich Wagnerische an den Helden Wagner's: ich meine die Unschuld der höchsten

Selbstsucht, der Glaube an die grosse Leidenschaft als an das Gute an sich, mit Einem Worte, das Siegfriedhafte im Antlitze seiner Helden.“(GS 99)

[23]

„Ohne Musik wäre das Leben ein Irrthum.“(TI “Epigrams” 33)

[24]

„Woran ich leide, wenn ich am Schicksal der Musik leide? Daran, dass die Musik um ihren weltverklärenden, jasagenden Charakter gebracht worden ist“(EH “CW” 1)

[25]

„Vermöge der Musik geniessen sich die Leidenschaften selbst.“(BGE 106)

[26]

„Die Griechen (oder wenigstens die Athener) hörten gerne gut reden: ja sie hatten einen gierigen Hang darnach, der sie mehr als alles Andere von den Nicht-Griechen unterscheidet. Und so verlangten sie selbst von der Leidenschaft auf der Bühne, dass sie gut rede, und liessen die Unnatürlichkeit des dramatischen Verses mit Wonne über sich ergehen: — in der Natur ist ja die Leidenschaft so wortkarg! so stumm und verlegen! Oder wenn sie Worte findet, so verwirrt und unvernünftig und sich selber zur Scham! Nun haben wir uns Alle, Dank den Griechen, an diese Unnatur auf der Bühne gewöhnt, wie wir jene andere Unnatur, die singende Leidenschaft ertragen und gerne ertragen, Dank den Italiänern.“(GS 80)

[27]

„Die Erkenntniss hat sich in uns zur Leidenschaft verwandelt, die vor keinem Opfer erschrickt und im Grunde Nichts fürchtet, als ihr eigenes Erlöschen; wir glauben aufrichtig, dass die gesammte Menschheit unter dem Drange und Leiden dieser Leidenschaft sich erhabener und getrösteter glauben müsste als bisher, wo sie den Neid auf das gröbere Behagen, das im Gefolge der Barbarei kommt, noch nicht überwunden hat.“(D 429)

[28]

„Wenn ihr Anhänger dieser Religion die selbe Gesinnung, die ihr gegen die Mitmenschen habt, auch wirklich gegen euch selber habt, wenn ihr euer eigenes Leiden nicht eine Stunde auf euch liegen lassen wollt und immerfort allem möglichen Unglücke von ferne her schon vorbeugt, wenn ihr Leid und Unlust überhaupt als böse, hassenswerth, vernichtungswürdig, als Makel am Dasein empfindet: nun, dann habt ihr, ausser eurer Religion des Mitleidens, auch noch eine andere Religion im Herzen, und diese ist vielleicht die Mutter von jener: — die Religion der Behaglichkeit. Ach, wie wenig wisst ihr vom Glücke des Menschen, ihr Behaglichen und Gutmüthigen! — denn das Glück und das Unglück sind zwei Geschwister und Zwillinge, die mit einander gross wachsen oder, wie bei euch, mit einander — klein bleiben!“(GS 338)

[29]

„Was haben die Moralprediger vom inneren ‚Elend' der bösen Menschen phantasirt! Was haben sie gar vom Unglücke der leidenschaftlichen Menschen uns vorgelogen! — ja, lügen ist hier das rechte Wort: sie haben um das überreiche Glück dieser Art von Menschen recht wohl gewusst, aber es todtgeschwiegen, weil es eine Widerlegung ihrer Theorie war, nach der alles Glück erst mit der Vernichtung der Leidenschaft und dem Schweigen des Willens entsteht! Und was zuletzt das Recept aller dieser Seelen-Aerzte betrifft und ihre Anpreisung einer harten radicalen Cur: so ist es erlaubt, zu fragen: ist dieses unser Leben wirklich schmerzhaft und lästig genug, um mit Vortheil eine stoische Lebensweise und Versteinerung dagegen einzutauschen? Wir befinden uns nicht schlecht genug, um uns auf stoische Art schlecht befinden zu müssen!"(GS 326)

[30]

„Man liebt zuletzt seine Begierde, und nicht das Begehrte."(BGE 175)

[31]

„Die Vergeistigung der Sinnlichkeit heisst Liebe: sie ist ein grosser Triumph über das Christenthum. Ein andrer Triumph ist unsre Vergeistigung der Feindschaft. Sie besteht darin, dass man tief den Werth begreift, den es hat, Feinde zu haben: kurz, dass man umgekehrt thut und schliesst als man ehedem that und schloss. Die Kirche wollte zu allen Zeiten die Vernichtung ihrer Feinde: wir, wir Immoralisten und Antichristen, sehen unsern Vortheil darin, dass die Kirche besteht. . . . Nicht anders verhalten wir uns gegen den ‚inneren Feind': auch da haben wir die Feindschaft vergeistigt, auch da haben wir ihren Werth begriffen. . . . Nichts ist uns fremder geworden als jene Wünschbarkeit von Ehedem, die vom ‚Frieden der Seele', die christliche Wünschbarkeit; Nichts macht uns weniger Neid als die Moral-Kuh und das fette Glück des guten Gewissens. Man hat auf das grosse Leben verzichtet, wenn man auf den Krieg verzichtet…"(TI "Morality" 3)

[32]

„Der Mensch aus einem Auflösungs-Zeitalter, welches die Rassen durch einander wirft, der als Solcher die Erbschaft einer vielfältigen Herkunft im Leibe hat, das heisst gegensätzliche und oft nicht einmal nur gegensätzliche Triebe und Werthmaasse, welche mit einander kämpfen und sich selten Ruhe geben, — ein solcher Mensch der späten Culturen und der gebrochenen Lichter wird durchschnittlich ein schwächerer Mensch sein: sein gründlichstes Verlangen geht darnach, dass der Krieg, der er ist, einmal ein Ende habe; das Glück erscheint ihm, in Übereinstimmung mit einer beruhigenden (zum Beispiel epikurischen oder christlichen) Medizin und Denkweise, vornehmlich als das Glück des Ausruhens, der Ungestörtheit, der Sattheit, der endlichen Einheit, als ‚Sabbat der Sabbate', um mit dem heiligen Rhetor Augustin zu reden, der selbst ein solcher Mensch war. — Wirkt aber der Gegensatz und Krieg in einer solchen Natur wie ein Lebensreiz und -Kitzel mehr —, und ist andererseits zu ihren mächtigen und unversöhnlichen Trieben auch die eigentliche Meisterschaft und Feinheit im Kriegführen mit sich, also Selbst-Beherrschung, Selbst-Überlistung hinzuvererbt und angezüchtet: so entstehen jene zauberhaften Unfassbaren

und Unausdenklichen, jene zum Siege und zur Verführung vorherbestimmten Räthselmenschen, deren schönster Ausdruck Alcibiades und Caesar“(BGE 200)

[33]

„‚Griechenthum und Pessimismus‘: das wäre ein unzweideutigerer Titel gewesen: nämlich als erste Belehrung darüber, wie die Griechen fertig wurden mit dem Pessimismus, — womit sie ihn überwanden…“(EH “BT” 1)

[34]

„Die wohlgerathenste, schönste, bestbeneidete, zum Leben verführendste Art der bisherigen Menschen, die Griechen — wie? gerade sie hatten die Tragödie nöthig? Mehr noch — die Kunst? Wozu — griechische Kunst?….“(BT “Attempt” 1)

[35]

„im Buche selbst kehrt der anzügliche Satz mehrfach wieder, dass nur als ästhetisches Phänomen das Dasein der Welt gerechtfertigt ist.“(BT “Attempt” 5)

[36]

„Alle Passionen haben eine Zeit, wo sie bloss verhängnissvoll sind, wo sie mit der Schwere der Dummheit ihr Opfer hinunterziehen — und eine spätere, sehr viel spätere, wo sie sich mit dem Geist verheirathen, sich ‚vergeistigen‘. Ehemals machte man, wegen der Dummheit in der Passion, der Passion selbst den Krieg: man verschwor sich zu deren Vernichtung, — alle alten Moral-Unthiere sind einmüthig darüber ‚il faut tuer les passions.‘ Die berühmteste Formel dafür steht im neuen Testament, in jener Bergpredigt, wo, anbei gesagt, die Dinge durchaus nicht aus der Höhe betrachtet werden. Es wird daselbst zum Beispiel mit Nutzanwendung auf die Geschlechtlichkeit gesagt ‚wenn dich dein Auge ärgert, so reisse es aus‘: zum Glück handelt kein Christ nach dieser Vorschrift. Die Leidenschaften und Begierden vernichten, bloss um ihrer Dummheit und den unangenehmen Folgen ihrer Dummheit vorzubeugen, erscheint uns heute selbst bloss als eine akute Form der Dummheit. Wir bewundern die Zahnärzte nicht mehr, welche die Zähne ausreissen, damit sie nicht mehr weh thun… Mit einiger Billigkeit werde andrerseits zugestanden, dass auf dem Boden, aus dem das Christenthum gewachsen ist, der Begriff ‚Vergeistigung der Passion‘ gar nicht concipirt werden konnte. Die erste Kirche kämpfte ja, wie bekannt, gegen die ‚Intelligenten‘ zu Gunsten der ‚Armen des Geistes‘: wie dürfte man von ihr einen intelligenten Krieg gegen die Passion erwarten? — Die Kirche bekämpft die Leidenschaft mit Ausschneidung in jedem Sinne: ihre Praktik, ihre ‚Kur‘ ist der Castratismus. Sie fragt nie: ‚wie vergeistigt, verschönt, vergöttlicht man eine Begierde?‘ — sie hat zu allen Zeiten den Nachdruck der Disciplin auf die Ausrottung (der Sinnlichkeit, des Stolzes, der Herrschsucht, der Habsucht, der Rachsucht) gelegt. — Aber die Leidenschaften an der Wurzel angreifen heisst das Leben an der Wurzel angreifen: die Praxis der Kirche ist lebensfeindlich …“ (TI “Morality” 1)

[37]

„Das Christenthum gab dem Eros Gift zu trinken: — er starb zwar nicht daran, aber entartete, zum Laster.“(BGE 168)

[38]

„Der Verbrecher-Typus, das ist der Typus des starken Menschen unter ungünstigen Bedingungen, ein krank gemachter starker Mensch. . . . Seine Tugenden sind von der Gesellschaft in Bann gethan; seine lebhaftesten Triebe, die er mitgebracht hat, verwachsen alsbald mit den niederdrückenden Affekten, mit dem Verdacht, der Furcht, der Unehre. Aber dies ist beinahe das Recept zur physiologischen Entartung. Wer Das, was er am besten kann, am liebsten thäte, heimlich thun muss, mit langer Spannung, Vorsicht, Schlauheit, wird anämisch; und weil er immer nur Gefahr, Verfolgung, Verhängniss von seinen Instinkten her erntet, verkehrt sich auch sein Gefühl gegen diese Instinkte — er fühlt sie fatalistisch.“(TI “Skirmishes” 45)

[39]

„Ich finde nicht mehr als sechs wesentlich verschiedene Methoden, um die Heftigkeit eines Triebes zu bekämpfen. . . . Viertens giebt es einen intellectuellen Kunstgriff, nämlich mit der Befriedigung überhaupt irgend einen sehr peinlichen Gedanken so fest zu verbinden, dass, nach einiger Übung, der Gedanke der Befriedigung immer sogleich selber als sehr peinlich empfunden wird (zum Beispiel wenn der Christ sich gewöhnt, an die Nähe und den Hohn des Teufels beim Geschlechtsgenusse, oder an ewige Höllenstrafen für einen Mord aus Rache, oder auch nur an die Verächtlichkeit zu denken, welche zum Beispiel einem Geld-Diebstahl im Auge der von ihm verehrtesten Menschen folgt, oder wenn Mancher schon zu hundert Malen einem heftigen Verlangen nach dem Selbstmord die Vorstellung des Jammers und der Selbstvorwürfe von Verwandten und Freunden entgegengestellt und damit sich auf der Schwebe des Lebens erhalten hat: — jetzt folgen diese Vorstellungen in ihm auf einander, wie Ursache und Wirkung).“(D 109)

[40]

„Stendhal, wie gesagt, eine nicht weniger sinnliche, aber glücklicher gerathene Natur als Schopenhauer, hebt eine andre Wirkung des Schönen hervor: ‚das Schöne verspricht Glück‘, ihm scheint gerade die Erregung des Willens (des ‚Interesses‘) durch das Schöne der Thatbestand.“ (GM III.6)

[41]

„Damit es Kunst giebt, damit es irgend ein ästhetisches Thun und Schauen giebt, dazu ist eine physiologische Vorbedingung unumgänglich: der Rausch.“(TI "Skirmishes" 8)

[42]

„Damit soll durchaus die Möglichkeit nicht ausgeschlossen sein, dass jene eigenthümliche Süssigkeit und Fülle, die dem ästhetischen Zustande eigen ist, gerade von der Ingredienz ‚Sinnlichkeit' ihre Herkunft nehmen könnte, (wie aus derselben Quelle jener Idealismus' stammt, der mannbaren Mädchen eignet) — dass somit die Sinnlichkeit beim Eintritt des ästhetischen Zustandes nicht aufgehoben ist, wie Schopenhauer glaubte, sondern sich nur transfigurirt und nicht als Geschlechtsreiz mehr in's Bewusstsein tritt."(GM III.8)

[43]

„Nichts ist bedingter, sagen wir beschränkter, als unser Gefühl des Schönen. Wer es losgelöst von der Lust des Menschen am Menschen denken wollte, verlöre sofort Grund und Boden unter den Füssen. Das ‚Schöne an sich' ist bloss ein Wort, nicht einmal ein Begriff. Im Schönen setzt sich der Mensch als Maass der Vollkommenheit; in ausgesuchten Fällen betet er sich darin an. . . . das Urtheil ‚schön' ist seine Gattungs-Eitelkeit…"(TI "Skirmishes" 19)

[44]

„Man vergleiche mit dieser Definition jene andre, die ein wirklicher ‚Zuschauer' und Artist gemacht hat — Stendhal, der das Schöne einmal *une promesse de bonheur* nennt."(GM III.6)

[45]

„Gesetzt, dass unter Schönheit in der Kunst immer die Nachbildung des Glücklichen zu verstehen ist — und so halte ich es für die Wahrheit"(D 433)

[46]

„‚Schön' — *c'est une promesse de bonheur*. Stendhal. Und das soll ‚unegoistisch' sein! ‚désintéressé'! Was ist da schön? Gesetzt, daß St<endhal> recht hätte, wie!"(NF 25[154] 1884)

[47]

„Worin wir Künstler werden. — Wer Jemanden zu seinem Abgott macht, versucht, sich vor sich selber zu rechtfertigen, indem er ihn in's Ideal erhebt; er wird zum Künstler daran, um ein gutes Gewissen zu haben. Wenn er leidet, so leidet er nicht am Nichtwissen, sondern am Sich-belügen, als ob er nicht wüsste. — Die innere Noth und Lust eines solchen Menschen — und alle leidenschaftlich Liebenden gehören dazu — ist mit gewöhnlichen Eimern nicht auszuschöpfen."(D 279)

[48]

„Unsere Lust an uns selber will sich so aufrecht erhalten, dass sie immer wieder etwas Neues in uns selber verwandelt, — das eben heisst Besitzen."(GS 14)

[49]

„Der Ekel am Menschen ist meine Gefahr…“(EH "Destiny" 6)

[50]

„Es giebt Tage, wo mich ein Gefühl heimsucht, schwärzer als die schwärzeste Melancholie — die Menschen-Verachtung.“(A 38)

[51]

„Was ist das gerade mir ganz Unerträgliche? Das, womit ich allein nicht fertig werde, was mich ersticken und verschmachten macht? Schlechte Luft! Schlechte Luft! Dass etwas Missrathenes in meine Nähe kommt; dass ich die Eingeweide einer missrathenen Seele riechen muss!… Was hält man sonst nicht aus von Noth, Entbehrung, bösem Wetter, Siechthum, Mühsal, Vereinsamung? . . . Aber von Zeit zu Zeit gönnt mir — gesetzt, dass es himmlische Gönnerinnen giebt, jenseits von Gut und Böse — einen Blick, gönnt mir Einen Blick nur auf etwas Vollkommenes, zu-Ende-Gerathenes, Glückliches, Mächtiges, Triumphirendes, an dem es noch Etwas zu fürchten giebt! Auf einen Menschen, der den Menschen rechtfertigt, auf einen complementären und erlösenden Glücksfall des Menschen, um desswillen man den Glauben an den Menschen festhalten darf!… Denn so steht es: die Verkleinerung und Ausgleichung des europäischen Menschen birgt unsre grösste Gefahr, denn dieser Anblick macht müde . . . Hier eben liegt das Verhängniss Europa’s — mit der Furcht vor dem Menschen haben wir auch die Liebe zu ihm, die Ehrfurcht vor ihm, die Hoffnung auf ihn, ja den Willen zu ihm eingebüsst. Der Anblick des Menschen macht nunmehr müde — was ist heute Nihilismus, wenn er nicht das ist?… Wir sind des Menschen müde…“(GM I.12)

[52]

„aber wer möchte nicht hundertmal lieber sich fürchten, wenn er zugleich bewundern darf, als sich nicht fürchten, aber dabei den ekelhaften Anblick des Missrathenen, Verkleinerten, Verkümmerten, Vergifteten nicht mehr los werden können? Und ist dass nicht unser Verhängniss? Was macht heute unsern Widerwillen gegen ‚den Menschen‘ — denn wir leiden am Menschen, es ist kein Zweifel. — Nicht die Furcht; eher, dass wir Nichts mehr am Menschen zu fürchten haben; dass das Gewürm ‚Mensch‘ im Vordergrunde ist und wimmelt; dass der ‚zahme Mensch‘, der Heillos-Mittelmässige und Unerquickliche bereits sich als Ziel und Spitze, als Sinn der Geschichte, als ‚höheren Menschen‘ zu fühlen gelernt hat;“(GM I.11)

[53]

„Denn Eins ist Noth: dass der Mensch seine Zufriedenheit mit sich erreiche — sei es nun durch diese oder jene Dichtung und Kunst: nur dann erst ist der Mensch überhaupt erträglich anzusehen! Wer mit sich unzufrieden ist, ist fortwährend bereit, sich dafür zu rächen: wir Anderen werden seine Opfer sein, und sei es auch nur darin, dass wir immer seinen hässlichen Anblick zu ertragen haben. Denn der Anblick des Hässlichen macht schlecht und düster.“(GS 290)

[54]

„Nichts ist hässlich als der entartende Mensch, — damit ist das Reich des ästhetischen Urtheils umgrenzt. — Physiologisch nachgerechnet, schwächt und betrübt alles Hässliche den Menschen. Es erinnert ihn an Verfall, Gefahr, Ohnmacht; er büsst thatsächlich dabei Kraft ein. Man kann die Wirkung des Hässlichen mit dem Dynamometer messen. Wo der Mensch überhaupt niedergedrückt wird, da wittert er die Nähe von etwas ‚Hässlichem'. Sein Gefühl der Macht, sein Wille zur Macht, sein Muth, sein Stolz — das fällt mit dem Hässlichen, das steigt mit dem Schönen . . . Das Hässliche wird verstanden als ein Wink und Symptom der Degenerescenz: was im Entferntesten an Degenerescenz erinnert, das wirkt in uns das Urtheil ‚hässlich' . . . Ein Hass springt da hervor: wen hasst da der Mensch? Aber es ist kein Zweifel: den Niedergang seines Typus."(TI "Skirmishes" 20)

[55]

„‚entweder schafft eure Verehrungen ab oder — euch selbst!' Das Letztere wäre der Nihilismus; aber wäre nicht auch das Erstere — der Nihilismus? — Dies ist unser Fragezeichen."(GS 346)

Chapter 5

[1]

„Wo ist Schönheit? Wo ich mit allem Willen wollen muss; wo ich lieben und untergehn will, dass ein Bild nicht nur Bild bleibe."(Z II.15)

[2]

„Woran ich leide, wenn ich am Schicksal der Musik leide? Daran, dass die Musik um ihren weltverklärenden, jasagenden Charakter gebracht worden ist"(EH "CW" 1)

[3]

„*Das Gute und das Schöne*. — Die Künstler verherrlichen fortwährend — sie thun nichts Anderes —: und zwar alle jene Zustände und Dinge, welche in dem Rufe stehen, dass bei ihnen und in ihnen der Mensch sich einmal gut oder gross, oder trunken, oder lustig, oder wohl und weise fühlen kann. Diese ausgelesenen Dinge und Zustände, deren Werth für das menschliche Glück als sicher und abgeschätzt gilt, sind die Objecte der Künstler: sie liegen immer auf der Lauer, dergleichen zu entdecken und in's Gebiet der Kunst hinüberzuziehen. Ich will sagen: sie sind nicht selber die Taxatoren des Glückes und des Glücklichen, aber sie drängen sich immer in die Nähe dieser Taxatoren, mit der grössten Neugierde und Lust, sich ihre Schätzungen sofort zu Nutze zu machen. So werden sie, weil sie ausser ihrer Ungeduld auch die grossen Lungen der Herolde und die Füsse der Läufer haben, immer auch unter den Ersten sein, die das neue Gute verherrlichen, und oft als Die erscheinen, welche es zuerst gut nennen und als gut taxiren. Diess aber ist, wie gesagt, ein Irrthum: sie sind nur geschwinder und lauter, als die wirklichen Taxatoren. — Und wer sind denn diese? — Es sind die Reichen und die Müssigen."(GS 85)

[4]

„Schopenhauer hat Eine Wirkung des Schönen beschrieben, die willen-calmirende, — ist sie auch nur eine regelmässige? Stendhal, wie gesagt, eine nicht weniger sinnliche, aber glücklicher gerathene Natur als Schopenhauer, hebt eine andre Wirkung des Schönen hervor: ‚das Schöne verspricht Glück', ihm scheint gerade die Erregung des Willens (des ‚Interesses') durch das Schöne der Thatbestand."(GM III.6)

[5]

„was ich allein unterstreichen will, ist, dass Kant, gleich allen Philosophen, statt von den Erfahrungen des Künstlers (des Schaffenden) aus das ästhetische Problem zu visiren, allein vom ‚Zuschauer' aus über die Kunst und das Schöne nachgedacht und dabei unvermerkt den ‚Zuschauer' selber in den Begriff ‚schön' hinein bekommen hat. Wäre aber wenigstens nur dieser ‚Zuschauer' den Philosophen des Schönen ausreichend bekannt gewesen! — nämlich als eine grosse persönliche Thatsache und Erfahrung, als eine Fülle eigenster starker Erlebnisse, Begierden, Überraschungen, Entzückungen auf dem Gebiete des Schönen! Aber das Gegentheil war, wie ich fürchte, immer der Fall: und so bekommen wir denn von ihnen gleich von Anfang an Definitionen, in denen, wie in jener berühmten Definition, die Kant vom Schönen giebt, der Mangel an feinerer Selbst-Erfahrung in Gestalt eines dicken Wurms von Grundirrthum sitzt. ‚Schön ist', hat Kant gesagt, ‚was ohne Interesse gefällt.' Ohne Interesse! Man vergleiche mit dieser Definition jene andre, die ein wirklicher ‚Zuschauer' und Artist gemacht hat — Stendhal, der das Schöne einmal *une promesse de bonheur* nennt."(GM III.6)

[6]

„*L'art pour l'art.* — Der Kampf gegen den Zweck in der Kunst ist immer der Kampf gegen die moralisirende Tendenz in der Kunst, gegen ihre Unterordnung unter die Moral. *L'art pour l'art* heisst: ‚der Teufel hole die Moral!' — Aber selbst noch diese Feindschaft verräth die Übergewalt des Vorurtheils. Wenn man den Zweck des Moralpredigens und Menschen-Verbesserns von der Kunst ausgeschlossen hat, so folgt daraus noch lange nicht, dass die Kunst überhaupt zwecklos, ziellos, sinnlos, kurz *l'art pour l'art* — ein Wurm, der sich in den Schwanz beisst — ist. ‚Lieber gar keinen Zweck als einen moralischen Zweck!' — so redet die blosse Leidenschaft. Ein Psycholog fragt dagegen: was thut alle Kunst? lobt sie nicht? verherrlicht sie nicht? wählt sie nicht aus? zieht sie nicht hervor? Mit dem Allen stärkt oder schwächt sie gewisse Werthschätzungen… Ist dies nur ein Nebenbei? ein Zufall? Etwas, bei dem der Instinkt des Künstlers gar nicht betheiligt wäre? Oder aber: ist es nicht die Voraussetzung dazu, dass der Künstler kann…? Geht dessen unterster Instinkt auf die Kunst oder nicht vielmehr auf den Sinn der Kunst, das Leben? auf eine Wünschbarkeit von Leben? — Die Kunst ist das grosse Stimulans zum Leben: wie könnte man sie als zwecklos, als ziellos, als *l'art pour l'art* verstehen? — Eine Frage bleibt zurück: die Kunst bringt auch vieles Hässliche, Harte, Fragwürdige des Lebens zur Erscheinung, — scheint sie nicht damit vom Leben zu entleiden? — Und in der That, es gab Philosophen, die ihr diesen Sinn liehn: ‚loskommen vom Willen' lehrte Schopenhauer als Gesammt-Absicht der Kunst, ‚zur Resignation stimmen' verehrte er als die grosse Nützlichkeit der Tragödie. — Aber dies — ich gab es schon zu verstehn — ist Pessimisten-Optik und ‚böser Blick' —: man muss an die Künstler selbst appelliren. Was theilt

der tragische Künstler von sich mit? Ist es nicht gerade der Zustand ohne Furcht vor dem Furchtbaren und Fragwürdigen, das er zeigt? — Dieser Zustand selbst ist eine hohe Wünschbarkeit; wer ihn kennt, ehrt ihn mit den höchsten Ehren. Er theilt ihn mit, er muss ihn mittheilen, vorausgesetzt, dass er ein Künstler ist, ein Genie der Mittheilung. Die Tapferkeit und Freiheit des Gefühls vor einem mächtigen Feinde, vor einem erhabenen Ungemach, vor einem Problem, das Grauen erweckt — dieser siegreiche Zustand ist es, den der tragische Künstler auswählt, den er verherrlicht. Vor der Tragödie feiert das Kriegerische in unserer Seele seine Saturnalien; wer Leid gewohnt ist, wer Leid aufsucht, der heroische Mensch preist mit der Tragödie sein Dasein, — ihm allein kredenzt der Tragiker den Trunk dieser süssesten Grausamkeit. —“(TI "Skirmishes" 24)

[7]

„Die vornehme Moral, die Herren-Moral, hat umgekehrt ihre Wurzel in einem triumphirenden Ja-sagen zu sich, — sie ist Selbstbejahung, Selbstverherrlichung des Lebens, sie braucht gleichfalls sublime Symbole und Praktiken, aber nur ‚weil ihr das Herz zu voll‘ ist. Die ganze schöne, die ganze grosse Kunst gehört hierher: beider Wesen ist Dankbarkeit.“(CW "Epilogue")

[8]

„Der Wille zum Verewigen bedarf gleichfalls einer zwiefachen Interpretation. Er kann einmal aus Dankbarkeit und Liebe kommen: — eine Kunst dieses Ursprungs wird immer eine Apotheosenkunst sein, dithyrambisch vielleicht mit Rubens, selig-spöttisch mit Hafis, hell und gütig mit Goethe, und einen homerischen Licht- und Glorienschein über alle Dinge breitend.“ (GS 370)

[9]

„An diesem vollkommnen Tage, wo Alles reift und nicht nur die Traube braun wird, fiel mir eben ein Sonnenblick auf mein Leben: ich sah rückwärts, ich sah hinaus, ich sah nie so viel und so gute Dinge auf einmal. Nicht umsonst begrub ich heute mein vierundvierzigstes Jahr, ich durfte es begraben, — was in ihm Leben war, ist gerettet, ist unsterblich. Die Umwerthung aller Werthe, die Dionysos-Dithyramben und, zur Erholung, die Götzen-Dämmerung — Alles Geschenke dieses Jahrs, sogar seines letzten Vierteljahrs! Wie sollte ich nicht meinem ganzen Leben dankbar sein? Und so erzähle ich mir mein Leben.“(EH "Dedication")

[10]

„Ein Volk, das noch an sich selbst glaubt, hat auch noch seinen eignen Gott. In ihm verehrt es die Bedingungen, durch die es obenauf ist, seine Tugenden, — es projicirt seine Lust an sich, sein Machtgefühl in ein Wesen, dem man dafür danken kann. Wer reich ist, will abgeben; ein stolzes Volk braucht einen Gott, um zu opfern… Religion, innerhalb solcher Voraussetzungen, ist eine Form der Dankbarkeit. Man ist für sich selber dankbar: dazu braucht man einen Gott.“(A 16)

[11]

„Bizet macht mich fruchtbar. Alles Gute macht mich fruchtbar. Ich habe keine andre Dankbarkeit, ich habe auch keinen andern Beweis dafür, was gut ist.“(CW 1)

[12]

„Es giebt nur ein perspektivisches Sehen, nur ein perspektivisches ‚Erkennen‘; und je mehr Affekte wir über eine Sache zu Worte kommen lassen, je mehr Augen, verschiedne Augen wir uns für dieselbe Sache einzusetzen wissen, um so vollständiger wird unser ‚Begriff‘ dieser Sache, unsre ‚Objektivität‘ sein.“(GM III.12)

[13]

„Machen wir uns hier von einem Vorurtheil los: das Idealisiren besteht nicht, wie gemeinhin geglaubt wird, in einem Abziehn oder Abrechnen des Kleinen, des Nebensächlichen. Ein ungeheures Heraustreiben der Hauptzüge ist vielmehr das Entscheidende, so dass die andern darüber verschwinden.“(CW "Skirmishes" 8)

[14]

„Indem wir thun, lassen wir.“(GS 304)

[15]

„Sie ist ihm die Erlösung vom ‚Willen‘ auf Augenblicke — sie lockt zur Erlösung für immer… Insbesondere preist er sie als Erlöserin vom ‚Brennpunkte des Willens‘, von der Geschlechtlichkeit, — in der Schönheit sieht er den Zeugetrieb verneint…Wunderlicher Heiliger! Irgend Jemand widerspricht dir, ich fürchte, es ist die Natur. Wozu giebt es überhaupt Schönheit in Ton, Farbe, Duft, rhythmischer Bewegung in der Natur? was treibt die Schönheit heraus? — Glücklicherweise widerspricht ihm auch ein Philosoph. Keine geringere Autorität als die des göttlichen Plato (— so nennt ihn Schopenhauer selbst) hält einen andern Satz aufrecht: dass alle Schönheit zur Zeugung reize, — dass dies gerade das proprium ihrer Wirkung sei, vom Sinnlichsten bis hinauf in’s Geistigste…“(TI "Skirmishes" 22)

[16]

„*Was man den Künstlern ablernen soll.* — Welche Mittel haben wir, uns die Dinge schön, anziehend, begehrenswerth zu machen, wenn sie es nicht sind? — und ich meine, sie sind es an sich niemals! Hier haben wir von den Aerzten Etwas zu lernen, wenn sie zum Beispiel das Bittere verdünnen oder Wein und Zucker in den Mischkrug thun; aber noch mehr von den Künstlern, welche eigentlich fortwährend darauf aus sind, solche Erfindungen und Kunststücke zu machen.“(GS 299)

[17]

„Denn erst in den dionysischen Mysterien, in der Psychologie des dionysischen Zustands spricht sich die Grundthatsache des hellenischen Instinkts aus — sein ‚Wille zum Leben'. Was verbürgte sich der Hellene mit diesen Mysterien? Das ewige Leben, die ewige Wiederkehr des Lebens; die Zukunft in der Vergangenheit verheissen und geweiht; das triumphirende Ja zum Leben über Tod und Wandel hinaus; das wahre Leben als das Gesammt-Fortleben durch die Zeugung, durch die Mysterien der Geschlechtlichkeit. . . . In ihr ist der tiefste Instinkt des Lebens, der zur Zukunft des Lebens, zur Ewigkeit des Lebens, religiös empfunden, — der Weg selbst zum Leben, die Zeugung, als der heilige Weg…"(TI "Ancients" 4)

[18]

„einmal die Fähigkeit zu artistischen Leidenschaften, zu Hingebungen an die ‚Form', für welche das Wort l'art pour l'art, neben tausend anderen, erfunden ist"(BGE 254)

[19]

"La beauté n'est que la promesse du bonheur. Le bonheur d'un Grec était différent du bonheur d'un Français de 1822. Voyez les yeux de la Vénus de Médicis et comparez-les aux yeux de la Madeleine de Pordenone (chez M. de Sommariva)."(Stendhal 1857: 34 n.1)

[20]

"Albéric rencontre dans une loge une femme plus belle que sa maîtresse (je supplie qu'on me permette une évaluation mathématique), c'est-à-dire dont les traits promettent trois unités de bonheur, au lieu de deux (je suppose que la beauté parfaite donne une quantité de bonheur exprimée par le nombre quatre).

Est-il étonnant qu'il leur préfère les traits de sa maîtresse, qui lui promettent cent unités de bonheur? Même les petits défauts de sa figure, une marque de petite vérole, par exemple, donnent de l'attendrissement à l'homme qui aime, et le jettent dans une rêverie profonde lorsqu'il les aperçoit chez une autre femme; que sera-ce chez sa maîtresse? C'est qu'il a éprouvé mille sentiments en présence de cette marque de petite vérole, que ces sentiments sont pour la plupart délicieux, sont tous du plus haut intérêt, et que, quels qu'ils soient, ils se renouvellent avec une incroyable vivacité à la vue de ce signe, même aperçu sur la figure d'une autre femme.

Si l'on parvient ainsi à préférer et à aimer la *laideur*, c'est que dans ce cas la laideur est beauté."(Stendhal 1857: 34-35)

[21]

„*Mit neuen Augen sehen.* — Gesetzt, dass unter Schönheit in der Kunst immer die Nachbildung des Glücklichen zu verstehen ist — und so halte ich es für die Wahrheit —, je nachdem eine Zeit, ein Volk, ein grosses in sich selber gesetzgeberisches Individuum sich den Glücklichen vorstellt: was giebt dann der sogenannte Realismus der jetzigen Künstler über das Glück unserer Zeit zu verstehen? Es ist unzweifelhaft seine Art von Schönheit, welche wir jetzt am leichtesten zu erfassen und zu geniessen wissen. Folglich muss man wohl glauben, das jetzige uns eigene

Glück liege im Realistischen, in möglichst scharfen Sinnen und treuer Auffassung des Wirklichen, nicht also in der Realität, sondern im Wissen um die Realität?“(D 433)

[22]

„Erkenntniss und Schönheit. — Wenn die Menschen, so wie sie immer noch thun, ihre Verehrung und ihr Glücksgefühl für die Werke der Einbildung und der Verstellung gleichsam aufsparen, so darf es nicht Wunder nehmen, wenn sie sich beim Gegensatz der Einbildung und Verstellung kalt und unlustig finden. Das Entzücken, welches schon beim kleinsten sicheren endgültigen Schritt und Fortschritt der Einsicht entsteht und welches aus der jetzigen Art der Wissenschaft so reichlich und schon für so Viele herausströmt, — dieses Entzücken wird einstweilen von allen Denen nicht geglaubt, welche sich daran gewöhnt haben, immer nur beim Verlassen der Wirklichkeit, beim Sprung in die Tiefen des Scheins entzückt zu werden. Diese meinen, die Wirklichkeit sei hässlich: aber daran denken sie nicht, dass die Erkenntniss auch der hässlichsten Wirklichkeit schön ist, ebenso dass wer oft und viel erkennt, zuletzt sehr ferne davon ist, das grosse Ganze der Wirklichkeit, deren Entdeckung ihm immer Glück gab, hässlich zu finden. Giebt es denn etwas ‚an sich Schönes‘? Das Glück der Erkennenden mehrt die Schönheit der Welt und macht Alles, was da ist, sonniger; die Erkenntniss legt ihre Schönheit nicht nur um die Dinge, sondern, auf die Dauer, in die Dinge; — möge die zukünftige Menschheit für diesen Satz ihr Zeugniss abgeben!“(D 550)

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