Chapter I

MILILISM AND ART

PHILOSOPHICAL MIIILILISM

Nietzsche's works reveal a deep conviction of the fallibility of the intellect, reason, and knowledge. Every turn of his ideas is marked by either a veiled or a forthright skepticism that often frustrate his own intellectual endeavours. He is often plunged into despair over the fact that appearance and illusion are the only possible sources of meaning and significance in this world.

The meaning of tragic: From his very first work, The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche is skeptical about our claims to knowledge. He states that the purpose of this work is to examine the scholar from the point of view of the artist and the artist from the point of view of life.

The ideal artist for Nietzsche is a harmony of artistic impulses. He distinguishes between two kinds of natural artistic impulses which he calls the Apollonian and the Dionysian. He examines both these impulses and substantiates his arguments by drawing on Greek art and culture. The Apollonian represents restraint and harmony and is symbolic of intuitive, visionary form and image, as compared to that which is apparently chaotic. The Dionysian is Nietzsche's most important symbol. It represents an exuberant affirmation of existence. It is expressed in the outflow of uninhibited energy, the longing to exceed all norms, and in drunken frenzy. Nietzsche finds the Apollonian tendency most
evident in Greek sculpture and architecture, especially in the Doric art forms. The Dionysian tendency he finds most evident in Dionysian dithyrambs and in the music and frenzy associated with the festivals of the Dionysian cult.

Nietzsche argues that though the Apollonian and Dionysian are distinguishable, they came to be most harmoniously blended in Greek tragedy. Nietzsche finds here the most aesthetic reflection of the Greek contemplation of the world and of human existence.

He pictures the Greek as one who is healthy, powerful, exuberant and very sensitive to pain and suffering. The Greek penetrates into the very heart of the terrible destructiveness of so-called universal history, as also the cruelty of nature. 3

Nietzsche is led to formulate a metaphysics to explain the nature of suffering.

a) There is Being or Primal Unity, or the One Truly Existent.

b) Apostasis: Being is divided against itself and is, therefore, eternally suffering.

Nietzsche does not tell us why or how apostasis of being takes place. Nor does he tell us how apostasis causes suffering. The movement from Being to apostasis to suffering remains, in The Birth of Tragedy, a mysterious one. At best, the three concepts serve Nietzsche with postulates for an interpretation of Greek thought.
However so, he is emphatic in asserting that "individuation is the origin and prime cause of all suffering." 

This metaphysics for Nietzsche provides all the elements of a profound and pessimistic contemplation of the world, together with the mystery doctrine of tragedy. Awareness of this insight induces, says Nietzsche, a terrible pain in the Greeks:

In the consciousness of truth once perceived, man now sees everywhere only the terror or the absurdity of existence and he is filled with loathing.

Then comes the very crucial answer to the question why Nietzsche admires the early Greeks. The early Greek, in spite of his suffering, was able to affirm existence. The affirmation of existence, with its suffering and contradictions, is for Nietzsche the essence, or the meaning, of "tragedy".

Nietzsche later rejects both the metaphysics of Being as well the idea that tragedy is an aufgehoben of the Apollonian and the Dionysian tendencies ("there is a strong smell of Hegel about it....", he writes.), but there are certain key concepts in this early work which play an important role in the development of Nietzsche's thought. To name a few of these: affirmation, negation, existence, pessimism and nihilism.

Affirmation of existence, we said, is one of Nietzsche's key concepts. It refers to the highest state in which one can stand and relate oneself to the world. As a conceptual
clarification we may observe that affirmation and negation, terms often used by Nietzsche, are not logical categories that imply the inclusion or exclusion of classes or members of classes. They are used as essentially evaluative categories: affirmation amounts to saying "yes", "good", negation to saying "no", "bad". Whereas the first is highly recommendatory the second is highly condemnatory.

By existence Nietzsche means not merely the fact of one's bodily survival but also the fact that man is both deeply instinctive and spiritual. It involves the state of man's psycho-physiological make-up in a specific context of history and culture.

Nietzsche gives very many nuances to the terms pessimism and nihilism. What is important for him, and on the basis of which he evaluates both thinkers and ideas, is whether either of them is being affirmed or negated. Nietzsche's distinctions and evaluations are often tedious and amorphous. To enable some amount of clarification we may briefly expose Nietzsche's use of pessimism and nihilism in the following manner: whereas the paradigm of the former is suffering, the paradigm of the latter is truth. Thus:

**Pessimism: There is suffering (and contradiction).**

(i) Strong: Affirmed (Nietzsche's own attitude).

(ii) Weak: Negated or denied (e.g., Christianity, Buddhism).
Nihilism: There is no ground for assertions about Truth or value.

(i) Strong (Philosophical nihilism): Affirmed (Nietzsche's own attitude).

(ii) Weak (Philosophical optimism): negated or denied (e.g. Platonism, science).

We may observe that in the Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche does not hold on to position of nihilism (there is being), but he does hold on to a position of pessimism.

Having clarified certain concepts that are central to both Nietzsche's early and later thought we may return to our artist-scholar discussion. Nietzsche's antagonist here is Socrates. Whereas both Dionysus and Apollo stood for an aesthetic relation with "Being", Socrates stands for the extreme development of the Apollonian instinct. Nietzsche calls it extreme because where the earlier forms of Greek art arose out of visionary intuitions, Socrates, introduces paradoxical thought. Greek tragedy degenerates under the influence of the Socratic dialectic. Nietzsche says that Socrates failed to understand the true significance of tragedy as a spontaneous outburst of life itself. Instead he demanded that tragedy be made intelligible, that it explicitly state its meaning and purpose.
Socrates, the representative scholar, enters the Greek scene with his assumption, not of the absurdity of existence, but of the intelligibility of the universe. With this assumption, Nietzsche says, Socrates lays the foundation for the whole western tradition of rationality and science. Whereas for the earlier Greek "virtue" had meant the ability to give "sublime" form to one's instincts, Socrates made the new equation "knowledge is virtue". The new ideals must ultimately derive their justification from the dialectic of knowledge. An implication of such an equation for aesthetics was that "to be beautiful everything must be intelligible."

That Socrates proved to be a destructive influence upon Greek tragedy is one charge that Nietzsche levels against the former. More important is Nietzsche's crusade against Platonism as such. The crusade is carried on till the very end of his creative period.

The problem of Platonism, as Nietzsche sees it, is the creation of two-world theories. On the one hand there is a devalued, perceptible world of phenomena and on the other hand is posited a "higher", intelligible world of Being or Truth.

The problem purportedly arises with one's confrontation with the world as it is given to us in our experience. Can there be knowledge of it? As the Greek put it, can there be knowledge of the world of becoming? 
Nietzsche concludes, and here he comes to the same conclusion as Socrates did, that knowledge and Becoming exclude one another. Both see the problem as follows: since there is nothing which is static and permanent in the phenomenal world, nothing ever is, how then can we ever have knowledge of "it". Knowledge is not possible simply because nothing "is" to know. There must be something static, eternal if at all we are to have knowledge. Plato concluded that there must be a world of Forms or Ideas which stands beyond the phenomenal world.

Nietzsche criticizes Socrates for being under an illusion, the illusion still held today, that thought can reveal the essence of Being. This "optimism" is the basis of modern rationality and science. Both, however, can merely achieve some kind of illusion but never Truth. Thus in the Birth of Tragedy is expressed the idea that a faith "moves" philosophy and science. The latter, however, are merely art-forms in an extended sense in which form and coherence are created and imposed upon the world. The form and coherence however are essentially illusions. That the concept of "truth" is imposed upon them leads to a metaphysical illusion. Since Socrates, this illusion has been the motivating force of occidental philosophy and science but nonetheless leads them to its
"limits where it must change into art, which is really the
goal to be attained by this mechanism." Compared to the
art form of the early Greeks, however, it remains a degenerate
art form.

It is important to keep in mind Nietzsche's reference
to Platonism. By the latter term Nietzsche means to include
religion, specifically Christianity, as well. For Nietzsche
both Platonism and religion advocate two-world doctrines and
he frequently refers to both as just Platonism. The negation
of life, "this world" and the sensuous and the postulation of
another world, a "beyond", is nihilism itself. Heidegger
characterizes Nietzsche's insight as follows:

Here a new interpretation of Platonism emerges.
It flows from a fundamental experience of the
development of nihilism. It sees in Platonism
the primordial and determining grounds of the
possibility of nihilism's upsurge and the
rise of life-negation. Christianity is in
Nietzsche's eyes nothing other than "Platonism
for the people." As Platonism, however, it
is nihilism.  

Having said this much, we shall shift over to certain
other problems which have a bearing on the total nihilism
that Nietzsche is after.

The world: the ideas of a continuum and unity always
play a significant role in Nietzsche's description of the
phenomenal world. The latter has that evanescent and amorphous
character that eludes the grasp of both perception
and the intellect. It is incomprehensible and from a relative point of view absurd. Nothing can be said about it. Nietzsche's frequent attacks against the intellect, reason and language are motivated by his belief that they facilitate and perpetuate fragmentation, individualization and atomization of that which is essentially a continuum and a unity. It is simply erroneous to even talk of any distinction between noumena and phenomena. Nietzsche leads us to the extreme thesis that we have no right, in a semantic context, to talk of "phenomenal" or "apparent" or "becoming" because these concepts can become significant only if it is logically possible to place beside them the real or substance or noumena or Being. Because this is so, Nietzsche is wary of using the concept of "appearance" at all.

We have abolished the real world; what world is left? the apparent world perhaps? no, but no with the real world we have abolished the apparent world as well. 14

This should absolve Nietzsche of the obligation as well as the possibility of giving any descriptions about the world. In his more consistent moments he wishes to leave the world as it is, a meaningless, aimless and chaotic cosmos. That he does go on to describe the world in terms of an ontological quality and to develop a cosmology presents one of the greatest logical difficulties in Nietzsche's thought. The sense of the mysteriousness of
the world which Nietzsche is sometimes fond of conveying is otherwise quite eroded. Nietzsche was, after all, caught between the pulls of a philosophical nihilism, art and science and the three were not always reconcilable.

Unlike Kant who wished to formulate pure concepts of the Understanding, and unlike Hegel who wished to give a rational explanation of all experience, and unlike Hume whose imagination was essentially suspect for its frivolous and arbitrary nature, Nietzsche wished to give an aesthetic significance to the ways in which the imagination may construct or reconstruct the world. Because every construction of the world is an illusion, it can have only aesthetic significance. In Nietzsche, therefore, we find a running tension between the attempt to give aesthetic form, image and coherence (the fact that fragmentation and conceptualization is taking place) and the urge to leave unity qua continuum as it is in an ineffable realm; it is the tension between "a longed for unity and actual fragmentation." 

Perception: We are now in a position to go further into Nietzsche's nihilism. It involves (a) the position that there is nothing stable in the world and (b) Nietzsche's critical perspectives on sense impressions, language, reason and the intellect. He is skeptical whether these can even be adequate for the grasp of reality.
Using an assumption of unity he asserts that no "event" or "fact" can be abstracted from the continuum, without leaving something of the fact in the continuum. What then are facts? It is merely the tendency of human perception to break up this continuum, isolate sections of it, and "freeze" them into facts:

our inaccurate observation takes a group of phenomena as one and calls them a fact. Between this fact and another we imagine a vacuum, we isolate each fact. In reality however the sum of our actions and cognitions is no series of facts and intervening vacua, but a continuous stream. 16

Nietzsche works out the well-known thesis, common to both Pyrronian skepticism and various forms of rationalism, that we have no way to judge whether our perceptions resemble their causes. Our sense organs are such that they are "programmed for error" 17 and the object stands already distorted. 14

Language: Further, language, Nietzsche argues, is essentially metaphorical. It puts coherence onto experience only in terms of image and metaphor:

A nerve stimulus, first transposed into an image — first metaphor. The image in turn, imitated by a sound — second metaphor. 18

Language can only describe illusions which are mistakenly believed to be real. However, Nietzsche argues, in the history of thought man has always looked on language as a kind of "putative science" 19 — that language was...
an adequate vehicle for the grasp of knowledge and truth.

"language is in fact the first stage of the occupation with science." 20

Man thus embarked on a process of creating labels, names, distinctions, analyses and relations. However, Nietzsche argued that this only led to an atomisation of that which was a continuum and to a reification of that which was not given to abstraction. For example he attacks such conceptions as "will", "I", "ego", "thing", "subject-object", "event", "fact", "substance", "agent" and "action". 21 These are abstract conceptions. He argues that the unity of a word is no guarantee for the unity of existence of a thing. Further, these atomistic conceptions have led to the belief that there must be a universal or essential meaning to these concepts, which further led to the reification and creation of transcendental and metaphysical realms. Nietzsche is apt to, like Wittgenstein, reduce universals to family resemblances in order to preclude the possibility of the abstraction and reification of concepts. The Platonistic Ideas are a prime example of what Nietzsche wishes to argue against.

Nietzsche's attention focuses on the grammatical structure of language. He notices a grammatical similarity in various languages and argues that because of this there
has been a similarity in philosophical developments. He points to German and Indian idealism as a case in point. The grammatical structure of language, being what it is, cannot but give rise to peculiar perspectives and interpretations, cannot help perpetuating a peculiar philosophical mythology.

Language contains a hidden philosophical mythology, which, however careful we may be, breaks out afresh.

Nietzsche's intention was to deny the possibility of using language to create metaphysical structures. However, he is sometimes given to the view that all uses of language are essentially metaphorical. This leads to a rather frustrating and meaningless position.

Firstly, if metaphor is to be meaningfully used, it must be possible to put beside it a straight declarative sentence which is a literally true sentence. If we deny this possibility then Nietzsche faces the paradox pointed out by Danto:

To say that all sentences are metaphorical entails that the thesis is metaphorical, hence not literally true, hence literally false. So, if he is right, he is wrong.

Russell tried to work out an ideal language precisely because he saw the ambiguous relationship between language and facts. Since then many questions have been asked about ideal language, the form of sentences and of facts.
Indeed, one may observe that it is difficult to find straight declarative sentences which are literally true. Danto goes on to say that Nietzsche could thus even justify himself for using a notion of metaphor.25

Nietzsche is cautious about the use of language, especially its adequacy for descriptive and metaphysical purposes. Wittgenstein sees the paradigm of philosophical activity in "brings words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use",26 and in uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and bumps that the understanding has got by running its head against the limits of language.27

Nietzsche is cautious about the ways in which language and concept are used to describe the world. All we ought to do is attain to an attitude of doubt concerning the question whether the boundary here is really a boundary.28

As a philosopher and an expert philologist he likens his own philosophical activity to the leisurely art of the goldsmith applied to language: an art which must carry out slow fine work, and attains nothing if not lento.29

Along with Nietzsche's arguments about language we will find corollary arguments about the relationship between language and rationality. For Nietzsche they are structurally
interdependent and allow for only a limited number of possible permutations:

We believe in reason; this however, is the philosophy of gray concepts. Language depends on the most naive prejudices. We cease to think when we refuse to do so under the constraint of language; we barely reach the doubt that sees this limitation as a limitation. Rational thought is interpretation according to a schema that we cannot throw off.

Perspectivism: The intention behind Nietzsche's arguments about the fallibility of perception, language, and reason, is to deny the possibility of aeternae veritates. He points to the subjective, relative, or interpretative nature of all knowledge.

Man being a mediating agent there is always a discordance between the world and knowledge. He argues that thought is anthropomorphic through and through. Indeed, his attempts to refute traditional epistemological and metaphysical thinking led him to offer what are essentially anthropological analyses. He interprets "truth" within such anthropomorphic parameters:

What then is truth? A mobile array of metaphors, anthropomorphisms, a sum in short, of human relationships which, rhetorically and poetically intensified, ornamented, and transformed, come to be thought of, after long usage by people, as fixed, binding, and canonical. Truths are illusions, worn out metaphors now impotent to stir the senses. Coins which have lost their faces and are considered now as metal rather than currency.
As a consequence of his skepticism Nietzsche arrives at a form of perspectivism. Man can view the world only in perspective. Knowledge is interpretation:

What alone can knowledge be? "Interpretation", the introduction of meaning - not "explanation" (in most cases a new interpretation over an old interpretation that has become incomprehensible, that is now itself only a sign). There are no facts, everything is in flux, incomprehensible elusive; what is relatively most enduring is our opinions. 32

Interpretation itself is described as a kind of "forcing, doctoring, abridging, omitting, suppressing, inventing, falsifying procedure." 33 Variability in interpretation is rendered almost absolute. There is "no limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted". 34

He describes his "new infinity" as follows:

The world has rather once again become for us 'infinite'; insofar as we cannot reject the possibility that it contains in itself infinite interpretations ... 35

Since an absolute description of the world becomes impossible, knowledge cannot go beyond "perspectivism". It always remains a "seeing as" and therefore not true in any metaphysical sense of being "eternal".

Meaning, definition and essence are similarly dissolved of an absolute denotation. They can only be relative.
The question "what is that?" is an imposition of meaning from some other viewpoint. "Essence," the "essential nature" is something perspectival and already presupposes a multiplicity. At bottom of it there always lies "what is that for me?" (for us, for all that lives etc.)

A thing would be defined once all creatures had asked "what is that?" and had answered their question. Supposing one single creature, with all its own relationships and perspectives for all things were missing, then the thing would not yet be "defined."

In short the essence of a thing is only an opinion about the "thing" or rather "it is considered," is the real "it is," the sole "this is." 35

and:

Insofar as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning, the world is knowable, but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind but countless meanings. - Perspectivism. 37

Further Nietzsche holds that a point of view is not entirely accidental, nor arbitrary nor merely subjective. It is necessitated by motives (causes) whose origin lies with life. Or, life in the process of its own enhancement creates points of view -- perspectives. 38

Though Nietzsche does describe his standpoint as that of Perspectivism, there nonetheless remains the problem of a criterion to evaluate not only Nietzsche's own position but any "perspective." If all cognitive judgements are merely perspectives can they be proved to be true or false; or are
they all true or all false? Is perspectivism itself a
perspective? Is it open to epistemological evaluation?
Can we legitimately call it "true" or false?

Danto asks: "Does perspectivism entail that perspectivism
is but a perspective, so that the truth of this doctrine
entails that it is false?" It is possible to argue, as
Danto is aware, that the truth of Nietzsche's perspectivism
depends on a pragmatic criterion of truth. Thus a perspective
"p is true and q is false if p works and q does not." But Danto has not really argued his point.

The real problem, in Nietzsche's context, arises
because life is to decide the usefulness of a perspective.
Nietzsche reifies life into an animated kind of being that
has its own motives and its own perspectival objectives.
The fact that human beings carry on a Sisyphean task of
investigation is only incidental to the fact that life
has a use for them. The unfoldment of life is itself
dependent on a large number of unknown conditions. Therefore
in Nietzsche's perspectival pragmatism, as one may call it,
the problem would remain, what or who is to decide the
usefulness or uselessness of a perspective. No doubt life
"enhancement" is for Nietzsche the most important criterion
for judgement. But enhancement is itself, as we shall see, a difficult concept. By what scale are we to measure it?

**Positivism:** Though Nietzsche's criticisms are negative in trying to show the limits of language, reason, "facts," and "truth," there are nonetheless some positivist epistemological elements in his work. For example, he went through a phase in which he showed his disillusionment with art and respect for science and scientific method. His investigations into diverse problems reveal a quasi-methodology which emphasizes the origin and history of ideas. The later Nietzsche still maintains a respect for science and scientific method. He talks about a "method" to glean "small truths" and "facts." He says what is imperative, "the essential," is the development of methods and the "sense for facts... the most important of all the senses." He claims to have won back from Christianity a free view of reality, the cautious hand, patience and seriousness in the smallest things, the whole integrity of knowledge.

Another method he proposes is the skill of interpretation "the incomparable art of reading well... the prerequisite for a cultural tradition, for a uniform science." Mary Warnock and Kaufmann give some credence to Nietzsche's concern for small facts and truths. J.P. Stern
and Danto deny that he was ever serious about them. 47

However so, it is clear from Nietzsche's notes and his "experimental" philosophising that though at certain stages he is influenced by, and develops, a quasi-positivist outlook, he is nonetheless critical of science. He is critical of it to the extent that it is motivated by the optimistic delusion that it, and it alone, has the right to make truth claims. He seems to say that scientific claims are always couched in that manner peculiar to the rationalists, who used such terms as necessary truths, eternal truths and who always endeavoured for objectivity and certainty in their conclusions. Though he argues that knowledge is contingent or perspectival, he seems not to have allowed such concessions to the claims of science. It is widely recognised today that scientific claims are contingent and hypothetical and are open-ended systems. Karl Popper cautiously remarks that science indeed is conjectural and fallible and may harbour "unscientific" elements. He says:

"our guesses are guided by the unscientific, the metaphysical (though biologically explicable) faith in laws, in regularities which we can uncover." 48
Nietzsche's intention was to expose the boundaries of philosophy and science. These he thought, lay in the prejudices, beliefs and value preferences of philosophers and scientists, and he tried to show that these were peculiar either to the milieu or to the psychological inclinations of those who propounded them. Nietzsche was, however, not as serious as Popper in trying to work out objective, scientific criteria, nor was he as tolerant as Popper. Indeed, he was intolerant enough to debunk the whole of philosophy and science on the grounds that they were moved by a metaphysical illusion. For him the belief in truth was a sign of decadence. It was a critique of this belief which he sought to incorporate into a position of philosophical nihilism.

**Problems:** Nietzsche's whole conception of nihilism may be said to rest on weak conceptual grounds. For example, the whole activity of the pursuit of religion, metaphysics, philosophy and science, in so far as they make truth claims, are put into the class of "morality" in a somewhat blanket stroke. For Nietzsche truth is a value and specifically a moral value in that it harbours beliefs and convictions. As against this we may say that the proper referent of morality is human action. Its domain includes deliberation,
decision making and the evaluation of actions through established criteria. On the other hand the proper referent of knowledge or truth is cognition. The latter may include complicated procedures: perception, reason, linguistic and semantic understanding and the following of institutionalized norms, rules, restrictions, and certain formal procedures. Further, moral beliefs can be distinguished from those beliefs which may be useful in the pursuit of knowledge. Strictly speaking, cognitive judgments ought to be free of mere belief, whereas moral judgments are often the result of one's beliefs and convictions. Thus one could go on distinguishing knowledge from morality. They are certainly not the same thing; nor can one assert that they cannot be related to each other. Since these problems require extensive analysis, they are best left aside for the moment.

Nietzsche may be accused of confusing, in an unjustified manner, the concepts of knowledge, truth and morality. Though he did try to break loose from traditional philosophical language, especially the one used by metaphysics, one may question whether he did succeed in doing so. His extreme philosophical generalizations and his use of image and metaphor may prove to be altogether frustrating. As Copleston puts it:
If Nietzsche is in fact reaching out after the hitherto unthought, he cannot tell us what it is. Indeed we might ask what it is.

There are further problems that his position of nihilism throws up. Firstly, there is his attempt to deny the possibility of making cognitive judgements, and on the other hand the attempt to say at least something about the world and man—to see the limits of thought and to break new grounds for thought. The tension is typical of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Secondly, a point that remains ambiguous throughout Nietzsche: what is nihilism? On the one hand nihilism is Platonism, the very fact that a world transcending the phenomenal world has been postulated. On the other hand, as we shall see, nihilism is also the philosophical reversal of Platonism including Nietzsche's skepticism.

The problem can be partially met by maintaining the distinction we made between the "weak" senses of nihilism (e.g. Platonism) and the "strong" sense of nihilism (e.g. Nietzsche's own philosophical nihilism). Though Nietzsche is aware of the two senses, his last word about the latter sense remains ambiguous.

Finally the position of philosophical nihilism faces logical problems. Nietzsche did go on to formulate a
metaphysics of the "will to power". However, the fact that he does so proves nihilism false. Further, we cannot even evaluate nihilism. To call it true would entail the falsity of its own propositions. To assume the truth of its presuppositions would entail its falsity. 52

Danto has clearly seen the general implications of Nietzsche's philosophical nihilism. Kaufmann, however, claims that Nietzsche was a cognitivist. He argues convincingly that for Nietzsche, conviction, usefulness, pleasure, conduciveness to the preservation of life are no "proofs" for truth. Rather, he asserts, Nietzsche subscribed to a kind of experimental method. 53 However, the goal is not, as Kaufmann seems to think, "truth", the goal of experimentation is how far truth can lead to an enhancement of the life-process. We have said that Nietzsche's most fundamental concern is with "life", and specifically the conditions that enhance or debilitate life. Thus he says:

"the ultimate question about the conditions of life has been posed here, and we confront the first attempt to answer this question by experiment. To what extent can truth endure incorporation?". That is the question; that is the experiment. 54

Kaufmann is aware that Nietzsche thought that "though the intellect is an instrument, its figments should frankly be labelled as fictions". However, he goes on,
The question arises, of course, from what point of view the fictions of the intellect could possibly be criticised and found to be only fictions.

Then comes Kaufmann's strange assertion that:

With Kant, Nietzsche believes in reason's capacity for self-criticism and the fictions in question may be found to be either self-contradictory or to contradict each other. To be held in offering such criticism is part of the service of truth.

Against Kaufmann it could be argued that Nietzsche believed that fictions could replace fictions, but this would not depend on the laws of either logic or rationality. The efficacy of incorporation into life is ultimately the decisive factor.

As opposed to Kaufmann's interpretation that Nietzsche believed in "reason's capacity for self-criticism," we would like to quote a few lines of Nietzsche. The latter shows the difficulty of formulating a critique of reason qua reason. Nietzsche asks why philosophical systems ultimately collapse. Kant would have replied because they failed to examine the very nature of rationality itself. Nietzsche calls this position "ridiculous."

How can reason criticise itself?

Was it not rather strange to demand that an instrument itself should recognize its own worth, power, and limits? Was it not even just a little ridiculous?
Here is another passage which, in a somewhat similar vein, points to the difficulty of achieving an extra perspec­tival position to examine the intellect. The problem is again a lack of criterion.

The intellect cannot criticize itself, simply because it cannot be compared with other species of intellect and because its capacity to know would be revealed only in the presence of "true reality," i.e., because in order to criticize the intellect we should have to be a higher being with "absolute knowledge." 58

Danto and Kaufmann have had an acrimonious debate in footnotes about their conflicting interpretations on Nietzsche on truth. Both select crucial passages from the Genealogy of Morals and The Gay Science to argue their points.

The problem may be said to arise out of Nietzsche's explicit assertion that he himself could be accused of harbouring a faith in this metaphysical value "that God is truth, that truth is divine." 59

From this Kaufmann concludes: "that is how Nietzsche considers himself 'still pious', that is Nietzsche's faith." 60 He goes on "Nietzsche did not condemn Geist and the passion for truth, but declares truth to be 'divine'". 61

Danto charges Kaufmann for having completely ignored, in arriving at this conclusion, the very next lines that succeed the passage in which Nietzsche asserts that he too
could be accused of having faith in truth. Nietzsche says:

But what if this itself always becomes more untrustworthy, what if nothing any longer proves itself divine except it be error, blindness and falsehood — what if God himself turns out to be our most persistent lie? 

And here the section ends. Surely this later note of "what if" looms large and forebodingly over Nietzsche's previous remark about the divinity of truth. Danto does well to point out to Kaufmann the significance of the motto of the Fifth Book of the *Gay Science*: "Carneasse, tu trembles? Tu tremblerais bien davantage, si tu savais, ce qui te mène." For Nietzsche is indeed here taking the drastic step towards a total philosophical nihilism — there is no truth.

As against Kaufmann's thesis that Nietzsche was a "cognitivist" a further argument could be forwarded: if cognition logically precludes from it as it should, piety, morality, belief, faith, then would Nietzsche say: "I am pious, a moralist, have a faith and therefore I am a cognitivist?" Decidedly not. He would rather say: "I am a non-cognitivist precisely because I am pious, have a faith, believe that there is truth." He says quite clearly: "'Faith' as an imperative is a veto against science." 63

* Man, you tremble! you would tremble more if you know where I am leading you.
In passing we may observe that an aspect of Nietzsche's philosophical nihilism which seems to have gone largely unexamined is the way in which Nietzsche builds contradiction into the very position he wishes to adopt. Nietzsche was aware of the philosophical traditions where contradiction is recognized, tolerated and, perhaps, overcome. He refers to Kant 64 and Hegel 65 in this context. Briefly, he says that his book The Dawn is pessimistic in the sense that it tolerates contradiction. How the contradiction comes about is as follows: the belief in truth is a moral value. This belief, in the course of history, produces a "conscience" or truthfulness. The latter, however, turns upon the belief in truth and finds it to be merely an illusion. Thus truthfulness negates the belief in truth.

For it, The Dawn represents a contradiction and one which it does not fear; in it confidence in morals is retracted—but why? Out of morality! ....... In us is consumed if you desire a formula—the self-suppression of morals. 66

Thus in keeping with Nietzsche's rather ambiguous formulation of nihilism we may isolate two antinomies which are at the very least essential to it. These antinomies are found throughout Nietzsche's works. Thus:

1. We believe there is truth.

   There is no truth.

2. Truth is a moral value.

   Truth is refuted out of morality.
The value of truth: Nietzsche, we may observe, cannot be called merely a skeptic by virtue of the fact that he believes that truth and knowledge are not possible. His position is one of philosophical nihilism because he believes that the denial of truth and knowledge turns man towards nothingness. Man, however, does not like the thought or the feeling or the experience of nothingness.

Nietzsche asserts (in the *Genealogy*) that we must ask the question: what was the value of truth? Or, in his language, what was the value of the will to truth? (Without being overtly bothered by Nietzsche's use of "will" at this point, we could at a minimum understand it to mean the whole activity of the search for truth, including its assertion.)

So strong is this will to truth, Nietzsche says, that it has structured itself into, and become a part of, man's being. As such, it acts as an "unqualified will for truth." 67

Briefly, he incorporates the belief in truth into the class of what he calls "ascetic ideals" man's fantastic intellectual creations which are a shield against his horror of nothingness.

Man, Nietzsche says, guesses at moments that the world is valueless, that there is no world of Truth. Yet he has to give meaning to his existence, to his suffering. Rather than follow up nihilism by a process of destruction and self-annihilation he invents ideals which
entail a kind of asceticism — abandoning all else for the sake of an ideal. He renounces some instincts and passions and creates values and goals for himself. He is saved from destroying himself. The greatest development out of the ascetic ideals is the will to truth. By its constant refinement man is able to go beyond the apparent, chaotic world of meaninglessness and create a stable real world which would henceforth be called the world of Truth.

The motives for this procedure, according to Nietzsche, can only be found with life. Life needs enhancement. Rather than embark upon regression, decadence and self-annihilation, it needs stability and consolidation. This is provided by the will to truth. Truth is not possible but error is valuable:

Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for life is ultimately decisive.

That being so, Nietzsche even justifies the fact that Truth or a metaphysical world have been posited. Though errors, they were valuable to life within a specific historical context. However, he denies them epistemological value:
The characteristics which have been assigned to the "real being" of things are the characteristics of non-being, or nothingness — the "real world" has been constructed out of a contradiction to the actual world — a moral optical illusion.

Though the creation of a "real world" or "true world" is of no epistemological value, is nihilism, yet their creation has value for the enhancement of life.

ART

Since the *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche sought to estimate the nature and value of both truth and art.

Very early in my life I took the question of the relation of art to truth seriously; even now I stand in holy dread in the face of this discordance. My first book was devoted to it. The *Birth of Tragedy* believes in art on the background of another belief — that it is not possible to live with truth, that the "will to truth" is already a symptom of degeneration.

For Nietzsche, the confrontation between art and truth was a dread-inducing confrontation and he resolved it in favour of art.

The belief in a true world was nihilism. The belief pervaded the entire history of thought, including the history of science. The alternative to nihilism was art:

Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decadent forms of man. The countermovement is art.

And:

Art as the only superior counterforce to all will denial of life, as that which is anti-Christian, anti-buddhist, anti-nihilism par excellence.

Nietzsche wished to develop two notions of art.
a) in seeing all forms of life as basically art forms and
b) in viewing all human activity as basically artistic
activity. In such a context there is no clear demarcation
in Nietzsche between art and non-art, artists and non-artists.
His interest in the fine arts and artists in the strict sense
is comparatively marginal.

For Nietzsche life is sui generis and the "form of
being most familiar to us". As such, Nietzsche found the
closest analogue of the very nature of life in art. Both are
essentially creative, ever opening out new forms, new perspec-
tives, new evaluations. He sees the whole cosmic process as
one of constant creation and destruction and he frequently
uses the imagery of "play", "dance of the gods" and the "dance
of appearance" to describe the creative cosmic process. Seeing
the analogous nature of life and art he asserts that it is
"only as aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world
are eternally justified."  

On the one hand the world is seen as a work of art
"that gives birth to itself". On the other hand art is
the "most perspicuous and familiar configuration" of
the world.

If life is an art form in an extended sense, then
so is all human activity:
According to the expanded concept of artist, art is the basic occurrence of all beings; to the extent that they are, beings are self-creating, created.

In his early writings Nietzsche had identified in man a "middle sphere" and a "middle faculty" in which the transformation of the world into experience takes place. Whereas for Kant the manifold of sense intuitions is given form through strict a priori categories, Nietzsche's "phenomenon" is essentially an aesthetic rendering of bare sensation.

I mean an intimation transference, a sort of halting, stammering translation into an entirely foreign language; for which purpose we need a freely poetizing, a freely inventive middle sphere and middle faculty.

And Nietzsche goes on to subsume almost all intellectual activity under art. The artist himself, in the strict sense, is but a "preliminary stage" in the understanding of all human activity.

Art, Nietzsche says, provides existence with various kinds of illumination, it transfigures existence, lends it ever new perspectives. It strengthens or weakens certain valuations. It is a kind of mirror in which man may behold himself for what he is: "It is your life. It is the hour hand of the clock of your existence." While the will to truth creates fixed perspectives, illusions called truths, art gives freedom of perspective. Thus Nietzsche says

"more divine" than truth: art and "art is worth more than truth."
In seeing art as more fundamental than truth and seeing art as a countermovement to nihilism, Nietzsche wished to see how far the individual himself becomes, or can become, or ought to become a self-created work of art. Nietzsche's call goes to the individual to shape himself into a new type of man, to search for and recognize his own necessity and his own freedom. He envisages such a project under the title "How One Becomes What One Is".

In the present context we must see how Nietzsche looks upon the artist. For Nietzsche "art must be grasped in terms of the artist". This means that for Nietzsche art and artist are inseparable. If they are to be distinguished they must also be seen as being closely related.

Further, the artist can be described in certain physiological terms. Nietzsche did not view art from the point of view of the observer. Neither did he lay down norms or rules for the creation of art or aesthetic enjoyment. Rather he states the condition of the artist in which art arises.

Nietzsche describes the fundamental aesthetic state as intoxication. Intoxication itself, he says, could arise from a variety of causes from "great desires", "strong emotions", feasting, contest, the brave deed, victory, extreme agitation, cruelty, destruction, "meteorological influences", spring... ... narcotics".
The form of intoxication to which Nietzsche gives the greatest importance is the "intoxication of the will" of an overloaded and distended will. The essence of such intoxication is the "feeling of plenitude and increased energy." In such conditions one sees everything as "swollen, pressing, strong, overlaid with energy."

Corresponding to Nietzsche's classification of art impulses under the symbols of Apollonian and Dionysian, there are two basic kinds of intoxication:

Apollonian intoxication alerts above all the eye, so that it acquires power of vision. The painter, the sculptor, the epic poet are visionaries par excellence. In the Dionysian state, on the other hand, the entire emotional system is alerted and intensified so that it discharges all its powers of representation, imitation, transfiguration, communication, every kind of mimicry and play acting, conjointly... It is impossible for the Dionysian man not to understand any suggestion of whatever kind, he ignores no signal from the emotions, he possesses to the highest degree the instinct for understanding and divining, just as he possesses the art of communication to the highest degree.

The artist receives the creative impulses from life and then is compelled to bestow his received plenitude onto everything or everyone around him.

From out of this feeling (of intoxication) one compels them to take, one robs them —one calls this procedure idealizing.
In short then, the artist gives form to himself and to everything around him. For Nietzsche the artist creates art in accordance with the standards of which he himself is the perfect embodiment. He gives form to things until they become reflections of "his power— until they are reflections of his perfection." He himself is the standard of beauty: "In the beautiful man sets himself up as the standard of perfection." 89

To conclude, we have so far tried to show Nietzsche's views on knowledge and truth, Platonism and metaphysics. As an alternative Nietzsche looked to art. As we shall be seeing again and again one may wonder whether Nietzsche does at all overcome nihilism, whether on his own grounds he himself is not a nihilist. Nietzsche's intention is to concentrate on how philosophy (metaphysics and epistemology) and science have been a kind of denial of the sensuous, of the apparent — a denial of life.