Chapter Six

PRECONDITIONS AND AUTHENTICITY

Perhaps the biggest problem one would face in discussing any normative content in Nietzsche’s ideas is the problem posed by the various “necessities” that he assumes. The problem can be placed in the general perspective of the free-will/determinism problem which has aroused such a perennial concern in philosophy. Philosophers have, consciously or not, often held on to a position that deemed man as a part of unit of, and determined by, nature. Determinism as a problem arises when it is juxtaposed with man’s freedom to decide upon or choose the course of his actions. Freedom and determinism are usually taken as conceptually antithetical; whereas the latter may be useful to understand certain events in the animal or physical world, freedom is the logical precondition for any significant talk about man’s agency and responsibility. Indeed, freedom is the presupposition of ethics, morality and law.

The problem of freedom/determinism is itself too vast to come under the scope of this work. It is evident, at the very least, that today philosophers are far more cautious in opting for one position or the other than they were before. Stuart Hampshire, for example, remarks that science has always endeavoured to subsume human behaviour under “natural laws”. Though both concepts of
"nature" and "natural law" may prove inadequate, he suggests that the question whether human behaviour can be subsumed under natural laws, must remain an open one, for

there can be no logical, but only empirical grounds for closing it; and certainly no general conclusions can be based on our present ignorance of the powers and structures of the human brain and body. ¹

Because our factual knowledge is utterly limited, caution is recommended. It has been remarked that the question whether determinism is true or whether man is free is no longer regarded as a simple or even a philosophically sophisticated question... concealed in it are a vast array of more fundamental questions the answers to which are largely unknown. ²

The problem, therefore, of determinism as opposed to man's autonomy can only be closed on empirical grounds, which for us are lacking. We could perhaps, as Antony Flew suggests, adopt an attitude of caution towards the very many uses of the concepts "inevitable" and "freedom".³ Since the uses of these concepts is primarily "elliptical", we could at best ask for a clarification of the context in which they are being used with such rejoinders as "inevitable for whom?" and "freedom from what?" ⁴ It has even been suggested by certain philosophers that freedom (agency) is not opposed to
causation but to constraint. This really dismisses the problem of freedom from being a traditionally metaphysical one to being a social or interpersonal one.

Let us see the kind of inevitability or necessity posed by Nietzsche. It is not clear whether his position is one of determinism in a strict sense. If determinism is defined in terms of cause and effect and law,\(^5\) Nietzsche's case is problematic since he disputes the very concepts of "law" and "cause". Yet he imputes necessity to the world.

There does seem to be some inappropriateness here. Necessity does, \textit{ prima facie }, seem to imply some form of determinism and determinism does seem to imply, at the very minimum, the kind of necessity exhibited by the law of Sufficient Reason. Though in contemporary times we do not speak of necessary "facts" (as, for example, the Rationalists were wont to do) we could say that causes necessitate effects. Or, assuming the Law of Sufficient Reason we can say "given the casually sufficient conditions of some effect, that effect cannot any longer be prevented."\(^6\)

To take the problem further would take us far afield. The relation between determinism and necessity threatens to be an
intricate one and would involve us in setting forth a consistent set
of definitions and analyses. Let us be content with saying that
though Nietzsche denies determinism in the strict sense which takes
recourse to the concepts of cause-effect and law he is nonetheless
ambiguous enough to assume, and be deeply committed to, some necessity
in every sphere of the world. The problem in Nietzsche, if not one
of determinism and freedom, is one of necessity and normative intention.

Nietzsche's position is complicated enough to introduce at
least three levels of necessity.

There is firstly the necessity of the will to power. It
is derived from Nietzsche's attempt to carry to an extreme "one
kind of causality". The causality of the will to power being universal,
Nietzsche's final picture could be seen to be similar to the
metaphysical assumptions of the Rationalists. He makes the
tautological assumption "everything is will to power" and then seems
to derive a series of substantive propositions from this assumption.
The necessity thereby implied, is the kind of necessity that
obtains between the premise and the conclusion in a deductive
argument.

Therefore, at a general level, Nietzsche would be open to
the same kind of criticisms that can be levelled against the
philosophical method of the Rationalists. For example, if we prove that the basic, axiomatic assumption is not self-evident the whole series of necessary deductions quite collapse.

Further, more or less at the same level as the will to power, Nietzsche's bio-anthropological perspective produces various "necessities" of "life". For example, art, truth, morality, values generally, are "necessities" posed by life in its own enhancement.

Secondly, the Eternal Recurrence imposes the kind of fataлистic necessity of a cycle which makes it superfluous to talk of ends, purposes or goals.

Finally, there is the historical necessity of nihilism which Nietzsche sees running from the Platonic-Christian interpretations till his own time.

Since we have already discussed nihilism and the Eternal Recurrence, let us first get these out of our way.

The necessity, or determinism, of nihilism is comparable to the way in which Marx, for example, envisaged capitalism as an organism which, though created by men, nonetheless becomes autonomous of him and in fact begins to determine him. It may be observed that both Nietzsche's nihilism and Marx's historical materialism are
forms of historical and not metaphysical determinism. Whereas the latter tends to be absolutist, the former is an extremely weak form of determinism. Both Marx and Nietzsche seem to leave open the possibility of man's essential autonomy from such historical determinism, and therefore his ability to alter the future course of history.

With the Eternal Recurrence the problem arises, firstly, whether one can possibly choose to affirm one's fate or not. Is Nietzsche saying that it is a determined fact that one affirms existence or is he saying that one ought to affirm existence? He does say that only strong natures can "bear" and affirm the idea.

Nietzsche holds on to a position of necessity quite rigorously. He denies that one could have a choice between being decadent and healthy, weak and strong, between an affirmative will to power and a nihilistic will to power. It is purely by necessity that one is driven one way or the other, there being little chance of even envisaging alternative possibilities for oneself.

Secondly, problems arise if we juxtapose the Eternal Recurrence with Nietzsche's whole project of "willing", "becoming" and especially, "creativity". Even if we do, as Nietzsche does, call certain activities as "creative" these can, in the last
analysis, only be evaluations that we eternally make of that which eternally occurs. The term "creative" would lose the sense of there being something entirely original and new in time.

Bernd Magnus has found a clever escape from such a paradoxical situation that Nietzsche finds himself in. He points out that the Eternal Recurrence "nowhere implies a memory of previous states". Since I have no memory of previous states I cannot know from advance what I will choose. This at least makes the fact that I choose, make decisions, will and "become" more interesting. Such an escape route as Magnus applies to the Eternal Recurrence could in fact be applied to any form of determinism: since I do not "know" the way in which I may be determined, I could go on acting as if I were not. However, though Magnus' argument certainly introduces an element of adventurousness into "necessity", one cannot overlook the fact that a strict determinism does not make norms possible but only allows the possibility of an illusion of norms. In a strict logical sense one would not be able to meaningfully talk of an ought where the individual is bound to behave in a way determined by the "law" of recurrence.

Let us now turn towards certain of Nietzsche's ideas which have a teleological or a normative content.
Nietzsche speculates on the possible direction in which necessity is taking mankind. Nietzsche is concerned with the "end" to which present history could lead. In spite of the fact that there is a value-crisis, he says "but everything is also flowing forward, and towards one goal." Just as our whole history with all its illusions of metaphysics, religion and morality was necessary, in spite of its being illusory, so perhaps it could give way, necessarily, to its opposite. Thus perhaps "a new habit, that of comprehending, not-loving, not-hating, surveying is gradually implanting itself in us." 

He asserts that the "the unwise, unjust, guilt-conscious man" was perhaps, not an antithesis, but a "necessary preliminary" to a "wise, innocent (conscious of innocence) man."

So far Nietzsche's idea may merely indicate that he is, as his language suggests, giving a tentative, possible outcome of history, but not one which he thinks is inevitable. Nietzsche does seem to think that there are alternatives to the necessity of nihilism. Let us turn towards a few of the alternatives he suggests.
Nietzsche, unfortunately, is rather infamous for having suggested the "breeding" of an "elite" of masters or a "master race". True, his idea of mastership is essentially an ascetic conception and does not purport to have social, economic or political connotations. He has been grievously misunderstood on this point.11

However on his assumption that the will to power structures itself in a hierarchy and that there is a basic inequality amongst men could be potential sources of trouble. We would not like to go into this aspect of Nietzsche's normative intentions.

But an idea which is rich in insight and potential is encountered in the idea of the Superman. Its background we must assume to have been worked out in the concepts of ascetic and master. It does not overtly reflect a conscious attempt to work out a normative system. Rather, it reflects Nietzsche's concern for man's destiny.

The advent of nihilism must not end in "negative nothingness", in meaninglessness. The Superman is Nietzsche's
conception of an anchor in the face of an ominous nihil. The will to power, in Nietzsche's thought, achieves its highest ascetic in the Superman, who is to be the epitome of self-overcoming and self-reconciliation, a self-created work of art. Against nihilism, Nietzsche's call goes for a self-knowledge and self-therapy: "Physician heal yourself: thus will you heal your patient too." 12

Neither Zarathustra nor by a long shot Nietzsche ought to be taken as representing the Superman. The "Madman" who announces the "death" of God 13 remarks despondently that he comes too soon. Nietzsche is always thinking of the future — perhaps there would be free spirits and the Superman who would give a direction to man's destiny. Zarathustra's love is not for his "neighbour" but it is a "love of the most distant man of the future." Zarathustra only preaches the Superman: "Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman — a rope over an abyss." 14

Nietzsche clearly recommends a new kind of man. How far this would be reconcilable with the run of necessity remains one of the fundamental logical problems in Nietzsche.

We may conclude this discussion by saying that there are many levels of necessity in Nietzsche's thought. The necessities
implied by, for example, the will to power, the Eternal Recurrence and nihilism seem to differ from each other and one may not easily be able to relate them. Each level raises logical problems for any normative intentions that Nietzsche may have. For instance, while the will to power and the Eternal Recurrence propose health, asceticism, mastership and affirmation, nihilism proposes alternatives for the future of man. Whether there is a continuity between these levels of necessity and between the different normative intentions is a complex question and we would not like to attempt to answer it here.

**How One Becomes What One Is:** We shall take up one important project which Nietzsche identifies by the appellation: How one Becomes What One Is. It forms the subtitle of his philosophical autobiography *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

The project implies that Nietzsche is proposing a method. It also implies that there "is" something towards which we must move with the help of that method. Seemingly, Nietzsche says that there is something in us which is hidden, not apparent, and which we must get to recognize.
In the history of philosophy we find attempts to draw a line between non-persons and persons. It has often been thought that the latter are to be understood in terms of an essence or an eternal substance. Most contemporary philosophers, however, regard the whole enterprise of looking for an essence or essential attributes as misconceived. Certain existentialists, for instance, have diffused the idea of an eternal, substantive self into a variety of problems of "self", "mind", "consciousness" and so on. They attempt to examine these by a kind of experiential or phenomenological method. Certain analytical philosophers have tried to understand "self", "mind", "consciousness" in terms of their conceptual interconnectedness, especially in the context of knowledge.

Most philosophers of both ways of thinking do like to maintain a difference between "self" and "person". Whereas the former is said to have a descriptive use the latter has a largely prescriptive use. Questions such as the following continue raise interest: what is a person? what is the self? what are the criteria of personal identity? In what sense can a person be said to acquire or lose an identity? What unites the same person or self? How is self-knowledge possible?
Nietzsche does not, like some contemporary philosophers do, list criteria like learning, understanding and using symbols, both verbal and non-verbal, as preconditions for acquiring self-identity. Nor does he investigate social matrices and culture as part of these preconditions. Though Nietzsche may have touched on these topics generally or in other contexts he does not specifically use them to illuminate How One Becomes What One Is.

However so, Nietzsche is asserting at least three things a) that everyone has something, "what one is," hidden in themselves; b) that this "what one is" can be known; and c) that there is a method for knowing it. But let us be more explicit about Nietzsche's views on these points.

Human "greatness" according to Nietzsche, consists in the artful wielding of the potentialities that make up one's own nature. For Nietzsche these potentialities lie in the unconscious. The instincts are central to the conception of the unconscious. His chief concern is to handle the instincts in such a way that no "guilt," and "bad conscience" result. The fact that these arose at all was the consequence of our
failure to be masters of our instincts, Priests, theologians
and "philosophical blindworn" have themselves given to the passions
their "terrible" character. 15 Nietzsche sees as his task:

to take from the passions their terrible character
and thus prevent their becoming devastating torrents —
one should not inflate one's oversights into eternal
fatalities, let us work honestly together on the
task of transforming the passions of mankind one
and all into joys. 16

There are two things Nietzsche wants to do, one, remove
the idea of an external responsibility to, for example, God,
society or "other men", and second, to cultivate an "innocence
of becoming", which is Nietzsche's way of calling for manifestation,
spontaneity, rather than action based on rational deliberation
of "objective" moral principles. 17

Yet by abjuring responsibility external to oneself,
and wishing to restore the "innocence of becoming", Nietzsche
does not say that we blindly give way to the instincts. That
would amount to pure decadence. It would give rise to the unshaped
men of crude impulses. The transvaluation is not to merely
power — "power makes stupid" as Nietzsche says at one point
while describing his contemporary Germans. 18
Turning one's "passions into joys" on the other hand involves "proper mastery and subtlety in conducting a war against oneself, that is to say, self-control, and self-outwitting." 19 It is a "great and rare art" to be able to survey one's own character, both "in strength and weakness," and to mould it until "everything appears as art and reason".

It will be the strong, imperious natures which experience their subtlest joy in exercising such control in such constraint, and practicing under their own laws. 20

Two things become clear. One, that Nietzsche's conception of asceticism suggests that it itself is a form of art -- an aesthetic practice. Two, the discussion about the instincts forms the backdrop to the project How One Becomes What One Is. It is highly plausible to suggest that Nietzsche's general perspective arose not out of speculation into the nature of moral action but from a personal, and valuable, insight into the nature of asceticism.

The project, we may object at the outset, presupposes that in the run of necessity I have the minimum choice between alternate instincts. Such an objection is mitigated, however, if
we notice that Nietzsche does not advocate a "choice" between impulses but a "non-willing" as a preliminary step to become what one is. Such a state does not involve choice but passivity. Let us see how Nietzsche goes about this.

Nietzsche says that in order to become what we are, we must begin with the assumption that one knows nothing about oneself, that one "has not the remotest suspicion of what one is." 21 Nietzsche suggests as a first step the ability to dissociate oneself from all kinds of stimuli and exercise control.

The "essence" of a powerful will is "precisely not to "will", the ability to defer decision." 22 Spontaneity, therefore, calls for the cessation of a reactive kind of willing. There is one note where Nietzsche experiments with two kinds of cessations: one, of the weak will, and the other, of the strong will.

1) Everything done in weakness fails. Moral: do nothing. Only there is the hitch that precisely the strength to suspend activity, not to react, is the sickest of all under the influence of weakness; one never reacts more blindly than when one should not react at all. 23
Such a will would be one which wearies of the world and action and thus becomes passive. However, this makes it vulnerable to all kinds of stimuli. Knowing no self-control, such a will would probably over-react under a strong stimulus. That is why Nietzsche calls it "sick". On the other hand a strong nature manifests itself by waiting and postponing any reaction; it is as much characterised by a certain _ediphoria_, as weakness is by an involuntary countermovement, and the suddenness and inevitability of "action".

The idea of non-willing or "waiting" is not unique to Nietzsche but has been variously expressed, as Nietzsche himself is aware. Just to be more illustrative of what Nietzsche has in mind, we may briefly see how this idea occurs elsewhere. Of course the contexts in which it arises, its function and purpose may be quite different from the kind we find in Nietzsche.

It is almost fundamental to Heidegger's Foundational Thought that one adopts a position of Openness towards Being. Openness for Heidegger means a "non-willing". His German
predecessors saw thought as fundamentally a willing (Kant saw it as "spontaneity"). Because, however, Heidegger wishes to surpass "representational" and "categorical" thought, he proposes an alternative kind of thought that arises out of a "non-willing". It is in such a condition that Being presents itself to thought. 26

Whereas Nietzsche's "non-willing" is a state where one is asked to maintain an openness by forbearing reactive impulses, Heidegger's "non-willing" is a state of openness where one is asked to forbear representational thought.

For both "non-willing" is, at the very minimum, a pre-condition for authenticity. Whereas for Heidegger it leads to authentic thought, for Nietzsche, it leads to authentic self. The contexts in which they arise are different in that Heidegger waits for the "coming-to-pass" of Being, in thought, and Nietzsche waits for the recognition of one's own necessity — one's "life-task".

Nietzsche was convinced that each of us is destined or fated to play our roles in the game of life. This leads to the
idea that each of us has a "life-task", that is, a fulfilment of our destinies. Nietzsche further exemplifies this by asserting that each of us must have one dominating instinct. It is the recognition or the cognitive assertion of this which would indicate one's "life-task". Such an instinct purportedly lies dormant, hidden by the morass of everyday life; our aim therefore "ought" to be to undertake a kind of phenomenological, apperceptive game with our instincts until the strongest instinct or "motive" eventually overtake us. Absolutely essential is a state of non-willing, the forsaking of moral imperatives, allowing a free-play of the instincts, but being as much in control as to avoid reaction:

We are torn back and forth by conflicting motives until we finally choose the most powerful of them --- as we put it (in truth, however, until the most powerful motive chooses us.)

Nietzsche's philosophical autobiography reinforces such an interpretation. He indicates the confusion as well as a "non-willing" which he underwent to recognize his life-task:

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I can recall of no instance of my ever having exerted myself, there is no evidence of struggle in my life. I am the reverse of a heroic nature. To "will" something, to "strive" after something to have a "purpose" or a "desire" in my mind — I know none of these things from experience. 23

and:

the organizing "idea", destined to mastery, continues to grow in the depths — it begins to command, it leads you slowly back from your deviations and aberrations, it makes ready individual qualities and capacities, which will some day make themselves felt as indispensable to the whole of your task — gradually it cultivates all the serviceable faculties before it ever whispers a word concerning the dominant task, the "goal", the "purpose" and the "meaning". 29

This then is how Nietzsche wishes to go about Becoming what one Is, by adopting the posture of a non-reactive, non-willing, repose. It is under such conditions that one's own necessity emerges in one's consciousness. To act on that necessity is to manifest, that is, manifest necessity. That is the "freedom", the "innocence" and the authenticity that Nietzsche wishes to restore.

We may observe that Nietzsche's project requires one to forsake mere desire, longing, willing. It involves a denial of
one's ordinary gratifications for the sake of a goal that is itself, initially, unknown. It may be objected, with a logical point, that the individual in order to do so would require a minimum autonomy from necessity in order to adopt a repose of non-willing, even if, ultimately, the end was to merge, so to speak, into necessity.

Further, would one not be caught in a paradox of willing non-willing? One must, after all, do something in order to reach a state of not-doing.

Nietzsche does not seem to be aware of such logical constraints.

Finally, to tie up this discussion, we may observe that in the project of How One becomes what One is the conscience plays an all-pervasive role. This point cannot be emphasised enough.

It is the conscience which "shouts" at the man who does "not belong in the mass!"

"Be yourself! You are not really all that which you do, think and desire now!"

It is the conscience which dictates the necessity of becoming what one is: "What does the conscience say? — 'You should become
Further, as we tried to indicate earlier, it is precisely the conscience which recognizes necessity (what one is) and expresses it in the form of the command “this and nothing else is necessary now”. In short then, the conscience is the mediating factor, the agent so to speak, which guides one in How One Becomes What One Is.

The Bestowing Virtue: We have indicated the importance that Nietzsche gives to art as opposed to truth. In that discussion we highlighted the condition under which art arises (intoxication, rapture, ecstasy). Further, that eternity and perfection are two categories that Nietzsche uses both to evaluate art as well as to describe the “end” of art.

In the last section we tried to indicate how, for Nietzsche, the individual himself becomes a paradigm of a work of art. The latter is himself both artist and work of art. The “works” of art in the ordinary sense, if at all we must go to them, are merely the bestowal of his, the artist’s perfection. And this “perfection”, as we saw, is an expression of the plenitude and abundance of life.
itself. Life *bestows* its plenitude onto an individual who in turn "bestows" his perfection on all "things" around him. 32

At this point we may introduce what may well be said to be one of the highest goods, or values, that Nietzsche envisages, namely, the Bestowing Virtue: "the highest virtue is a bestowing virtue". 33 This virtue is purportedly the opposite of a petty, egoistic selfishness. However, this ought not to be interpreted to mean that Nietzsche is moving towards merely altruistic principles. It indicates, rather, a state where the ego is superfluous.

We have seen Nietzsche place emphasis on egoism. He recommends it as a necessary prerequisite for the development of oneself under one's own laws. As such, it is the prerequisite for the development of a conscience. With the recognition and the spontaneous manifestation of one's necessity, however, the ego seems to become superfluous.

Zarathustra makes the extremely rich distinction between a selfish egoism and an egoism that is cultivated for the emergence
of the Bestowing Virtue. By the use of the term "appropriation" as a specific sense of egoism, Nietzsche indicates how appropriation, and not a selfish egoism, is a prerequisite for the Bestowing Virtue.

The appropriation is not one of wealth or material possessions but is one of values; one becomes a "thief of all values". One appropriates these only in order to be able to give, that is, create or command (the same thing for Nietzsche) values. The appropriation, therefore, is a spiritual one.

Nietzsche distinguishes between a "sick" ego which in "hungry selfishness" and greed says "All for myself" and a healthy appropriation which ultimately bestows the direction "upward from the species across to the superspecies".

The idea that Nietzsche seems to work out is that the recognition of one's life-task is essentially of the nature of "virtue". One's virtue, one may say, is the life-task that one comes to recognize.

When you are the willers of a single will, and you call this dispeller of need your essential and necessity, that is when your virtue has its origin and beginning.
Nietzsche goes further. This new-found virtue is, must be, of such a nature that it demands the bestowal of itself. The spirit is "lifted up" and in the "overflowing" of its upliftment; "the heart surges broad and full like a river, a blessing and a danger to those who live nearby." 38 It is this outward flow, the compulsion to transform and to give, that Nietzsche calls the Bestowing Virtue.

Zarathustra adds a further qualification, and it stands out as a significant testimony of Nietzsche's Humanism. He says:

Stay loyal to the earth...with the power of your virtue! May your bestowing love and your knowledge serve towards the meaning of the earth! 39

Reminiscent of Christ's simile of man as the salt of the earth, Nietzsche says that the "free-spirits" of the future, the masters and the creators of value, must give the earth its meaning, "a human meaning". Rather than look for the meaning and significance of man in a "beyond", in some eternal realm, Nietzsche asks for the creation of such conditions for the future in which the Superman could arise. "All gods are dead: now we want the Superman to live." 40

The latter, again to be emphasized, is not a well thought out and strictly formulated paradigm of what men ought to be. Strictly
speaking, man is himself a "rope tied over an abyss", between
animal and Superman. As such man can only create the conditions
for a new being. Zarathustra himself is the harbinger of the idea;
what the Superman is to be like is left an open question. Nietzsche,
who likened himself to an essentially experimental thinker, was too
modest to formulate categorical demands:

There are a thousand paths that have never yet been
trodden, a thousand forms of health and hidden islands
of life. Man and man's earth are still unexhausted and
undiscovered. 41

Nietzsche felt, with an obsessive intensity, that there
must be an alternative to the "negative nothingness" of nihilism.
If in the conception of the Superman Nietzsche finds his "great
hope", in the Bestowing Virtue he finds the "highest virtue". It is
a bestowal of the significance and direction for men. As such,
it is the bestowal of value.