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Friedrich Nietzsche's Esotericism:
Developing a Media Askesis

Denis Madore

A Thesis

in

Public Policy

And

Public Administration

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

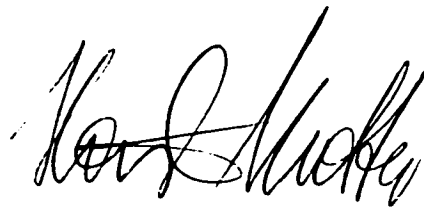
Friedrich Nietzsche's Esotericism: Developing a Media Askesis

Denis Madore, MA.
Concordia University, 2002

The present study is divided into two major parts. The first deals with Nietzsche's writing and approach towards esotericism, the first of these chapters concentrates on Nietzsche's esoteric public, the context of his milieu, and how his writing style dealt with such pressures. The second chapter deals with how Nietzsche understood esotericism less as something which was locked within the written art as it was in the art of taking care of one's health. This study attempts to demonstrate how Nietzsche's esoteric approach is an engaging in an askesis that is non-idealized.

The second part of this study deals with the present context in which a 'Nietzschean' ethic has to navigate. As such it draws much from the work of Michel Foucault on Governmentality, Pastoral Power, normalization and the Care of Self. From this third chapter, and the first part on Nietzsche's esotericism, an experimentation is undertaken in order to constitute an attempt at a media *askesis*. As

such much of this last chapter deals with the manner one can approach a self-practice which takes modern media technologies as a meeting point in which to engage an askesis of esotericism. Rather than being a definitive presentation, this chapter is a thinking and overview through an animation of Zarathustra which is provided alongside the written thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Konrad Hübner'. The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Konrad' and last name 'Hübner' clearly distinguishable.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Nietzsche's Esoteric Public	9
Chapter 2 Esotericism as Convalescence	36
Chapter 3 Governmentality and Normalization	71
Chapter 4 Media Askesis	103
Bibliography	112

The writing of Friedrich Nietzsche is a subject of considerable debate. His influences¹ such as Emerson, Stendhal, Goethe and Schopenhauer prove to be inspirations to how Nietzsche approached writing. Yet despite all the consideration which, should be taken in hand when looking at Nietzsche's writing style, one characteristic stands out- his use of the aphorism. For many readers Nietzsche is a personal engagement, his editor, Giorgio Colli once said that when reading Nietzsche "we feel scrutinized"². Something about Nietzsche's writing is invasive, personal and unsettling. Nietzsche seems to do his utmost so that his reading public cannot have the possibility of being passive towards his writing. The often polemical writing style of Nietzsche is no accident, it is certainly deliberate, but perhaps more important, frequently obscure and unclear. That Nietzsche is so often illusive yet engaging is so indicative of his particular style that one is lead to wonder if this type of writing is not done to elicit some sort of intended response.

A great deal of literature exists on the subject of Nietzsche's esoteric writing style, especially from Leo

¹ What is often interesting about Nietzsche is that many of his influences are people he ultimately rejects. Wagner and Schopenhauer are prime examples, but so are Leibnitz, Dostevsky, and Tolstoy. This is not to say that Nietzsche ultimately rejects some writers, but rather that out of those he rejects he also admires, Nietzsche often garners a certain amount of fondness towards even those he totally rejects.

² See Avant-propos in *Ecrits sur Nietzsche* de Giorgio Colli (traduit de l'italien par Patricia Farazzi)

Strauss and his inheritors. Though Straussians for the most part are divided on whether Nietzsche is a perilous consideration³, for the most part they do agree that his writings are sophisticated esoteric forms of writing. The major point of contention for Straussians are the conclusions Nietzsche proposes, which are understandable suspicions since in the end Nietzsche apparently rejects the Socratic way of life.⁴ This present thesis on the esoteric writing style of Nietzsche is decidedly different in emphasis than what has been the center focus of the Straussian analysis of Nietzsche's writing. In many regards the Straussian manner of reading esoteric texts is first a suspicion that the author is in possession of the truth, but also that writing is often crafted in such a manner to protect such truths from the casual reader. In *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Leo Strauss makes the argument that writing under persecution created the condition by which an esoteric writing needed to be developed. In many regards this is a platonic tradition which commences with the execution of Socrates and the subsequent writings by

³ By this I mean that many thinkers think Nietzsche to be dangerous, especially to those without moderation. This suggests that the young are particularly susceptible to Nietzsche's charm and misinterpretation.

⁴ See Dannhauser, Werner J., *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, Cornell University Press, 1974, Lampert, Laurence, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, Yale University Press, 1993
Lampert, Laurence, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Yale University Press, 1986, Strauss, Leo, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, The Free Press, 1952, Lampert, Laurence, *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press, 1996

Plato. The point of investigation in this study is not as much concerned with this specific aspect of esoteric writing, but engages in what Nietzsche and later Michel Foucault prescribed as getting closer to the way a practice endures in a physiological manner as an askesis.⁵ This study assumes that there is an equally important element of esoteric writing which is not only a question of decoding what the author meant for certain readers to understand, but also that the way in which an esoteric writing is encountered is an essential crafting which permits gains to be had from an otherwise inaccessible cryptic writing. What is often important in such esoteric writings are the empty spaces of the text, in particularly open ended statements, changes in emphasis, pitch, tempo, and in other cases reversals of speaking subject and tone towards the reader.

Though esoteric texts are for the most part cryptic, they are not exclusively so in order to safeguard a truth or particular position from undeserving readers, or even worse dangerous censors.⁶ In many regards this assumes too much authority on the part of the author who is writing the text, and it should be kept in mind that often esoteric

⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989 and Rabinow, Paul ed. Foucault, Michel, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, 1984, Rabinow, Paul, ed., *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 1*, The New Press, 1997

⁶ Though, admittedly, this is often the case

authors engage in very overt attempts at seducing and eliciting their readership, rather than convincing through argument. And even beyond this, esotericism is never an exact science, rather it is an experiment and elicitation: even towards the most gift reader it is a stab in the dark. Important elements come to surface when considering such obvious tactics of persuasion, not least of which is how such reading publics come into existence.

Nietzsche is a philosopher who is deeply aware of his audience, though in all honesty for Nietzsche the emphasis is not necessarily to cater to the wants or expectations of such a public, nor even to argue necessarily within the established norms of discourse of philosophy during that period. Nietzsche's language and approach are deeply his own take on the dilemmas he sees; though one can see his influences from other authors in a stylistic sense, it should be born in mind that his approach of subjects is distinctly his own.⁷ Of course, Nietzsche's thought can be *periodized* to a certain extent. However, this does not limit the fact that on a certain level his writing remains consistent in its general approach towards the reader. Some general characteristics remain pervasive throughout his

⁷ Though one can find some very strong similarities with certain thinkers, namely Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's ethic of self honesty makes him ultimately rupture with all those that have influenced his thought. Wagner is another case in point.

life, most notably a sustained disdain for an academic style, systemization and quick reading.⁸

Two passages are important with regard to Nietzsche's view of writing and reading. In the preface to *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche draws particular attention to the process of exegesis, and indicates that the 3rd essay should be taken as a process of exegesis, and also that the first aphorism stands as a commentary on it. The other significant text in which Nietzsche writes about the process of writing and reading is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *On Reading and Writing*. The particular attention here is that one ought to write in blood, at least this is how Nietzsche states it through the mouth of Zarathustra. The first text is a polemic, the latter is a far more cryptic approach to the process of exegesis. Both are very different styles in comparison, yet they both approach a manner of writing which is invasive of its reader, and from what can be gathered from Nietzsche's personal correspondences, to the author as well.⁹ In either case what is essential to Nietzsche in terms of writing and reading

⁸ Kennedy, J.M. Trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Future of Our Educational Institution*, Russell & Russell Inc, 1964, Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, trans. *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, trans.; *Beyond Good and Evil*, Vintage Books, 1989

⁹ Middleton, Christopher, ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press. 1969

is that it be fundamentally a transformative process for both the reader and author. Yet how the text should be transformative for Nietzsche is not predicated on whether or not the reader finds the author convincing, rather the emphasis is that despite the readers personal convictions, wants, or expectations what is being articulated is compelling because it sets oneself against oneself.

That a text which is external to the self can create a rupture which pits the self against itself is the mark of how a text can force an exegesis. In many ways this is how Nietzsche's writing is such a seduction without necessarily being a flattery. What is important to consider with all forms of seduction is how the encounter takes place. In the case of Nietzsche's writing what is very much important is how it is encountered as a read material, as a book. Yet in many ways Nietzsche demands that the text not be encountered as a text, but in and through life. It is on this level that a relationship can be seen between reading and writing, and what Nietzsche calls the esoteric as a "height".¹⁰

What emerges in exploring Nietzsche is the role good health played in philosophy. Writing seems to have been a form of cure for Nietzsche, a careful askesis, non-

idealized, in order to create the best possible conditions for a pregnancy¹¹. It is on this score that Nietzsche cannot be seen outside of the 19th century, and as a profound reflection on the technological manner in which the world seemed to have changed overnight. In such a context Nietzsche's writing is important to be seen as a form of reaction against the mass literature that was blooming, but also the mass 'rabble'. Ideological propaganda and readings for the masses seemed to have acutely affected Nietzsche's attitude towards modernity and its development, its apparent 'superiority' over the past. In a world where the horizon of value had died a sudden death, only to leave its shadow behind, proved for Nietzsche to be the beginnings of a 'community' whose mores were limitless.

The present study is divided into two major parts. The first deals with Nietzsche's writing and approach towards esotericism, the first of these chapters concentrates on Nietzsche public, the context of his milieu, and how his writing style dealt with such pressures. The second chapter of the first part deals with how Nietzsche understood esotericism less as something which was locked within the written art as it was in the art of taking care of ones

¹⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, trans.; *Beyond Good and Evil*, Vintage Books, 1989

¹¹ Often Nietzsche refers to his work as the pregnancy of his life.

health. Indeed, in many regards this is an important element of how a Nietzschean ethic becomes important as a manner of engaging in an *askesis* that is non-idealized.

The second part of this study deals with the present context in which a 'Nietzschean' ethic has to navigate. As such it draws much from the work of Michel Foucault on Governmentality, Pastoral Power, normalization and the Care of Self. From this third chapter, and the first part on Nietzsche's esotericism, an experimentation is undertaken in order to constitute an attempt at a media *askesis*. As such much of this last chapter deals with the manner one can approach a self-practice which takes modern media technologies as a meeting point in which to engage an *askesis* of esotericism. Rather than being a definitive presentation, this chapter is a thinking and overview through an animation of Zarathustra (which is provided along with this text in CD format) which can stand as an attempt at a possible media *askesis*.

Chapter 1

Nietzsche's Esoteric Public

Esoteric writing is often understood as being literature wrapped within a cloud of secrecy, the deliberately cryptic language only intelligible to the initiated. In the contemporary context being called esoteric is seldom used in order to flatter. Indeed for the most part esotericism is associated with the kind of mistrust one has towards charlatans and frauds. In many regards this attitude lies in the subjective roots of esoteric writing, that is to say in the private and confidential reactions it elicits. What is peculiar about the term *esoteric*, and how it interacts with what constitutes esoteric writing, (though they don't necessarily entail a direct relationship) is that an understanding of it becomes more obscure, fleeting, and confusing the more one dwells on it. This is not to say that gathering a sense of esotericism is a mute effort, but rather that the term esotericism, how it exists and should be understood is not unanimously agreed upon. What is important within the aims here, is to demonstrate what type of understanding Friedrich Nietzsche had of esotericism and how such an understanding ultimately shaped the manner in which he wrote to certain publics. As such, it should be borne in mind that no single clear style of esoteric

writing can be establish as an example *par excellence* of esoteric literature. So many general contributions and comments can be seen as esoteric that one cannot determine exactly the contributing factors which help establish a text as esoteric. However, there do seem to be three general assertions which can be made about esotericism and its written form, at least in a preliminary fashion: esoteric writing entails that it is not initially or immediately accessible to the reader; it operates on a personal and confidential level for the reader; and esoteric literature is equated with something 'within' or 'inside'.¹

What is clear about esoteric writing is that it goes to certain lengths to be obscure, or at any rate less than obvious about its position. This could be associated with a host of reasons, many stemming from the constraints enforced by political and/or religious authorities, or even much milder forms of demands, such as those instilled by the particular tastes of a readership. In any event, esoteric writing is not initially or immediately accessible to the reader; this is not to say that it necessarily employs special terminology or cryptic techniques, but

¹ Nietzsche notes on esotericism, "more essential is that the *exoteric* approach sees things from below, the *esoteric* looks down from above." It is important to note that Nietzsche contrasts this to the more common

rather that positions, beliefs and truths are hard to establish at a glance. Often multiple competing views are presented, some stronger than others, but one is often left with the sense that an omission exists, that something has been left unsaid. An important point to make is the possibility that some readers are simply cut off from ever understanding an esoteric text, simply because they lack the ability to attain or capture what is being presented. As such esoteric forms of writing are not democratic or egalitarian, they do not try and have the broadest segment of society 'understand'. Whether or not this is correct or mistaken elitism is not the point, but it does raise an important distinction between those that hold to the possibility of esoteric text, that a hierarchy of human understanding exists. As a result, two groups exist, those that can know and those who never will.²

In many instances what lends to the strength of esoteric literature are the obvious omissions of certain positions, beliefs, attitudes or even the limitation of some possibilities, which elicit in some a redoubling of efforts to gather exactly why such omissions are the case. In a

distinction of 'outside' vs. 'inside'. Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Vintage Books, 1989, section 30, pg. 42-43

² Strauss, Leo, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, The Free Press, 1952, pg. 25 "Persecution, then, gives rise to a particular technique of writing, and therewith to a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth

Platonic dialogue for instance many are lead to speculate about lost or deviated statements, "what happened to the account that justice was the will of the stronger?", for instance, and find that the position is never actually refuted, but remains dormant within the text, as hint, innuendo, threat or anxiety expressed in tones of the speakers.³ Possibilities abound in esoteric literature, and misinterpretations by a readership is the most important aspect of writing in such an obscure fashion, inevitably this becomes the most dangerous and most necessary feature of esoteric literature, especially in the post-Gutenbergian era.

It is here that it becomes central to differentiate between periods of writing, especially those works which emerge after the invention of the Gutenberg press, and this is not to suggest that persecution, as the central motivation behind the practice of esoteric writing had disappeared. Rather, it points towards a fundamental shift in the power over writing, and how it could be brought under the dominion of political and/or religious repression. For instance, the emergence of a figure such as

about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines. That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but all trustworthy and intelligent readers only."

³ Craig, Leon Harold, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic*, University of Toronto Press, Canada, 1994 and Ohir, Adi, *Plato's Invisible Cities: Discourse and Power in the Republic*, Routledge, 1991

Martin Luther is quite unthinkable without the appearance of the technical means of mass print. And indeed, Martin Luther was an individual forced to "do no other", because the mobility of infinitely repeatable pamphlets against indulgences, thrust Luther into a public discourse which had not existed until that point.

That esoteric texts employ so many tactics to hide certain beliefs and positions, suggests that on one level they disguise themselves in order to be understood as a non-threat to the status quo. As such, the political, religious, social and/or moral order does not feel immediately or significantly threatened by the writings of a thinker. In many respects this guiding principle has fashioned to a high degree how many thinkers⁴ have approached what type of tactics to use in order to evade censors. Often simple remedies work effectively: long, boring metaphysical discussions that can only be endured by the most rigorous of students suddenly open up to reveal views very much contra establishment. In other instances such tactics are too primitive, and are easily detected by meticulous censors. In such cases more sophisticated or

⁴ I use the term *thinker* rather than philosopher because it is a term which is inclusive of other authors which would not necessarily strike someone as being 'philosophical'. As such, *thinker*, has a connotation which includes poets, playwrights, novelists, essayists, and many other activities which involve writing and an engagement in religious, political, or moral debate without it being a 'philosophical' approach or method.

elaborate tricks are employed to keep the authorities from banning such books, or more importantly keeping oneself from imprisonment, or worse.⁵

The traditions of hiding certain messages within written works, as a practice, probably dates back as far as humans have been inscribing messages. Secret letterings⁶, numbers, orders and organizations have for some meant an enormity of things, only because the secret symbols kept so many in the dark as to their meaning. In many regards decrypting messages behind a text assumes too often one can read in the first place. *The phonetic-alphabet's emergence as a dominant standard of writing signals the commencement of a different way of encountering esotericism within writing, and not only as writing.* In many ways this is an overlooked element about esoteric writing, an omission which neglects involuntarily the very physiological manner in which we come to encounter the esoteric. That all writing was esoteric seems odd today, simply because so

⁵ What is interesting and important to note is the manner by which such repression can occur. Not only is the sovereign able to destroy the author, but also the work itself. That written material was so tediously distributed before Gutenberg's press, signaled the possible eradication of philosophical works, in a very permanent manner. The destruction of the Ancient library of Alexandria is such a testament to the fragility of literary works. See Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, *Third Essay*, especially the philosopher's pose as a religious type, how philosophy existed at all.

⁶ For instance the Pythagorean Υ , as well as the later Christian PE, became the monogram P/E which looks very much like a key. See Introduction by Arnold I. Davidson (trans.) in Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, Blackwell Publishers, 1995

many people have become literate.⁷ Obviously this has not always been the case, but in a prior period, simply being able to read meant one was part of a chosen few to 'understand' what the text meant. In order to understand how esoteric writing is shaped as a practice, an understanding of what constitutes 'public' life of the time is essential, only in this manner can it be understood in what horizon does a particular esotericism mold itself. In a fashion this consideration of what constitutes the public is not simply a discussion about accessibility to written text, but rather how written text was taken, understood and reacted against within the public forums of the day. Understanding the public, as rules, organizations, and political technologies, serves to point towards the different sorts of wraps and cloaks which were used by individual practitioners as an askesis of the self.

The emergence of writing as a practice, esoteric or otherwise was guided by the way in which it helped or hindered the engagement of individuals in public or private. For instance as Michel Foucault makes clear in his

⁷ McLuhan, Marshall, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, University of Toronto Press, 1969 "If a technology is introduced either from within or from without a culture, and if it gives new stress or ascendancy to one or another of our senses, the ratio among all our senses is altered. We no longer feel the same, nor do our eyes and ears and other senses remain the same. The interplay among our senses is perpetual save in conditions of anesthesia. But any sense when stepped up to a high intensity can act as an anesthetic for other senses." Pg. 35, as a consequence the "real revolution is in this later and prolonged phase of "adjustment" (to the new sense ratio) of all personal and social life to the new model of perception set up by the new technology." Pg. 33

work on the *Care of Self*, the ancient use of *hypomnemata*, the modern equivalent being copybook or notebook, was essential to how an understanding of both private and public behaviors occurred. Its very occurrence as a technology made certain practices possible and favorable, while and other practices imbedded with techniques became socially atrophied.⁸

Nietzsche's writing is a very overt sort of engagement with the methods and technologies which dominated his day. For Nietzsche, writing, education and the state stand as threats to the possibility of philosophy. The use and understanding Nietzsche has for esoteric practices, as a non-idealized ascetic practice, becomes an important manner in which to be, to stand and see, in a world which is now more what he spoke and warned against.

Nietzsche's Public

Dying for the "truth" - We should not let ourselves be burnt for our opinions: we are not that sure of them. But perhaps for this; that we may have and change our opinions.⁹

⁸ Rabinow, Paul ed. Foucault, Michel, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, 1984, the interview with Paul Rabinow "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" pg. 363 "Now, in fact, *hypomnemata* has a very precise meaning. It is a copybook, a notebook. Precisely this type of notebook was coming into vogue in Plato's time for personal and administrative use. This new technology was as disrupting as the introduction of the computer into private life today. It seems to me the question of writing and the self must be posed in terms of the technical and material framework in which it arose."

⁹ From *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 186, section 333

The above aphorism by Nietzsche points towards a necessary understanding on the topic of esotericism, its essential worth and value is survival, and being unsure is often the key to survival. For Nietzsche, too much conviction or allegiance, either metaphorical or physiological, can only bring death. Nietzsche's thought is permeated with movement, images of flight and descents, and the obvious feature of Nietzsche is a dynamic interplay with words and allusions. In many regards the aphoristic style Nietzsche uses calls upon the notions imbedded within Heraclitus' *fragments*. Dynamism, movement, agitation, are at the very core, constitutive of life for Nietzsche and Heraclitus, and it is here that *polemos*¹⁰ resides creating the world anew.

Nietzsche lived and wrote on the edge of the age of mass print - just before the birth of electronic communication. Very different conditions existed for him compared to the ancients; Nietzsche lived during a period in which being public was very much modified and redefined by the media which were or had emerged.¹¹ It is often overlooked by

¹⁰ That *war* and *strife* are constitutive of how life adapts itself to conditions of life preservation is an essential facet of Nietzsche's work. As such, the notion of the ego, or self for Nietzsche does not have an essential true self, become as you are, is a fate and not an origin. Remarkably this goes to the core of the rupture Nietzsche has with Platonism, ultimately unmoving *eternals* are the hopes of diseased second nature.

¹¹ Though Nietzsche died before Marconi's transatlantic communication he did live in the prime of mass print, and also through the invention of the photograph. Oddly enough great parallels exist between print and photographic technologies, both were the result of application of previous technologies into a method

modern thinkers just how revolutionary print technology is, not just as paper and presses¹², but the whole procedures of the phonetic-alphabet, keeping in mind that Plato's dialogues would have looked very much like this;

I cannot help feeling that writing is unfortunately like painting for the creation of the painter has the attitude of life and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence and the same may be said of speeches you would imagine that they had intelligence but if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them the speaker always gives one unvarying answer

Rather than the procedural improvisations to which we are accustomed such as spacing and punctuation (developed later in order to assist readers with understanding tone and particular inflections the author wished to convey), ancients reading involved a careful attentiveness which moderns do not associate with reading. The above actually forces one to read *slowly*, and this is perhaps an insight Nietzsche, as a philologist, had towards the modern reader contra the ancient. "To be sure, one thing is necessary above all if one is to practice reading as an art in this

of exact reproduction. The camera obscura, an artistic tool of the 15th century, helped create the modern photograph as the phonetic-alphabet helped create the possibility of the printing press. This is an important note in that it serves to demonstrate the sorts of technologies Nietzsche, overtly or unconsciously, fought against. The printing press, its linearity of logical presentation was something Nietzsche fought against in his philosophy, not simply as content, but in terms of form. No matter the debate of whether or not Nietzsche should be read sequentially, he cannot be understood in a logical, progressive, developmental sequence. Writing aphoristically, demands reading slowly, a stopping and reflecting and beginning anew. It ruptures the possibilities, which McLuhan associated with typographic print. Nietzsche was one of the first to own a modern typewriter, though he never much cared for it. See Introduction by Richard Schacht, in Hollingdales, R.J. trans. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pg. viii. In terms of the modern Camera, and the possibility that the photograph could stand as the irrefutable evidence of truth as representation, of things as they were, ironical was manipulated and resisted by the now famous pose he requested of Paul Ree and himself, being whipped by Lou Salome.

way (exegesis), something that has been unlearned most thoroughly nowadays - and therefore it will be some time before my writings are "readable" - something for which one has almost to be a cow and in any case not a "modern man": rumination."¹³

There is nothing unique about the above passage: Nietzsche's lament about modern readers are commonplace within his work. Usually such criticisms are aimed at the haste such readers have, the utility they demand, and the opinions and personality they wish to impose on a text.¹⁴ In Nietzsche's critique of the modern reader an implicit association is made with modern newspapers, and the rabble of the multitudes. Democracy, opinion, newspapers, and the rabbling of an unknowing, unreflective public are the causes of the decline of true culture. The democratic principle imbedded within the literate society, where each may give voice to his moral conviction and opinion, becomes a humming roar which drowns out the genius of culture. Hierarchy is lost in favor of the *spirit of equality*, even

¹² Which only takes place under Gutenberg in the 16th century Germany.

¹³ GM: Nietzsche is very adamant towards his readers that the key to his books is reading slowly, calmly, and with a steady meticulousness that asks questions. In many ways the manner to approach the readings of Nietzsche is carefully.

¹⁴ "The reader from whom I expect something must possess three qualities: he must be calm and must read without haste; he must not be ever interposing his own personality and his own special "culture"; and he must not expect as the ultimate results of his study of these pages that he will be presented with a set of new formulae..." Kennedy, J.M. Trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Future of Our Educational Institution*, Russell & Russell Inc, 1964. Pg. 3 and as counter distinction "I have always recognized who among my readers was hopeless for example, the typical German professor..."

scholarship encourages the young to produce originality without an honest knowledge of the masterful works. Students, Nietzsche continues to assert, are lead to trust in their originality, the cost of which is a belief of superiority over the past masters. As such, students form a dishonest superiority towards such masterful works, which have constituted great culture throughout the ages. Writing as such, is subject to the demands of the reading public, the common public or *mores*, whose want of understanding (entertainment) drives out everything truly artistic, and substitutes it with what at best could be called 'clever journalism'.¹⁵ As Nietzsche calls the modern pulp public of newspapers and party literature, such writings are a "prostitution of the spirit"¹⁶.

The public, or how being public was constituted during Nietzsche's life was very different than the public with which the ancients were familiar. This was no Ecclesia, no Pnyx, no meeting of the city citizens, where raging debates on policies, laws, wars, bereaved accusations, death sentences were argued and ultimately executed. Only ruins exist, the University has survived, though differently,

¹⁵ Otto, Manthey-Zorn, *Dionysus : The Tragedy of Nietzsche*, Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 1975 and Kennedy, J.M. Trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Future of Our Educational Institution*, Russell & Russell Inc, 1964

¹⁶ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974 section 31, pg. 102

being public in the 19th century means very much to write, to contribute to the literature and debates of the age. Science, religion, politics, philosophy, are topics of free accessibility, in terms of commentary. Newspapers, flyers, magazines, and pamphlets circulate: Communists, Anarchists, Nationalists, Imperialists, Humanist, and anti-Semites all write down their attempts at persuasion. Debates rage over the age, "what of the state?", "what about the freedom of press", "is a classless society possible?", a plethora of opinions and options are bartered and discussed, the Age of Enlightenment has awakened a new age of public discourse, through print and literacy.¹⁷ Nietzsche is writing during a period already drowned out by the noise of thousands of written books, journals and pamphlets, all looking to seduce the mass, the mores, the majority, the people. Writing has been subject to the marketplace of ideas, both great and small, at the expense of the great, according to Nietzsche.

It is also important to point out that the manner in which writing is done is significantly different in

¹⁷ If one examines the number of British dailies which were in circulation since the creation of the Gutenberg Press (1436 CE) until Nietzsche's death (1900 CE), during the period of Nietzsche's writing a literal explosion of newspapers had erupted in Europe. Germany being the birthplace of the printing press, and the reformation in general was the hot bed of the mass transformations constituted by the use of print to convey propaganda, the first instance of course being Martin Luther's opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. The impact of the Gutenberg press cannot be seen outside its use by Liberal thinkers, Nietzsche in many ways stands as a lament for older forms of writing, which were not preoccupied with converting

Nietzsche's time compared to other eras. One does not write for the self anymore, the old forms of working on the soul and *askesis* have all but vanished. The modern biographical novel has emerged, but its form and emphasis is a far cry from the sort of self-effective writing Nietzsche was familiar with as a philologist.¹⁸

In the *Gay Science* for instance, Nietzsche is clear about being intentionally hard to understand, "One does not only wish to be understood when one writes; one wishes just as surely not to be understood. It is not by any means necessarily an objection to a book when anyone finds it impossible to understand: perhaps that was part of the author's intention - he did not want to be understood by just "anybody"."¹⁹ This suggests that not only does the author choose to be hard in order to censor himself from certain readers, less deserving readers, but in doing so he is also forcing the reader to modify himself and perform an

individuals, it is only in the modern era that we can see that 'truth' and public opinion become conflated, more and more. Much of Nietzsche's thoughts about democracy and its tendency reflect this very process.

¹⁸ I will go into greater detail on this topic in Chapter's 2 and 3. In Chapter 2 I deal with the manner in which Nietzsche's writing can be seen as a modern attempt at a *care of self*, as writing of the self and simultaneous dealing with the throes of modernity. Chapter 3 deals more with the attempts by Foucault of articulating how the self as subject is constituted by certain institutional practices, and forcibly how technologies of resistance have emerged to contest such subjectivization. As far as the purpose above in is important to point out the influences and readings Nietzsche often engaged in, many date during the period of late antiquity. In terms of writing, either for the self or other Nietzsche was familiar that "no technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise; neither can one learn the art of living, the *techné tou biou*, without an *askesis* which must be taken as a training of oneself by oneself: this was one of the traditional principles to which the Pythagoreans, the Socratics, the Cynics had for a long time attributed great importance."

¹⁹ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974 section: 381

exegesis. The book becomes an engagement, again with a sort of question answer basis, a soulcraft and self dialogue, a challenge to overcome. Nietzsche's books become books for none and all, in the sense that everyone has access to reading it, drawing from it, but being enriched by it is another matter. "Regarding my Zarathustra, for example, I do not allow that anyone knows that book who has not at some time been profoundly wounded and at some time profoundly delighted by every word in it;..."²⁰ for it seems that an exegesis of Nietzsche's books demands that one has mixed emotions and reasons towards a text or aphorism. The precondition for an understanding of Nietzsche's esotericism is best put as a question, "Who among you can laugh and be elevated at the same time?". And the answer oddly enough seems to be those who have distance, "Who ever climbs the highest mountains laughs at all tragic plays and tragic seriousness." Distance and height, laughter and dancing, such is the way for Nietzsche to kill the "spirit of gravity". For Nietzsche, this is the importance of the esoteric, "now I am light, now I fly, now I see myself beneath myself, now a god dances through me." The esoteric is not simply the "inside", but a movement, a looking "down from above", a passage of the self as inside, through, and

²⁰ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage

then over and above oneself, it is a perspective which distances itself from gravity and seriousness.

There are heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to be tragic; and rolling together all the woe of the world - who could dare to decide whether its sight would necessarily seduce us and compel us to feel pity and thus double this woe?²¹

So how does the practicing of public life in Nietzsche's time modify and shape the manner in which Nietzsche writes an esoteric text? In many ways Nietzsche reveals, or at least makes apparent that esoteric writing, hidden meanings, truths, opinions and existences are not just hidden, but often obviously presented, in full light, yet only wrapped in an enthusiasm, a cavalier literary romanticism. "God is dead", and a quick reader runs away shouting all is permitted, but the "devil is also refuted". Some become swept away, half-cocked and totally clueless. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* for instance, probably the most scholarly style²² of Nietzsche's work is secondarily titled 'A Polemic'. Nietzsche aims in many instances to elicit an emotional response, personal, wounding, in many ways physiological. The process of censorship is a process of elimination, where many weary readers misunderstand,

Books, 1989, Preface section 8, pg. 22

²¹ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Vintage Books, 1989, section 30, pg. 42

²² Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, Introduction

canonize and walk away thinking they know what is meant by Nietzsche, such consequences are destructive- but unavoidable and necessary.²³ It is important to remember that Nietzsche is in no way egalitarian, or sympathetic to those who cannot understand him. That they are sacrificed to a misreading is entirely their fault, since there are dangerous books. In many ways the approach Nietzsche has is evocative on purpose, not to be sensational for its own sake, but in order to disgust the more moral *prudishness* that resides in some, and in others it elicits a scholarly disdain, resulting in a turning away.²⁴ With some readers, one can hardly turn them away and Nietzsche is not cryptic on this regard, but he does wear a mask in an attempt to trap them, to lure them away, especially those who wish to acquire a system, prescription or answer.²⁵

Is that your pleasure, my impatient friends?
Well then, who would not like to please you? My
bagpipes are waiting, and so is my throat - which
may sound a bit rough; but put up with it, after all
we are in the mountains. At least what you are about

²³ Letter to Elizabeth Nietzsche: Venice, Mid-June, 1884 "Who knows how many generations must pass before people will come who can feel the whole depth of what I have done! And even then I am frightened by the thought of what unqualified and insuitable people may invoke my authority one day. Yet that is the torment of every great teacher of mankind: he knows that, given the circumstances and the accidents, he *can* become a disaster as well as a blessing to mankind." From Middleton, Christopher, ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press, 1969 pg. 227

²⁴ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, *Ecce Homo*, section 6, pg. 289. The German professor.

²⁵ Kennedy, J.M. Trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Future of Our Educational Institution*, Russell & Russell Inc, 1964 and Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols; Or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997
, on systematization and individuals looking for systems, as Nietzsche makes clear a system is only a provisional manner of seeing the world, as a particular judgment of life.

to hear is new; and if you do not understand it, if you misunderstand the *singer*, what does it matter? That happens to be "the singer's curse." His music and manner you will be able to hear that much better, and to his pipes - dance that much better. Is that your will?²⁶

Nietzsche's aphorisms often have an opposite movement, a reversal of praise or scorn, an opposite perspective, what was being said changes and leaves the reader no longer in company with Nietzsche.²⁷ Nietzsche plays²⁸ with the subjectivity of the reader, drawing him in, then pushing him away.²⁹ It is in this facet of Nietzsche that the physiological character of his esoteric, aphoristic style emerges. Nietzsche does not simply chase away certain readers by being more complicated, drawn-out, as an insufferable pedant, rather Nietzsche is physiologically violent with his readers. He judges and accuses, but in many ways he entices those who do not mind suffering from their self honesty.³⁰

²⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, trans. *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974: section 383, pg. 347-348 Entitled the epilogue this aphorism points to an important consideration Nietzsche has towards selecting his readers, that often they must have an 'ear' for him. In this aphorism Nietzsche commences with a reference about proper readers, "... remind my readers about the virtues of the right reader"

²⁷ See Tracy Strong on this. Introduction of *Twilight of the Idols*

²⁸ Letter to Erwin Rhode, Feb 22, 1884 "My style is a dance; a play of symmetries of all kinds and an overleaping and mocking of these symmetries." Indeed, in many ways the mocking Nietzsche exhibits is towards his readers, a demand to "become hard", an esotericism of distance towards the tragedy of life and literature. From Middleton, Christopher, ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press, 1969 pg. 221

²⁹ For the moment I will only limit a discussion of such techniques of writings and the influence music brought, and specifically the influence to Nietzsche's writing style. See Tracy Strong and Babette Babich, on the musical principles used in Nietzsche writing.

³⁰ *Ecce Homo*, Why I write such Good Books, section 3: "Utterly depraved "spirits," "beautiful souls," being mendacious through and through, simply do not know where they are with these books - hence they consider them *beneath* themselves, the beautiful consistency of all "beautiful souls." The oxen among my

This characteristic of Nietzsche's, to appeal to very emotive sentiments, and then reversing upon such sentiments, favors certain types of individuals. Such movements create very real feelings of movement, in a physiological sense, for certain readers. A sense of elation, company, superiority, genius, comes crashing down by an association to a guilt one has, self-honesty comes in to demonstrate a less than perfect conviction to principles, a lack of genius, a commonality, and ultimately an abandonment by Nietzsche. Such movements in the reading of Nietzsche are journeys, as he makes clear a moving high up, and then going under, an elation followed by a depression, a peace followed by a war, a consonance by a dissonance.³¹

Of course a large part of these movements for Nietzsche are worked upon by the use of masks and disguises, a playful dance of seductions and lies. Though for the present it is enough to affirm that the esoteric approach, which Nietzsche uses, has an appeal to a physiological movement, indeed the inspiration for Zarathustra come from such movements.

Probably I would, from artistic motives, have chosen darker and more somber and garish colors for the first two parts, if I had kept my soul serene and bright this year - for the sake of what happens

acquaintances - mere Germans, if I may say so - suggest that one cannot always agree with my opinions, but at times - This I have been told even about Zarathustra."

³¹ Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols*, Hackett Publishing co., 1997, Introduction by Tracy Strong.

at the end. But this year of solace of more serene and airy colors was vitally³² important to me; and so in the second part I have cavorted about like a clowning acrobat almost. The detail contains an incredible amount of personal experience and suffering which is intelligible only to me - there were some pages which seemed to me to drip with blood.³³

If one reads closely the letters to friends and family by Nietzsche from 1881 to roughly 1887-8, one can distinguish movements, which Nietzsche expresses. Many of his allusions to friends and family might seem simply metaphoric embellishments, in the main they are not.³⁴ Nietzsche's speaks often of the weather, the moods it instills, as well as the climes of a region.³⁵ His health always in a constantly precarious state, gave Nietzsche a certain awareness of the effects and affects of sensations, and how climate and locale can shape a body, a disposition, and frame of mind.

Since yesterday evening I have had a fishbone in my throat; last night was gruesome; in spite of repeated attempts at vomiting, it is still stuck there. Curious, I feel there is an abundance of

³² Emphasis Nietzsche's.

³³ To Peter Gast, From Sils Maria, end of August, 1883, pg. 217 Middleton, Christopher, ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press, 1969

³⁴ For instance the three metamorphosis, camel, lion, and child for Nietzsche represent movements of development that take place for both individuals as well as peoples. Yet the movement of each archetype correlates to a movement within the soul, of unity or discordance. The Camel, for instance carries the burden of its truth, while the lion destroys such truths. Many of Nietzsche's aphoristic movements mirror such developments, in order to return to the child as the reconciliatory movement. Yet all allusions by Nietzsche also have a physiological basis or bearings, such that the manner of being of certain types is always a particular judgment of a particular life lived.

³⁵ Nietzsche would not find it simply a curiosity or coincidence that climate in english means both weather and mood. The two for Nietzsche are fundamentally linked, not as reflections of one another but by real physiological linkages.

symbolism and meaning in this sordid physiological state.³⁶

In many regards Nietzsche's reflections and insights about life and philosophy come from a rather penetrating look at the physiological *origins* of thought and directions of thought. In many ways Nietzsche is a staunch materialist, though it must be born in mind that his conception is far from a simplistic materialism. Illness, depression and suffering are things, which are always worked on, for instance his winter stay in Rapallo Bay between 1882-1883.³⁷ Out of Nietzsche's stay there and the thoughts which emerged during long walks would come not only the inspiration for *Zarathustra* (Part I, 1882-83; Part II, 1883; Part III, 1884; Part IV, 1885) but also *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *The Gay Science* (1882-87) and later *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887).

J'ai passé mon hiver 1882-1883 dans la gracieuse baie de Rapallo, qui échancre la Riviera, non loin de Gênes, entre la promontoire de Portofino et Chiavri. Ma santé n'était pas des meilleures; l'hiver était froid, pluvieux; une petite auberge, située au bord même de la mer, si près d'elle que le bruit des vagues empêchait de dormir, m'offrait un abri à tous points de vue très peu satisfaisant. Malgré cela - et c'est un exemple

³⁶ Letter to Peter Gast, Nice, Oct 27, 1887, Middleton, Christopher, ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press, 1969, pg. 272

³⁷ In a letter to Peter Gast, Nietzsche describes how *Zarathustra* was born as a movement. Over and under is not simply a theme within *Zarathustra*, it was how Nietzsche came to understand his own movement. As Daniel Halévy points out, when Nietzsche first arrived in Rapallo, "Ses premières semaines furent affreuses. Lou et Rée l'avaient cruellement frappé, il gardera la marque du coup qu'ils lui ont porté; par eux, il est devenu soupçonneux, travers qui restera. Quelle diminution depuis ce printemps de Sicile ou *Zarathustra* lui parlait de si pres, et quelle pente a remonter pour redevenir le confident du prophète, son interprète auprès des hommes" Halévy, Daniel, *Nietzsche*, Pluriel, 1977 Pg. 345

de ma maxime que ce qui est décisif vient «malgré» - c'est durant cet hiver et dans cet inconfort que mon Zarathustra naquit. Le matin, je grimpais vers le sud sur la magnifique route montante, vers Zoagli, parmi les pins et dominant la mer immense; l'après-midi (dans la mesure où le permettait ma santé) j'allais, contournant la baie de Santa-Margherita jusqu'à Portofino. Sur ces deux routes m'est venue toute la première partie du Zarathustra (fiel mir ein); plus encore, Zarathustra lui-même, comme type; plus exactement il est tombé sur moi (Überfiel mich)...³⁸

The way being public was constituted, during Nietzsche's time, was very much framed by the manner that one wrote. A particular academic style was encouraged, which Nietzsche obviously avoided and even scorned. Many of his contemporaries must have found him bombastic, to say the least.³⁹ Nietzsche's specific style attempts to rupture the normal public intercourse, which takes place by a host of methods.⁴⁰

For one, the use of the aphorism affords the possibility to remain hidden as to one's position. An equally consequential element is the physiological movement an

³⁸ Ibid pg 344

³⁹ As Otto Manthey-Zorn makes clear "*The Birth of Tragedy* itself, as the challenging result of these preparations, was ready for the publisher in November 1871 and appeared the following January. It was to be the first book of the young professor to establish his position among the classicists, not only with a new and wholly unconventional interpretation of the Greek spirit, but also with a cavalier fluency and emotional style which was certain to arouse professional opposition – as it universally did. This, however, only increased his pride in his originality and heightened his conviction of the philosophical blindness of academic philologists. It made him the more certain of his own penetration and the prouder that he could not be confused with them. He did not think of himself as a scholar in their sense, but as a bold experimenter with ideas, and sought his equals among the geniuses and not the plotters." Manthey-Zorn, *Otto Dionysus : the Tragedy of Nietzsche*, Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 1975 pg. 25-26 and see introduction in Kennedy, J.M. Trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Future of Our Educational Institution*, Russell & Russell Inc, 1964, as Kennedy makes clear Nietzsche wanted to increase the tasks of philology, in order that it become the handmaid to philosophy. And finally see Kaufmann, Walter, and R.J. Hollingdale trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Will to Power*, Random House, 1967, sections: 420,421,422 for an important glimpse of Nietzsche's later attitude towards academics.

aphorism is able to bring about in a reader, which also affords an interesting and important filtration of certain readers. What is especially material about the aphorism, at least the manner in which Nietzsche uses them, is that they grant him the possibility to appeal to non-linear conclusions. In many regards this has much to do with Nietzsche's understanding of the physiological, wearing of masks and music. By looking at these influences and considerations in Nietzsche's style, it becomes apparent that Nietzsche appeals to far more than simply a reading of him. Rather the manner in which he writes seeks to elicit a very physical response.⁴¹ The next chapter will focus on Nietzsche's use of music in his writing, the links this has with much of his understanding of the physiological and the necessary use of masks. In many regards the type of esotericism, and the filter process Nietzsche employs is not only to safeguard his position from the ignorant, but rather to seduce and entice the service of a certain type of soul.

In Nietzsche we can see a very physical tactic in writing in the manner that he did, such devices are not

⁴⁰ Of course public engagement is not simply via writing.

⁴¹ "At bottom, I had put into practice one of Stendhal's maxims: he advises men to make their entry into society with a duel." Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, *Ecce Homo: The Untimely Ones*, section 2 Pg. 279-80. It is worth pointing out that the individuals that often seem to impress Nietzsche the most are honest writers attempting to acknowledge the demands of modernity by an attempt to understand themselves. The character Julien Sorel is a marvel of psychological complexity, searching power and wealth while dealing with the inner demands of a romantic self and the exterior pressures exerted from the 'red' and the 'black'.

simply "thematic" in a pejorative sense. In many regards they can be seen as substantial indicators of a reasoning that stands behind or rather closer to a physiological root. In Plato, one of Nietzsche's important sources of engagement, such indications often point at the very real existence of threat, bodily harm, and the limits of speech in the light of power. Yet the how and why of Plato's writing of the dialogues in the manner he did, can for the most part never be answered. Though it is a safe conclusion that the dialogues would have been a supplement to actual discussions of philosophy during and after Plato's time, that in itself suggest that "thematic" elements in the dialogues are important considerations.⁴² Nietzsche though lives in the wake of the Platonic tradition and consciously challenges it, he ultimately has to deal with a very different sort of public engagement. Indeed a host of different elements exist in Nietzsche's historical period to warrant a very different approach to esoteric literature and practices.

The above shows to a moderate degree how the manner in which being public is constituted, may often shape or guide

⁴² Many interesting interpretations have emerged in recent decades vis-a-vis Plato's dialogues and Socrates. Among them Craig, Leon Harold, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic*, University of Toronto Press, Canada, 1994, Press, Gerald A., *Who Speaks for Plato?: Studies in Platonic Anonymity*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2000, Nehamas, Alexander, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, University of California Press, 2000.

the form esoteric writing and practices take place. That Nietzsche writes esoterically in such a pervasively literate public becomes significant, in many ways because of the tactic he has used in order to seduce, interest, or convince his audience that indeed what he articulates is significant. After all, Nietzsche himself once wrote, "I am not a man, I'm dynamite." Though always polemical, even by today's standards, Nietzsche does employ other methods far more hidden and elusive to understand, but it would seem easy to feel for some. One can tell by Nietzsche's brush with Richard Wagner, enduring friendship with Peter Gast (Koselitz), or his first book *The Birth of Tragedy and the Spirit of Music* that his interest in music was not simply in passing. In many ways music stands at the core of Nietzsche's thought and is equally present in his aphoristic style of writing.

The next chapter examines the link that exists in Nietzsche's esoteric writing style with the physiological, music, and the wearing of masks. In looking at such influences in Nietzsche's writing it becomes clearer that much of his intent is to rupture the sorts of reading practices that pervade his time. The most important theme which links the properties and characteristics of

Nietzsche's writing are a search for a modern *Care of Self*⁴³ through writing. If one emphasizes either the esoteric in terms of a writing which protects against unwanted readers (such as censors, the ignorant, or dangerous), or as Nietzsche does, a particular perspective towards the world and self⁴⁴, one thing still pervades esotericism, that being its intimate tie to helping the self overcome constraints. As such, the esoteric is germane to the philosopher.

Let us compress the facts into a few brief formulas: to begin with, the philosophic spirit always had to use as a mask and cocoon the *previously established* types of the contemplative man - priest, sorcerer, soothsayer, and in any case a religious type - in order to be able to exist at all: the ascetic ideal for long time served the philosopher as a form in which to appear, as a precondition of existence - he had to *represent* it so as to be able to be a philosopher; he had to *believe* in it in order to be able to represent it. The peculiar; withdrawn attitude of the philosopher, world-denying, hostile to life, suspicious of the senses, freed from sensuality, which has been maintained down to the most modern times and has become virtually the *philosopher's pose par excellence* - it is above all a result of the emergency conditions under which philosophy arose and survived at all; for the longest time philosophy would not have been *possible at all* on earth without ascetic wraps and cloak, without ascetic priest self-misunderstanding. To put it vividly the repulsive and gloomy caterpillar from in which alone the philosopher could live and creep about ⁴⁵

However, this period seems to be over, "God is dead", and "we still have to vanquish his shadow, too". Nietzsche

⁴³ Though it should keep in mind that this is a specific reference to Michel Foucault and is not presented in the same manner within Nietzsche. See also Nehamas, Alexander, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, University of California Press, 2000

⁴⁴ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Vintage Books, 1989, section 30

⁴⁵ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, *GM: Third Essay*, section 10.

does ask, if this caterpillar period is really over? Has it passed? In effect Nietzsche suggests that different sorts of cloaks are required, that the philosopher is still not free to express what he will, the democratic ethos and the *lastman* stand as the guarantors of this, and the bite of the tarantulas is still very real.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Kaufmann, Walter trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, Penguin Press, 1978, pg. 99-102

Chapter 2

Esotericism as Convalescence

The Physiological: Philosopher as doctor

The philosopher is a physiologist, a doctor, an artist¹, a legislator; for Nietzsche the philosopher stands as a great health, the movement towards convalescence.²

Our highest insight must- and should - sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them. The difference between the exoteric and esoteric, formerly known to philosophers- among the Indians as among the Greeks, Persians, and Muslims, in short, wherever one believed in an order of rank and not in equality and equal rights- does not so much consist in this, that the exoteric approach comes from outside and sees, estimates, measures, and judges from outside, not the inside: what is much more essential is that the esoteric looks *down from above*. There are heights of the soul from which even the tragedy ceases to look tragic; and rolling together all this woe of the world- who could dare to decide whether its sight would necessarily seduce us and compel us to feel pity and thus double this woe?

What serves the higher type of men as nourishment or delectation must almost be poison for a very different and inferior type. The virtues of the common man might perhaps signify vices and weakness in a philosopher. It could be possible that a man of a high type, when degenerating and perishing, might only at that point acquire qualities that would require those in the lower sphere into which he had sunk to begin to venerate him like a saint. There are books that have opposite values for soul and health, depending on whether the lower soul, the lower vitality, or the higher and more vigorous ones turn to them: in the former case, these books are dangerous and lead to crumbling and disintegration; in the latter, heralds' cries that call the bravest to *their* courage. Books for all the world are always foul-smelling books: the smell of small people clings to them. Where the people eat and drink, even where they venerate, it usually stinks. One should not go to church if one wants to breathe pure air.³

¹ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, section 290, *One thing is needful*, pg. 232-3

² Boyman, Anne, trans. Deleuze, Gilles, *Pure Immanence: Essays on Life*, Zone Books, 2001, *Nietzsche*, pg. 65-100

³ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 310 *Ecce Homo, Beyond Good and Evil*, section 30

Few people would argue that Friedrich Nietzsche's life was a happy one. His letters to friends expressing a cheerfulness always seem to be short-lived, overshadowed by almost insufferable bouts of loneliness and isolation, and ingeneral his correspondences seem to be pervaded with health problems and a subsuming moroseness as to the fate that he had to endure, and the future which was dawning on humanity.⁴ To say that the chronic sickness that shadowed Nietzsche all his life had little consequence on his work would be incorrect, however it would also be mistaken to judge his work as simply symptomatic⁵ of a degenerated life. In the latter statement the assumption leads one to the conclusion that Nietzsche's thought was simply the expression of a diseased intellect⁶, in the other conclusion one assumes Nietzsche to be far too resilient towards his own circumstance, plucking him out of time. It is significant that later in Nietzsche's life a particular conclusion comes to surface more and more in his thinking,

⁴ Admittedly the 'subsuming moroseness' in his personal correspondences is more a characteristic of Nietzsche's later letters. "Dear Friend: That was no "proud silence" which closed my mouth to almost everyone; it was much more – a humble silence, that of a sufferer who is ashamed to betray how much he is suffering. A sick animal retires to its lair; so does *la bête philosophe*. A friendly voice seldom reaches me nowadays. I am alone now, absurdly alone; and in the course of my relentless and underground struggle against everything that human beings till now have revered and loved (my formula for this is the "transvaluation of all values"), I have imperceptibly become something like a lair myself – something hidden away, which people do not find, even if they go out and look for it." Letter to Reinhart von Seydlitz, Nice, Pension de Genève, February 12, 1888, Middleton, Christopher, ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press, 1969 pg. 283

⁵ In the traditional, rather than Deleuzian usage.

that the judgment of life cannot be anything other than that of a particular life lived.⁷

Of course this is not a new conclusion, and one can see commentaries as early as *The Birth of Tragedy*⁸; yet the role it plays in later works is essential to the *Transvaluation of All Values*, which Nietzsche saw as the culmination of his life's philosophy.⁹ What becomes increasingly repeated and re-stressed in Nietzsche's work is the assertion that "that the value of life cannot be assessed".¹⁰

For Nietzsche though, even the *despisers of the body*, the *afterworldly*, Socrates and Plato, stand as the most life affirming forces of humankind. The philosophic types stand in their oldest forms; philosophers as doctor, as physiologists, as spiritual healer, however, for Nietzsche

⁶ Ultimately ending in madness and error

⁷ See for instance the Introduction by Tracy Strong in Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols*, Hackett Publishing Co., 1997, pg. 28 *Morality as Anti-Nature*, section 5,

⁸ "The daemon remained sullen and uncommunicative until finally, forced by the king, he broke into a shrill laugh and spoke: "Ephemeral wretch, begotten by accident and toil, why do you force me to tell you what it would be your greatest boon not to hear? What would be best for you is quite beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to be, to be *nothing*. But the second best is to die soon." From *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music*. Also as a type should be included the *despisers of the body* and their search and belief in the afterworld, such for Nietzsche is an illustration of how religious types and philosophers have held life in contempt of a reality. This ultimately is born out because the world is judged by the inequalities which exist between individuals in the world. The weak vs. reality, so to speak, as such the weak, deformed, degenerated take vengeance on the stronger. See Kaufmann, Walter trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, Penguin Press, 1978

⁹ After having finished the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche launched himself in to the writing of the *Anti-Christ*, which many have regarded as the beginning of the *Transvaluation of all Values*. However it should be mentioned that Nietzsche had the habit of writing books which he never actually finished, with chapters and partial developments. What can be said is that the *Transvaluation of All Values* was a definitive plan for Nietzsche, and that the *Anti-Christ: A Curse on Christianity* was an integral part of this process. See the Introduction by Hollingdale in Hollingdale, R.J. trans. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, Penguin Classics, 1987

¹⁰ Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols; Or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, pg. 13, *The Problem of Socrates*, section 2

even this is no cure. Since even these attempts at a cure for life are further symptoms, not real cures, but temporary *emergency conditions*¹¹ of an unhealthy life contorting to *normalize* itself. Even the cure is another sort of disease. As Nietzsche believed was Socrates' secret admission "*Socrates is no doctor,*" "*death is the only doctor here... Socrates himself has just been sick for a long time.*"¹²

But even for Nietzsche this is an element of the philosophical pose, the role of doctor, as world healer, and more essentially as caretaker of self, as a convalescence which becomes further sickness. The characteristics which Nietzsche extracts from the Platonic tradition is that ultimately it began as a search for health. The Greeks for Nietzsche had to become absurdly rational in order to survive, since the contests of Ancient Greece had brought their civilization closer and closer to the brink of overbearing. *Pleonexia*, Nietzsche asserts, had to become absurdly rational under Socrates in order to survive. Socrates and Plato are responsible for a new contest, an *agon* of dialectics, which it would seem contained the future tyrants of Athens with a form of

¹¹ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, section 10, pg. 116

counter-tyranny.¹³ It is also here, with Nietzsche's interpretation of Socrates' revenge against his life, his ugliness, and his *commonness*¹⁴ that we see the beginning of recruitment of young aristocrats against themselves, through philosophy. Reason becomes the counter-tyranny which acts to contain the emotions, the humors, the *pleonexia* for power.¹⁵ Nietzsche ultimately 'platonizes' too much in *Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil* because these books serve to create a new aristocracy by seduction.¹⁶

For Nietzsche every great health is the result of a great sickness, an overcoming of sickness, as is with the transvaluation of values, the world must overcome the sickness of *ressentiment*.

Apart from the fact that I am a decadent, I am also the opposite. My proof for this is, among other things, that I have always instinctively chosen the *right* means against wretched states; while the decadent typically chooses means that are disadvantageous for him. As *summa summarum*, I was healthy; as an angle, as a specialty, I was a decadent. The energy to choose absolute solitude and leave life to which I had become accustomed; the insistence on not allowing myself any longer to be cared for, waited on, and *doctored* - that betrayed an absolute instinctive certainty about *what* was

¹² Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols; Or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, *The Problem of Socrates*, section 12, pg. 17

¹³ Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols; Or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997 *The Problem with Socrates*, section 9, pg. 15

¹⁴ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. *The Portable Nietzsche*, Penguin Books, 1982 *Homer's Contest*, and Kaufmann, Walter, and R.J. Hollingdale trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Will to Power*, Random House, 1967, sections 430-435, pg. 234-240

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Kaufmann, Walter, and R.J. Hollingdale trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Will to Power*, Random House, 1967, section 435 (March-June 1888), pg. 239

needed above all at that time. I took myself in hand, I made myself healthy again: the condition for this - every physiologist would admit that - is *that one be healthy at bottom*. A typically morbid being cannot become healthy, much less make itself healthy. For a typically healthy person, conversely, being sick can even become an energetic *stimulus* for life, for living *more*. This, in fact, is how that long period of sickness appears to me *now*: as it were, I discovered life anew, including myself; I tasted all good and even little things, as others cannot easily taste them - I turned my will to health, to life, into a philosophy.

For it should be noted: it was during the years of my lowest vitality that I ceased to be a pessimist; the instinct of self-restoration forbade me to a philosophy of poverty and discouragement.¹⁷

But the esoteric form of writing, of speaking, indeed of seeing¹⁸ is an essential element in order to acquire health, a *convalesces* as a movement out of sickness, an abandonment of pessimism in favor of a great hope, a rejuvenation of the soul. "*Music now brings me sensations such as I have never had before. It takes me away from myself, it sobers me up from myself, as if I oversaw myself from a distance, it gluts my senses (uberfuhrte)... Life without music would be an error, a hardship, an exile.*"¹⁹ Sickness, tragedy, depression, truth, power, strength, weakness, and lust are examples of what for Nietzsche are best represented as movements, as heights and depths, as climbs, ascensions, depressions, flights and elations. Much of the physiological understanding of philosophy comes from the movements of understanding, "*he collects from everything he*

¹⁷ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 224-5, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Wise" section 2

¹⁸ As above, see BGE section 30

sees, hears, lives through, his sum: he is a principle of selection, he discards much. He is always in his own company, whether he associates with books, human beings, or landscapes; he honors by choosing, by admitting, by trusting."¹ It is here that we can see a hint to answer- 'who is it that has turned out well', and under what criteria.

Nietzsche's warning to not be hasty in reading², indeed to be anything but a modern man, to ruminate is also an important life living practice, a way of engaging with the world; "He reacts slowly to all kinds of stimuli, with the slowness which long caution and deliberate pride have bred in him: he examines the stimulus that approaches him, he is far from meeting it halfway."³ This prescription towards acquiring health is also the same general approach one has towards reading Nietzsche himself. That the third essay of the *Genealogy of Morals* is prefixed to the process of exegesis, but also stands as a commentary on it - says much to the manner Nietzsche thought was important to read. An aphorism is not understood simply by reading it, it has only been deciphered once an exegesis has been performed.

¹ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Wise" section 2, pg. 224

² Ibid, preface to *The Genealogy of Morals*, section 8, pg. 22-23

³ Ibid, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Wise", section 2, pg. 225

Yet much of the third essay of the *Genealogy of Morals* is a commentary on the philosopher, how emergency conditions made him favor the ascetic ideal as the best possible manner in which to acquire an optimum.⁴ An optimum of freedom, away from responsibility, indeed from all fetters in order to be free to contemplate. The philosopher is filled with a profound sickness, yet the ascetic ideal, with all its denial of life, as well as all the philosopher's disguises, under the mask of a holy type, were simply devices of a great convalesce. The ascetic ideal created favorable conditions, but came to be idealized as the very conditions for health. In such a case even the cure, is no more than further sickness. The new contest to bring back to life serves to negate and stifle it.⁵

⁴ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 97-98, *Third Essay*, section 1. Interesting and noteworthy is how Nietzsche opens this Essay with a quote from "On Reading and Writing" from Zarathustra. "Unconcerned, mocking, violent – thus wisdom wants us: she is a woman and always loves only a warrior." This quote also draws attention to two important concepts, the esoteric as a distance, which means becoming 'unconcerned, mocking, and violent', and also the halcyon temperament which helps one give birth. See Shapiro, Gary, *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise, and Women*, State University of New York Press, 1991 Nietzsche often plays with Socratic analogies, and often distances himself from such analogies. When Nietzsche speaks of a spiritual pregnancy he is often commenting on Socrates, who could only be a midwife to knowledge, or wisdom. In this passage one can see Nietzsche notion of wisdom and knowledge as distinct from Spinoza and Socrates. See Faubion, James D. ed., *Power Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994, pg. 1-90 *Truth and Juridical Forms*, specifically the distinction of Nietzsche from Spinoza, pg. 9-14, and Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, section 333, pg. 261-262

⁵ "Socrates was a misunderstanding; the whole morality of improvement, Christian morality includes, was a misunderstanding... The most glaring daylight, rationality at all costs, a life clear, cold, careful, aware, without instinct, in resistance to the instincts, was itself just a sickness, another sickness – and not at all a way back to "virtue," to "health," to happiness... To have to fight the instincts – that is the formula for decadence. As long as life is ascending, happiness is the same as instinct. –" Polt, Richard, trans.

Under such conditions, in the ancient philosophers as well as the modern, *ressentiment* against sickness can become the greatest of sicknesses, as taking revenge through the instinct to fight. But even the instinct to fight for life has its limits, its finality and exhaustion. It is in this state that the remedy wears out, and a sort of '*Russian fatalism*' needs to take over. Like an exhausted Russian soldier who lies in the snow, '*Russian fatalism*' is an act of no longer absorbing, obeying or taking anything in, and this act becomes the greatest remedy for better health.⁶ The remedy is a distancing oneself from *ressentiment*; since "*ressentiment is what is forbidden par excellence for the sick - it is their specific evil - unfortunately also their most natural inclination.*"⁷

Counter to the formulation Nietzsche attributes to Socrates, reason=virtue=happiness, Nietzsche approaches the problem differently, sickness and masks determine, provisionally, *who has turned out well*. Nietzsche never

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols; Or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, "*The Problem of Socrates*", section 11, pg. 16-7

⁶ McLuhan, Marshal, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New American Library, 1964, "In the physical stress of superstimulation of various kinds, the central nervous system acts to protect itself by a strategy of amputation or isolation of the offending organ, sense or function. Thus, the sensation to new invention is the stress of acceleration of pace and increase of load. And "The function of the body, as a group of sustaining and protective organs for the central nervous system, is to act as a buffer against sudden variations of stimulus in the physical and social environment." Pg. 52-53, also interesting in comparison is McNeil, Jean trans. Deleuze, Gilles, *Masochism*, Zone Books, 1999 on the topic of Venus in Furs.

⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, *Ecce Homo*, "*Why I am so Wise*" section 6, pg. 230

seems to escape the Socratic shadow, prompting "self-examination" and "self-honesty". But the emphasis is entirely different in this regard - Nietzsche usurps the conventional hierarchy of importance, substituting the metaphysical with the physiological.

One will ask me why on earth I've been relating all these small things which are generally considered matters of complete indifference: I only harm myself, the more so if I am destined to represent great tasks. Answer: these small things - nutrition, place, climate, recreation, the whole casuistry of selfishness - are inconceivably more important than everything one has taken to be important so far. Precisely here one must begin to *relearn*. What mankind has so far considered seriously have not even been realities but mere imaginings - more strictly speaking, lies prompted by the bad instincts of sick natures that were harmful in the most profound sense - all these concepts, "God", "soul", "virtue", "sin", "beyond", "truth", "eternal life". - But the greatness of human nature, its "divinity", was sought in them. - All the problems of politics, of social organization, and of education have been falsified through and through because one mistook the most harmful men for great men - because one learned to despise "little" things, which means the basic concerns of life itself.³

In fact to a large extent Nietzsche reverses Platonism and the Socratic prescription to bring about the just life. Nietzsche keeps intact the virtues of "self-examination" and "self-honesty", but ties them closer to the body. As such, what served in Socrates' time as the new *agon* (contest) of dialectics is reversed, prompting an examination of the bodily stimulus, not simply as speech and proposition, but as "books, human beings, or

³ Ibid, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Clever" section 10, pg. 256

landscapes"⁹, indeed of realities themselves. Nietzsche's goal in many ways is to change the "counter-tyrant" created by Platonism.¹⁰

The Physiological: Esotericism, music and distance as convalescent

Walks, reading, and music are the avenues by which health is established for Nietzsche, but in many ways because they bring a distance, a break away from oneself. As such, esotericism for Nietzsche is found in many engagements, as a standing outside and above oneself and others, but it also exists as a getting away, an active creation of distinctions. All tragic seriousness is temporarily suspended. The mark of good music for Nietzsche, and why he ultimately rejected Wagner's music, is that it must be linked with a certain type of physiological agitation, and agitation which comes from good walks, leaps and dancing.¹¹ These activities bring a

⁹ Ibid, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Wise" section 2, pg. 225

¹⁰ Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols*, Hackett Publishing co., 1997, "The Problem with Socrates", section 9, pg. 15

¹¹ "Finally the main point. The two kinds of rhythms are antithetic in their most basic intention and derivation. Our barbarous (or Germanic) theory of rhythm understands by rhythm a series of equally strong heightenings of emotions, separated by unstressed syllables. This constitutes our oldest form of poetry; three syllables, each expressing a central idea, three impressive knocks, as it were, on the emotional sensorium – this forms our oldest metric. In our language it is usually the syllable most pregnant with meaning, the syllable which dominates the emotions, which has the accent, a feature utterly different from anything in the classical rhapsode was extremely passionate (in Plato's *Ion* there is a vivid description of the gestures, tears, and so on); the time symmetry was felt to be a kind of oil upon the water. Rhythm to the ancient mind is, morally and esthetically, the reins which are put on passion." The Cure to the disease of passion!? Letter to Carl Fuchs, End of August, 1888, Middleton, Christopher, ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press, 1969 pg. 309

distance away from seriousness, like all healthy physiological activities they bring a moment of ease.¹² To be more precise, Nietzsche understands health to be a direction in order to promote the most life, by an engagement with a bodily stimulus, which can be the walling oneself off in certain circumstances, or a reveling in the agitation and stimulus upon the body. For Nietzsche, a healthy conditions greatest health could be in sickness, as precipitous motion to invigorate with a renewed lust for life.¹³

Nietzsche's manner of using the aphoristic style of writing is very much in a musical attempt. It needs to be sounded out. That the aphorism is not understood by all readers, especially the ignorant is essential. "*Ultimately, nobody can get more out of things, including books, than he already knows. For what one lacks access to from experience one will have no ear.*"¹⁴ The manner of approaching writing

¹² Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, section 368, also Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989. "*Why I am so Clever*" section 7 "I shall say another word for the most select ears: what I really want from music. That it be cheerful and profound like an afternoon in October. That it be individual, frolicsome, tender, a sweet small woman of beastliness and charm." On the subject of reading, "Has it been noted that in that profound tension to which pregnancy condemns the spirit, and at bottom the whole organism, chance and any kind of stimulus from outside have too vehement an effect and strike too deep? One must avoid chance and outside stimuli as much as possible a kind of walling oneself in belongs among the foremost instinctive precautions of spiritual pregnancy. Should I permit an alien thought to scale the wall secretly? _ And that is what reading would mean." And also "In any case, every kind of reading belongs among my recreations – hence among the things that liberate me from myself – that I no longer take seriously." EH section 3

¹³ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 224-5, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Wise" section 2

¹⁴ Ibid, *Ecce Homo*, "*Why I Write Such Good Books*" section 1, pg. 261

as Nietzsche does, and the effect it elicits from a select, worthy few, is ultimately to instill a transvaluation, a transformation of the 'singled out'¹⁵ reader. This process is intimately related to the ability of Nietzsche to convey movement, in a physiological state. Such as the movement of rhythm in music, of a consonance and dissonance, indeed many of the aphorisms in Nietzsche follow this general form. At the beginning of the aphorism Nietzsche will draw a commonality, or fellowship with the reader, which guides him through a movement of thought, forming a sort of unity (between Nietzsche and the reader), only to end in dissonance, or disagreement by siding with the opposite of the original position.

"We" in the beginning of an aphorism, may end with "you", or the procession could be the reverse.¹⁶ The overall effect this has in the reader is to draw attention to the want of unity, or company; it pits the self against the reading, almost eliciting the sort of *Russian fatalism* Nietzsche demands from his readers. The maxim "become hard!", for Nietzsche is more than a catch-phrase, it literally refers to an approach one requires towards stimuli, and it is especially important when approaching

¹⁵ Lampert, Laurence, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Yale University Press, 1986 pg. 44-46, the comment that after On reading and Writing is followed by the child by the mountain side which about the recruitment of new gentlemen.

his books that "*they have to be conquered with the most delicate fingers as well as the bravest fists.*"

In August of 1881, Zarathustra was penned with the notation "6000 feet beyond man and time." Zarathustra has a height to it, and it is reckoned as music; In any case Nietzsche says it is a "rebirth of the art of *hearing*" and that *hearing* "was among its preconditions". As Peter Gast and Nietzsche witness in Sils Maria as an omen, the phoenix flew over head. One remains unsure of the intended signification, but certainly a new height and a renewal of music are evident.¹⁷

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra makes a speech "*On Reading and Writing*", and therein outlines the movement that Aphoristic, esoteric writing makes possible. As Nietzsche makes clear in *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 30, the esoteric is not so much 'inside', as it is an above looking down. He then continues to make the distinction of how certain books and virtues are destructive to lower types, and what is necessary for the stronger and more nobler characters. As Nietzsche makes sure to mention, "*books for all are always foul-smelling books*". One thing

¹⁶ Dannhauser, Werner J., *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, Cornell University Press, 1974, 206

¹⁷ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, pg. 295 Zarathustra section I and , Shapiro, Gary, *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise, and Women*, State University of New York Press, 1991

is certain, loftiness and distance, as *height*, is important to the reading and writing process.

Whoever writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read but to be learned by heart. In the mountains the shortest way is from peak to peak: but for that one must have long legs. Aphorism should be peaks- and those who are addressed, tall and lofty....

.... Whoever climbs the highest mountains laughs at all tragic plays and tragic seriousness....

...Now I am light, now I fly, now I see myself beneath myself, now a god dances through me.¹⁸

For Nietzsche the *spirit of gravity*, the morose sentiment brought about by the inequalities of individuals, is the result of a serious and solemn want to revenge against the health, nobility, and abilities of others. This is the reason elevation is needed in the well constituted, in order to escape the '*foul-smell*', and the '*parasites*' that are the bulk of society. And in no uncertain terms this *ressentiment* that deformity constitutes, for Nietzsche, represents the bulk of motivation in the majority of individuals. The credo of the ill constituted is "life is hard to bear", and it is out of this judgment, that life is refuted.¹⁹

The higher types, for Nietzsche require isolation and high peaks, what he calls the halcyon temperament, in order to give birth to great things. It becomes important to

¹⁸ Kaufmann, Walter trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, Penguin Press, 1978, "On Reading and Writing" pg 40-41.

¹⁹ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, section 382-3, pg. 346-48

distinguish that the esoteric is not at all about a form of writing, but a way of acting and choosing, it is a way of being which guarantees the best possible condition for the greatest health and climes. And forcibly for Nietzsche this means splitting mankind in two.²⁰

"Whoever knows the reader, will henceforth do nothing for the reader", for Nietzsche understands very well the demands under which reading is subjected during his own time. The mass distribution of print by the invention of the Gutenberg press creates the possibility that everyone may learn to read. *"First the spirit was God,"* as the subjects of the first mass printed books were religious, *"then he became man"*, following the bible and religious treatises came the humanists. And finally, print risks being *"rabble"*. *"Another century of readers- and the spirit itself will stink."*²¹

Esoteric writing becomes the same as being a physiologist, it is the manner in which to appear as doctor, as self healer, but equally as a search for kindred

²⁰ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, section 8, pg. 22-23, and also see Shapiro, Gary, *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise, and Women*, State University of New York Press, 1991, specifically the chapter's, *Parasites and Their Noise*, and *Alcyone's Song: The Halcyon Tone*. Shapiro's book draws a very interesting understanding of Nietzsche's use of the word 'halcyon'. The sense one gets is the sophisticated understanding Nietzsche had of his own best conditions of pregnancy. Birds, song, water, tone and birth all become interwoven in an understanding of the seasons, heights, literal movements Nietzsche saw as his best conditions away from parasites.

²¹ Kaufmann, Walter trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, Penguin Press, 1978, *"On Reading and Writing"*

spirits, "free spirits", ones which have become "hard" out of "deliberate pride."²²

God is dead and the care of self

Georg Lukacs was one of the more powerful critics of Nietzsche. Essentially he stated that Nietzsche was simply a last effort by bourgeois philosophy to critique the inevitable "classless" society, which would ultimately, according to Lukacs, dominate the future.²³ In many ways this critique of Nietzsche is a powerful one, not because it is especially illuminating of the weakness of Nietzsche's position, but rather because it denigrates his thought as a symptom of "productive" forces - Lukas transformed Nietzsche into an attempt at survival in the face of inevitable outcomes. On this score Lukas was not far off in understanding Nietzsche's situation, but the winning side for Lukacs is decidedly different than the one Nietzsche envisaged. Upon closer inspection this becomes an important point of distinction about what sort of attitudes and estimations we are supposed to attribute to Nietzsche. For Nietzsche there really is no winning side, and in many

²² Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Clever" section 2, pg. 225

²³ "The weakness and half-heartedness of such 'daring thinker' as Nietzsche or Spengler is that their relativism only abolishes the absolute in appearance." Livingstone, Rodney, trans. Lukacs, Georg, *History and Class Consciousness*, The Merli Press, 1971, pg. 187, see also Lukacs, Georg, *Von Nietzsche bis Hitler, oder Der Irrationalismus in der deutschen Politik*, Fischer Bücherei, 1966

ways Nietzsche stands outside mass movements, he does not cater to them, nor demand that his philosophy be acquired by any such movements. Rather his position, and attempt at seducing apprenticeship is far more select (in any event, ancient in character as opposed to the techniques indicative of modern mass persuasion).

Yet Nietzsche cannot remain in the same tradition as Socrates, because times have changed, many astounding things have changed, and one of the essential ruptures with Plato and Socrates has much to do about the possibility of change, how much change can derail the possibility of being a philosopher and/or poet. Nietzsche's attitudes takes much of the criticisms which Socrates made clear about democracy, especially its nature to heart.

On the fundamental level Nietzsche rejects all ideological forms of politics, he abandons the mass politics of persuasion, yet these statements beg the question - what was Nietzsche's point in writing?²⁴

Humanity is not reaching an ideal of itself, nor is it reaching or approaching happiness, nor is it becoming more

²⁴ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, pg. 146 section 93, "But why do I write? - ... B: But why do you write? A: Well, my friend, to be quite frank: so far I have not discovered any other way of getting rid of my thoughts. - B: And why do you want to get rid of them? - A: Why I want to? So I want to? I must - B: Enough! Enough!"

moral and responsible, Nietzsche makes clear that some of us have been liberated, after a fashion, from the burdens of believing in God. Nobody, Nietzsche asserts, gives humans their qualities, not God, society, nor our parents or ancestors. As a result, for Nietzsche, not being the result of special intentions, gives a license, only in this way can the world be redeemed.²⁵

It is always important to note that "we", does not mean the reader, it points to the "*free spirits*", the higher types, the noble *gentilhomme*²⁶, only they can redeem the world for themselves, and nobody else.

Much of Nietzsche's thought is guided by the need to overcome, not only many things and forces in the world, (particularly important is *ressentiment*) but the self, the self, needs to overcome itself. This notion of overcoming

²⁵ Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols; Or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, pg. 36-37, *The Four Great Errors*, section 8, "What can be our doctrine? - That nobody gives human beings their qualities, neither God, nor society, nor their parents and ancestors, nor they themselves (the nonsense of this last notion we are rejecting was taught by Kant as "intelligible freedom", and maybe was already taught by Plato as well). Nobody is responsible for being here in the first place, for being constituted in such and such a way, for being in these circumstances, in this environment. The fatality of our essence cannot be separated from the fatality of all that was and will be. We are not the consequence of a special intention, a will, a goal; we are not being used in an attempt to reach an "ideal of humanity," or an "ideal of happiness," or an "ideal of morality" - it is absurd to want to divert our essence towards some goal. We have invented the concept "goal": in reality, goals are absent... One is necessary, one is a piece of destiny, one belongs to the whole, one is the whole. - There is nothing that could rule, measure, compare, judge our being, for that would mean ruling, measuring, comparing, and judging the whole.... But there is nothing outside the whole! - That nobody is made responsible anymore, that no way of being may be traced to a *causa prima* (first cause), that the world is not a unity either as sensorium or as spirit, only this is the great liberation - in this way only, the innocence of becoming is restored... The concept "God" was up to now the greatest objection against existence.... We deny God, and in denying God we deny responsibility: only thus do we redeem the world."

²⁶ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 310 *Ecce Homo, Beyond Good and Evil*, section 2

oneself, of giving 'style to ones character' (not to be understood as dandyism), of 'turning out well', or 'becoming as you are' strikes the very core of Nietzsche's pedagogical ambitions, but it cannot be over stressed how this in no way is a general principle. Each individual case is a subjective entanglement, with some prompting by Nietzsche, to 'become what one is'. For the majority however, general principles are needed. But the gambit is that with the 'Death of God', the loss of meaning, the very underpinnings of knowledge, truth, the subject, and equally sovereignty - how can the future establish values? How can humanity have goals in such conceptually inhospitable climes?²⁷ This problematic situation, and resultant question, points to the very core of some of Nietzsche's critical assertions about the nature of knowledge, and as a result power and human action. The search for certainty and truth is an on going pursuit within the western world, but it has yet to face the dilemma of norms, and genesis of norms. As Foucault comments on Nietzsche's general approach, "[it] undertakes a historical analysis of the formation of the subject itself, a historical analysis of the birth of certain types of knowledge [savoir] - without

²⁷ Rabinow, Paul, ed. Foucault, Michel, *Power Vol 3*, The New Press, 2000, *Truth and Juridical Forms* pg. 1-89

ever granting the preexistence of a subject of knowledge [connaissance]."²⁸ The perspectivalist approach that Nietzsche has towards knowledge stems from the distinction between 'origin' and 'invention'. For Nietzsche 'knowledge' is invented, it has no origin, invention (Erfindung) constitutes a break, a result of ambiguous power relations. 'Origin' however, is a result of a bad conscience, an active want of certain outcomes, namely the 'solemnity' that is associated at the start of all great things.²⁹

The problem vis-a-vis the self, is that knowledge is not an instinct, it is not even a natural thing for Nietzsche. Rather, knowledge is the result of counter-instinctive forces. In other terms this means that knowledge is not natural to humanity, it is not its specific virtue or intention for being.³⁰ That we have 'knowledge' in the first place is largely erroneous to Nietzsche, a consequence of a particular formation and relation of power.³¹ Apart from the fact that knowledge is counter-instinctive, it does not truly correspond to the world, rather it finds itself [knowledge] imposing itself,

²⁸ Ibid, pg. 6

²⁹ Rabinow, Paul ed. Foucault, Michel, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, 1984, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*

³⁰ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. *The Portable Nietzsche*, Penguin Books, 1982, *On Truth and Lie, in an Extra-Moral Sense*.

³¹ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, section 110, pg. 169-171

since the world lacks order. Foucault draws close attention to Nietzsche's critique of the equivalence of knowledge and the world, but also the consequence of what Nietzsche suggests. For Nietzsche, knowledge is established by the distance over subjects, not their rapprochement or affinity. *"Knowledge can only be a violation of things to be known, and not a perception, a recognition, an identification of or with those things."*³²

As such, distance for a particular subject liberates the hold, or sway it may have over the individual, *"There are heights of the soul from which even the tragedy ceases to look tragic; and rolling together all this woe of the world- who could dare to decide whether its sight would necessarily seduce us and compel us to feel pity and thus double this woe?"* Nietzsche would certainly draw reference to the eagles on rocky crags swooping down on tasty lambs. It is specifically in this context that Nietzsche associates closeness with judgment, hatred and *ressentiment*. In part, because it is the closeness, the suffering of the lambs which make them invent (*Erfindung*)

³²Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994, *Truth and Juridical Forms*, pg. 9

'good' and 'evil', the moral impetus is spawned by
ressentiment towards the eagles.³³

So what do we have? Well, we have esotericism as a type
of health, then we have it as a form of distance, which
also exists as a guard against others.

Nietzsche is a challenge to care for the self, when
there is every reason not to, since we are cared for.
Equality, and the forces which ally themselves with it,
serve to create complacency, comfort, entertainment, in
every sense a static pool out of which the flies of the
marketplace can be born.

Nietzsche's philosophy and the methods by which that
philosophy are disseminated to a select few are tightly
intertwining. The general direction of Nietzsche's works
was to write his seminal work, *The Transvaluation of all
Values*, and it is in the project that we see the necessity
of all of Nietzsche's caution, the manner of writing he
employed and the great risk he made society undertake. That
the transvaluation of all values is at all possible,
commences with the "death of god", that god is dead however
does not dispel his shadow, nor get rid of the old tablets
and values.

³³ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, 2nd Essay

Nietzsche's understanding and practice of an esoteric way of engaging in public discourse are very much molded by the time in which he finds himself. The esotericism of Nietzsche however can never be said to guard a truth, a hidden one that the masses cannot have access to, such as "democracies crumble from vanity, or philosophy is the steward of truth" such beliefs and assertions do not fit Nietzsche's style, nor take full account of the general epistemical account of Nietzsche's understanding of truth and knowledge. Hence, the esoteric is not the **guarding** of the truth from the ignorant masses, rather esotericism stands as a distancing, in the guarding of oneself from others in order to make possible the self-creation (invention) of one's own truths. As such, to say that the esoteric guards the truth is only to say, by the fact that it creates the very possibility for them to emerge, and not because they are pre-existent. One guards the self, not the truth. The link Nietzsche makes with esotericism and distance and the search for the best possible health, maintain a consistence that esotericism is simply a getting away from the influences of others, a protecting oneself from the opinions of others, and particularly their suffering. Nietzsche is very consistent on this attitude: suffering often creates a bitterness which transforms

thought and action into a revenge seeking, this can be in a very overt fashion, or more subtle and gandeoloquent, as is the case with religion and metaphysics.

Esotericism as such protects against the worst travesties of second nature (that being a system of beliefs which stands over primary nature), while and the same time trying to deal and understand the reality of primary nature. What becomes important in this process is that understanding is very much predicated on the "acceptance" of something. For instance Zarathustra has a problem accepting the reality of the eternal return not because he does not understand it, or comprehend it, he understands and comprehends all to well, rather his impasse is in its acceptance, which ultimately must be affirmed enthusiastically "one more time!" Esotericism helps establish ones own truth towards others, the world, and oneself by distancing oneself from the suffering inflicted via life, as is stated in *On Reading and Writing*, "*life is hard to bear*", but this is especially the importance and relevance in accepting the esoteric as a great convalescence.

Nietzsche's use of esotericism is two fold, one as a practice towards oneself and ones own perspectives, as such this a drawing away from the concerns of suffering, both as

empathy pointed towards the world and towards ones own feelings against the hardships of that world. As such on the fundamental level esotericism is an askesis which aims to liberate from the trappings of suffering. Nietzsche's second type of esoteric employment is to guard against the sick, those which have been damaged by life and suffering so much that they have become destroyers, poisonous and parasitic. The esoteric here is employed as a quarantine from contagion.

"Indeed, it has bite me. With godlike assurance and beauty it bit my finger. "Punishment there must be and justice," it thinks; "and here he shall not sing songs in honor of enmity in vain." "Indeed, it has avenged itself. And alas, now it will make my soul, too, whirl, with revenge. But to keep me from whirling, my friends, tie me tight to the column. Rather would I be a stylite even, than a whirl of revenge." ³⁴

Here it is important to underline that in no way does Nietzsche advocate the elimination, execution, or liquidation of the sick, wretched or parasitic. (Such acts are self destructive, since out of the low can come the high) The emphasis for Nietzsche is the cyclical and symbiotic relationship between ranks, not as equals, but as necessary compliments and entanglements.

What can be said about Nietzsche's esotericism? How is it practiced? How is it written? To say that Nietzsche's

esotericism is a reflection of the physiological roots of health would be a start. As Richard Schacht makes note of Nietzsche's health, and his particular writing style and the use of aphorisms.

The aphoristic form Nietzsche adopted (and adapted to his purpose) in *Human, all too Human* had long been a favored literary form of observers of the human scene who preferred to comment incisively on many things, rather than writing essays about selected few. But this form may also have been virtually necessitated by Nietzsche's increasingly severe and disabling health problems, which frequently rendered him incapable of writing or even thinking for extended periods of time³⁵

Though this insight is certainly revealing of the physiological state Nietzsche had to endure, the fertile soil in which his philosophy was born - it would be unwarranted to state this is the only reason Nietzsche adopted the aphoristic style. Apart from the demands it met for the author, Nietzsche also certainly had an aim in choosing it for its powers of selecting and discriminating fruitful readers from bad ones.

In terms of esotericism, for Nietzsche it is closely linked with a standing above, a looking down and escape from gravity. This promotes a certain health, a care for self, a bringing about the best possible conditions for an

³⁴ Kaufmann, Walter trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, Penguin Press, 1978, *The Tarantulas*

³⁵ Hollingdale, R.J. trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pg. xi

escape from ressentiment³⁶. For instance this idea of standing outside, or above oneself has a long heritage in several philosophical traditions, as Pierre Hadot makes clear in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. In the ancient context of the esoteric, the flight of the soul is a manner become universal by a distancing away from the subjective concerns. This is done in a twofold manner, by a distinction or separation from the public traditions or opinions, the doxa, and a replacement with the logos, knowledge which is the universal telos, which are the object of search for such ascetic practices. Nietzsche agrees with the division from the communal attitudes and opinions in favor of more thought out reflections, but his object cannot be universal, since with the death of god comes the death of an objective telos which guides the self towards a direction of an absolute fixed and cosmic excellence. As such, Nietzsche really provides an askesis which has no objective telos which stands outside the self.

"Thus, in each philosophical school we encounter one and the same conception of philosophy. Similarly, in each philosophical school we find the same conception of the cosmic flight and the view from above as the philosophical way par excellence of looking at things. In particular, Platonists, Stoics, the Epicureans all discovered, in addition to their theoretical physics, a practical physics, which was conceived of as an exercise in which the

³⁶ Nietzsche use of the French ressentiment draws the link between revenge seeking and personal sentiment. In English it would best be understood as a fusion of revenge and resentment. In the French ressentiment both revenge and resentment are implicit.

imagination speeds through the infinite vastness of the universe."³⁷

Nietzsche was a thinker steeped in the traditions and writings of the ancients, ranging from the pre-Socratic Greek, all the way to the later period of Roman empire. Nietzsche would have been, and was well familiar with some of the practices of 'self-mastery' with which ancient philosophers often engaged. In *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Pierre Hadot makes some important comments on such spiritual practices, and he is quick and right to point out that all of these exercises had a specific aim of universalizing the particular, out of the self and into the cosmos. Such spiritual practices were aimed and formed by the telos at which the practitioner was orientated. This has often been the center focus of Hadot's critique of Michel Foucault's work on the *Soi de Soi* (Care of Self), yet at the same time this points towards the rupture both Hadot and Foucault had, namely Nietzsche's pronouncement that 'God is dead'.³⁸

Nietzsche operates very much within this frame work, however his perspectivist approach is not in order to universalize, such ascetic practices are undertaken in

³⁷ Hadot, Pierre, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, Blackwell Publishers, 1995, pg. 242

order to idealize a particular perspective, outside the self, which serves as man's ideal and horizon.³⁹

"We have seen how a certain asceticism, a severe cheerful continence with the best will, belongs to the most favorable conditions of supreme spirituality, and is also among its most natural consequences: hence it need be no matter for surprise that philosophers have always discussed the ascetic ideal with a certain fondness. A serious examination of history actually reveals that the bond between philosophy and the ascetic ideal is even much closer and stronger. One might assert that it was only on the leading-strings of this ideal that philosophy learned to take its first small steps on earth - alas, so clumsily, so unwillingly, so ready to fall on its face and lie on its belly, this timid little toddler and mollicoddle with shaky legs!"⁴⁰

That such practices of askesis emerged at all was largely due to a horizon, a promise, a God, an ideal which pushed philosophy to stand on its own two legs. Nietzsche search for new values, for the transvaluation of value commences with the rupture of the fixed point of view; it refutes the possibility of '*sine ira et studio*' [without anger or affliction]. In this way Nietzsche is a modern attempt to incorporate specific practices and points of view, in this case the esoteric appears as a view from above, in order to provide better health.

"Afterward we cure ourselves: sickness is instructive, we have no doubt of that, even more instructive than health - those who make sick seem even more necessary to us today than any medicine men or "saviors". We violate ourselves nowadays, no doubt of it, we nutcrackers of the soul, ever questioning and questionable, as if life were nothing but cracking nuts;

³⁸ Ibid. pg. 206-213, Chapter 7

³⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich, Kaufmann, Walter, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 119, section 12

⁴⁰ Ibid. Pg. 113, section 9

and thus we are bound to grown day-by-day more questionable,
worthier of asking questions; perhaps worthier - of living?"¹¹

The esotericism that Nietzsche employed and the manner in which it was manifested is shaped by two physiological intrusions; one, Nietzsche's sickness and his search for health, and two, the manner in which newspapers and readers have made a foul smell, like those of the 'madhouse and hospital'.

How is it that Nietzsche deals, in terms of form, with writing? The aphoristic style is not linear in the conventional usage or sense, it does not lead from one argument into another. Often translators such as Hollingdale and Kaufmann have mentioned that Nietzsche should not be read 'sporadically', yet Nietzsche's own books show that he follows certain themes, (which does not mean that his aphorisms cannot be taken insightfully on their own). One can only speculate as to the exact reason why Nietzsche chose to write in aphorisms, but certainly the freedom it permits the reader when reading was one of them. As Dannhauser makes note it is often difficult to "associate context or development", more often than not the valleys and hills which Nietzsche's books carry us seldom seem unified; even after having read them closely. Many of

Nietzsche's concepts and terms revolve around one another; for example, resentment is difficult to understand without making reference to will to power, the eternal return, or the spirit of gravity. Indeed, for the most part Nietzsche's thought is a rich complex of interdependence, a circular flow of thought and action, a hodgepodge of interconnections where ideas, sentiments and physiologies collide like the swords in the *Gay Science*. Like everything Nietzsche engages with it appears to be a double-bladed technique; at least one should suspect it may be janus faced. Reading slowly, without haste is important for Nietzsche, yet aphorisms give in some the predilection for skipping, quickening, becoming sporadic and generally running amuck within the text. Many who fail to see the immediate development, as the narrative of an argument, find Nietzsche's aphorisms far too lonely and filled with possible error; after all it is not easy to follow where he is leading, if anywhere.

Nietzsche's writing is bombastic, insulting, cavalier, and seems to fly in the face of all good manners and morals. It is also egotistical, non-academic, and dismissive, though it oscillates into the opposite of these features; Nietzsche writes to exhaust some, bore others,

⁴¹ Ibid. pg 113, 3rd Essay, section 9

and disturb the rest. Whatever the verdict on his specific tools of writing, who he writes for, if indeed understanding him is a rare exception, it cannot be honestly asserted that one is better off, superior, higher, better, simply because one understands him. Nietzsche's writing is a song to kindred souls, searching for an ethic, but it is first and foremost a writing that is a profound experiment, a stab in the dark to see if anyone will hear - if anyone can hear.

More importantly than what the specific mechanisms of the esoteric in Nietzsche, are his important challenge to be different, to wall oneself away to think and reflect, to become hard. By being so loud in his writing he forces some readers to be quiet towards themselves, the necessary inward turn, which takes care of itself for the first time under a new star, one striving for chaos, in order to give birth to what one really is.

Understanding Nietzsche is far easier than understanding oneself, and perhaps this in a paradoxical way points towards the direction one must face when dealing with Nietzsche's thought. "Now that you know me, you must forget me", Nietzsche advice always stings because it scorns the comfort of repose, the contentment which comes with *knowing* the truth and the good, learning Nietzsche by heart means

forgetting and rejecting the possibility of a throne on which to sit our moral sentiments. As he mentions, in order to read well, one must read slowly and not interpose ones personal sentiments, as such the want of something to be true can never serve as its proof.

Michel Foucault is an example of a Nietzschean ethic that engages with the politics of health. Foucault is a search for a personal, non-idealized ascetic practice which took relish in the act of destruction. The next chapter touches on the environment and object of Foucault's work, the institutional implementations of normalizing, the technologies which take shape and the fissures into which a discourse and practice of resistance can take shape.⁴² As such the next chapter deals with the state and the manner in which identities form, in order to better and articulate an askesis of resistance.

Foucault's thought in the later period of his life centered around the Care of Self, though some have argued that such a reemphasis of his work was a movement away from his original work on governmentality. However, Foucault's work, and there is evidence for this, can be seen as an extension and continuation of his investigation into

⁴² Rabinow, Paul, ed. Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth Vol 1*, The New Press, 1997, The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom pg. 281

governmentality and the institutional technologies which render subjectivities possible. In this light Nietzsche and Foucault, apart from Foucault's references to Nietzsche, share in an endeavor to understand and often resist valuation. As such, the next chapter deals with the context in which one must investigate and take note of when developing esotericism as a self askesis. If indeed, as Nietzsche suggests, our understand, philosophy, or even simply the manner in which we investigate the world is swayed by the proximity of suffering; perhaps looking at the present technologies of political control imbedded within governmentality can be a useful reflection on how one can develop an askesis, and necessarily a media askesis which takes some insights from Nietzsche's esotericism.

Chapter 3

Governmentality and Normalization

What does it mean to wear a mask? To become a 'masked philosopher', an Athenian Stranger - or a long forgotten mythical lawgiver? A game is played with the reader, the viewer, not as superior to inferior, but as a stage to an audience, a relation of power and sentiment. The greatest role of a philosopher, and his greatest image, is that of the individual who questions, not because he is right and the other wrong, but because the act of questioning is an act of power. Questioning, and being questioned makes us aware of a play occurring with speech, the written word, or video, by being anonymous or distant we become acutely aware of the authorial behind truth.

Books, universities, learned journals are also information media. One should refrain from calling every channel of information to which one cannot or does not wish to gain access a "mass medium". The problem is to know how to exploit the difference, whether we ought to set up a reserve, a "cultural park", for delicate species of scholars threatened by rapacious inroads of mass information, while the rest of the space would be a huge market for shoddy products. Such a division does not seem to me to correspond to reality. What's more, it isn't at all desirable. If useful differentiations are to be brought into play, there must not be any such division.¹

The division between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' has been an important distinction among scholars, usually a

¹ Rabinow, Paul, ed. Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth Vol 1*, The New Press, 1997, *The Masked Philosopher* pg. 326

very convenient² one, but it has also created an important limitation as to what is constituted as 'important' to public and scholarly interests, in other words, how the legitimacy of an issue is established is often the result of an engagement, or polemics of 'seriousness'.³

Biopolitics and Governmentality: Equality vs. Liberty

Alexis De Tocqueville on the subject of the formation of the United States of America commented on the manner in which equality was distributed, when the natural inclination of abilities gravitated towards its usual, unequal distribution. As Tocqueville makes clear Europe had already experimented with how to constitute this equality: by vesting in one man all the power of the sovereign, tyranny resulted and all became equal in their

² "In an age which suffers from its universal education, to what an unnatural, artificial and in any case unworthy state must the most truthful of all sciences, the honest naked goddess philosophy, be reduced! In such a world of compelled external uniformity it must remain the learned monologue of the solitary walker, the individual's chance capture, the hidden secret of the chamber, or the harmless chatter of academic old men and children. No one dares venture to fulfill the philosophical law in himself, no one lives philosophically with simple loyalty that constrained a man of antiquity to bear himself as a Stoic wherever he was, whatever he did, once he had affirmed his loyalty to the Stoa. All modern philosophizing is political and official, limited by governments, churches, academics, customs and the cowardice of men to the appearance of scholarship; it sighs 'if only' or knows 'there once was' and does nothing else. Within a historical culture philosophy possesses no rights if it wants to be more than a self-restrained knowing which leads to no action; if modern man had any courage or resolution at all, if he were not merely a subjective creature even in his enmities; he would banish philosophy; as it is, he contents himself with modestly concealing its nudity. One may think, write, print, speak, teach philosophy - to that point more or less everything is permitted; only in the realm of action, of so called life, it is otherwise only in the realm of action, of so called life, is it otherwise: there only one thing is ever permitted and everything else simply impossible: thus will historical culture have it. Are there still human beings, one then asks oneself, or perhaps only thinking-, writing- and speaking-machines?" Hollingdale, R.J. trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, Cambridge University Press, 1996 pg. 85

dispossession of rights. Tocqueville makes a very important and ancient comparison, that tyranny, the absolutism of power invested in the one, is similar and kindred to the absolutism in the people, democracy. Both, in ancient terms, we are told by Plato and Aristotle (and many others) are the result of one becoming a slave to ones desires, and this is at the root of why both are considered ignoble. The period and location Tocqueville is commenting on is the first occurrence of absolutism in the people since ancient times. Tocqueville does assert that in some the search for equality elevates the humble to the level of the great, in others however the "human heart" searches to exact its "depraved taste for equality". Such is the result of being born unequally, and having the rights of liberty and equality. But the inabilities of individuals in a society greatly outweighs their abilities, and the vast majority harbor and bunker into the principle which shelters them from the skirmishes of inequity, as such "equality is their idol".⁴

Populations become the sovereign, an absolutist demand, indeed, the '*raison d'être*' of the state apparatus.

³ Nietzsche's thought is often directed at the importance that comes with gravity, or rather the seriousness of suffering.

⁴ Reeve, Henry, trans. De Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America: Vol I*, Vintage Classics, 1990, pg. 52-53, and Vol II, pg. 33-35, 94-102, 162, 204-211

The modern state only accrues power to the extent that it can maintain a healthy, mobile, standing reserve of resources, to be easily expedited in the service of the state. In modern liberal democracies the principle of equality and liberty have created a downward pressure of the most common demand, the *right to life*. But this *right to life* has been further supplemented with the right to the conditions by which a 'healthy', 'normal' life can be rendered possible.⁵ The science of government, of its administration and management, becomes synonymous with the furtherance of the population's and individual's health, it being the single most important effective practice of the state.⁶ The logic, and rationality of the bureaucracy runs on the assumption of the goal to further the best health for all, the 'normal', mean, or average aggregate are regulated in order to instill the minimal level of standards. Incrementally spheres of human activity, the

⁵ Rabinow, Paul, ed. Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth Vol I*, The New Press, 1997, *The Birth of Biopolitics* pg. 73 and Rabinow, Paul ed. Foucault, Michel, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, 1984, *The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century* pg. 273 and Hurley, Robert, trans. Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Vol I*, Vintage Books, 1990, *The Right of Death and Power Over Life*, pg. 133-159

⁶ "The object of technology of population begins to be sketched: demographic estimates, the calculation of the pyramid of ages, different life expectations and levels of morality, studies of the reciprocal relations of growth of wealth and growth of population, the development of forms of education and professional training." Continues, "The biological traits of a population become relevant factors for economic management, and it becomes necessary to organize around them an apparatus which will ensure not only their subjection but constant increase of their utility. This enables us to understand the main characteristics of eighteenth-century noso-politics as follows: 1. *The privilege of the child and the medicalization of the family*. 2. *The privilege of hygiene and the function of medicine as an instance of social control*." Rabinow, Paul ed. Foucault, Michel, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, 1984, *The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century* pg 278-282

manufacturing of products, services, or ideas consents to the legitimacy of its health, the benign and ameliorative intervention of regulative and preventive measures.

The institutionalization of multiple technologies of intervention seek to constitute a normal (regularized) guarantee, indeed the systematic mapping by the state of the potentialities of the population and the individual. What commenced as the modulation and regularization of the population, transforms itself into the confinement and curative study of the individual and multiple populations, such as the criminal, mentally ill, or pathological. Under these different flags the administration of government becomes married with the technologies of power, which seek in turn to cure simultaneously the population and the individual.

The juridical power of the state commences its mandate with the security and healthy maintenance of populations.

A good government implies two things: first, fidelity to the object of government, which is the happiness of the people; secondly, a knowledge of the means by which that object can be best attained. Some governments are deficient in both these qualities; most governments are deficient in the first. I scruple not to assert that in America governments too little attention has been paid to the last. The federal Constitution avoids this error; and that merits particular notice, it provides for the last in a mode which increases the security for the first.⁷

⁷ Hamilton, Alexander, Madison, James, and Jay, John, *The Federalist*, everyman, 1996, pg. 320

Objects of knowledge, how best to constitute this public happiness of the greatest many, is of course the pillar under which liberalism is based. Yet as De Tocqueville makes clear, the entanglement between the opposite pressures of rights infused within the population, signals the reign of equality. The opposition of these two modern democratic principles as outlined by De Tocqueville make the mechanism in the *Federalist Papers* constitute for the first time a modern democracy whose aim is the furtherance of the greatest happiness, for the greatest majority. In effect this signals the *swords spark*⁸ of knowledge, where the rational individual becomes representative of the 'healthy individual'. Not simply subject to juridical provisions, but now subject to the *medicalization*⁹ of institutional power, the *gaze*¹⁰ and simultaneous manipulation of the observed object.¹¹

⁸ Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994, pg. 8, "Knowledge is like a luminescence, a spreading of light, but one that is produced by mechanisms or realities that are of completely different natures. Knowledge is a result of the instincts; it is like a stroke of luck, or like the outcome of a protracted compromise. It is also, Nietzsche says, like "a spark between two swords,; but not a thing made of their metal."

⁹ Jones, Colin, and Porter, Roy, *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body*, Routledge, 1998, *Medicine, History and the Present*, by Nikolas Rose, pg. 49

¹⁰ "Rational discourse is based less on the geometry of light than on the insistent, impenetrable density of the object, for prior to all knowledge, the source, the domain, and the boundaries of experience can be found in its dark presence. The gaze is passively linked to the primary passivity that dedicates it to the endless task of absorbing experience in its entirety, and of mastering it." Smith, A.M. Sheridan, trans. Foucault, Michel, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Vintage Books, 1994, pg. xiv

¹¹ Rabinow, Paul, ed. Foucault, Michel, *Power Vol 3*, The New Press, 2000, *Governmentality* pg. 210, "To govern, then, means to govern things." Continued, pg. 211 "Government is defined as a right manner of disposing of things so as to lead not to the form of the common good, as the jurists' texts would have said, but to an end that is "convenient" for each of these things that are to be governed. This implies a plurality

The state and its resources, data, societal incentives, populations themselves, groups, associations, and corporate bodies engage in politics of health, a politics which has been replace with a "conflict free", "value free" eye of rational judgment. Now 'efficiency' speaks for public discourse, the aim is articulated as the impartial search for greater health.¹²

Governments, corporations, non-profit organizations, free associations unite to create reserves¹³ of health.¹⁴ The demands for health, the populations frantic demand and necessity for good health, makes administrative bodies

of specific aims: for instance, government will have to ensure that the greatest possible quantity of wealth is produced, that the people are provided with sufficient means of subsistence, that the population is enabled to multiply, and so on."

¹² "Medicine, as a general technique of health even more than as a service to the sick or an art of cures, assumes an increasingly important place in the administrative system and the machinery of power – a role which constantly widened and strengthened throughout the eighteenth century. The doctor wins a footing within the different instances of social power. The administration acts as a point of support and sometimes a point of departure for the great medical inquiries into the health of populations, and conversely doctors devote an increasing amount of their activity to tasks, both general and administrative, assigned to them by power. A "medico-administrative" knowledge begins to develop concerning society, its health and sickness, its conditions of life, housing, and habits, which serves as the basic core for the "social economy" and sociology of the nineteenth century. And there is likewise constituted a politico-medical hold on a population hedged in by a whole series of prescriptions relating not only to disease but to general forms of existence and behavior (food and drink, sexuality and fecundity, clothing and the layout of living space). Rabinow, Paul ed. Foucault, Michel, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, 1984, *The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century* pg. 283

¹³ By reserves, I mean both a thing set aside for future use, but also a protected and differentiated species of thing to be studied and understood, which often means destroyed or changed.

¹⁴ "Examine the background of every family, every organization, every commonwealth: everywhere the struggle of the sick against the healthy – a silent struggle as a rule, with petty poisons, with pinpricks, with sly long-suffering expressions, but occasionally also with that invalid's Phariseism of loud gestures that likes best to pose as "noble indignation". Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, #rd Essay, pg. 123, section 14 This has important links with what Nietzsche characterized as the great slave revolt in morality. The movement of the weak against the strong. For Nietzsche this is also parallel, at least in the modern instances, with the occurrence of the modern state.

regulate and correct the inequities of nature, in effect it *normalizes the process of normalization*.

Each object of governance has its own specificity, its own sorts of questions and curative measures, but the object of management is never something which fades, even the abolition of direct management and intrusion is framed within the space of its ameliorative approach, such as the free market approach, otherwise known as the laissez-faire mechanism. The modern system of governance does not permit, nor allow a vacuum of management, nothing can become dilapidated. Regulation and management implements demand that certain activities be disallowed, as such they become reserves of disallowance, 'cultural parks' of nonexistence.

Universal hygiene serves as the license to intern a minority in order to protect the majority. Such powers are not exceptional, for instance those of the state during times of crisis. Internment is not exceptional, rather, such powers, under the auspices of health, are imbedded within the very fabric of governance; they can range from the procedure involving times of epidemics to the mobilization of natural disaster relief.

Now governments can exterminate¹⁵ (under a curative license, which can mean the licensing of death, the monopoly over the coercive use of force, or interment¹⁶) without consequence, in the name of further health. For example, the hermaphrodites, homosexuals, and the criminally insane can be quarantined¹⁷ for public health, a heavy censorship looms over¹⁸, pinpointing others which constitute health risks. Under such conditions, Juridical power must be constant in its regulatory intrusions into the biological health of political subjects. To regulate is to *normalize*, it means to regularize the pathological, or morbid behaviors, to bring back to the norm by means of political technologies. Consequentially something becomes medical, economic, or standard setting, and not political, as such it becomes a functionalist argument, based upon a median ideal.

But this demand for the constant biological supervision becomes synonymous with the interests both

¹⁵ Not as the power to sentence death, but a power which is subject to the constraint of fostering the power of life. Hurley, Robert, trans. Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Vol 1*, Vintage Books, 1990, see *Right of Death and Power Over of Life*

¹⁶ Rabinow, Paul, ed., *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 1*, The New Press, 1997, pg. 23-37, *The Punitive Society*

¹⁷ Not to be simply understood as interment and isolation of individuals in a physical space, though this can be the case as can be attested historically with majority of those just mentioned. Individual's can be quarantined off to be normalized by simply designating them as something, the bestowing of name in order to study creates a difference and division, and actually constitutes a subject of knowledge to be modulated and pinpricked.

of the state and the people. The people, now being the source of sovereign authority demand that the state equalize, or impose the minimum guarantee to life, and its potential growth. Governmental power is exercised in order that the absolute sovereignty of individuals can be constituted, that the principle of equal rights, meaning equal health and possibility of growth, brings down to bear living power over populations, in order to foster a healthy and normalized society. This is the direction resultant from *will to equality*, *ressentiment*: the specific revenge against the body heals itself through a government which exercises the management of public health.¹⁹ That is to say that government technologies are at the service of a population which requires the betterment of its inequities. Of course how this tasks place is subject to specific forms of an ideological underpinning; liberal and socialist states differed more in the minimum requirements allocated to the population, more so than the actual methods the employed to bring such minimums about.

¹⁸ Foucault points out where Juridical power became the power of surveillance under the implementation of Jeremy Bentham's architectural innovation across multiple institutions. See Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994, pg. 70-72

The idea of society enables a technology of government to be developed based on the principle that it itself is already "too much", "in excess" - or at least that it is added on as a supplement which can and must be questioned as to its necessity and its usefulness.²⁰

Foucault defines liberalism and its manner of governing as three fold;

It constitutes - and this is the reason for its polymorphism and its recurrences - a tool for criticizing the reality: (1) of a previous governmentality that one tries to shed; (2) of a current governmentality that one attempts to reform and rationalize by stripping it down; (3) of a governmentality that one opposes and whose abuses one tries to limit. So that we will be able to find liberalism, in different but simultaneous forms, as regulative scheme of governmental practice and as the theme of a sometimes-radical opposition.²¹

How can the governance of populations in liberal democratic societies engage in the practice of limiting government utilities, curbing its ability to manage? If democratic absolutism demands equality, why sanction or limit government growth? Such debates on the limits of the state and its mandates and injunctions are subject to the tension which exists between the pursuit of liberty and the principle of equality. The governance of populations takes place under the constant tension of these opposite forces. Technologies of political management try to expedite

¹⁹ Kaufmann, Walter trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, Penguin Press, 1978, pg. 93-102, *On the Virtuous, On the Rabble, and On the Tarantulas*

²⁰ Rabinow, Paul, ed. Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth Vol 1*, The New Press, 1997, *The Birth of Biopolitics* pg. 75

²¹ Ibid

methods over and above the friction resultant from democratic absolutism. As such, they normalize the process of governmental critique as the further management of government.

Governmentality, Pastoral Power²² and Newspapers: The Normalization of Norms

When men are no longer united themselves among themselves by firm and lasting ties, it is impossible to obtain the co-operation of any great number of them unless you can persuade every man whose help you require that his private interest obliges him voluntarily to unite his exertions to the exertions of all the others. This can be habitually and conveniently effected only by means of a newspaper; nothing but a newspaper can drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment. A newspaper is an adviser that does not require to be sought, but that comes of its own accord and talks to you briefly every day of the common weal, without distracting you from your private affairs.²³

It is easy to imagine modern mass communications technologies, both of early print and newspapers as well as those of telecommunications like the radio, television, movies, and now the Internet, are locus's of understanding. Such technologies act as a meeting point, a nodal transfer point, where the demands of the public are expressed as the

²²Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994, "Omnes et Singulatim": *Toward a Critique of Political Reason* pg. 298-325, and Introduction pg. xxvi. By Pastoral power I mean the meeting of a complex of the pastoral flock and the city citizen practices which denote western civilizations two major systems of governance and self-identity. Under "raison d'état and the polizeistaat, or more general theories and practices of state craft emerged the fusion of pastoral and polis under modern secular systems of governance. As such Pastoral power specifically denotes the power which "both individualizes and totalizes".

²³ Reeve, Henry, trans. De Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America: Vol II*, Vintage Classics, 1990, pg. 111

needs to police²⁴, like a baby's cry for its mother. That is not to say that such demands are childish, but rather necessary in the most immediate sense of the word, they require the involvement of a parental figure, a cure and pacification to the disruption.²⁵ Indeed it serves to demonstrate one of the important points Foucault made on the modern institutional division of administrative health of populations, it is the process of regularizing the normalization of norms.²⁶ The modern liberal democracy does not wean unless it is asked to do so. (Liberal thought, for instance that *government is already in excess*; that the debate takes place never stands as the proof or refutation

²⁴ Police here is to be understood in the broader notion of the word, which today (roughly speaking) falls as public policy and administration. And as in public policy the topic can be inclusive of policing in the narrow sense, but extends to survey many other point of study which broadly include the health and welfare of the population. Rabinow, Paul, ed. Foucault, Michel, *Power Vol 3*, The New Press, 2000, *The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century*, pg. 94-95

²⁵ Reeve, Henry, trans. De Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America: Vol II*, Vintage Classics, 1990, pg. 318 and Carrette, Jeremy R., ed. *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault*, Routledge, 1999, pg. 149, "And here, we can make out what is, I think, an important idea. As a form of rational intervention wielding political power over men, the role of the police is to supply them with a little extra life; and by doing, supply the state with little extra strength. This is done by controlling 'communication', i.e., the common activities of individuals (work, production, exchange, accommodation)

²⁶ "It so happens that historians of the human sciences date the birth of scientific psychology at this time: during the same years, it seems, Weber was manipulating his little compass for the measurement of sensations. What took place at Mettray and in other European countries sooner or later) was obviously of a quite different order. It was the emergence or rather the institutional specification, the baptism as it were, of a new type of supervision - both knowledge and power - over individuals who resisted disciplinary normalization.... But the supervision of normality was firmly encased in a medicine or a psychiatry that provided it with a sort of 'scientificity'; it was supported by a juridical apparatus which, directly or indirectly, gave it legal justification. Thus, in the shelter of these two considerable protectors, and indeed, acting as a link between them, or a place of exchange, a carefully worked out technique for supervision of norms has continued to develop right up to the present day. The specific, institutional supports of these methods have proliferated since the founding of the small school of Mettray; their apparatuses have increased in quantity and scope; their auxiliary services have increased, with hospitals, schools, public administrations and private enterprises; their agents have proliferated in number, in power, in technical qualification; the technicians of indiscipline have founded a family. In the normalization of power of normalization, in the arrangement of a power-knowledge over individuals, Mettray and its school marked a

of the demand that the meeting point of government and the public remains a game of convincing a technique for the "raison d'état"). However it is on this level, this meeting point between governing and the population that interesting questions can be asked about what is legitimate, necessary, indeed the very stuff which outlines *good* and *evil*, the limits of behavior, and as such the breeding ground for necessary ruptures and transgression.²⁷ This institutional meeting place is where the subject is constituted, where it speaks about itself as public confession, and the need to regulate, cure, indeed to forgive *otherness* - in other words it is the babies cry to mother in order to be governed.

There is, and I cannot repeat it too often, there is here matter for profound reflection to those who look on freedom of thought as a holy thing and who hate not only the despot, but despotism. For myself, when I feel the hand of power lie heavily on my brow, I care but little to know who oppresses me; and I am not the more disposed to pass beneath the yoke because it is held out to me by the arms of a million men.²⁸

Media are tightly related to the system of governance which exists in our present, they often frame but are also

new era." Sheridan, Alan, trans. Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage Books, New York, 1995, pg. 296

²⁷ Bouchard, Donald, ed. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Cornell University Press, 1977, *Preface to Transgression* "From the moment that Sade delivered its first words and marked out, in a single discourse, the boundaries of what suddenly became its kingdom, the language of sexuality has lifted us into the night where God is absent, and where all of our actions are addressed to this absence in a profanation which at once identifies it, dissipates it, exhausts itself in it, and restores it to the empty purity of its transgression." Pg. 31

framed by the fears that permeate society. As such, they met many of the same technical functions that were implement by early technologies of policing.

The transformation of sovereignty as the right to exercise death into the duty to invest in life, splintered into multiple institutional divisions and as a result constituted different subjects of populations. This was a deeply practical exercise, an effective modulation, a power investing in both 'populations' and 'individuals'. It is not say that the object of government, the population was undertaken in order to maximize its growth, rather the inverse, it was the control of growth to the extent that it may imperil the whole, as such the "normalizing" of the social body became an essential technological intrusion, a curative measure in order that morbidity cannot be led too astray and thus jeopardize the whole. Equality came to quash liberty.

After having thus successively taken each member of the community in its powerful grasp and fashioned him at will, the supreme power then extends its arm over the whole community. It covers the surface of society with a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate, to rise above the crowd. The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent, and guided; men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting. Such power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and

²⁸ Reeve, Henry, trans. De Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America: Vol II*, Vintage Classics, 1990, pg. 12

industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.²⁹

The manner in which government and its organs intervenes in the everyday lives of individuals is not all coercive and repressive; power is not only repressive, even the power of the state. That is not however to suggest that the state acts against its own interests, however broad or narrowly this can be defined. The dilemma resides in that no clear line can be drawn between the state (its apparatus) and society (the subjects of governance), since it is hard to see where the workings of state, and its utilities, mixes with those of society, and the personal wants and dreams of the citizenry.

But the great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department, consists in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of the others. The provision for defense must in this, as in all other cases, be made commensurate to the danger of attack. Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.

This policy of supplying, by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives, might be traced through the

²⁹ Ibid, pg. 319

whole system of human affairs, private as well public. We see it particularly displayed in all the subordinate distributions of power, where the constant aim is to divide and arrange the several offices in such a manner as that each may be a check on the other - that the private interest of every individual may be a sentinel over the public rights.³⁰

It is interesting to see, not so much in terms of an internal critique of the topic, the emergence of systems of subjectivisation which expedite the transformation of individuals into 'rational' agents, which ultimately assume an agency within certain structures of contract. Whether this is done in explicit terms of within the state, as in the *Federalist Papers*, as voters and citizens, or within markets as sellers and buyers is ultimately less interesting than the emergence of a self identity which renders decision making more efficient within efficiency seeking organizations.³¹ Out of the debates around political economy, the classical economic model, and the theoretic of 'supply and demand', emerged the notion of the rational calculating individual. Across multiple disciplines, economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, arises the application of mathematical principles, through the science of statistics³² born out of government, emerged a self-

³⁰ Hamilton, Alexander, Madison, James, and Jay, John, *The Federalist*, everyman, 1996, pg. 266

³¹ As can be gathered from the formulation from the *Federalist Papers* on the subject of personal interest. See above.

³² "The word "statistics" denoted, in [Francis] Galton's time, "state" numbers - indices of population, trade, manufacture, and the like - the gathering of which aided the state in the shaping of sound public policy. In

identity. A fusion occurred, where the power of the state, both in its tabulation (statistical data) and modulations (policing technologies) married under the sign of pastoral power in order to best expedite a model citizen. In effect, modern governments and academic institutions have created the '*rational chooser*'. A discourse developed which was not simply a system of understanding aggregates, rather it was the self focus, the incorporation of '*expected*', or '*rational*' decisions: a self transformation occurs where an individual actively engages in a self *askesis*, a discipline of '*rational choice*' which is within the horizon of the state and its institutions.

Since the 16th century governments have experimented with acquiring data, as maps and inventory, which took the shape increasingly as the inventory of potentials, accruements, possibilities, and risks, the tools of managing the growth of life. That the state understands the aggregate population as a composite of rational, self interested seeking maximizers, practicing a discipline of cost-benefit analysis means that it wishes to know, in

mid-Victorian Britain, the practice of statistics consisted mainly of the accumulation of socially useful numerical data, with neither theoretical underpinnings nor mathematical analysis. But in the late eighteenth-sixties, as a result of his meteorological interests, Galton came upon a quite different approach to statistics – the formulation now called the normal, or Gaussian, distribution.” Kevles, Daniel J. *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, Harvard University Press, 1999, pg. 13, and Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994, *Governmentality*, pg. 212

certain terms, what strength lies at its disposal. The state understands the actions of agents, its data, as the resources at its disposal, to become swayed by rational choices, to understand ones self as the rational determinant of gains, means to live in the shadow of the state and its expedients.

The state³³ understands the logic of its population to be primarily, not exclusively, motivated by 'self-interest'. This means necessarily that individuals will always seek to gain, in the face of loss. This does not mean they will not be mistaken, it simply means that an individual will 'choose' the gainful possibility within the knowledge available, any other choice is 'irrational', which can mean many different things. "Irrational" thought and action is threatening to the state, simply because it cannot be predicted accurately, nor influence efficiently, in the broadest possible sense the 'irrational'³⁴ is a

³³ By state I mean the apparatuses at the disposal of government. As such the emphasis is more on the means by which governments can effect behavior. Which may include coercion or softer manipulations, such as propaganda and economic incentives.

³⁴ "I would say that the work of the intellectual is in a sense to say what is, while making it appear able not to be, or not to be as it is What reason experiences (eprouve) as its necessity, or rather what the different forms of rationality put forward as their necessary being - one can perfectly well undertake a history of that and recover the network of contingencies from which it emerged. Which does not mean, however, that those forms of rationality were irrational: it means that they rest upon a base of human practice and human history; and since the latter were made, they can be unmade, provided one knows how they were made." Faubion, James D. ed., *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 2*, The New Press, 1994, pg 450

concern, an unknowable risk, a *dangerous maybe*³⁵, an impetus for study.

Political technologies, the police³⁶, as a government observatory and curative engagement was one of the more important occurrences which constituted the science of the modern state. It was the technological meeting point between the state and society, it is the technical means by which the science of governance was possible, not as governing by the self, but rather as the intervention directly into the 'population' in order to modulate the social body. This political technology of state expediency has as its object the happiness of the greatest majority. As Foucault makes apparent in his study on the subject of governmentality, policing since its earliest articulation was spoken of as the best possible manner of coordinating the strength of the state and the greatest happiness of the population.³⁷ Indeed, the happiness of the population is said to be the greatest asset to the state, the very root

³⁵ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Vintage Books, 1989

³⁶ The early disciplines found in both France and Germany on the Art of Governing. See Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994, *The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century*, Governmentality and Rabinow, Paul, ed. Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth Vol 1*, The New Press, 1997, *Security, Territory, and Population*

³⁷ "The purpose of policing is to ensure the good fortune of the state through the wisdom of its regulations, and to augment its force and its power to the limits of its capability. The science of policing consists, therefore, in regulating everything that relates to the present condition of society, in strengthening and improving it, in seeing that all things contribute to the welfare of the members that compose it. The aim of policing is to make everything that composes the state serve to strengthen and increase its power, and likewise serve the public welfare. From Johann Von Justi, *Elements Generaux de Police*, pg. 7, Donzelot, Jacques, *The Policing of Families*, Pantheon Books, 1979

conditions of its existence. The police is what makes possible the care of individuals as a 'population'.

I think that the main characteristic of our political rationality is the fact that this integration of the individuals in a community or in a totality results from a constant correlation between an increasing individualization and the reinforcement of this totality.³⁸

Today public policy, the political technology for administering the needs of the population is constituted by the nodal transfer rendered possible through telecommunication media. As was the case during the solicitation of the public of New York in 1787 by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay for the constitution of the United States, so too does the media serve as the locus of an exchange. Perhaps now more than then, the exchange seems rather one-sided, in that today it is the demand for the state's attention to a particular technical failure in the administering of governance. Tocqueville raises the point that in a democracy, one needs the ready-made ideas available through the newspapers.³⁹ Television today serves a continuous medium by which the 'population' can voice its needs through its own subjectivized and individualized experiences. That is to say, how individual cases can appear as generalized trends

³⁸ Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994, *The Political Technologies of Individuals*, pg. 413-417

that demand an immediate treatment and intervention, indeed the fourth estate serves as the perpetual technological innovation - it is democracy's lubricant.⁴⁰ Media and its elicitation to be governed folds the object of governance into a constitutive whole, under contemporary media the 'population' and 'individual', fold into one another, statistics and internment intermingle in the forming of a media pastorship.

Subjectivities, or rather how individuals come to understand themselves within a certain sphere or horizon, is largely shaped by the institutional power which comes to reign over the individual. That certain political technologies come to mold and set norms over a population does not necessarily end with the subject as 'population'. That is to say, that certain technologies of political expediency may have the general population as a subject, though the aim may be to constitute individual subjects,

³⁹ Reeve, Henry, trans. De Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America: Vol II*, Vintage Classics, 1990, pg. 111-114

⁴⁰ "C.D. But don't you think that our period is really lacking in great writers and in minds capable of dealing with its problems?

M.F. No, I don't subscribe to the notion of a decadence, of a lack of writers, of the sterility of thought, of gloomy future lacking in prospects.

On the contrary, I believe that there is a plethora. What we are suffering from is not void but inadequate means of thinking about everything that is happening. There is an overabundance of things to be known: fundamental, terrible, wonderful, funny, insignificant, and crucial at the same time. And there is an enormous curiosity, a need, a desire to know. People are always complaining that the mass media stuff one's head with people. There is a certain misanthropy in this idea. On the contrary, I believe that people react; the more one convinces them, the more they question things. The mind isn't made of soft wax. It's a reactive substance. And the desire to know [savoir] more, and to know it more deeply and to know other things increases as one tries to stuff people's heads." Rabinow, Paul, ed. Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth Vol I*, The New Press, 1997 *The Masked Philosopher* pg. 326

madmen, the ill, students, worker, investors etc, are instances of institutional power which brands its technique across living subjects.

The body manifests the stigmata of past experience and also gives rise to desires, failings, and errors. These elements may join in a body where they achieve a sudden expression, but as often, their encounter is an engagement in which they efface each other, where the body becomes the pretext of their insurmountable conflict.

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration.⁴¹

The *Panopticism* of the 19th and 20th century came to effectively constitute subjects of surveillance, the eye of governance came to be a horizon always seen as the limit to which the individual was able to constitute, form and create his identity. Clinics, prisons, factories, and schools are locus' of surveillance, where not only subjects navigate but are molded and constituted by a gaze and discourse which inverts self knowledge into the mastery demanded by the panoptic glare of surveillance. Within the population as a whole, such institutions are technologies which set certain norms of behavior, but establish mechanisms to curtail and limit the possibility of morbid and pathological behaviors.

⁴¹ Bouchard, Donald, ed. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Cornell University Press, 1977, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, pg. 148

As such, we can see multiple points of intrusions into populations in order to establish a norm or normativity of behavior through various technological methods. As Foucault made evident about Panopticism and the new knowledge about subjects that it created as a consequence, "was no longer organized around questions" "Was this done? Who did it?" It was no longer organized in terms of presence and absence, of existence and nonexistence; it was organized around the norm, in terms of what was normal or not, correct or not, in terms of what one must do or not do". Panopticism created the necessity of intervention, the science of intrusion and behavior modification, in so doing it created a technology which could normalize behavior, something which was quite impossible until then, even under the looming insistence of a death punishment. The panopticon of Jeremy Bentham rendered possible the immediate intervention into the population, via the individual, by a series of architectural adjustments to multiple institutions, the clinic, prison, school, reformatories, poorhouses, and factories.⁴²

As George Canguilhem commented on the formation of norms based on misguided biological assumptions and technological interventions;

⁴² Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994,

The psycho-social definition of the normal in terms of adaptedness implies a concept of society which surreptitiously and wrongly assimilates it into an environment, that is, to a system of determinism when it is a system of constraints which, already and before all relations between it and the environment, contains collective norms for evaluating the quality of these relations.

What then can be said against such overpowering and belittling mechanisms? Whenever a body is inscribed there is descent and resistance, and often a reversal, inversion and finally a disappearance of the subject. But what does this mean? In the effect of a technology of subjectivization, the act of resistance necessitates the reversal of the technologies of subjection, in that act the rules of how one came to be subjectivized disappears into the void from which it came.⁴³

Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose. The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules.⁴⁴

As such, it seems that the statistical norm occurring in the 'population' is not the result of homeostasis, but rather the result of interventive and constant infusions of vitality in order to maintain an equilibrium which is not natural to the population itself. That is to say it

Truth and Juridical Forms, pg. 58-59

⁴³ Polt, Richard, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols; Or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, Hackett Publishing Company Inc, 1997, pg. 36 *The Four Great Errors*, What can be our doctrine alone? Section 8

⁴⁴ Bouchard, Donald, ed. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Cornell University Press, 1977, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, pg. 151

heightens and limits multiple individuals in order to match them with a calculative average which is already a quotient with no existent representative.⁴⁵

Power though is never entirely repressive, nor absolute; with every effective technique comes the possibility of reversal, and the necessity of a game of inversion, where the rules are appropriated and hollowed out of their meaning. Normalization however, its pressure and specific technologies is not simply, or rather, no longer simply the implementation of a panoptic architecture. Rather a fusion has occurred under the differing medias, but all in the intertwining cultural park of mass media. The panoptic technologies of surveillance become cooperative with a community of the spectacle, the media meeting point of governance, and one can see where policy speculation bends under the thumb of a surveillance/spectacle technology of governance. Yet how can an ethic of resistance take shape under such a technological aegis?

Ethics of Freedom: Liberty vs. Equality

Only where the state ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous: there begins the song of necessity, the unique and inimitable tune. Where the state ends - look

⁴⁵ Fawcett, Carolyn R. trans. Canguilhem, Georges, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1978, pg. 160-161

there, my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman?⁴⁶

Nietzsche understands the state as the instrument by which a people is destroyed, the state is a monster which requires human sacrifices to house its service, it lies with every breath, the state "bask[s] in the sunshine of good conscience", it is the New Idol. With Tocqueville equality was the New Idol of democracy, a "depraved" demand which belittled men to the standing of a "timid flock". With Michel Foucault however, it resided more with the pressure to set norms under the reign of specific technologies at the disposal of governmentality, though one can see many similarities they do have important points of separation. However, the disturbing trend that both point towards, is the direction in which individuals have chosen to emancipate, or rather liberate themselves. Indeed, it is in this specific region that the most concern should be weighed and challenged. It is also where the importance of Nietzsche's esotericism becomes consequential as an effective practice.

Mass media, specifically television and multimedia have become the locus by which a great majority of the population demands for further governance, yet this should

⁴⁶ Kaufmann, Walter trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, Penguin Press, 1978, pg. 51

be understood and seen, not as the transgression of limits, but rather an enthusiastic setting of limits before the possibility of their transgression.⁴⁷ In many regards this "timidity" sets, under governance, limits before the possibility of individuals to be challenged, it makes the statistical norm the ideal horizon under which governments can demand that all individuals sweep themselves. As such, in effect, it becomes the setting of a limit which both sublimates individual limits beneath the yoke of a totalizing population average and raises security to a level which simply can never be sustained.⁴⁸

By contrast, if the organism-environment relation is considered as the effect of a really biological activity, as the search for a situation in which the living being receives, instead of submits to, influences and qualities which meet its demands, then the environments in which the living beings find themselves are carved out by them, centered on them. In this sense the organism is not thrown into an environment at the same time that he develops his capacities as an organism.⁴⁹

Canguilhem is drawing on an older, pre-modern notion of normalization, or rather the setting of norm. The latin *norma* is a word for T-square, which implies a setting right, to square or straighten, to set perpendicular (*normalis*). As such, to *normalize*, is to impose a requirement of an

⁴⁷ By this I mean that individual subjectivities undergo emancipation increasingly by subjectivizing themselves further as objects to be governed. Safety as a topic for instance, under media, such as talk shows and investigative reports constantly point towards holes in governance and how such holes of regulation should be filled. Even arguments which solicit a "free market" approach are still appealing to a system of management in order to become objects of governance.

⁴⁸ In the latter case this can serve as the cause for further stricter regulations under the auspices of health.

existence. Funnily enough, Canguilhem calls it a polemical concept.⁵⁰

Perhaps this is the single most important reason why Nietzsche's esotericism as the search for greater health makes the most sense. Nietzsche's constant sickness, and subsequent search for health was a *normalis*, not altogether different in form than the ones he gathers from Hippocrates' *Aphorism* and Plutarch's *Lives*.⁵¹ Indeed, the esoteric search for better climes, books and landscapes serves as the setting of a T-square to raise oneself perpendicularly towards a healthier condition.

Comme je me trouve au milieu de la tache decisive de ma vie il faut indispensablement que j'observe avant tout une regle parfaite pour un certain nombre d'annees. L'hiver a Nice, le printemps a Turin, L'ete a Sils, et deux mois d'automne a Turin, viola mon plan. Mon regime est etabli sur le pied d'une regle normale, c'est -a-dire strictment personnelle et adapte a mes besoins les plus particuliers. Il comporte donc naturellement la suppression complete des repas en commun. Le success de cette regle d'existence optima que j'ai petit and petit eprouve a fond se traduit par un enorme accroissement de ma puissance de travail⁵²

Nietzsche can be seen as an encounter with a system of governance that has taken its hold, enforcing its power; the techniques by which this occurred was under the sign of democracy, as an emancipation of the individual as the cradle and natural procession of history. Nietzsche's

⁴⁹ Fawcett, Carolyn R. trans. Canguilhem, Georges, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1978, pg. 177

⁵⁰ Ibid, pg. 146

⁵¹ Vialatte, Alexandre, trans. Nietzsche *Lettres Choiesies*, Galiard, 1937

⁵² Ibid, pg. 297 Letter to Elizabeth Nietzsche, Sils, 14 September 1888, letter 142.

approach at health, philosophy, and a search for an ethic, a sovereignty under which to guide some, was one of the more profound changes in philosophical practice, as a search for living, and at the same time a resistance against the grain. His profound distrust of mankind's evolution was the necessary destructive sneer at the seriousness that the clever beasts had invented in order to emancipate themselves out of the mud of the animal kingdom. But this challenge to become hard, and resist stimulus, to become dumb and stupid for Nietzsche was a curative measure in order to refuse to be governed, to be judged, to be subjectivized. Indeed, it was the most basic and uprooting revolt against myth and comfort. With the death of god it became obvious that the individual was up for grabs, but this also meant that one could define oneself, like Baron Munchausen⁵³, grabbing hold of ones own pony tail and giving birth to oneself from out of the water.

Like Foucault, Nietzsche is a thinking and practice which is deeply suspicious of the normalizing demands of society, its mechanism, its attitudes, its "poverty and filth, its wretched contentment."

Perhaps it is mistaken to pull oneself out of creation like the baron, but to engage in a profound mistrust of the

⁵³ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 27, section 21

way in which we speak of each other, over each other, and specifically how we cure each other, despite our consent or concern, demands a form of resistance that has become hard out of 'deliberate pride', a walling oneself in the joy of Nietzsche which speaks in destroying and experimenting, perhaps by doing so we become more worthy of living.

Esotericism is an approach, a manner of bringing perspective and a cold gaze, a vivisection and experiment, both with oneself and the world, and this is perhaps the most important element of the sovereign game of giving names, that it does not reside in an art, par excellence, but as a dangerous encounter and search for oneself. When we have been sick for a long time, we see the world with new eyes, eyes which thirst for life, experience and dancing, but a thirst which wants good healthy company, companionship, the playground of the freethinker.

Yet this requires an askesis, a self cruelty in order to transform oneself, that this sort of ethic can be accomplished, or rather should only occur on the outside of present technologies and medias is not desirable, nor prudent. Yet how might a media askesis, an esoteric practice be fashioned? Perhaps like philosophy itself, first it must be taken with shaky legs, a toddlers legs,

perhaps under the sign of usefulness and necessity, however it still needs to be an experiment, perhaps necessarily and hopefully ending up profoundly useless and inconsequential, but perhaps for others helpfully bringing a health, a height, a lonely isolation to think, resist and become suspicious.

The next chapter concentrates on a modest attempt at engaging in what could be called a media askesis. This by no means to suggest that it is a *fait accompli*, rather it should stand as an attempt to encounter a translation of media. As with any translation one must approach it in a particular manner, as a self-practice, which takes modern media technologies as a meeting point in which to engage an *askesis* of esotericism.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Prefixed to the closing chapter is a Zarathustra animation, included herein.

Chapter 4

Developing a Media Askesis¹

The division of faculties which results from the technological dilation or externalization of one or another sense is so pervasive a feature of the past century that today we have become conscious, for the first time in history, of how these mutations of culture initiated. Those who experience the first onset of a new technology, whether it be alphabet or radio, respond most emphatically because the new sense ratio set up at once by the technological dilation of eye or ear, present men with a suprising new world, which evokes a vigorous new "closure", or novel pattern of interplay, among all of these senses together. But the initial shock gradually dissipates as the entire community absorbs the new habit of perception into all of its areas of work and association. But the real revolution is in this later and prolonged phase of "adjustment" of all personal and social life to the new model of perception set up by the new technology²

Developing a media askesis would be an incomplete project without reference to the work of Marshall McLuhan³, and more specifically his reflection on the interplay between the senses when we come to presence certain epistemological contents. That in itself is another manner of articulating a McLuhanism, that the "medium is the message". Yet the root of this observation, almost revelation on McLuhan's part, has its roots in the assertion that technology is never a neutral implement. Indeed, on the fundamental level technologies, no matter how benign, always seem to frame thought within a

¹ This chapter, in the freespirted sense, is prefixed to an example of a media askesis.

² McLuhan, Eric and Zingrone, Frank, ed. *Essential McLuhan*, Anasi, 1995, pg. 18

³ Though I find McLuhan's work an important reference in terms of understanding media and technology, I should stress that I share little of his ethos. For McLuhan this new horizon of media and the interplay of the sense is a positive development. As such, I cannot share in this conclusion, but rather gravitate more

particular mode of understanding. Foucault's work is perceptive in that it elaborates the mechanism that often inscribed the body with certain manners of understanding and being. In the case of the medical gaze, a certain discursive language quickly follows the heels of experience. Perhaps this is the mechanism by which a closure of technology occurs, but certainly it offers more questions than answers. Perhaps the new interplay is the result of being the first initial experimentation with novel technologies, a pinprick, which serves as the first instance of the body's resistance. On this specific topic, McLuhan has many similarities with Nietzsche and Foucault. Stimulus, it would seem, demands a response.

The principle of self-amputation as an immediate relief of strain on the central nervous system applies very readily to the origin of the media communication from speech to computer.

Physiologically, the central nervous system, that electric network that coordinates the various media of our senses, plays the chief role. Whatever threatens its function must be contained, localized, or cut off, even to the total removal of the offending organ. The function of the body, as a group of sustaining and protective organs for the central nervous system, is to act as buffer against sudden variations of stimulus in the physical and social environment." "Both pleasure and comfort are strategies of equilibrium for the central nervous system."⁴

The trouble with such observations, and as a consequence the development of a media *askesis*, lies primarily in the

towards Foucault and Nietzsche in that this development, is simply that, a development among many. This does not mean by any measure however that it becomes uninteresting and inessential.

⁴ McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New American Library, 1964, pg. 52-53

possibility of awareness towards such interplays. Though it would seem that Foucault⁵ offers more possibility than McLuhan, since for McLuhan such previews into cultural awakening occur during times of sensorial interplay (closure), Foucault is just as difficult to pinpoint in the moment of awakening towards technological manipulation. One thing seems to be consistent with both, and Nietzsche for that matter: the body itself has a form of wisdom and resistance towards stimulus. McLuhan does say however, that "the serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception" since the manipulations of sense ratios do not occur on the level of "opinions or concepts".⁶

So how does one develop an ethic of esotericism, a self *askesis*, with such forces and impossibilities of perception? Well, perhaps similar manners of approaching writing and reading can be of value, certainly fostering a

⁵ "Impossible, as one turns these pages, not to think of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's teaching and of what was for him the essential philosophical task: never to consent to being completely comfortable with one's own presuppositions. Never to let them fall peacefully asleep, but also never to believe that a new fact will suffice to overturn them; never to imagine that one can change them like arbitrary axioms, remembering that in order to give them the necessary mobility one must have a distant view, but also look at what is nearby and all around oneself. To be very mindful that everything one perceives is evident only against a familiar and little-known horizon, that every certainty is sure only through the support of a ground that is always unexplored. The most fragile instant has its roots. In that lesson, there is a whole ethic of sleepless evidence that does not rule out, far from it, a rigorous economy of the True and the False; but that is not the whole story." Faubion, James D. ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol 3*, The New Press, 1994 *For an Ethic of Discomfort* Pg. 448

⁶ McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New American Library, 1964, pg. 33

sort of slow judgment towards stimuli, "bred out of deliberate pride"⁷ could be a useful start.

Nietzsche once asked an important question; why does one write? Is it for an audience? Oneself? A combination? Or is it simply as a movement towards health? The development of an askesis, initially, should be seen as an experiment with oneself, a testing of oneself, perhaps even the cultivation of the self. Yet Nietzsche seems to suggest something here which comes to be rather stark, "because I have found no other way of getting rid of my thoughts."⁸

In the literal sense the ancient spiritual exercises of the Greco-Romans are lost: they cannot be revived in order to be relived in the same manner as they were first experienced. That is not to say that one cannot engage in a very modern re-appropriation of techniques, which have as their inspiration the ancient philosophical practices of antiquity.

"No technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise; nor can one learn the art of living, the *techne tou biou*, without an *askesis* that must be understood as a training of the self by the self."⁹

⁷ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 225

⁸ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, pg. 146, section 93, see also *Introduction* by Richard Schacht in Hollingdale, R.J. trns. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pg. xvi "[Nietzsche] is at once developing and employing the various perspectival techniques that seem to him to be relevant to the understanding of what we have come to be and what we have it in us to become. This involves gathering materials for reinterpretation and reassessment of human life, making tentative efforts along those lines and then trying them out on other human phenomena both to put them to the test and to see what further light can be shed by doing so."

⁹ Davidson, Arnold, ed. *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, University of Chicago Press, 1997, pg. 235

One should not simply see an *askesis* as being locked within a particular activity *par excellence*; rather, an *askesis* is a practice which permeates the very engagements of living.¹⁰ And as its central focus is the governing of the self. Multiple tools and techniques may be used in such an effective practice. Certainly the *hupomnemata*¹¹ of antiquity are a prime example that one need not limit the inclusion of technical devices, though conceivably limiting them could be as important.

How can the relationship, between the "closure" of senses in McLuhan's understanding and the mechanism of discursive language, according to Foucault, which follows, yield useful details on the interaction with *ourselves* and the external world and mediums? For that matter, one must understand that the external world and media are realities which are both real in that sense that they constitute a tension in which as living subjects we must,

¹⁰ "No one dares venture to fulfill the philosophical law in himself, no one lives philosophically with simple loyalty that constrained a man of antiquity to bear himself as a Stoic wherever he was, whatever he did, once he had affirmed his loyalty to the Stoa. All modern philosophizing is political and official, limited by governments, churches, academics, customs and the cowardice of men to the appearance of scholarship; it sighs 'if only' or knows 'there once was' and does nothing else. Within a historical culture philosophy possesses no rights if it wants to be more than a self-restrained knowing which leads to no action; if modern man had any courage or resolution at all, if he were not merely a subjective creature even in his enmities; he would banish philosophy; as it is, he contents himself with modestly concealing its nudity. One may think, write, print, speak, teach philosophy - to that point more or less everything is permitted; only in the realm of action, of so called life, it is otherwise only in the realm of action, of so called life, is it otherwise: there only one thing is ever permitted and everything else simply impossible: thus will historical culture have it." Hollingdale, R.J. trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pg. 85

enthusiastically, engage. Nietzsche would have articulated that it is in the service of life to do so, yet it begs the question on the form in which one must appear in order to entangle within the tumultuousness of primary and secondary nature. Should one choose the philosophical pose? The ascetic priest? Or the Artist?

"But if one wishes to keep the relation of language to vision open, if one wishes to treat their incompatibility as a starting-point for speech instead of as an obstacle to be avoided, so as to stay as close as possible to both, then one must erase those proper names and preserve the infinity of the task. It is perhaps through the medium of this grey, anonymous language, always over-meticulous and repetitive because too broad, that the painting may, little by little, release its illuminations.

We must therefore pretend not to know who is to be reflected in the depths of that mirror, and interrogate that reflection in its own terms."

Speaking and writing have their limits, they have points of exhaustion and inversion, they can snuff themselves out in a game of representation.¹² Yet so can media, though in

¹¹ Davidson, Arnold, ed. *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, University of Chicago Press, 1997

¹² "It is only the juxtaposition of reflective texts and novels in the language of thought that makes us aware of the shattering of the philosophical subject. The works of Bataille define the situation in a far greater detail: in the constant movement to different levels of speech and a systematic disengagement from the "I" who has begun to speak and is already on the verge of deploying his language and installing himself in it: temporal disengagements ("I" was writing this," or similarly "in retrospect, if I return to this matter"), shifts in the distance separating a speaker from his words (in a diary, notebooks, poems, stories, meditations, or discourses intended for demonstration), an inner detachment from the assumed sovereignty of thought or writing (through books, anonymous texts, prefaces to his books, footnotes). And it is at the center of the subject's disappearance that philosophical language proceeds as if through a labyrinth, not to recapture him, but to test (and through language itself) the extremity of its loss. That is, it proceeds to the limit and to this opening where its being surges forth, but where it is already completely lost, completely overflowing itself, emptied of itself to the point where it becomes an absolute void – an opening which is communication: "at this point there is no need to elaborate; as my rapture escapes me, I immediately reenter the night of a lost child, anguished in his desire to prolong his ravishment, with no other end than exhaustion, no way of stopping short of fainting. It is such excruciating bliss." Bouchard, Donald, ed. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Cornell University Press, 1977, Preface to *Transgression*, pg. 43

this one can see that *mediaing* has never become a verb.¹³ Perhaps for this reason alone one must become an artist before becoming a philosopher. To be sure, one must be clear, not as an artist which seeks shelter in a harmony other than himself, and who affirms as a consequence that such a turn is never really a harmony.

As such, developing a media *askesis* means first becoming a grammarian who chooses to forget, in the active sense, the invention of a rule. In a sense it creates a point of rupture with the old manner in which we spoke of an activity, and commencing a new activity while never filling it with a new grammar.¹⁴

Jean-Jacques Rousseau once wrote "everywhere man is in chains", though for some reason he also believed that we are however born free; Nietzsche would beg to differ. A freespirit is someone who has through deliberate acts, many esoteric, freed himself from the chains of the world. And perhaps this brings back the element of self-governing and the practice of *normalis*. God is dead refers back to the problem of a norm, and the outside value one can ascribe to

¹³ "Where there is affinity to languages, it cannot fail, owing to the common philosophy of grammar – I mean, owing to the unconscious domination and guidance by similar grammatical functions – that everything is prepared at the outset for a similar development and sequence of philosophical systems; just as the way seems barred against certain other possibilities of world-interpretation", Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Vintage Books, 1989, pg. 27, section 20

¹⁴ "Praise by choice – An artist chooses his subjects; that is his way of praising" and Books. – What good is a book that does not even carry us beyond books?" Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, pg. 215, section 245 and 248

oneself. With the absence of the divine comes the establishment of modern norms, and forcibly the obliteration of any overcoming of oneself. In the media *askesis* of Zarathustra the lastman has written across his chest the motto, "I'm number one, so why try harder?"¹⁵, and perhaps this points towards an important reflection one needs towards the modern institutionalization of norms, why bother trying if we are cared for despite ourselves?

This is not an ethic of pillaging or disrupting the possibility of public health or public policy, rather it is the refusal to be held to a statistical ideal which never reflects the worthwhile endeavoring to setting oneself perpendicular. Indeed this brings to bear an old encounter of a surprising individual who refused to hold to the common opinions, simply because they were held. The danger resides not in the society which is challenged, but rather in those who challenge. Curiously, and perhaps a little terrifying is the outcome at times from such encounters, some may be poisoned¹⁶, others go insane¹⁷, and more recently some die of immune deficiency¹⁸ - perhaps the threat lies more in the set of norms which erode our possibility of resistance before they ever have a possibility to occur.

¹⁵ See the media aphorism 5.1 included.

¹⁶ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, pg. 272

¹⁷ Leo Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy and Other Studies*, Greenwood Press, 1973, pg. 231

Whatever the manner of experimentation with a media askesis one takes, it needs to have a hammer, not as a tool of destruction, but rather as a toning fork, hollowing out of false idols which enforce ideals, statistical or otherwise.

"Health of the Soul. - The popular medical formulation of morality that goes back to Ariston of Chios, "virtue is the health of the soul," would have to be changed to become useful, at least to read: "your virtue is the health of *your* soul." For there is no health as such, and all attempts to define a thing that way have been wretched failures. Even the determination of what is healthy for your *body* depends on your goal, your horizon, your energies, your impulses, your errors, and above all on the ideals and phantasms of your soul. Thus there are innumerable healths of the body; and the more we allow the unique and incomparable to raise its head again, and the more we abjure the dogma of the "equality of men," the more must the concept of a *normal* health, along with a normal diet and the normal course of an illness, be abandoned by medical men. Only then would the time have come to reflect on the health and illness of the *soul*, and to find the peculiar virtue of each man in the health of his soul. In one person, of course, this health could look like its opposite in another person.

Finally, the great question would still remain whether we can really dispense with illness - even for the sake of our virtue - and whether our thirst for knowledge and self-knowledge in particular does not require the sick soul as much as the healthy, and whether, in brief, the will to health alone, in not prejudice, cowardice, and perhaps a bit of very subtle barbarism and backwardness."¹⁹

¹⁸ Miller, James, *The Passion of Foucault*, Anchor Books, 1993

¹⁹ Kaufmann, Walter, trans. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Gay Science*, Vintage books, 1974, pg. 176-7, section 120

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