

Towards a Posthuman Sexuality: Art, Sex and Evolution in Nietzsche, Williams and Mozart

Thomas A. Steinbuch¹

Abstract

My paper is a study of art, sex and evolution as they are entwined in the text of On Those Who Are Sublime from Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra and other related texts from that work. N. introduces the thought of the Dionysian orgy in connection with the work of art, which should be Dionysian art, and in this meaning, the sexual orgy signifies evolution. My paper further attempts to identify art, sex and evolution in the context of evolution out of the mind of domination arguing that here evolution means experiencing freedom and backtracking from rape sex to anonymity in sex. A close reading is made of the psychology of domination in Tennessee Williams' drama A Streetcar Named Desire I present a new interpretation of Mozart's Don Giovanni as a search, however unclearly, for a post human sexuality. I draw on the works of Wilhelm Reich's classics of the literature of the Frankfurt School on the critique of authoritarianism, and interrogate the idea of truthfulness promoted on the far right.

Keywords: Friedrich Nietzsche; Art; Epigenetic Evolution; Sexuality; Critique of post-truth

I must begin by acknowledging the limitations of my study. The subject is posthuman sexuality, and I have been able to track a theme through Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*. But I am only dealing with heterosexuality, and I do not in least mean to exclude any form of sexuality, if it is legal and consensual, from that inclusion. All writing is autobiographical to some degree—this writing is—but authorship is still authoring of a *persona*, and this writing uses one. If I have said too little about the philosophy of sex, it is because this work is really not a work of theoretical thinking but a work of lived experience, and not my final thoughtful word on the subject in any case.

My paper is a close reading of a chapter on N.'s aesthetics from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Z) Z: II, chapter 13, "On Those Who Are Sublime", and on passages from chapters of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* textually related to it. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is N.'s foremost work, and from this chapter and supporting chapters we find a conception of the work of art as presenting an advance in evolution. The general philosophical framework of the aesthetic ideas found in "On Those Who Are Sublime" follows the tradition from Kant, and we shall identify those points in the chapter as that framework sets up the main interpretative questions, in particular, how the sublime can become the beautiful, what is the rest/repose of art that allows it to become purposive and what is the truth of art, as this tradition holds.

¹ Thomas A. Steinbuch, Zhejiang University of Science and Technology, Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province, P.R. China, 310023. E-mail: thomas_steinbuch@163.com.



The fundamental meaning of the work of art for N. is that it represents the ideal of the triumph of scientific thinking—rationality in a general sense—over irrationalism in society. N.’s focus is on the irrationalism in the “foolish redemption” of the will, to use the language of Z: II, chapter 20, “On Redemption”, “the imprisoned will [...] redeems itself foolishly” (*närrisch erlöst sich auch der gefangene Wille*) (Nietzsche, 1976, 251). It redeems itself by inflicting suffering on all who can suffer. The Spirit of Revenge of inflicting suffering becomes irrational culture. Artistic production, which is a rational enterprise, shows the redemption of suffering in and through living more as stimulated by suffering, *Mehrleben* as he says in his autobiography *Ecce Homo*, chapter 1 “Why I am So Wise”, 2, (Nietzsche, 1976, 680) and shows that the work of art is rationally purposeful in identifying evolution as the reason for suffering: we suffer to evolve in power.² Heidegger has emerged as the central philosopher of the far right, and his irrationalism is surely part of what has made that possible, and one has to ask whether his reading of the Will to Power and Art in volume one of his study of N. was influenced by his fascist sympathies, as I believe it was (Heidegger, 1979). The argument of my paper presents serious challenges for any such reading, and while I will not here go into the particulars of the first volume of Heidegger’s book, I have held it in mind throughout.

In “On Those Who Are Sublime”, N. defines the beautiful as the sensible expression of will to power. The text refers to a distinctive kind of knowledge required for will to power to evolve; this is “knowledge for the lion willed”, as we read about it in Z: III, chapter 12, “On Old and New Tablets”, 16 (Nietzsche, 2000, 318). The sublime one is a heroic warrior of knowledge just returned from the “woods of knowledge” with “ugly truths”, and he is given over to the nihilism of disgust (Nietzsche, 2000, 228). What is lacking is his redemption of the truths he has encountered in himself that leave him still “fragment, riddle and dreadful accident” that is Zarathustra’s purpose to redress, Z: II, chapter 20, “On Redemption” (Nietzsche, 2000, 251). So too, “the sublime one should also redeem his own monsters and riddles” (*erlösen sollte er auch noch seine Unthiere und Räthsel*) and turn them into “heavenly children” (Nietzsche, 1976, 231). Knowledge for his lion will it what brings about this redemptive change and that is how the sublime one can become beautiful. This point about the sublime one’s redemption looks forward to perhaps the most important chapter of *Zarathustra*, that Laurence Lampert called the “most astonishing” chapter in the book, Z: II, chapter 20, “On Redemption”, (Lampert, 1986, 140), and it is not until then that we see what idea of truth is on Nietzsche mind and that gives us the clue to the sense in which the work of art is true.

Fragment, riddle and accident become necessary as oppositions to life by which alone will to power can strengthen life to become *Mehrleben*, and this is redemption. But what then is the truth of the work of art? The idea of truth that we find in “On Redemption” is an idea of *truthfulness*. The Spirit of Revenge lies about itself, calling its vengefulness punishment, and it creates a good conscience for itself. The truth of the work of art is not a metaphysical truth, but the truth of an *anagnorisis*. The Eternal Recurrence, arguably, is not a metaphysical thought but the provocation of this *anagnorisis* that opposes the mendacity of lying that suffering is punishment by the inalterability of the pastness of the past.³ The true statement made by the work of art concerns the meaning of suffering per the law of the will to power: that suffering is the path of *Mehrleben* and that we should be on it but are not and are lying to ourselves

² N. states that the book *The Will to Power* presents a new philosophy, more precisely, that is an ‘attempt at a new interpretation of evolution’, (WZ I, 1995, 3).

³ See my review essay of Bevis McNeil’s book: *Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence*. “Recurrence-Awareness: Eternal Return or Epigenetic Evolutionary Biology?” <http://zust.academia.edu/ThomasSteinbuch>. forthcoming in *New Nietzsche Studies*.



because we do not want to be on it, and that by calling suffering punishment we are avoiding being on it. Not all suffering is evolutionary. But then, instead of engaging the law of our evolution, the Spirit of Revenge, in weakness, seeks to hurt and cripple it, and then lies about itself in doing so to be in a good conscience. By lying that the will suffering in/of weakness is a punishment, the Spirit of Revenge conceals from itself that suffering in weakness is aberrant in Nature, and that it need not be so and is only so because we have rejected the labor of strengthening ourselves against oppositions to life set by will to power. Suffering in weakness is aberrant per the law of our evolution, and from this aberrant state there arises the aberrant culture of the Spirit of Revenge, Christianity. In *The Spirit of Revenge*, suffering redeems itself foolishly by vengefully inflicting suffering, now permanent, on others, thus undergirding a nihilistic culture. We are choosing weakness because it is easier than exercising ourselves against oppositions to life in ourselves, and this has led to a compulsively vengeful attack on the will to power, the law of evolution, hoping to cripple it in enmity against it and to be spared by its exaction. The work of art is disabusing; it is meant to provoke a crisis of conscience, the *anagnorisis*, that, in weakness, we are vengefully striking against the will to power because of the demand it makes on us to evolve and lying to ourselves about doing so. But the work of art is truthful about the purpose of suffering, its truthfulness is the truthfulness of the sublime one to himself. The work of art is called into being as a task of knowledge: “they [the decadent] are not free to know” N. says (Nietzsche, 1976, 728).⁴

In *Z: I*, chapter 17, “On the Way of the Creator”, we learn that the creator is she/he who would create a god for her/him-self out of his “seven devils” (Nietzsche, 1976, 177). The “seven devils” of the sublime one are earthly oppositions which he must master in his forward evolution. In his struggle against them, the sublime one is the bellowing ox who ploughs the earth to prepare for the Overhuman and were he/she to transform his devils into heavenly children, he might one day look out with the eye of an angel. But as it is, there is still “despising in his eye and disgust around the corners of his mouth”. The sublime one is heroic, he has a heroic will, but he must get beyond it to become the “Over-Hero” (*Über-Held*) and that will be a step in evolution and he will make the transition to rest and to becoming purposive. But the “rest” of the Over-Hero is characterized with a specification.

N. presents the Over-Hero as resting with his arm placed over his head: “his arm laying over his head” (*den Arm über das Haupt gelegt*) *Z: II*, chapter 13, “On Those Who are Sublime” (Nietzsche, 2000, 230). This is a typical pose in Dionysian iconography, and at the least signifies sexual readiness. What the text of “On Those Who Are Sublime” is saying is that the rest of the Over-Hero should be an erotic rest; in the tradition from Kant, rest indicates purpose, and the purpose of erotic rest in the sexual orgy, as N. understood, it is recovery from suffering in life evolved in *Mehrleben* and the celebration of the inexhaustibility/indestructibility of life. This pose is found widely in this meaning on paintings in the off-street bordellos and atriums in ancient Pompeii.⁵ At the time of N.’s visit to Pompeii in 1877, these would have largely been off display in the Gabinetto Segrato but not all were, and one fresco in particular depicting the crooked arm iconography as the signal of sexual

⁴ *Ecce Homo*, Chapter 3 “Why I Write Such Good Books”, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 2.

⁵ There are over thirty entries in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologie* depicting Dionysus in this pose. John R. Clarke identifies the meaning of the crooked arm icon as indicating sexual readiness (Clarke, 2001, 68). This is not its only context; however, it is also found on depictions of a walking maenad trailing a sacrificed fawn, sometimes cut in half, during the stage of Dionysus worship known as the *sparagmos*, (to tear, rend, pull to pieces), and in the other hand the crooked arm is carrying a knife (Licht, 1932, facing 369). Also, the Dionysus sarcophagus in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum, the Gymnasiarch Gerostratos show *sparagmos*.

readiness was too damaged and could not be removed.⁶ In *Twilight of the Idols* N. says that the idea of the Greeks proposed by Goethe and Winklemann should be disregarded because it is incompatible with the element within which a Dionysian art grows, and that is the element of the orgiastic, in “What I Owe the Ancients”, 4 (Nietzsche, 2000, 561). Also germane to N.’s understanding of sex and evolution is the catalogue of sexual dysfunctions in Z: III, “On the Three Evils” 2 (Nietzsche, 1976, 300).⁷ The overall setting of this chapter is evolutionary. The section analyses sex for the ascetic, among others, and we note that the sublime one from “On Those Who Are Sublime” is identified as an ascetic. In keeping with the evolutionary character of the chapter, “On the Three Evils” identifies what sex is after the movement of evolution, what sex means for the “lion-willed”. After the exertion of the lion-willed comes the intoxication of over-fullness, the “reverently reserved wine of wines” (Nietzsche, 2000, 300). Dionysian intoxication has a double meaning for we can be intoxicated by wine as well as by the “over-great fullness life” (KSA 13: [14] 68). The Dionysian orgy is only discoverable as recovery from the exertion of the lion-will of self-mastery in living in *Mehrleben* in power over an opposition, and it is evolutionary as the first beginning of *Mehrleben*. Some dysfunctional sex is a failure to engage with evolution but can be corrected in the correlative sexual form that expresses *Mehrleben*. In the context of the Dionysian, the achievement of will to power over a destructive opposition is an occasion for a celebration of the inexhaustibility and indestructibility of life, and the sexual orgy is the form of that celebration. In Turin, Franz Overbeck formed what would seem to have been a death-wish against his friend, concluding that death for N. was preferable to the disgrace of erotomania of satyr dancing in his room with an erection, as he was reported on by his landlords, the Fino’s. The figure of the dancing satyr is also found in artwork in Pompeii, both on a fresco in the Villa of the Mysteries, devoted to the Dionysian mysteries, and as a statuette in front of the House of the Fawn.⁸ We may conclude that the satyr, the Selinus and the hermaphrodite in N.’s thinking are artistic representations of what we are today calling the posthuman in being first manifestations of the forward step of evolution, making its first appearance in sexual form.⁹

The work of art reflects the esoteric knowledge of Dionysus as N. speaks about it in *Ecce Homo*, *Why I Write Such Good Books*, “Birth of Tragedy”, 3 as the celebration of the indestructibility of life. Here in this section, N. says that he was the first to recognize the bridge from the cult of Dionysus to the psychology of the tragic poets of joy in destruction. He is the first philosopher to have “tragic wisdom” and to transform Dionysianism into tragic philosophy as the Philosophy of Eternal Recurrence (Nietzsche, 2000, 729). It is

⁶ Insula 5, Pompeii Regio IX, Cubiculum f, west side of atrium, painting on west wall. It is heavily damaged, but it could represent the Selinus and a maenad, or perhaps the Selinus and the Hermaphrodite, as this representation also appears on wall paintings in ancient Pompeii (Licht, 1932, facing 280). See my video lecture on my YouTube channel for plates of the crooked arm iconography of Dionysus in wall paintings in Pompeii, including this one, and other examples (Steinbuch, 2016). A stunning example, discovered in 1962, is a wine mixing urn, the Dervini Krater, on display at the Archaeological Museum in Thessaloniki depicting on the obverse Dionysus in sexual readiness, his arm crooked over his head, Ariadne looking on and many other scenes; see ‘Dionysos and the Dervini Krater’ *Archaeology Magazine*, December 1982, and later book length studies. Another example of the crooked arm as sexual readiness is on the Dionysus sarcophagus in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum, the Gymnasiarch Gerostratos sarcophagus.

⁷ As Walter Kaufmann pointed out in his notes to this chapter in his general notes to the chapters of Z, part 3, the word *Wollust* used repeatedly in the chapter has a broader meaning than as reference to sex, but in some aphorisms, it is clear that sex is meant, and Kaufmann’s choice was to translate it as “sex” throughout, but adjustments should be made. For the lion-willed though, the reference of *Wollust* is to the sexual orgy (Kaufmann, 261, notes to chapter 10).

⁸ Licht, 1932, facing 296.

⁹ Satyrs can be both male and female. An exquisite sculpture of a male/female fawn couple in an erotic embrace is on display in the National Museum in Wrocław, Poland, titled “Symbolic Scene”, from a cycle titled: “Satyrs from the Bois de Boulogne”, by Boleslaw Biegas, 1922.



autobiographical of N. to say that he is the first philosopher to have tragic wisdom, and the statement directs us to the first chapter of *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am So Wise”. There we learn that he faced the highest opposition of death in life but that it led him to life on the highest rung, and so he calls this opposition to life, the highest opposition, the “highest prize” (*höchste Auszeichnung*) that life can win. He says that *Mehrleben* came to him as a “creation” and “a real addition” (*als Schöpfung, eine wirkliche Zuthat*), and that it was his will to life that brought him to this creation.¹⁰

As noted above, “On Those Who Are Sublime” draws a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime that had been under development for some time in German aesthetics beginning with Kant’s early essay, *The Feeling of the Sublime* and later in the section “The Analytic of the Beautiful” from *The Critique of Judgment*, and from Kant to Schiller in his letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, and to Hegel. We find the idea of art depicting life beyond what is necessary in Schiller,¹¹ and in N. it is an anti-Darwinian thought. In the Kantian tradition, something can be infinite and without form, unbounded, and can be sublime, but it cannot be beautiful. As infinite and without rest, the sublime is also without a purpose, and the beautiful must have a purpose and be true. To have purpose is to be a self-moved mover of something else, and since only what is at rest can be a self-moved mover of something else, only what is at rest can have a purpose. This analysis of rest as a condition of purposiveness can be found in Hegel.¹² We have located some of these points in “On Those Who Are Sublime”, but exactly what is the knowledge for the lion willed by means of which the sublime one redeems his seven devils and becomes angelic? This is N.’s addition to the traditional account.

N.’s analysis in “On Those Who Are Sublime” begins with the sublime one returning from the woods of knowledge. But he is a warrior of knowledge, not yet the “saint of knowledge” of Z: I, chapter 10, “On War and Warriors” (Nietzsche, 2000, 159). He has yet to turn his devils into “heavenly children”. In an earlier chapter, Z: I, chapter 5, “On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions”, N. wrote that all our virtues are the overcomings of passions of suffering. Writing in the same figure of angles as in “On Those Who Are Sublime”, he says “all our angels were once our devils” per the devilment of the will to power in the world, which, by being reversal, is our highest path as the path of evolution, which, hopefully, we can handle (Nietzsche, 2000, 148). The sublime one can become beautiful by the knowledge for the lion willed that can turn his devils into angels.

In Z: II, chapter 8, “On the Famous Wise Men”, we read that life cuts into itself to increase its knowledge, it cuts into itself with hurt to itself to increase knowledge of how to become stronger against that hurt. It must do this because this knowledge is of how to master opposition to itself, and new knowledge of this sort can be discovered only in new vulnerability. The metaphor appears elsewhere in *Zarathustra*¹³ and recalls the Dionysian

¹⁰ KSA 13, 23[14]. This text is a variant to the epigraph of *Ecce Homo*. This is also N.’s point against the imaginary interlocutor at *Beyond Good and Evil*, 37 as he tries to inculcate tragic wisdom to him. He asks him “who forces you to speak with the devil?” and the answer, although it is meant to be discovered and so it is not stated, is “will to power” because will to power leads us on paths of devility for us to overcome per the tragic law of evolution (Nietzsche, 1976 206).

¹¹ *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, 27th letter: “The animal works when a deficiency is the mainspring of its activity, and it plays when the richness of power is this mainspring, when superfluosity of life itself pricks it to action” (*Das Tier arbeitet, wenn ein Mangel die Triebfeder seiner Tätigkeit ist, und es spielt, wenn der Reichtum der Kraft diese Triebfeder ist, wenn das überflüssige Leben sich selbst zur Tätigkeit stachelt*) Project Gutenberg CD-ROM

¹² In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel wrote: “purpose is what is immediate and at rest, the unmoved mover who is also self-moving, and as such is subject” (Wartenberg, 1993, 107). See also Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Letter 16.

¹³ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III, chapter 12, On Old and New Tablets, 7 (Nietzsche, 2000, 312).

sparagmos, which we also find in connection with the crooked arm iconography. N.'s ideas about evolution can be summed up as follows: life is will to power—although it is beyond his scope to assert that the totality of what is willed by life is power; he was not challenged so we do not know that he did assert this—will to power seeks the growth and development of itself in the form of power over an opposition as exercised in and by living *Mehrleben*; the opposition that will to power selects to exercise itself against must be equal to it and the will to power interprets what an equal opposition is, chunking a large resistance into smaller ones and then growing stronger in life to engage a larger chunk as equal.¹⁴ We find examples of knowledge for the lion willed in sections of *Ecce Homo*, chapter 1, “Why I am So Wise”, Wise/4 and Wise/5 where, autobiographically, N. presents how he came to have tragic wisdom (Nietzsche, 2000). If anyone had reason to despise the earth it was N., whose fate was death in life: to have already died in a psychological but nonetheless quite real sense, while still having to live and grow old. A glance at *Ecce Homo*, Wise/3 superseded draft should arouse real horror, as there he writes about his terrible displacement from the world around as a *Doppelgänger* unaffected by socialization, so much so that it can seem that German had been “merely sprinkled on him”, so that others, Poles, fill in the blank with the happy surmise that he must be Polish (Nietzsche, 2000).¹⁵ He was writing here in an extended metaphor about his inheritance from his father, and current research into the paternal transmission of trauma by epigenetic mechanisms warrants a fresh reading of his inheritance statements from his father as he, K.L. Nietzsche, could have experienced trauma as his brain disease worsened and it could have been transmitted to F.W. Nietzsche. N. is telling us all this because he believes that this is how life evolves, even by resorting to extremes as it had in his case, and that we should not be pessimistic even in such extremes, as he is here to say, that he nevertheless evolved life to *Mehrleben* in himself. Instead, we should be grateful; that is, seizing the opposition to create *Mehrleben*, we shall become grateful to life and the earth we belong to instead of pessimistic by reason of developing life to the over fullness of *Mehrleben* which contains the feeling and thought of gratitude. What was the knowledge for the lion willed that carried N. from the highest opposition to life to the highest life?

Ecce Homo, Wise/4 and Wise/5 each open with a reference to this dreadful accident of inheritance and go on to show how he redeemed his situation by evolving to *Mehrleben* using psychological exercises of applied knowledge. By these he controlled his first order tendency to retaliate and renounce. As we learned from Z: II, chapter 20, “On Redemption”, the suffering will redeem itself “foolishly” by inflicting suffering on all who still have power, that is, on all not so weak that there is a remnant of life in them that can still suffer. That is N.'s case, as he is on the lowest rung on the ladder of life; his first order compulsion is to seek hurt and harm others vengefully. Apropos of this, in Wise/4, he tells of his first order psychology of forming expectations bound to go unmet and that are thus cathected with vengefulness, and how he constructs bears, buffoons and lazy students per these expectations of the ill will. Here, knowledge for the lion willed is knowledge of remaining unprepared and being always up for any chance event in his dealings with others. By remaining unprepared, the bears become tamed and the buffoons mannered and he can achieve a change in perspective regardless of what behaviors present themselves: they are always just chance for him and not

¹⁴ *WP* 656, 688, standard edition; *KSA* 12, 2[148], and a little further on in the same notebook he writes: “one must not ask: ‘so who interprets?’—instead, the interpreting, as a form of the will to power, itself has existence, (but not as a ‘being’; rather as a process, as a *becoming*, as an affect)” 2[151]; (RB, 91).

¹⁵ In Duncan Large’s translation (2007), the superseded draft is in the end matter of the book, 99f. *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (D. Large, Trans.). Oxford University Press.



instances of failed expectations. And in *Wise/5*, his knowledge for the lion willed is that he must blame himself for the wrongdoing of another to him even though he is in the right, and this exercise controls aggrievement at being wronged. This same idea appears in *Z: I*, chapter 19, “On the Adder’s Bite”, and there we also find less stressful strategies for mastering moral aggrievement, such as: “a wrong shared is half-right”, and “if you have been done a great wrong, quickly add five little ones” (Nietzsche, 2000, 180). These are progressive and build up to blaming oneself, the most difficult, and show that knowledge for the lion willed emerges per evolutionary change in mastery of moral aggrievement. But it takes much love, and courage, to apply it because it is very painful. *Ecce Homo* is the introduction to the planned *Revaluation of All Values*, and it is the introduction by way of autobiography because it is N.’s account of his evolution to *Mehrleben*, and autobiography is the only way one’s own evolution can be presented to make an ethos appeal of gratitude for will to power’s devilment in opposition to pessimism over it. The sublime one’s devils become angels by his applying knowledge for the lion willed, and that is how he can become beautiful.

The distinguishing point of N.’s idea of the Over-Hero of the work of art is that it is a view of the self-turned outward and away from acculturation into revenge socialization, which only serves the “foolish will”, and instead inches ahead into an unknown of evolution. Dionysian art becomes the signpost of evolution to a new beginning as individuals. This then is our situation: in all our lives and at all times there is the backdrop of will to power sacrificing life to engage a resistance to grow in power over it in and by living *Mehrleben*. But, to follow the account in *Z: II*, chapter 20, “On Redemption”, we are not aligned with this tragic law of our evolution, and we become vengeful on account of the sacrifice of life for power that will to power demands, and we seek to hurt and cripple the agency of will to power and redeem suffering foolishly with vengefulness. We lie about doing so. I do not want to face having to strengthen myself against the resistance set by will to power as I am weak at that point, of course, as otherwise there is no benefit to life in facing it, and so facing it is painful. I lie by constructing the resistance in ill will as the historical past. In my ill will, I form up the idea of the different past in my imagination and cathect it with vengefulness against the historical past. I construct the legitimate resistance set by will to power in the ill will of my vengefulness at this past, raging against the actual past that it is not the different past I vengefully imagine. So, I continue in my suffering of weakness, but inasmuch as it should not be happening, I lie to myself and to others and hide the trail that connects my suffering to failing off from engaging the will to power. I make the historical past a punishment because of not allowing for the imagined different past by reason of its pastness and say that my suffering is this punishment. I reconfigure these events to make my suffering come out as punishment by the past’s pastness and not as my own doing as the evasion of the will to power, and I disguise my act in good conscience. But the real object of revenge is the will to power; the ill will is vengeful because life develops only by a sacrifice of itself for power and it is a lie that I suffer because the pastness of the historical past is a punishment. The eternal recurrence is ‘beyond humanity and beyond time’ as he tells us in *Ecce Homo*, (Nietzsche, 1976, 751).¹⁶ It is because willing the same past forward elides the possibility of the different past from the imagination of the ill will, and so also any designation of the thought of the past’s pastness, and we enter ahistorical time and leave behind the cultural construct of the historical past, and the lie ends. Willing the eternal recurrence is knowledge for the lion willed. Behind us all then, is failure to square up with the law of will to power to evolve life in us as it does by setting a resistance

¹⁶ *Ecce Homo*, chapter 3, Why I Write Such Good Books, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1.

against us to master in power in living in *Mehrleben*. We are always backward looking on our failure because we are weakened on account of it and so we are ongoingly vengeful, remaining weakened in a permanent state. In this way, the culture of Christianity is generated ongoingly. The truth of the work of art is, as we said, truthfulness that addresses the mendacity of the good and the just about the purpose of suffering, revealing that the purpose of our suffering is so that we may get on to the business of evolving, and not that it is punishment by the past's pastness. The Nietzschean work of art is meant to bring this realization to consciousness. The sublime becomes beautiful by the *techne* of knowledge for the lion willed, although this does not commit N. to a support for technological culture. From here, the Over-Hero is in erotic rest and expresses the purpose of the suffering of life cut into itself hurtfully as being to gain knowledge of evolution to *Mehrleben*, his arm placed over his head. His rest is the celebration of the indestructibility of life in evolution to *Mehrleben*, and that happens in the Dionysian orgy. We find the crooked arm iconography both in scenes of the *sparagmos* and in scenes of the sexual orgy.

N. recognized a weakness of powerlessness in us that seeks revenge. In this aspect of evolution's work, there is suffering in/of a kind of weakness of life that can be strengthened per the law of the will to power as it sets a resistance before that weakness to be overcome. Our failure in this regard is the source of modern nihilism in the form of a culture of vengefulness. But there is also a fearfulness of the freedom of life that seeks flight from it, and this produces the mind of domination of the culture of authority, just as terrifyingly nihilistic. Fearfulness of freedom finds its flight in domination of the freedom of the other, invasively taking over the other to make him or her into a psychological second womb to escape birth. This fearfulness is violent, confronting the other with the threat: "do what you're told, or else". The violence in domination is the violence against the assertion of autonomy in the other. Inasmuch as autonomous assertiveness is in resistance to domination's takeover, it forces to the surface the conscious experience of being in fear of freedom, and it is fear of that experience and anxiety over recognizing this meaning of fearfulness that is causing the violent reaction. Taking our cue from N.'s understanding that the deepest sources of social psychopathology are found in the failure to engage with the will to power law of our evolution, we can ask what about evolution is causing the fearfully invasive mind of domination.

The freedom in evolution to produce ever new and unimaginable forms would seem to be infinite, and I suggest that this is the respect in which we are afraid of it, we are afraid of the capacity for unbounded evolution in the life in ourselves. Every living thing is frightening because every living thing is further testimony to the unreserved freedom of evolution to create anything, from viruses that thrive in under-ocean toxic thermal vents to the amazing olfactory structure of the Tyrannosaurus Rex that could identify the species of dinosaur by scent from six miles away and everything in between, as so where will it lead us? For N. we said, evolution by the law of will to power means life lived in mastery of an opposition to itself as *Mehrleben* and by which we turn away in individuation from pathological socialization. The beautiful is the sensible manifestation of a step in evolution per the law of will to power. The first moment of that next step is the lustfulness of the orgy, and the orgiastic per a next step in evolution is the ground alone out of which Dionysian art can appear. These linkages are indisputably in the texts. And on the other hand, the dysfunctional sexuality of the ascetic signifies a psychopathological reaction to an aspect of evolution. Extending beyond N., we can ask what the dysfunctional sexual form of fear of freedom in the domination is that resists evolution and what the sexual form is that backtracks away from it, and whether that



backtracking sexual form can become the ground of a new kind of art. As Wilhelm Reich (1997) charged in some of the most profound works of the Frankfurt School, nationalistic cultural art is cathected with the fear of freedom.¹⁷ Reich explored a dysfunctional sexuality of fear of the involuntary in orgasm in connection with the mass psychology of fascism. He exposed that fascism's nationalist symbols and ceremonies, such as the Nazi swastika and torchlight processions, are cathected with pent-up libido that had become an object of greater and greater fear as it went undischarged. The implication of Reich's discoveries is that fully orgasmic sex involves facing a way of being afraid, and so must signal an evolutionary step. Just as the sexual orgy for N. appears at the first moment of a new step in evolution, we can extend his thinking to the idea that sex per evolution out of fearfulness of freedom is also evolutionary and a ground on which art can appear. Is there another sexual form besides the orgy that is evolutionary? Art from out of that sexual form would not be a Dionysian art keyed to the indestructibility of life even in life being cut to pieces, but some other meaning of art. I suggest that art, sex and evolution can line up as the foundation of an anti-nationalistic art that parallels N.'s conception of a Dionysian art. This would mean the end of any idea that nationalist cultural art is anti-nihilistic in a sense that would mean anything to N.; the work of art as conceived in Nietzschean aesthetics cannot be nationalistic. One must wonder whether Heidegger would have turned to an interest in Nietzsche's aesthetics were it not for the emphasis on nationalistic art in Nazi Germany versus so called "degenerative art", or rather whether N.'s conception of art precisely falls into that designation.

The pathway of evolution out of the culture of authoritarianism is by backtracking from the psychology of domination. While I am unsure of some of Reich's linkages, it is clear that he thought that developing orgasmic potency involves backtracking from fear of the involuntary and is an anti-nihilistic step. But Reich does not address the more fundamental question of how we came to be fearful of the involuntary in orgasm to begin with, and I suggest that it is just the tip of the iceberg of a more deep-seated fear that comes to microcosmic expression in sexuality. I suggest that backtracking from domination also means a change in sexuality and that that change presupposes orgasmic potency as Reich understood it but perhaps goes beyond it. The sexuality of domination is rape sex, and I venture to explore it in a dramatic setting in a reading of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Williams, 1947)¹⁸.

In the drama, Stanley is in a power struggle with Blanche, his domination versus her autonomy, and his rape of her is just the culmination of that power struggle. The power struggle begins with Stanley imputing a refractory egoism to Blanche as being the meaning of her assertion that she is a person of worth despite being a loser in competition in the card game/bowling game of life, for which he ridicules her again and again. She is autonomous. Stanley seeks to affix a view of Self-as-Loser but she is indifferent, and his retort is that she is an egotist who refuses to accept her drop in status from her vaunted self of Belle Reve to who she is now—neither of which she relates to as who she is or was. She is oblivious to the social meaning of her changed circumstances, and that to him is all important: she is now in the lower middle class, the most authoritarian of the middle classes, as Reich pointed out (Reich, 1997) and that should mean an adjustment to who she thinks she is. In Stanley's mind, as head of the family, indeed, as emphatically so under the Napoleonic Code still in force in New Orleans at the time of the setting of the play, he is called upon to set matters right. Her

¹⁷ Graham Murdock has been calling for a revisit to the Frankfurt School since as early as 2018 in response to the rise of the global far right (Murdock, 2018).

¹⁸ There is a street in New Orleans named 'Desire' and a streetcar runs along it, but it is pronounced as: "Des-e-reé".

refractory egotism is a delusion and a danger to herself and that means that she must be saved from herself and he has her committed to a mental asylum. Under the Napoleonic Code as Head of Family, Stella could not stop him from authorizing her sister's commitment.

What Stanley brings up from Blanche's past is meant to explode her assertion of self-worth as being a delusional denial of "who she is" and show who she is for real. She is autonomous in thinking of herself as she does, and he insists that she accept how he sees her as being. To Stanley, Blanche's past belies that she was ever the cultured person she claims she was—whatever the thought of being cultured means to him, an affectation and nothing more as he is not capable of any other idea of culture—and he attempts to affix a selfhood variously not "clean, white or good enough" in its stead, and insists that this self must solicit the approval of respectability. Certainly, whatever grace we are willing to extend to Blanche for her prostitution and adolescent sexual abuse having lost Allan—and that only up to a point—it is clear what these mean for Stanley: they tell who she is. For Mitch too, she is not "clean enough" to meet his mother. In Stanley's mind, perhaps she had been this "self" even before the downfall and deluded about it, the Self-of-Cultivation of her past exploded as hollow, finally come crashing down. If we allow people to decide who they are, they cannot be dominated, although these ideas of selfhood are cultural constructs and not everyone who "decides who they are" is *eo ipso* deciding egotistically. All this rather, is the fantasy life of the authoritarian mind that seeks to reshape how I may think about myself and brings me back again and again to the single dimension of the obedient self of "do what you're told". All this compulsive preoccupation with being "above one's station" is the authoritarian mind seeking control of self-arrogation of how we may about ourselves, but for the authoritarian, Blanche is a self *manquée* who should solicit approval by obedience is a refractory egotist. The authoritarian mind imputes fraudulence to the self-arrogation of the idea of self-worth. Autonomy, which is already self-valuing, must be delegitimized in deciding "who we are" and a deprecated self-put in its place to allow for the takeover that makes the other the second womb of the authoritarian's escape from freedom. The whole psychology of the interaction is Stanley's fear of Blanche's autonomy in assertively arrogating to herself the identity of who she is because that means that there is freedom in her mind which is frightening to Stanley, and that means that he must replace the mind of self-determination and its self-valuing with the vacuated mind to become the second womb in his escape from the experience of freedom.

Stanley's violence is driven by his fearfulness which compels him to retract to unbirth, and he seeks to induce stasis in those around him by getting them to obey. Another's assertion of autonomy is enraging to him. Nothing of Stanley revision of Blanche's thought of who she is takes hold; she never sees him as "Stanley-Head-of-Household-Stanley", although in his mind, he is surely that self at least and there is something wrong with Blanche for not seeing it so. Napoleon said so after all! Whoever she is, she is not him, her unshakeable truth and philosophical faith as she declaims in her speech to Stella, surely Williams's own voice on the matter of evolution.¹⁹ Continuing his fantasy that autonomy is refractory, Stanley invents a justification of violent assault against it, and his rape of Blanche is under this justification; it is a violent act meant to scatter autonomy in a frenzy of 'do what you're told'. In this fantasy justification he called upon to correct her self-delusion under the familial guise of "being for her own good", and he has her institutionalized.

¹⁹ Williams, Scene IV.



It starts with her vulnerability. Stanley's fantasy is that Blanche's destitute situation should become all-consuming of her life and signal to her that she is really nothing after all. He wants her to take the leap to social anxiety per the equation that her destitution means that she could never have been anyone or anything or this would not have happened, that all is cancelled out by this fall. The idea is to get her to feel her situational vulnerability as being vulnerability to him and make her feel that her anxiety is anxiety at his threat to do as told or else. He wants to frighten her. Blanche's doing as told begins with her renouncing that there was ever any significance to her humanities education, which has an autonomous value and exists before and apart from any losing outcome in a competition. Stanley's derisive "ha, I say" disprizes any other context of value in an attempt to subject the self's grasp of the value of itself to the ongoing anxiety of competitive loss. He cannot even grant her the respite of her birthday celebration, instilling anxiety with a bus ticket back to Laurel as her "present". In the end, he did have a most terrible "or else" in store for her. His recourse was psychiatric institutionalization. Blanche's institutionalization for the rest of her life means that Stanley's mind of domination can fearfully indwell as if in a second womb in a lifetime of fantasy relief from his own fearfulness. Now that there is no assertiveness in her mind but only "do what you're told" he achieves the ongoing fantasy that freedom is not real after, that freedom cannot be true, that there is no such thing. The room of Blanche's cell is a sealed chamber in which all autonomy of purpose is scattered, all assertion repressed as she becomes a vacuated mind to be his longed-for womb for himself.

What is remarkable is that Stanley's assault on Blanche is exactly like the assault of domination everywhere it appears, down to the smallest strategic details, always beginning with the imputation of a refractory egoism. This can only be explained by epigenetic evolution set off by a global calamity that affected all in the remnant population and which was then conserved over evolutionary time. The domineering mind is really one mind, the Self-of-Importance really only one self. This perception is important because perception is dominated, and this perception exposes that the Self-of-Importance is a fantasy life and belongs to a compulsion and that it should be ignored. One point of origin for so catastrophic an event is the comet impact hypothesis, or solar flare, as the cause of the Younger Dryas cooling event that coincided with the rise of agriculture in the Middle East. Domineering minds organized authoritarian society from the "others" of women and children and unaffected minds living in tropical refugia.

Stanley's rape of Blanche is the fearful mind of domination to invade the mind of another to become its psychological second womb. It had nothing to do with sex and everything to do with obedience; Blanche had been a prostitute, and if he had wanted to make an arrangement with her to continue on living with them, he probably could have, but that would have left Blanche her dignity. The paired social constructs of Self-of-Power and Refractory Egotist/Self-of-Submissive Obedience is the context of domination. The opposite of rape sex that backtracks from domination and is evolutionary if it does so is in the sexuality of anonymity where the power struggling construction of domination by a fantasy Self-of-Importance in a struggle against an imputed fantasy Refractory Ego does not exist. For it to be possible that a sexual form can backtrack us away from domination, and for what N. is similarly saying about sex in the orgy as signaling a new movement of will to power evolution, it must be that the psychobiology of sexuality is insulated from epigenetic imprint by trauma and that the epigenetic mind first capitulates to the affirmation of life and the intoxication of

gratitude in the sexual form of the orgy, and, as authoritarian, first capitulates to the free play of life in the sexual form of anonymity, also intoxicating.

Anonymous sex was as much cherished in the ancient world as was sex in the orgy. In ancient Rome, anonymous sexual meetings went on for centuries under the Milvian Bridge, sacred in Roman myth and then later sacred as Constantine's battle site. In this parallel schema to art, sex and evolution in N. that I have set up, our evolutionary next step is a capacity for freedom, and anonymity in sex is the first moment of that development of life as discipline against the mind of domination, to parallel the orgy in N. as the first moment of gratitude for the law of will to power as we take that step in evolution out of the mind of vengeful renunciation. Sex in the orgy relates to the affirmation of will to power in its success against a destructive opposition to itself, but not so with anonymous sex. We cannot consider anonymous sex as a foundation for an art out of the intoxication of gratitude. Rather, it is the foundation of art intoxicated by freedom.

In this parallel to N. on art, sex and evolution, art is not Dionysian as gratitude to life and earth in the orgy as evolution out of the renouncing mind, but grows out of sexuality in freedom, which is sex in anonymity. Anonymity is the sexual form most without restriction or reservation, which is its meaning. We find an art of freedom and unrestraint in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*, and the subject has always been associated with artistic freedom: Byron's *Don Juan* was the freest work of its time.

The theme of anonymity and disguise runs throughout *Don Giovanni*: Donna Anna does not know Don Giovanni's identity at first, then he later exchanges clothes with Leporello to serenade Donna Elvira's maid whilst Leporello, dressed as Don Giovanni, walks off with Donna Elvira. And dressed as Leporello, Don Giovanni runs into one of Leporello's former girlfriends and takes advantage of the situation. In a different context, disguised as Leporello, Don Giovanni encounters Masetto who declares that he wants to kill him. "And it is not enough to break his bones, smash his shoulders?" (*e no ti basteria rompergli l'ossa, fracassargli le spalle?*) asks Don Giovanni. "No", says Masetto, "I want to kill him, cut him to pieces" (*no, no, voglio ammazzarlo, vo' farlo in cento brani*). Masetto's violence is the violence of all the five. Don Giovanni shows considerable decency as Masetto hands him his weapons for inspection and Don Giovanni proceeds to beat him around the head and shoulders instead of cocking the pistol and pointing it at him as he should have. But he is not the monster of the two. Don Octavio seizes on the identity of being both father and husband to Donna Anna—another disguise—to pressure her into having sex with him, which, of course, fails, and it will take a year long wait of mourning before his seduction succeeds, his third put off even though Don Giovanni was apprehended and her father's death avenged, the original condition Donna Anna set. It seems the only thing they could cooperate on was vengeance, in the duet "Ah, swear to avenge his blood / If you can" (*Ah! Vendicar, se it puoi / Giura, quel sangue ogno!*) in Act I in which their voices intertwine, each becoming a center of gravity around which the other orbits, as lovers obsessed with one another do. But their obsession is as allies in revenge, and it is not a love duet at all but a statement of singularity of purpose in swearing an oath to God, and when it comes to the simple matters of life, they are dysfunctional: he pleads and pressures, she withdraws. It is even possible that the duet is satire. The older reading that Donna Anna is sexually repressed and that she found herself attracted to Don Giovanni and became anxious at the experience of sexuality has something to it. On the matter of dysfunction, ditto the lovesick Donna Elvira, who stalks Don Giovanni relentlessly after just



three days of a relationship. She cannot put aside her fixation long enough to get up off her knees and sit with Don Giovanni and enjoy the dinner prepared by his excellent chef just before the damnation scene. Whatever that is about, it dampens even Leporello who has the chance to seduce her disguised as Don Giovanni but just runs in flight from her instead, so even the lust of anonymity cools. Even after Don Giovanni is dragged into hell, she does not move on but joins a convent. Poor Zerlina is being trafficked along on the same father/husband patriarchal tramway by Masetto, and falls to Don Giovanni's "seduction" as the offer of a last liberated moment—the marriage proposal a thin veil as she surely knows—and which, but for the intrusion of Donna Elvira and the danger of embarrassing exposure, we are to understand she would have gone along with—showing that she is ambivalent about her situation with Masetto and not well functioning in her situation. The female characters in *Don Giovanni* are flawed, and we should not heed those today who would sweep that fact under the rug—well intentioned as they may be—as it distorts the point of the opera. Don Giovanni is no exception: all are complicit in a human sexual tragedy. It is patriarchy that is behind it, warping all their lives out of shape, and all are its victims. This is what makes Mozart's treatment of the subject a profound one, *Don Giovanni* not *opera buffa* but *dramma giocoso*. One can hear patriarchy's order to do as told musically at the end of opera, at one time its final scene before Mozart was compelled to add the last moralizing one, in the strong beats at the start of each of two lines: "you invited me to dinner" (*tu m'invitasti a cena*) and "now, do you know your duty?" (*il tuo dover or sai*) inviting Don Giovanni to dine with him return. The music alludes to the threat of authority, repentance means obedience. It was Don Giovanni's freedom and the challenge it meant to the social order that feared it that had come to the attention of the gods. He rightly ignores the Commendatore as representing a passing reign of nonsense things human. He is a mocker of the gods because he knows they are transient and that there is a deeper reality: it is the reality of evolution towards embracing freedom, grasped in sexual anonymity, however imperfectly he apprehends it and however criminally flawed he becomes in trying to live it, and that is his unshakable truth.

It is salutary to remember that *Don Giovanni* is a work of dramatic fiction, it is a tragedy. The forces depicted in Mozart's opera are truly in conflict, but that conflict need not play itself out in the setting it does there and can play out academically and philosophically today. If we do take anonymity in sex to be Don Giovanni's interest, as he would seem to be saying, it is only in the orgy and the client/prostitute relationship where it truly exists. (Although prostitution has been ethically problematic throughout its history, it is not so in several European countries today where it is legal and regulated.) Ambivalence typically exists outside these contexts, and we should either prepare for it or remain within them, and Don Giovanni does neither. But it may just be Mozart's point that trying to live his sexuality, which hints at a posthuman sexuality, by exploiting the dysfunctionality of patriarchal culture is a sure catastrophe, and Don Giovanni's tragedy may be that he did know not he did know not how to attack it more strategically and from a distance.

Evolution in our species is everywhere under horrendous assault, in Seville, in New Orleans and in Turin. The living death we think of as nihilism is because of this reason. Relearning sexuality is surely one right step in the direction away from it.

Abbreviations

- KSA = Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bände*, Herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli et Mazzino Montinari, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York und dtv, Munich 1980; Nietzsche Werke, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe on CD-ROM, 1994, *ohne* Volume 14, *Kommentar*, Walter de Gruyter und IntelLex.
- RB = *Nietzsche: Writings from the Late Notebooks*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, edited by Rüdiger Bittner, translated by Kate Sturge, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- WZ = *La Volonté de puissance*, text établi par Friedrich Würzbach, traduit de l'allemand par Geneviève Bianquis, Paris: Editons Gallimard, 1995.

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