INTRODUCTION

In the whole array of philosophical luminaries since Socrates there has been no philosopher who was so unsystematic, inconsistent and fundamentally paradoxical as Nietzsche. It is even doubted if in a strict sense he ought to be considered a philosopher at all.

Nietzsche was unsystematic in a very self-conscious manner. He had two main reasons for being so. The first, a psychological reason, arose from his assertion that the attempts to build philosophical systems implied an oversimplification and a laziness on the part of a thinker. He says in strong language:

"The will to a system: in a philosopher, morally speaking, a subtle corruption, a disease of the character; morally speaking, his will to appear more stupid than he is . . . . I am not bigoted enough for a system — and not even for my system!"

Secondly, Nietzsche thought that the premises of a philosophical system are often the result of a philosopher's beliefs and prejudices; its premises demand unquestioned acknowledgement. If, however, the premises are questioned, and found to be problematic, the whole system collapses at once. Systems, therefore, rest on weak logical grounds and ought not be taken seriously.

Nietzsche himself wrote in aphoristic style. His works consist of short essays or epigrams. He called such a style a style of "literary decadence", that is, one in which the word
or the sentence becomes meaningful only at the cost of the whole. While the whole is meaningless, its parts may be meaningful or significant. Nietzsche hoped to overcome such a style of "literary decadence" through constant experimentation. He hoped that he would emerge with some consistent ideas which would define his philosophy as a whole.

Nietzsche's ideas cannot be put into a system in which axioms, postulates, premises and inferences are clearly explained. His works consist of a series of ideas which are unrelated to each other if not inconsistent with each other. He does not seek the certainty and conviction that arise out of logical consistency or out of rational and scientific grounds.

A further difficulty in putting Nietzsche into a system is the fact that the corpus of his works comprises about 18 volumes. A lot of it was originally in the form of notes that were published posthumously and were never intended, perhaps, for publication by Nietzsche himself. Inspect of expert editorship by many Nietzsche scholars, the problem remains as to what Nietzsche would have liked to publish and in what form.

Nietzsche's works may broadly be divided into two phases: the pre-Thus Snake Zarathustra works and the post-Thus Snake Zarathustra works. The first phase begins with The Birth of Tragedy, a work written in sustained aphoristic style. The
subject of the work is a literary one, that is, Greek drama. Nonetheless, the work contains certain ideas of an epistemological and metaphysical nature and which lead to a sustained philosophical enquiry in the later works. The Birth of Tragedy is followed by Thoughts out of Season, an anthology of four essays on history, culture and education. They are essentially polemical in style and reveal the fervour and enthusiasm of a young Nietzsche caught in the conflicts of ancient and contemporary culture, but one who can also undertake a fresh and independent perspective in the intellectual climate of his times. The rest of the works till Zarathustra, that is, Human-all-too-Human (two volumes), The Dawn and The Gay Science, are essentially experimental in style, a style to which the epigramatic style seems most conducive. He discusses subjects ranging from art and music to science, metaphysics, religion and morality, the last three subjects occupying the most substantial part of his efforts. Problems are treated from a variety of perspectives, from the historical, psychological and biological to, generally, the anthropological. He attempts to break loose from traditional metaphysical concepts and as an alternative often uses the language of the natural sciences. We find him treating a traditional philosophical problem from a variety of perspectives or discussing a variety of problems from one particular kind of
perspective. His style is largely polemical and critical, at times going to unconventional extremes. Nietzsche's critical experimental philosophizing, which attempts at a kind of positivist interpretation of man and nature, ends with Thus Spake Zarathustra.

The latter work is a fresh interlude to his experimental polemical style and is a work of a high literary quality. It is written in rhapsodic dithyrambs, an attempt on Nietzsche's part to capture the style and spirit of the festivals and music associated with the Dionysian cult of the ancient Greeks. Here Nietzsche expresses in poetic prose some of the ideas that he had developed over the preceding period.

The post-Zarathustra works, including Beyond Good and Evil, On the Genealogy of Morals, The Case of Wagner, The Twilight of the Idols, The Anti-Christ, Thus Spake Zarathustra (a philosophical autobiography) and Nietzsche contra Wagner are more concrete in the expression of Nietzsche's ideas. They often contain sustained essays running into over eighty pages each. Indeed one may look to these as containing the final outcome of his earlier ideas, expressed and asserted in a manner that makes them of philosophical interest.

Most of Nietzsche's not a, from his early to his later periods, have been collected together and put into one volume called The Will to Power. Though this volume is rich in content and aphorisms can be found in it for almost any
topic that Nietzsche touched upon, it is better to approach the contents with caution since much of it may have been essentially experimental, and Nietzsche may not have endorsed it with that finality which he would have given to a work intended for publication.

A philosophically disconcerting feature in Nietzsche's writings is the use of an unconventional language to tackle traditional philosophical problems. Not only does he resort to the language of the natural sciences, especially psychology and biology, but also to a literary style that speaks in image and metaphor.

Nietzsche had a firm conviction about the unity of life. He thought that there was a kind of essential continuity between all forms of reality from the cosmic to the animal to the human and the intellectual. To describe such a continuity often led him into conceptual generalities, ambiguities and amorphism. Thus, for example, we find in Nietzsche a lot of animal imagery which is used not merely for literary enhancement but also for the literal description of types of human nature.

Nietzsche, of course, was not so crude as to relegate humans to the animal world. Rather, he works with the awareness of the continuity between the two. This he thought was most evident in such traits as instinctual necessities, cruelty, selfishness and a wilful destructiveness. Nietzsche often brings forth eulogies for the barbaric tribes and races
which had not yet given way to morality, religion, philosophy and art. Nonetheless, what for Nietzsche marked out man from the merely animal was culture — the fact that man creates and evolves a culture. The continuity between the animal and culture occupies a large part of Nietzsche's interest.

Nietzsche's use of polemic, superb rhetoric and an unconventional terminology is quite evident of his intention to shock and provoke. Indeed he is known to have evoked the most diverse feelings in the most diverse of all people. He has been looked upon with awe in both literary and philosophical traditions as a unique and radical thinker. He exhorts, persuades and endears with his literary genius. He drops an idea in a nonchalant manner and is indifferent about its acceptability or non-acceptability. The tone and content of his writings often reveal a melancholy and pensiveness. It throws into relief his sense, which he is concerned to communicate, of the futility and absurdity of existence, of the pettiness of human endeavour.

But we also find in Nietzsche the mood of the dancer — both in his imagery and in his ideas. Sprightliness and adroitness mark his use of words and he uses imagery of the sun and light, dance, laughter and joy, a sense of exuberance, a great health and well-being to express both his optimism concerning man and the future of man. These qualities are most evident of the affirmation of his own existence. He seeks his tenor with
the Greeks, both the barbaric and the creative, and with his
romantic predecessors like Schlegel, Schelling, Schiller, Holderlin,
Novalis and, of course, Goethe. This did not mean that he endorsed
their ideas but only that he saw himself as a part, indeed a
necessary part, of that cultural tradition. He sought his
life-task in an earthly humanism, a concern for the spiritual
upliftment of man and the future of man. It was only towards
what he found contemporaneous that he vehemently expressed a
"great disgust" 3. His eye sought for that which was "most distant".

Nietzsche's ideas are controversial. Some of his ideas
are positivist attempts at a description of man and the world.
These, however, are of little philosophical interest—they
fail to stand up to the rigours of a second-order analytical
enquiry. The motif that emerges is not one of rational or
logical thought but of an emotive, literary and artistic product.
His polemics and rhetoric in the context of certain individuals,
Christianity and the Platonic philosophical tradition can prove
to be an anathema to some. He creates such impressive fictional figures
as Dionysus, the Madman, the Man of Knowledge, Free Spirits, the
Anti-Christ, the Superman and, of course, his protagonist—
Zarathustra.

In this work we shall broadly try to work out Nietzsche's
position of nihilism. Its origins, we shall try to show, emerge
through Nietzsche's epistemological considerations. The latter
point to his skepticism regarding perception, language and reason, that there are no guarantee for assertions pertaining to knowledge and reality. His intention is to refute traditional metaphysics which posits a transcendental realm over and above the phenomenal world.

(We may point out here that in order to be consistent with Nietzsche’s line of thought we have used truth in two ways: Truth with a capital T is used synonymously with Being or Reality to convey the sense that a metaphysical entity is being referred to; otherwise truth has a primarily epistemological sense.

There is often an ambiguity between the two in Nietzsche texts.)

Nietzsche, however, inspire of his skepticism and nihilism the positions that deny the possibility of giving authentic descriptions about the world—formulates ideas as to the nature of the instincts, man and the world and incorporates them under the comprehensive principle: the "will to power". An interesting idea that does emerge from Nietzsche’s speculative conception is the idea of a self-overcoming—a kind of asceticism that Nietzsche uses to describe the inner dynamism of the will to power. It plays a significant normative role in Nietzsche’s philosophy.

On the ground of the instincts and the will to power Nietzsche undertakes his "life-task"; the Transvaluation of all Values. It incorporates Nietzsche’s critiques of religion and philosophy in the context of the values and the morality that they propose; Nietzsche’s critiques reinforce the problem
of nihilism. It arises in the sense of a vacuum that is created out of a meaninglessness in the context of values.

In trying to work out ways and means for the individual to reassert himself in the face of an ominous nihil, Nietzsche proposes a variety of ideas and conceptions, for example, the Eternal Recurrence, Amor Fati, How One Becomes What One Is, the conscience and the Bestowing Virtue. These alternatives are meant to answer the nihilism brought about by the advent of his critiques. They point to both his concern for the individual and to his humanism.

In the history of axiology there have been three predominant schools of thought: (i) Descriptivism (or Cognitivism), (ii) Antidescriptivism (or Noncognitivism) and (iii) Prescriptivism. The descriptivists, of whom there have been three varieties — the metaphysical, the natural and the non-natural — claim that value is a property which stands in relation to objects. It is either a metaphysical or a natural or a non-natural property. All value judgments are descriptive or factual in that they ascribe properties to things.

Nietzsche may be said to be a descriptivist. It may, however, be controversial whether Nietzsche was a descriptivist of the metaphysical or of the naturalist variety. It is certain, however, that Nietzsche did not take value to be an intrinsic non-natural, objective property of objects, which is indefinable but knowable in principle through either emotive experience.
or intellectual intuition. For Nietzsche values are really
eidolons of natural processes and as such are properties deter-
d mined or necessitated by natural or supernatural or metaphysical
grounds.

Further, in Nietzsche's case it is difficult to categorically
classify him under the various schools of Descriptivism, Anti-
descriptivism or Prescriptivism since elements of all three may
be found in his thought. He may be said of be a noncognitivist
or an antidescriptivist insofar as the experience of power
can be expressed in value judgments which are expressions of
one's emotions, attitudes and desires. Hence Nietzsche talks
about the feeling of power, or the desire for power, or the
reactions stimulated by feelings of power.

Nietzsche of course cannot be called a prescriptivist
in the strict sense in which Prescritivism states that all
values are prescriptions or norms or recommendations or acts
of grading or evaluation. We may say that Nietzsche worked out
a theory of value which has descriptive elements. As such
power becomes the origin, the measure, the criterion and the
sole arbitrator for value. On the basis of a normative
theory he is able to evolve certain cognitive criteria and
prescriptive measures for the pursuit of such values as would
lead to the enhancement and fulfillment of power.

Finally we may make a passing reference to some
Nietzsche literature. Walter Kaufmann is one of the most
authoritative translators of, and commentators on, Nietzsche. His work throws up innumerable problems faced by Nietzsche interpretations. However, in this writer's opinion he has mistaken the import of Nietzsche's nihilism and this has consequent repercussions for his interpretation of Nietzsche. Arthur Danto's book on Nietzsche highlights the logical difficulties in Nietzsche's thought and he has been able to see the implications of Nietzsche's most fundamental position of philosophical nihilism. Rose Pfeffer, F.A. Lea, and R.J. Hellingdale have given sympathetic interpretations of Nietzsche; the latter two have tried to relate the development of Nietzsche's ideas to the general background of his life. A recent anthology of critical essays throws refreshing light on Nietzsche's literary and conceptual use of language. Interestingly, these essays are primarily by scholars of German letters rather than by professional philosophers. There are few other works on Nietzsche in the English language. After all, interest in Nietzsche in the English-speaking world received its impetus only in recent post-World War II years. There is a sprinkling of this interest evident in philosophical journals.

In this work we shall try to lay emphasis on those aspects of Nietzsche's ideas which have received inadequate attention or which have been consistently ignored by his commentators. We shall try to highlight the conflict between Nietzsche's concern for eternity and his concern for temporality or actuality. We shall emphasize Nietzsche's use of the heart, the conscience and non-willing, all of which play a role in his conception of
self-recognition, self-mastery and authenticity. Further we shall emphasize Nietzsche's use of the Bestowing Virtue, which points to a deep-rooted humanism.

Briefly, we shall find that Nietzsche attempts to explain the nature of value through its origins and development. The will to power is asserted to be the origin of all values. In order to explain ways or the kinds of value into which the will to power progresses, he works out primarily dual conceptions, each is descriptive of the way in which the will to power manifests itself. Thus values and moralities are examined under the conceptions of Apollo and Dionysus, health and decadence, an enhanced and affirmative will to power and a negatory, degenerate will to power. He is thus able to differentiate between "master moralities" and "slave moralities". These have an all-important role to play in Nietzsche's axiology.

As a concomitant to these classifications we find also a prescriptive element which takes its pathos from a self-recognition, self-mastery and power. The latter are attempts on Nietzsche's part to lay down the preconditions for authenticity. Kant wished to lay down the necessary, a priori, pure or transcendental preconditions of knowledge. Nietzsche wished to lay down the individual, existential but necessary preconditions of authenticity, and derivatively of value.