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April 9, 2025

Politics of the Will: A Study of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

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An abstract of  
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences  
of Emory University in partial fulfillment  
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Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Philosophy, Politics, and Law

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## Abstract

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Schopenhauer's idea of the will and Nietzsche's expansion on the former's will to life, and his rejection of God were utterly revolutionary by attempting to destroy religious and ethical values. Their metaphysics have been thoroughly explored and have continued to inspire philosophers like Heidegger and Derrida. However, as the main proposers of the will, their political thought has often been shadowed by their metaphysics. This thesis presents an overview and critique of their political thought. The method of examination is an internal reading of these two thinkers' own philosophical views with the aim of situating their political philosophies within their broader metaphysical views. The first part of this thesis studies Schopenhauer's metaphysics and politics. He believed an absolute monarchy and intellectual aristocracy were the best form of government. Using the lens of his metaphysics and morals, his political thought is shown to be unaligned with his larger worldview. Instead, I argue that a liberal state is more consistent with his previous work. Schopenhauer's politics is thus refuted within his metaphysical framework. The second part of this thesis explores Nietzsche's political thought, which expanded on Schopenhauer's. The latter influenced Nietzsche's early and late work, but Nietzsche went further in claiming that the universe is meaningless and not pessimistic. This allows his politics, which, at first, place the creation of genius as the goal of the state, and which later become anti-state, to fit the worldview he establishes as his metaphysics. Ultimately, Nietzsche's early political philosophy that declares the creation of genius as the main goal of the state, and his late thought, which attempts to refute the foundations of the state, are seen as congruent with his *weltanschauung* and shown as the true politics of the will.

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## Acknowledgements

Thank you, Dr. Mitchell, for fueling the passion for aesthetics in me, especially in its political implications, for introducing me to Schopenhauer and Wagner, and for taking time to allowing me to pursue these ideas. Thank you to my mom and dad for their love and supporting me to have this education and for continuing to fuel my love of philosophy and writing. ¡Muchas gracias!

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# Politics of the Will: A Study of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

Agustin Zelikson

## Introduction

Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche are two of the most important philosophers of the nineteenth century. Schopenhauer developed one of the first “pessimistic” metaphysical frameworks in the history of philosophy. Instead, Nietzsche went beyond the moral implications of pessimism and declared the world to be without inherent meaning. Their philosophy is closely intertwined as the latter considered the former his first philosophical teacher. Just like Schopenhauer can be seen as an extension of Immanuel Kant, Nietzsche can also be perceived as a disciple of Schopenhauer. Their metaphysics have been some of the most revolutionary philosophical works ever written.

## The Will

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche see the will as the fundamental force driving existence, but they conceive of it differently. For Schopenhauer, the Will to Life (*Wille zum Leben*) is a blind, irrational force that governs all life, compelling individuals to strive endlessly without ultimate purpose. This will is insatiable, causing endless dissatisfaction, and, as is explained in Chapter I, the only escape from its grip is through aesthetic contemplation, asceticism and ultimate death. For Schopenhauer, the will is a tragic force, making existence a pessimistic cycle of striving and disappointment. Nietzsche, deeply influenced by Schopenhauer’s metaphysical view, initially



accepted this notion of will, as seen in Chapter III. Still, he reinterpreted and transformed it into the Will to Power (*Wille zur Macht*). Instead of a passive, suffering-driven force, Nietzsche's will is a creative and affirmative drive that seeks growth and overcoming obstacles.

While Schopenhauer believes that true liberation comes from negating the will, as personified in the ascetic figure, Nietzsche embraces it and revalues it as the force behind all greatness, from art to philosophy to politics. Nietzsche's Will to Power extends beyond survival and suffering—it is the force that drives individuals to transform their lives and create new meaning in a universe devoid of intrinsic morals. Unlike Schopenhauer's view that suffering is an inevitable curse of existence, Nietzsche sees suffering as necessary and even desirable: it fuels self-overcoming and the creation of new values. The Will to Power allows individuals to affirm life in its totality. While Nietzsche borrows Schopenhauer's insight that will is the underlying force of life, he ultimately rejects the idea that it must be escaped or negated, instead transforming it into a philosophy of self-overcoming. This thesis explores both of their work as the prominent two preachers of the “will” and investigates how they reach their political conclusions through their individual ideas of the will.

## Thesis

While their metaphysics have been extensively explored, this thesis sheds light on their political thought. Both had anti-democratic ideas and would not be well-regarded today. However, ignoring them is not the way to understand these two philosophers. They believed their political philosophy to be embedded within their conception of the world. Schopenhauer uses his metaphysics from *The World as Will and Representation* to justify his political beliefs. Nietzsche used his ideas of morality and values that helps develop his political thought.

Therefore, exploring their politics within their metaphysical frameworks is important to understand their ideas. This work seeks to put forth nuanced research on both Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's political thought and investigate them through the lens of their metaphysics instead of our own current political perspectives. This will allow probing whether their political thought is congruent with their metaphysics. Furthermore, the ties between the two will be shown as Nietzsche took many concepts from Schopenhauer and developed them to fit his idea of the world. **Ultimately, Schopenhauer's politics shall be understood as insufficient for his metaphysics of the will. Meanwhile, some of the same political ideas that influenced Nietzsche will be shown to work according to the latter's worldview. Schopenhauer fails to set about an actual politics of the will, and Nietzsche succeeds in that endeavor, at first creating a political philosophy that is based on his metaphysics and worldview, while later dismantling political philosophy with his anti-morality.**

This thesis will be developed in two parts. The first two chapters will be dedicated to Schopenhauer and the last two to Nietzsche.

## Part I: Arthur Schopenhauer

### Chapter I: Introduction to Schopenhauer's Thought

The first chapter introduces Schopenhauer's metaphysics and ethics, which is a crucial step toward understanding his political thought in Chapter II. It describes Schopenhauer's theory of the will from his *magnum opus*. For him, the world is representation (what we perceive as real) and will (the actual essence of the world). At first sight, we do not seem to have knowledge

of this essence since we perceive the world through our bodies as objective. We think everything occurs according to cause and effect in time and space, and we see our bodies as immediate objects, too, much like the rest of the world. But there is something else in humans, something unique. We are active players in time and space. We do not act like a leaf that is moved in a series of causes and effects but instead move ourselves. We have a will. We play an active role in the world as we move, talk, act, and reflect. For Schopenhauer, there is a part of us that is outside causation but that instead causes. He believes that through this will, we can understand the essence of the world. Because multiplicity can only occur where there is space, anything outside time and space must be uniform. This same will we feel must also then be the same essence for everything in the world. Thus arises the idea of “will” as the thing-in-itself.

According to Schopenhauer, the whole purpose of the will is to keep willing. From nature to humans, all nature strives for more at every moment. Just like the plants want more sun, humans want more food, drink, or love. Once the wish is attained, another goal takes its place. Our lives are endless desires and thus doomed to non-fulfilment, a hopeless condition except for aesthetics. Through art, humans, as the highest objectification of the will, momentarily transcend the “will-to-life” and instead become pure observers, free from personal striving and desire. In this state, they detach from individual existence and the relentless drive of the will, which allows them to perceive reality in its purest form. They experience a deeper connection to the essence of the world, seeing it not as a place of suffering but as a realm of aesthetic contemplation through the beauty of art. Still, once the art is gone, so is this contemplation, and humans revert back to endless desire.

To indeed negate the will-to-life and this world of illusion, as he calls it, one must become an ascetic. Schopenhauer explains that the ascetics from Hinduism and Christianity

negate their desires and do not give in to their wishes. Instead, they live a plain life where the illusion of representation is gone, and the essence is felt. Schopenhauer, therefore, has a very pessimistic view of life, and the only ones who can be free of our worldly desires are those who transcend representation.

His ethics are explanatory and not prescriptive. He does not believe that there is a moral imperative that we must follow and know *a priori* as Kant had argued. Instead, Schopenhauer believes that most people are not ethical but egotistical, caring only for themselves since they are lost in the principle of individuation that makes us believe we *are* the whole world. Actual ethical humans see beyond this individuation and help other people since they are the same; they share the same essence and will.

Although this chapter initially does not seem political, this explanatory chapter is crucial to understanding Schopenhauer's political thoughts in Chapter II. Using the metaphysical world described in this first chapter, his politics can be dissected and critiqued as incongruent with his true philosophy.

## Chapter II: An Overview and Critique of Schopenhauer's Politics

This chapter delves into Schopenhauer's political ideas in *The World as Will and Representation* and his subsequent addition of *Parerga and Paralipomena*. It first explains how he derives his politics from his metaphysics, but it subsequently shows how the actual state that is valid through his metaphysics is that of a republic and not a monarchy.

Schopenhauer believes in a state of nature similar to that of Locke. Under this conception of society, people choose to go under a social contract that protects their rights of life and property from other egotistical individuals who want to fulfill their will-to-life and have no care

for others because the will to life makes us think we are the whole world, and the only thing that matters. The state here serves as a counter-motive to wrong-doing as set up in his ethics.

Until this point, I argue that his political thought derives from his metaphysics and ethics. That logical line is broken when he explains his ideal state: Schopenhauer concludes that a hereditary monarch is the best ruler with an intellectual aristocracy that the majority supports. I argue that these thoughts are incongruent with his metaphysics. Using his metaphysical idea of equality of will (we all share the same essence), the idea of some living with more rights than others runs parallel. A society cannot be equal, while some are above the law. The idea of a hereditary monarch being better because their family's fate is attached to the state's state is also debunked. This is done by using Machiavelli's *The Prince* as an example of a sovereign who uses his role as a leader to fulfill his egoistic desires without genuinely caring for his subjects.

Instead, I propose that the actual Schopenhauerian state is a republic. In a liberal republic, every citizen holds the same rights and is protected from each other. No one is above the rule of law, and the state is a counter-motive to all wrongdoing. Here, I delve into his critique of republics, mainly of the 19th-century United States, and show how his ideas have been proven wrong. He talks of republics not lasting long and having to be set up with slaves, but the modern United States shows that this is not necessarily true. His biases are shown, and instead, the path toward the actual Schopenhauerian state (based on his metaphysics and morals of the will) is set up.

## Part II: Friedrich Nietzsche

### Chapter III: Nietzsche's Early Schopenhauerian Politics

This chapter explores Friedrich Nietzsche's early political thought, as seen in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, and his *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*. Nietzsche is the clear next step in Schopenhauer's thought. Still, although an avid follower of Schopenhauer at the time, he had some crucial differences, including his Wagnerian view of art and his Hellenism and image of Dionysian tragedy as the redemptive force in society. These influences and differences, especially regarding the basis of their politics, are shown in this chapter.

I first explore his main "Schopenhauerian" work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, and especially Nietzsche's idea of genius, which was inspired by Schopenhauer's work. In this book, he develops two similar concepts to will and representation: the Dionysian and the Apollonian. For Nietzsche, there is not a singular will; instead, there are drives that move us into action and show the essence of the world. While the Apollonian is like the veil of illusion mentioned in Schopenhauer, the Dionysian is the deeper essence. This essence is bereft of moral connotations for Nietzsche and is not negative like Schopenhauer's. The Dionysian serves to see the meaninglessness and then affirm life through the creation of arts like Greek tragedy. This leads to his idea of genius: the person who can return to the Dionysian of the Greeks shows the essence of the world—creating and affirming a new human meaning.

Nietzsche's early philosophy is a proposal for the creation of such genius. To create it, he thinks the state should be greatly involved and treat its citizens unequally. This is clearly Schopenhauer's anti-democratic influence. Where Nietzsche goes further—and where his

philosophy is consistent while Schopenhauer's isn't—is that he does not have an idea of equality of will. His metaphysics establishes that we cannot know the real essence of the world. The only way to give meaning is by creating it through art. If there isn't a true meaning to the world, then there isn't equality under the law or a social contract to be established; even more, there is no need for a democratic republic. Instead, Nietzsche believes that the state and the educational institutions should be anti-democratic and highly elitist so that the genius can return. Although incompatible with our views of current politics, I argue it is congruent with his philosophy.

#### Chapter IV: Nietzsche's Politics as Beyond Good and Evil

The final chapter explores Nietzsche's mature works: *Joyful Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Beyond Good and Evil*. As his metaphysics becomes more evident, so does his political philosophy: he becomes anti-political. He propels humans to create meaning through art, action, and even what we consider evil. In fact, he believes sometimes, the most evil humans are the ones who advance society the most. His genius now becomes the overman, as Zarathustra explains, and he takes a step towards revolutionizing philosophy—metaphysics and politics—forever.

By again establishing that we should get rid of morality and religion altogether, which is a step that Schopenhauer did not take, Nietzsche also seeks to destroy the foundations of politics. Nietzsche argues that the overman should not only overcome himself but also society. It does not take one “higher man” to overcome himself and his morality, but he instead believes that a genius needs to help society advance. He thus places the state as something that must be overcome, and this idea of the overman is also congruent with his metaphysics unlike Schopenhauer. The idea of genius can still be traced back to Schopenhauer, but at this point, Nietzsche is far advanced in his own conception of the world. The will has become the *will to*

*power*, the drive through which the overman will overcome society. The genius from his early work now has no space in politics, but only through outside can he further society.

This chapter seeks to find Nietzsche's ultimate politics: the demise of the state. In its essence, late Nietzsche is profoundly anti-political. As he deepens his ideas about a meaningless universe, he also lets go of the idea of the state as necessary. In fact, it becomes an obstacle for the overman to achieve his purpose, as it strives to be the finger of God upon the earth. The ultimate politics of the will now become clear: the state is to be overcome. Although Nietzsche does not appear to say what the state after the overman will be, it becomes apparent that in a society of overmen, morality will be subjective and each person will create their own meaning.

## Conclusion

This Honors Thesis explores these two great philosophers and the political implications of their metaphysics. It shows their thought and establishes whether their politics is congruent with their celebrated metaphysics. This work sheds light on how anti-democratic, and even anti-political thinking can be understood under a different conception than our modern one. It also presents the biases of great philosophers and how they can deviate from the true meaning of the work.

In writing this thesis, I hope I have done justice to Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's political philosophy and shown how it fits into their conceptions of the world. Doing this study solely through the lens of their philosophy allows us to be detached from our current beliefs and biases. However, it is also important to remember our own conception of modern society and understand that it could be different under a different set of foundational thought.



Through these four chapters, the ultimate politics of the will are presented. Schopenhauer's political thought does not represent his metaphysics when seen through the lens of his own philosophy. Instead, Nietzsche's addition and challenge to Schopenhauer allow his politics of the will to be congruent with his worldview. Although Nietzsche's early politics owe much to Schopenhauer, his later metaphysical shift allows his political philosophy of the will to remain a solid argument. Ultimately, a republic is shown to be the state that most fits Schopenhauer's philosophy. At the same time, according to his worldview, Nietzsche's state — or the anti-state — of the overman is seen as the actual politics of the will.

# Chapter I: Introduction to Schopenhauer's Thought

Abstract: This first chapter introduces Schopenhauer's metaphysics and ethics. Once the base is established, chapter II discusses the political implications of Chapter I. Ultimately, I will disagree with Schopenhauer's political thought and instead argue that his metaphysics and ethics allow for a liberal democracy.

## Introduction

Arthur Schopenhauer is the heir to Immanuel Kant's philosophy, and his expansion on the idea of noumenon is essential to understanding his views on metaphysics and its political repercussions. Kant originally proposed in the eighteenth century that there are two aspects of the world: one of them is what we are used to, the world as representation. This is how reality is known to us. We are not truly acquainted with any object; instead, we know an eye that sees that object or a hand that feels it. That feeling is a "representation" of the object, but not the object itself. This part of the world is grounded in space and time, and therefore causality, meaning that everything has a reason in the world of representation, which is where science can answer questions about nature. Kant proposes that we do not truly know the reality behind any object, the "thing-in-itself" of anything, which is independent of observation by a subject. This "noumenon" as opposed to the "phenomena" of the world we know is therefore impossible to understand. For example, humans can never truly understand the essence of the sun, i.e. what the sun is without a subjective observer, but only an eye that sees it and a body that is heated due to it - never the noumenon behind the representation (perception) of the sun.

Schopenhauer would agree with most of Kant's thoughts on the world as representation in his *World as Will and Representation* (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*). He first expands

on the idea of the World as Representation, the first side of an inseparable two-sided coin. Representations are seen by a subject, which he will later better define. This World of Representation is divided into two: that of abstract and intuitive representations. Intuitive representations “encompass the entire visible world or the whole of experience, including the conditions for the possibility of experience.”<sup>1</sup>

While all living beings have intuitive representations, only humans have abstract ones. They are subordinated to the Principle of Sufficient Reason. First there is matter, i.e space and time. Since all material objects must exist somewhere at some time, there can be no matter outside of these conditions. Matter is nothing more than that which occupies space and persists through time (it has extension and duration.) Matter allows for causality in the World of Representation: an object can be in one position in space at one moment, but then change the next. At the same moment, there can be different objects in different places. “Each moment in time exists only in so far as it has annihilated the previous moment, ... past and future ... are as unreal as any dream; ... the present is only the border between the two and so has neither extension nor duration... as it is with time, so it is with space, and as it is with space, so it is with everything that is in both space and time: everything therefore, that arises from cause or motive exists only relatively.”<sup>2</sup> One moment is the demise of the previous one, and the next of this one, *ad infinitum*. Objects cannot exist outside of time, and time cannot exist without objects. The Principle states that everything must have a reason or cause, and asserts that nothing happens without a rational explanation for its occurrence. For Schopenhauer, we are conscious of this Principle *a priori*, since we need it to understand and organize the world. We are born

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 28.

understanding space and time: things flow continually through time, and different objects are placed at different positions in space. The Principle is therefore part of our consciousness. Without it, there is no world of objects as we perceive it. “[The world] is intuitive representation, developing in a lawlike manner according to the structures of causality.”<sup>3</sup> There is no subject without this, and no world of representation without the subject.

He then describes the body as our immediate object. It is the first representation we see and feel it gliding through causality, the starting point of cognition.<sup>4</sup> We first have immediate cognition, or pure sensation, of something that our bodies feel, and then we process it in our consciousness. Animals and humans also have cognition of causality— understanding— through our bodies. We are conscious of the causal relation between our bodies and that of others. Humans can then process this understanding through reflection. “*reflection*... is in fact a mirroring, something derived from intuitive cognition, although it has assumed a nature and constitution fundamentally different from such cognition and is ignorant of its forms; in it even the principle of sufficient reason, which governs all objects, takes on a completely different shape.”<sup>5</sup> This becomes important when the “subject” is panned out in his book 2.

Schopenhauer would expand on the idea of the noumenal world, making his philosophy revolutionary. He first determined that there cannot be “things-in-themselves” as Kant had theorized, but that outside representation there is only one thing-in-itself, that then is multiplied in the phenomenal world due to the *principium individuationis*. Since outside of the phenomenal world, there is no space and time, there is also no causality. There can only be one thing-in-itself in the noumenal because multiplicity is due to these two grounding factors (space and time).

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<sup>3</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 37.

<sup>4</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 41

<sup>5</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 59

Outside of space and time, there is no ground for different “things,” but only one. The same thing-in-itself is therefore behind the appearance of every phenomenal object. Furthermore, Schopenhauer disagreed with Kant’s idea that we cannot know anything about the noumenal world. He argued that we know the world in two different ways: as representation (where we see and feel through the immediate object of the body), and as an expression of Will. As mentioned, we do not see the world as mere spectators. Instead, we are active participants in it through our will. “the entire world as representation, is nonetheless completely mediated through a body whose affections...are the starting point for the understanding as it intuits this world... Movements would be just as foreign and incomprehensible as these other objects if their meaning were not unriddled in an entirely different way”<sup>6</sup> This is an intimate feeling that everyone has to move, think, and talk. Every movement of our body is both part of the world as representation, and also part of the world as will. This will is the key to the noumenal according to Schopenhauer. It is what we sense to be so close to us, what separates us from the other objects of the world as representation. Due to it, we are active and outside causality: a part of us is the uncaused cause of what happens to the phenomenological. It is thus our way to feel the noumenal world, even though Kant said it is unreachable to us. Since Schopenhauer had established that the thing-in-itself cannot have multiplicity, because it is outside of space and time, this means that the same will that I personally feel which shows me the noumenon is thus the same will as every other living and non-living thing in the universe. He therefore uses the word “Will” to connote the noumenal thing-in-itself which is the true reality behind every object, while the phenomenal world is the objectified will. “The will is completely different from its appearance and entirely free of all forms of appearance. Instead of Kant’s emphasis on the

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<sup>6</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 124

unreachability of the thing-on-itself, Schopenhauer says that our own actions reveal the Will as their underlying force, which allows to directly intuit the reality behind appearances. Since everything in the phenomenal world operates through causality, while our actions stem from the Will, we can know that the entire world is nothing but the Will. We can also know that there can only be one Will since there is no multiplicity outside representation, manifesting itself in different forms. The Will only takes on these forms when it appears, which is why these forms concern only its objecthood and are foreign to the will itself. The will has nothing to do with even the most general form of all representation.”<sup>7</sup> This is thus the noumenal part of the world that causes all of the phenomenal things we see, including our lives “a name signifying the being in itself of every thing in the world and the sole kernel of every appearance.”<sup>8</sup> According to the German philosopher, the Will’s sole purpose in the world of representation is to keep willing (or desiring.) Our lives, as objectified Will, are therefore subject to endless, pointless desiring. “As soon as they are attained they no longer look the same and thus are soon forgotten, grow antiquated, and are really, if not admittedly, always laid to the side as vanished delusions; we are lucky enough when there is still something left to desire and strive after, to carry on the game of constantly passing from desire to satisfaction and from this to a new desire, a game whose rapid course is called happiness and slow course is called suffering...every particular act has a goal; but the whole of willing has none.”<sup>9</sup>

## **Aesthetics as Respite**

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<sup>7</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 137

<sup>8</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 144

<sup>9</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 189

Although Schopenhauer's philosophy might seem very grim, as life is full of suffering, without any escape from endless desiring, he finds that in aesthetics there is a glimpse of hope. In Book 3 of *The World as Will and Representation*, which focuses on aesthetics, he begins by explaining how the Platonic Ideas are similar to Kant's noumena. Plato had established that every individual form exemplifies a higher Idea. This Idea was best represented by the most beautiful of the forms. These Ideas remain the same while the forms change. "What Plato calls the eternal Ideas or the unchanging forms in the particular levels of the objectivation of the will that constitutes the in-itself of the world ... We consider the will to be the thing in itself, and the Idea to be the immediate objecthood of that will on a specific level."<sup>10</sup> For Schopenhauer, the Idea is the representation closest to the Will; how the will shows itself in its most genuine form. They are the "primordial forms of all things." The idea is the first representation of the will, what Plato would call the 'most perfect.' The will has not yet been objectified in the way in which we normally intuit objects, but as a first representation before the world of objects appears. The objects that then appear are instantiations of the higher representation, the Idea. The trinity of the world is from pure Will to Idea to Object.

The Idea is thus the thing-in-itself in appearance. He says these Ideas correspond to the Will on specific levels, with the noumenal showing itself most in the highest ones. The first level is that of the natural forces. In the life-less world, every force is against each other, trying to gain more space in opposition to the others. These include electromagnetism, gravity, etc. This explains the chaotic nature of the universe. The Will's purpose in the world of representation is to endlessly desire, and this is why even at the lowest levels of objecthood, there is a constant battle for achieving pointless desires. The next level is that of plants: they do not have cognition,

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<sup>10</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 192

yet the Idea of plants wills to further the species, to both live and to put forth offspring. Everything the plant does in its lifetime is for these two goals, be it so moving towards the sun, or water. Then comes the Idea of the animal. It has cognition yet does not have reason. It strives to find a mate to make offspring, to then die, just like it strives for food and water to then yearn for them once more. The highest form of the Idea is that of humans. They have cognition, and also reason. This allows for a change: instead of the Will playing its role in intuition, reason now creates abstract thinking and thus makes the Will's desires abstract too. Humans cannot stop desiring but delude themselves through abstract thinking when it comes to the reason for their desires. In reality, Schopenhauer sees humans much like characters of a repeating play: the actors change throughout time but the plot remains the same. The Idea of humanity is the same, it shows the will to life at its highest form (to keep desiring for the fulfillment of the species), but it spreads itself in countless individuals through the *principium individuationis* (principle of individuation), i.e., different objects being distinguished from each other through matter. Every human character is thus the same throughout their life, but we get to know our character through experience.

Because humans are the highest form, though, they can free themselves from this endless desire, they can overcome the Will. Schopenhauer uses the metaphor of the statue of Apollo Belvedere in the Vatican: "The far-seeing head of the god of the Muses sits so freely on its shoulders that it seems entirely wrenched away from the body and no longer subject to its cares."<sup>11</sup> He believes this overcoming occurs mostly as an exception, namely in contemplating beauty. It is said that in pure contemplation of an object, we lose ourselves; Schopenhauer takes this saying to its most literal sense: he believes that the individual becomes aware of the Idea

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<sup>11</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 200



(sees the noumenal in its immediate objecthood), and becomes “the pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of cognition.”<sup>12</sup> “Pure” since the subject is now aware of the highest Idea, the beauty that Plato talks about; “Will-less” because the objecthood of the will is gone, and instead remains the noumenon; “painless” because the endless desire that comes with living is foregone, and instead only the aesthetic object remains. All the sufferings that life is full of go away, as the abstract thinking also leaves. For a moment, the subject understands that the same thing he is made up of also makes up the beautiful object of contemplation. Therefore, he has a respite from the world of continuous suffering and desire. The levels of art also correspond to the levels of the Idea, as they show the Will in different degrees. The highest of these is that of music. While every other art is a representation that lets the peaceful observer see the Idea or the closest objecthood of the will, music does not have spatial representation. It thus shows pure Will. This is the reason for the instant effect it has on humans. In music, we truly get lost, according to Schopenhauer. Art is part of genius, for him, is the most perfect objectivity, meaning that instead of being in the subject, consciousness becomes part of the object, of the world of representation. True geniuses are normally not living like most people. Everyday life becomes secondary and instead, their work transcends everything else as if they are distracted: “he takes the time to observe life itself, and strives to grasp the Idea of each thing, not its relations to other things: as a result he often fails to think about his own course of life, and generally pursues it rather clumsily.”<sup>13</sup> For most people, Schopenhauer says that this respite from the suffering caused by the will to life through art, is only a momentary break, and therefore not a way to fully negate the pestering life of illusion that humans live.

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<sup>12</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 201

<sup>13</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 211

## The Ultimate Savior: The Negation of the Will to Life

Schopenhauer considers that all redemption and punishment exist in the present moment in the world of representation. So much suffering exists in the world, and so many humans die in agony each second; poverty, and starvation. The moment is where all punishment resides, and it is all that exists. Most humans are thus punished. They endlessly desire or are bored. There is nothing else in their life apart from the will to life.

The negation of the will to life, the ultimate secession from the Will that desires endlessly, only comes through the life of the ascetic according to Schopenhauer. He explains both the will to life and the negation of this will. He says that the Will in the noumenal becomes the will to life in the phenomenological, since “life is nothing but the presentation of that willing for representation.”<sup>14</sup> This will to life is better shown with an example: that of sexual love. Humans believe that when they fall in love with another person they do so for merely egotistical reasons. Because of how they make them feel, how they look, or the pleasure they think they will feel. In reality, though, sexual love is all about the offspring; the continuation of the species. The Will shows it to us through the illusion of love, of being obsessed with a person and going so far as believing that every trouble one has in their life shall go away once they are with that person (when in reality the suffering continues until we die and return to pure Will.) It is all a way for us to conceive the next generation, and to further the species. The will to life shows itself as egotistical desire when in reality it exists to advance the Idea of Humanity.

This desire will then lead to two outcomes: either more desire and suffering, or boredom. Once everything has been achieved, and there is nothing else to desire, emptiness sinks in, and existence becomes boring for the human. Schopenhauer considers this as bad as suffering.

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<sup>14</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 301

Schopenhauer says there is one way to negate the will to life. It happens “when willing comes to an end with...cognition,”<sup>15</sup> meaning when a human’s gift of reason overcomes the motives of the world of appearance that leads to endless suffering and desire. He sees this as the life of the ascetic: “this deliberate breaking of the will by forgoing what is pleasant and seeking out what is unpleasant, choosing a lifestyle of penitence and self-castigation for the constant mortification of the will.”<sup>16</sup> There are few of these people in history, but they can come from any worldly religion. Christian and Hindu ascetics are the most predominant. Despite their different worldviews, they still achieve the same goal: to deny the illusions of the world of representation. Every desire that arises is part of the Will’s appearance in the phenomenological. They negate those desires: they fast for many days, sometimes even fast till death. They deny sexual pleasures, the most obvious way in which the will to life shows itself, and they understand the illusion of the world as representation. They intuit there is a “higher” world beyond appearances and they submit themselves to it. In the end, “if the negation of the will has arisen in someone, that person is full of inner joy and true heavenly peace, however poor, joyless and deprived his situation might look from the outside.”<sup>17</sup> In this peace, they also achieve freedom of will, meaning that the will no longer controls them. For Schopenhauer, this is the true meaning of redemption, and it is only found in this life of appearance after the ascetic lets go of representation, just like before it was all a world of punishment.

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<sup>15</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 311

<sup>16</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 419

<sup>17</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 416

## Why be Ethical Then?

Now that Schopenhauer's metaphysics has been understood, it is easy to see how his philosophy is characterized as pessimistic: the world is will, and life is full of endless suffering and unfulfilled desires. Humans have a pointless will to life, where, much like everything else in the universe, they continuously wish and strive for a better personal situation. In the end, though, they will only experience ache or boredom, along with certain death. It may then seem inherently contradictory that he argues for the ethics of compassion in his *Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals*.

In this compassion, humans momentarily see beyond their egoism and see the same will in themselves as in the person they are helping. In truth, Schopenhauer is not issuing a prescriptive claim but instead describing what is already part of human nature. As the highest objectification of the will, humans can see past the veil of illusion, and compassion stems from this *a priori* ability to escape the *principium individuationis*, allowing us to understand that one's will is the same as the next individual in need. Compassion is thus the basic moral category, and it is grounded in the fact that we are all the same will.

Schopenhauer begins his essay by criticizing Immanuel Kant's moral and ethical philosophy. Although his metaphysics is heavily based on Kant's, with the separation of a world of phenomena and a world of the noumenal, Schopenhauer reproves Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. "Kantian ethics, as much as all previous ethics, is devoid of any secure foundation."<sup>18</sup> Instead, he believes Kant is basing his moral imperatives on the fear of gods. Morality is commanded by religion, and he makes a very abstract argument with no true

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<sup>18</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, ed. Christopher Janaway, 167, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Schopenhauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

substance to justify the religious ‘ought to.’ Kant talks about duty, which is the necessity of an action, as an *a priori* law recognized by all reasonable beings. At the same time, though, many people do not respect these duties and are wrongdoers. This would be impossible if morality was *a priori* like our understanding of time and space. There would be no possibility for someone to act immorally because it is how we perceive the world. To act immorally would be like living in a world without time, which is impossible. Furthermore, Kantian language suggests that humans mostly act reasonably and that they should not treat others as a means but as an end in themselves. Instead, Schopenhauer argues that in their endless willing, individuals only think of themselves and what is best for them. Much like Hobbes argues in his *Leviathan*, humans are egoistic by nature, according to their character. Each individual has a distinct character that is shown through their actions. “How near or far from each individual lies the thought of treating the other for once as an end, instead of as a means as usual —that is the measure of the great ethical distinction between characters, and what it all comes down to in the final instance. This will indeed be the true foundation of ethics.”<sup>19</sup> Humans do not have free will as Kant argues but instead, their will is free to act as it means. Motives are necessary for an action to occur, and *operari sequitur esse* [acting follows from being.] Conscience is “acquaintance with one’s own self... we come to know ourselves too only empirically, and have no cognition *a priori* of our character.”<sup>20</sup>

Instead of explaining “Why be Ethical?” Schopenhauer says one should first look at ordinary life to come up with a true ethical account.<sup>21</sup> He does not want to give an imperative solution to human action — he will only give a descriptive account of what already occurs.

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<sup>19</sup> Schopenhauer. “Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals.” 164

<sup>20</sup> Schopenhauer, “Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals,” 175

<sup>21</sup> Schopenhauer, “Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals,” 181

Although most human activity is based on egotistical love for oneself, he expresses that genuine love of one's neighbors does come about, even if it seldom takes place. Apart from these isolated situations, 'morality' and 'justice' are wholly based on the self-interest of individuals. Humans do not want to do wrong mostly to "care for his good name, his civil honor, ... the evident danger of being expelled forever, ... the danger of being a pariah for civil society his whole life ... the greatest portion of honesty in human intercourse is owed solely to them."<sup>22</sup> The state here comes in as a counter-motive; as the summation of accumulated egoism of all that protects natural rights like property, compelling each human to respect the rights of others. "The necessity of the state... is based on the well known injustice of the human race..."<sup>23</sup> He compares humans under the state to tigers and wolves "whose bite is made safe by a strong muzzle."<sup>24</sup> It is important to note here that he is not making a claim such as "the state shall exist in order to protect individual rights from the egoist humans that are bound by endless desire to better their own lives." Instead, he is explaining what already occurs, much like Hobbes and Hume. There is no imperative to not encroach on others' rights. In fact, he even states that there is a Spinozian right of force, "each has as much right as he has power."<sup>25</sup> He only gives ethics "the task of clarifying and explaining ways of acting among human beings that are extremely morally diverse, and tracing them back to their ultimate ground"<sup>26</sup> Egoism will be against justice, while ill-will and spitefulness will be against loving kindness. When we do something solely to help another, his "well-being and woe must be my motive immediately."<sup>27</sup> We see the other

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<sup>22</sup> S Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," 185

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 218.

<sup>24</sup> Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," 188

<sup>25</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 219

<sup>26</sup> Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," 189

<sup>27</sup> Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," 200

person as the same as us, as my own, and this motive is sufficient to have compassion, “the wholly immediate sympathy ... towards another’s suffering.”<sup>28</sup> His ethics are therefore in every human consciousness. When we can see ourselves in the other a true maxim arises: ‘harm no one. Rather help everyone to the extent that you can.’ This is only the abstract representation of what already occurs in humans. When someone chooses not to kill another person, they do not do so due to rational philosophical thought, but they instead understand what it means to kill them, and compassion sets in.<sup>29</sup> Schopenhauer can therefore be considered a Hobbesian, who attains to Mandeville’s quote: “Another principle which has escaped Hobbes,... on certain occasions, the ferocity of his self-love, tempers the ardor with which he pursues his own welfare... holding man to be possessed of the only natural virtue... I am speaking of compassion.”<sup>30</sup> Compassion, or the understanding of another’s suffering as our own, is natural, unlike Kant’s moral religious imperative.

Thus, Schopenhauer’s world is still one of pessimism. Compassion rarely takes place, and the will to life remains the driving force of humanity. Those moments of true loving-kindness are a temporary relief from endless suffering, and they do not imply any reward, apart from the recognition of the will in someone else as your own.

Schopenhauer therefore does not answer the question “Why be ethical?” Instead, he explains what already happens to human beings when they are overtaken by a sentiment of compassion. There is no true condemnation, apart from calling wrongdoers blind and ignorant. There is only the egoism that is entailed in the will to life, and the momentary respite from it, along with the final negation of the will in the saints and ascetics.

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<sup>28</sup> Schopenhauer, “Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals,” 200

<sup>29</sup> Schopenhauer, “Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals,” 221

<sup>30</sup> Schopenhauer, “Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals,” 232





## Chapter II: An Overview and Critique of Schopenhauer's Political Philosophy

The first chapter outlined Schopenhauer's philosophy of the will, covering everything from his core metaphysical ideas to their ethical implications. This chapter shows how his political ideas contradict his work. There is a special emphasis on his *Parerga and Paralipomena*, focusing on chapter 9: "On Jurisprudence and Politics." His idea of a monarch and a cultured elite is antithetical to his idea of equality under the will. Leaders are as much will-to-life and are as selfish as what Schopenhauer calls the "human herd." They are, therefore, unfit to be above the law of any state. Instead, I argue that the metaphysics and ethics of the will lead to a liberal society where the state serves as a counter-motive for individuals. His criticism of republics is shown as stemming from his own biases and not from his philosophy. By establishing this, Schopenhauer's metaphysics leads to what his political thought *should have* been: an alternative metaphysical explanation for the liberal societies that exist today.

### Natural Rights and the Birth of the State

Schopenhauer first explains his political thought in *World as Will and Representation*, Book 4, §62. Book 4 follows the development of his metaphysics and delves into the will-to-life, as previously established. Before understanding the concept of the state, Schopenhauer discusses the inherent rights of men even when they are in the Hobbesian and Lockean "State of Nature."

For Schopenhauer, the first attestation of the will to life is "the affirmation of one's own body i.e. the presentation of the will through acts in time, to the extent that the body is already

the spatial presentation of the same will through its form and purposiveness, and no further.”<sup>31</sup>

The body is the will expressing itself in time and space. Therefore, the will to life initially manifests as the affirmation and protection of one’s own body, giving rise to egoism. This affirmation extends to one’s labor and the results of their physical efforts. Consequently, property originates from the body and the work it produces.

The concept of “rights” is the counter-concept to a “wrong.” A wrong occurs when one violates another’s will by denying the rightful possession of their body or property, affirming instead one’s own: “Property cannot be taken from anyone without doing him wrong... when we take away someone’s property, we take the energy in his body away from the will objectified in his body in order to make it serve the will objectified in someone else’s body. So the wrongdoer violates the sphere of the other person’s affirmation of will... From this it follows that all true, i.e. moral property rights are originally based solely and exclusively on the fact of working on something...”<sup>32</sup> Here, Schopenhauer explains that because each person uses their energy to affirm their will, a wrong occurs when someone uses another’s energy to affirm their own will. They negate another’s will to establish their own. This is seen in theft: when a person works to earn money, and another person steals it, the thief uses someone else’s energy (labor) to affirm their own will while negating the victim’s will. The victim no longer has control over the fruits of their work and cannot affirm their will. From this idea of wrong, the counter-concept of right is derived: “we could never talk about right if there was no wrong.”<sup>33</sup> The only purpose of a “right” is to prevent wrongdoing. If no one ever committed terrible deeds, there would be no point in protecting one’s personal sphere. A wrong is a positive action, while a right is negative

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<sup>31</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 360

<sup>32</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 362

<sup>33</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 364

since it negates wrong. Any action that does not intrude into one's affirmation of will is thus not wrong,<sup>34</sup> and everyone has a right to affirm their will and the energy they produce: "Everyone has the right to do anything that does not injure another."<sup>35</sup>

It is important to note that, once more, Schopenhauer does not give prescriptive claims; instead, he explains how nature works and why humans band together after seeing their rights violated. Schopenhauer argues that this right to property remains even when there is no state. "In the state of nature, it depends on everyone in every case not doing wrong, but in no way does this spare them in all cases from being wronged, something that depends on their contingent, external strength. Thus the concepts of right and wrong are certainly also valid for the state of nature and are not remotely the products of convention; but they are valid there purely as moral concepts for everyone's self-cognition of their own will."<sup>36</sup> Unlike Hobbes and much like Locke, Schopenhauer argues that the right to property remains in the state of nature, even when there is no positive state to protect it. This means that Schopenhauer believes an intrinsic right to property stems from his metaphysics. This intrinsic right will be very important to determine whether his idea for the best government is compatible with his metaphysics.

Schopenhauer sets up the state's foundations through his framework of the will. As representations of the will to life, self-preservation, and extending one's efforts into the world are fundamental and inherent to our existence, we have an *a priori* right to affirm our personal life and work. But, according to his pessimism, he argues that most people and property will not be protected in the state of nature; instead, the stronger will affirm their will through other's energy. As he says in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, "Though the powers of human beings are unequal, yet

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<sup>34</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 364

<sup>35</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 218

<sup>36</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 368

their rights are equal because these rest... on the fact that in everyone the same will to life manifests itself on the same level of its objectivation.”<sup>37</sup> Still, we are egoistic in this appearance, and the stronger objectification of the will, because of the will to life that leads to never-ending desire, strives to affirm their will at the expense of others’ work.

Since compassion and loving-kindness seldom occur, the state is formed to mitigate the suffering of wrongs. “Reason recognized that the best and only means of reducing the suffering spread out amongst everyone, and also of distributing it as evenly as possible, would be to spare everyone the pain of being wronged by having everyone also renounce the pleasure of doing it. – The mechanism for achieving this is the political contract or the law.”<sup>38</sup> Under the state, one’s right to affirm their will is protected. Also, the state rids the gratification of affirming it through the property of others. The state becomes a counter-motive to doing wrong. For Schopenhauer, motives move us into action and make us show the essence of our being, i.e. *operari sequitur esse* (acting follows from being). The state serves not to eradicate evil thoughts or plans but “only to counter every possible motive for wrongdoing with a stronger motive for failing to do wrong, in the form of inevitable punishment...”<sup>39</sup> Thus, it is not against egoism, but the effects of egoist action. “Morally grounded rightful action cannot be expected,”<sup>40</sup> so, in acting as a counter-motive to wrong-doing, the state wants to further the common good (protecting individual rights.)<sup>41</sup>

The state, therefore, arises from the state of nature. Positive law serves the purpose of being a counter-motive to offense. Punishment is grounded in law alone, and the state is needed

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<sup>37</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 218

<sup>38</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 369

<sup>39</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 371

<sup>40</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 372

<sup>41</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 372

to protect everyone's rights equally. Perfectly natural property rights exist outside of the state. Still, by banding together, selfish humans protect those rights from the "well-known *injustice* of the human race"<sup>42</sup> through the counter-motive of punishment. The state is that tool that protects them while taking away their option of going against another's will.

## The Best State for Schopenhauer

Through exploring his thoughts in sections 125 to 131 in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Schopenhauer's ultimate political philosophy and its incongruency with his metaphysics will be shown.

In §125, he begins by establishing that workers in poverty and slavery are the same. They are "two names for the same circumstance whose essence is that someone's powers are used not primarily for himself but for others."<sup>43</sup> Schopenhauer determines that under both conditions, the workers are using their energy and will to life for someone else, be it the boss or the master, to affirm it. It leads to them being overburdened and unable to fully affirm their will. The cause of this evil, he says, is luxury. "A great part of the powers of the human race is withdrawn from the production of what is necessary to all in order to secure what is superfluous and dispensable for a few."<sup>44</sup> By having people who want dispensable objects instead of only having what they need, luxury creates poverty. Because their desires are more extensive than their energy, the few people indulging in luxury now submit others to fulfill them. Without the need for superfluous

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<sup>42</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 218

<sup>43</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 221

<sup>44</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 222

objects, there would be no poverty: “For the alleviation of human misery the most effective thing would be to diminish, indeed to eliminate luxury.”

Luxury, Schopenhauer argues, is a necessary evil for society to advance. “The arts and sciences themselves are children of luxury, and they pay their debt to it.” Society cannot advance technologically if everyone has to care about their primary needs alone. It would have been impossible to create the machines in factories that “accomplish thousands of times more work than could have been done by the hands of all those who today are leisured, wealthy, educated, and work with their brains.”<sup>45</sup> Schopenhauer sees luxury as a means for society to be more refined and have fewer factory workers. Instead, he conceives a “universality of intellectual culture,”<sup>46</sup> where luxury prevails due to machines working instead of humans. In his utopia, the arts would be the most important and would lead to no wars since “arts refine customs.”<sup>47</sup> He points out that wars had already become less prevalent (although, as we know, his prediction was not fulfilled.)

After discussing his idea of a Utopia, Schopenhauer talks about his perfect government, an absolute monarchy that allows stronger humans to rule. He believes that society will always require strong leaders to guide it. “The great herd of the human race always and everywhere requires leaders, guides and counselors in manifold forms... it is only natural that these leaders remain free of physical labour...”<sup>48</sup> For Schopenhauer, humanity is frail and miserable. This is similar to what he states in his *magnum opus*: Because we live under the illusion of the will to life and strive endlessly, we live despairingly. Now, Schopenhauer uses arguments from Plato and Voltaire that go against his metaphysics because he begins to put out a political philosophy

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<sup>45</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 223

<sup>46</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 223

<sup>47</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 223

<sup>48</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 223-224

that does not treat every objectification of the will equally, but that says some are better than others. Like the former, he believes society needs strong leaders to direct it toward improvement, and this can only be done if luxury exists and they do not have to work with their bodies but with their minds. Although a people are sovereign and have a right to choose their own leaders once they come into the social contract, Schopenhauer believes they are “an eternally underage sovereign who... stands under permanent tutelage [of a prince]...”<sup>49</sup> He believes, as Voltaire, that this king comes about naturally through conquest and force.<sup>50</sup> The prince then excludes all others from using force in his dominion, and his original conquest turns naturally into being the legitimate ruler through “inborn prerogative... that cannot be doubted and challenged.”<sup>51</sup> This prince, according to Schopenhauer, allows for justice to rule through force.<sup>52</sup>

An absolute monarchy is, therefore, the best type of government for Schopenhauer. As stated before, only the state can achieve peace and less wrongdoing as its force is a counter-motive to doing wrong. The state has to be centralized, he argues, for its power to not be diminished by the “resulting participation of the many, as is almost always the case with republics.”<sup>53</sup> Unlike the abstract reasoning found in constitutions, which leads to the spread of power between unjust individuals, there is a “necessity of a completely irresponsible force standing above even the law and justice, concentrated in one human being before whom everyone bows... In the long run this is the only way humanity can be reigned and ruled.”<sup>54</sup> This is the only way that the state can be firm and lead to justice. He believes that because humans are not perfect beings that can sacrifice their own well-being for the public good, “something can be

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<sup>49</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 224

<sup>50</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 224

<sup>51</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 225

<sup>52</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 225

<sup>53</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 226

<sup>54</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 226

achieved by having one family whose well-being is inseparable from the country; so that they cannot promote the one without the other...”<sup>55</sup> Republics do not work as they allow for each individual to hold as much power as the next, and thus lead to “the lowest utilitarianism.”<sup>56</sup> In a republic, Schopenhauer argues, it is harder for superior minds to reach higher positions because “everywhere,... feeble and vulgar minds are sworn against those minds... and they are held firmly together by their common fear of them. Their numerous hosts will easily succeed in a republican constitution at oppressing and excluding superior types... they are always fifty against one.”<sup>57</sup> Since power is spread out in a republic, Schopenhauer believes, much like Plato, that the majority is not intelligent, and this mediocre majority will put down those who are better than them. In a monarchy, because the prince is untouchable, noble and intelligent minds will be protected as he does not “have to fear anyone’s competence”<sup>58</sup> since he is secure in his position. Because his fate is inseparable from that of his country, the prince will privilege those who are superior in intellect.

For Schopenhauer, a monarchy is the general state of society and even of nature. He argues that every human enterprise needs one leader, which occurs in the animal world and even in the solar system. Republics, on the other hand, are antithetical to nature since, with their abstract reasoning, they go against monarchical instinct. They are based on reflection (the worst gift humans have since it abstracts immediate consciousness). Furthermore, Schopenhauer emphasizes the fact that all republics were “conditioned by the fact that five-sixths or perhaps seven-eighths of their population consisted of slaves.”<sup>59</sup> They are easy to establish but

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<sup>55</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 370

<sup>56</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 226

<sup>57</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 229

<sup>58</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 229

<sup>59</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 230



challenging to maintain, and vice versa for monarchies. This leads to Schopenhauer's Utopia: "despotism of wise men and noblemen of a genuine aristocracy, achieved by means of procreation through the marrying of the most noble-minded men with the smartest and most brilliant women. This suggestion is *my Utopia* and my *Republic* of Plato."<sup>60</sup>

## A Critique of Schopenhauer's Politics

Schopenhauer's political ideas are inconsistent with his metaphysics. This next section will delve into those inconsistencies and develop the true Schopenhauerian politics that his metaphysics implies. His biases will be shown in the context of his life, and the idea of a monarchy will be set aside. Instead, a liberal society will be seen as the most direct and closest to his ethics as set out in his *Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals* and *World as Will and Representation*. For Schopenhauer, the moral human is the one who sees past the veil of *Māyā* and sees himself in the other person. In that case, the moral government is the one that sees all humans as the same objectification of the will and allows for all to be protected from wrongdoing equally.

His first inconsistency is believing a monarch is better than the other types of government because their family line is tied to the fate of the state. In truth, that sovereign is under the will to life like everyone else. If humans are naturally egoistic, as Schopenhauer believes, then the sovereigns will look out only for themselves. Their family first achieved power through force, meaning that they affirmed their will through others by conquest. Now, they still affirm their will

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<sup>60</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 230

by ruling arbitrarily over everyone. Schopenhauer thus makes an ultimately fatal logical jump: a king being prosperous is the same as a country being successful.

By exploring the thoughts of Machiavelli and examining the actions of authoritative governments of the present and past, this inconsistency between reality and Schopenhauer's thoughts can be clearly seen. Schopenhauer even talks about Machiavelli in §126, ultimately defining *The Prince* as a book of its time that applies to private life. However, he skips it and does not see how it voids his theory by describing a ruler who only cares to further his power and not to better the state. Schopenhauer shares the same idea with Machiavelli: humans are not inherently moral, but, as Machiavelli says, they are “ungrateful, fickle, simulators and deceivers, avoiders of danger, and greedy for gain.”<sup>61</sup> For him, the Prince's goal is to maintain and further his power. He does this by having the people on his side and by appearing merciful and religious, though not moral himself. He must avoid hatred, which is done through the illusion of love and peace-keeping. In doing all of this, the Prince will maintain his power. Leaving Machiavelli behind, this is not to say that the main goal of each monarch is to deceive the people and retain power. I use the example of Machiavelli to show that it is not a consistent statement to say that “the hereditary monarch cannot in the least separate his and his family's welfare from that of the country...”<sup>62</sup> The prince can have as his primary goal furthering his power (affirming his will), without holding his citizens in regard or elevating those with superior intellects. It is easy to point out current and historical examples like Kim Jong-Un, Nero, and Hitler to see the fault in Schopenhauer's statement.

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<sup>61</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and ed. Peter Bondanella, *Oxford World's Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 57-59

<sup>62</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 230

Schopenhauer further goes against his metaphysics by arguing that the right of birth is also intrinsic in humans. He argues that because possessions are inherited (and he was an avid proponent of inheritance since he got much money from his dad's death), the right of birth -the inheritance of titles- in the nobility "merely expresses its possession through the same."<sup>63</sup> Right of birth is entirely against his morals, though. Most noblemen in Germany until the late 18th century had land and serfs. These people worked to affirm the noblemen's will, and the only reason for this was that they were born under a specific family. In a society where all humans are seen as equal, there would be no right of birth since it inherently assumes some are more than others.

These thoughts stem from Schopenhauer's background. He came from a wealthy merchant family. Because he grew up as part of the growing bourgeoisie, and although he diverted from his father's chosen path to be a merchant, the inherent beliefs that capitalism brings remained a part of him in the years to come and shaped his ideas about nobility. Schopenhauer himself became a rentier with the inheritance he received after his father passed away, and his mother chose to sell his company. Throughout his life, he thus became an adamant supporter of inheritance, and an extension of inheritance of property, for him, was the right to inherit titles.<sup>64</sup>

Much like the reasoning set forth against the right of birth, so is the idea of a monarch contrary to the philosophy Schopenhauer established. If the idea of the state is to protect individuals and their property from others' actions, then setting a person above the law is contradictory. A monarch can affirm their will over the work others do. They can be opulent and

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<sup>63</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 234

<sup>64</sup> Jakob Norberg, *Schopenhauer's Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 26

ruthless because they can “rightly say ‘I am the state.’”<sup>65</sup> Since they are the state, they can use the state's monopoly on power to do as needed to protect their office and expand it. They can indeed separate their families from the people because no one can tell them how to act. By being unchecked by the people, they can act as they wish. This is the ultimate reason Schopenhauer's idea of a monarchy is against his morals and metaphysics. He acknowledges that all men are equal as objectifications of the same will while allowing a person to be above the rest. Even more, he allows one family to commit wrongdoing without having the state as the punisher and counter-motives as a detriment.

## The True Schopenhauerian State

Instead, I propose a political form that I believe remains true to Schopenhauer's metaphysics and morals: a liberal republic that protects each individual and their property, regardless of their family and office. Protection of rights for all can be established in various republics, but what is crucial is that equality under the law can exist since Schopenhauer previously argued that this is essential for the state and is the main reason humans enter into the social contract.

As previously mentioned, Schopenhauer believes the state arises due to the need to protect each individual's rights. Each individual objectified will understands that being the same as every other objectification of the will, they have to band together under a state that protects them and limits them with the monopoly on the use of force. No person has the right to punish

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<sup>65</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 230

another for wrongdoing, and no person can do any wrong. The next logical step is for this state to protect each citizen equally.

This protection can only occur under a liberal republic, where even those ruling are held accountable for their actions. The sovereign is the citizen who sets up and trusts the institutions of government like they would the monarch under Schopenhauer's perspective. Instead of the monarch being legitimized over time, the institution of government is legitimized, as it occurred in the United States. The first transition between parties was rightly called the "Revolution of 1800," but to call the transition of government today a revolution seems counter-intuitive because time has allowed for the institutions and traditions set about in the Constitution to be legitimized. This is the same argument Schopenhauer uses for the authority of the prince to be cemented, but used in the context of institutional legitimacy in Republics. He argued for monarchies already established in the past and not new ones. Since humans are creatures of habit, they grow satisfied with the institution in place. This same argument can justify the legitimacy of old republics, such as the United States. At his time, Schopenhauer couldn't have guessed how many republics there would be today, and he had studied many failed ones that had led to anarchy and war. Now, it is seen that a republic can gain as much legitimacy as a monarchy, even in what Schopenhauer would call the "intellectually superior" mind.

Schopenhauer's argument against republics is inconsistent, too. He argues that the use of slavery in republics shows how inherently bad they are. He was a vocal abolitionist who wanted every society to be rid of slavery. He fails to address, though, that monarchies for thousands of years also dealt with slavery. At times, as Norberg points out, he addresses Imperial China as an

exemplary monarchy.<sup>66</sup> His ideal monarchy, though, had institutionalized slavery until its end in the 20th century.<sup>67</sup> Thus, his selective observation is shown.

Another main reason the republic is the true Schopenhauerian state is that it is compatible with the goal of the ascetic. The ascetic is less protected to negate the will to life under a monarchy, and this inconsistency between Schopenhauer's politics, ethics, and metaphysics would not occur under a republic. The ascetic is that person who breaks from the "will by forgoing what is pleasant and seeking out what is unpleasant, choosing a lifestyle of penitence and self-castigation for the constant mortification of the will."<sup>68</sup> This is how they negate the will to life and can see past the *principium individuationis*. They understand that past the veil of *Māyā* and illusion, everyone and everything is made up of the same essence: will. They are released from worldly desires, transcend this reality, and are connected to the ultimate thing in itself, the essence of the world. The ascetic is the epitome of Schopenhauer's ethics. While most people cannot see themselves in the other, this person carries the maxim 'harm no one, rather help everyone to the extent that you can' to his chest. The only way the ascetic can achieve this is by having freedom and his own rights protected. The goal of the state is to protect each individual. If there is someone who is both egotistical (because probabilities are that the king will not be an ascetic) and holds power over the state, then the ascetic will not be able to duly perform his enlightenment. How many of the saints Schopenhauer talks about were ultimately killed by the Romans? Each governor ruled above the law and was the ultimate decider between life and death, while the emperor held that power above them. Having this arbitrary system does

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<sup>66</sup> Norberg, *Schopenhauer's Politics*, 237

<sup>67</sup> D. J. Wyatt, "Slavery in Medieval China," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, ed. Craig Perry, David Eltis, Stanley L. Engerman, and David Richardson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 271–294.

<sup>68</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 419

not allow everyone's rights to be protected, but a Republic does. If power is divided between every citizen, and the state is not above each person, but instead, each person is protected from the state, then the ascetic will be able to achieve his negation of the will.

Thus, the liberal republic is shown to be the true Schopenhauerian state. Under this form of government, everyone's will can be equally protected, and wrongdoing can be stopped from all sides of the aisle, both politicians and citizens alike. History has shown that these republics can last and can be without slaves, both criticisms that Schopenhauer made during his life. One cannot discuss equality under the law and propose a state similar to Plato's in his *Republic*. There is no equality when a class has political power over the rest. Especially when the office of those in power leads to much opulence and wrongdoing, as the monarchy does. The republic ensures the protection of each individual, both from the rest of the egotistical citizens and politicians. With it, a true state of individuals that see past their *principium individuationis* can exist. All men are declared equal, which is what Schopenhauer's morals teach. Wrongdoing is disallowed, and in its place comes the dictum "help everyone to the extent you can." The more consistent Schopenhauerian state, without all the biases the philosopher had in his time, is that of the republic.





# Chapter III: Nietzsche's Early Schopenhauerian

## Politics

**Abstract:** Chapter I developed Schopenhauer's metaphysics, while Chapter II delved into his political thought and why it was ultimately inconsistent with his overall philosophy. This chapter explores Friedrich Nietzsche's early political thought, as seen in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, and his *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*.<sup>69</sup>

Although an avid follower of Schopenhauer at the time, Nietzsche differs from him in important ways, including his Wagnerian view of art, his Hellenism, and emphasis on the redemptive power of tragedy. Still, his Schopenhauerian way of thinking will be explained. Furthermore, some political thought seen in Schopenhauer will again be seen in Nietzsche, like the idea of institutions developing genius, and his favoritism towards the intellectual aristocracy. While Schopenhauer was going against his metaphysics, though, these ideas will remain true to Nietzsche's philosophy as he does not believe that everyone is the same objectification of the will or equal in that sense.

"[The] sole philosopher in this century, Arthur Schopenhauer,..." - Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> All citations from Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy. Early Basel Writings (Winter 1869/70–Fall 1873)*, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, vol. 1, trans. Sean D. Kirkland and Andrew J. Mitchell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>70</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 28

## Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was one of the most influential thinkers in the history of philosophy. He has also been one of the most complex writers to analyze. His idea of a society freed from religion deeply impacted thinkers from the nineteenth century until today. Nietzsche's politics have been thoroughly debated, with some claiming he was a proto-fascist (an argument heightened by the Nazi use of his philosophy as propaganda)<sup>71</sup>, and others, like renowned Nietzsche scholar and translator Walter Kaufmann calling him an anti-political thinker.<sup>72</sup>

Whatever view one may have of his political inclinations, there is an obvious trend and separation between his early and later thoughts. This separation is marked by his early complete infatuation with Arthur Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner, and later rejection of both and development of his unique system of philosophy (that was still heavily based on his initial trend.) With these two influences, young 24-year-old Nietzsche acquired a professorship at the University of Basel in 1869. Although a philologist, he became fascinated with philosophy from a young age and saw Schopenhauer as his guide. "When I discovered Schopenhauer: I sensed that in him I had discovered that educator and philosopher I had sought for so long,"<sup>73</sup> Nietzsche wrote in his 1876 *Untimely Meditations*. Furthermore, Richard Wagner, the famed composer, enthralled Nietzsche, who played piano and composed pieces and took him in as his mentor.

Specializing in the Ancient Greek philosophers and theater, Nietzsche sought to connect the Greeks with his contemporary Germans. Wagner introduced Nietzsche to the ideas of music

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<sup>71</sup> Weaver Santaniello, "Nietzsche: American Idol or European Prophet? The 'Death of God' in America and Nietzsche's Madman," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 38, no. 2-3 (2017): 201-222.

<sup>72</sup> Lester H. Hunt, "Politics and Anti-Politics: Nietzsche's View of the State," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1985): 453.

<sup>73</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*. Cambridge [U.K.]: Cambridge University Press, 1997. <https://hdl-handle-net.proxy.library.emory.edu/2027/heb08912.0001.001>, 136

drama as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art that would return to the Ancient Greeks' aesthetical superiority and develop German culture to its highest level. This influence of Wagner, along with his devotion to Schopenhauer's work, made Nietzsche write a first book that would shock the philological world: *The Birth of Tragedy*. In it, he sets up the first bricks of his philosophical structure. Using Schopenhauer's metaphysics, Nietzsche sets about explaining the origins of Greek Tragedy- and its eventual return to Germany through Wagner. Ultimately, this book was not a philological work, but a philosophical one. Nietzsche praises Schopenhauer and uses his definitions to develop a theory of the total work of art involving the Dionysian and Apollonian drives, which will be later explored. He preaches for a different approach to morality through art, where humans create their lives' value: "art -and not morality- was proposed as the genuine metaphysical activity of the human..."<sup>74</sup>

Although at first glance, *The Birth of Tragedy* does not seem like a work of political philosophy, it is deeply intertwined with Nietzsche's view of the state and politics in general. This chapter will first explore this book, while the prior two works he did -*On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, and his *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books* (neither of which was published)- will serve to bring to light Nietzsche's political philosophy and its similarities with Schopenhauer's.

## The Birth of Nietzsche's Philosophy

### The Apollonian and Dionysian Metaphysics

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<sup>74</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy or Hellenism and Pessimism*, 9

*The Birth of Tragedy* was Nietzsche's first major work. It is a study of Greek Tragedy and its ultimate demise, along with its hopeful revival. In it, Nietzsche does not even himself translate the quotes he uses when talking about the tragedians like Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles. Far from a formal study, which the philologists of his time criticized, he instead uses past translations and does not mention the original Greek. He uses these to further an argument rather than exploring those works. Going against the trends of his current field, Nietzsche emphasizes the aesthetic and existential value of Greek tragedy before its philological one.

The book begins by setting up the idea of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. This, inspired by Schopenhauer's metaphysics, marks the attempt to apply the ideas of Will and Representation to his study of Ancient Greece. "The advancement of art is bound up with the duality of the *Apollonian and Dionysian*...",<sup>75</sup> Nietzsche begins to point out. For him, these two are forces that act upon the artist, the first as *dreams* and the latter as *intoxication*. Nietzsche explains where the Apollonian comes from. Like Schopenhauer pointed out, for Nietzsche there is a "second wholly other reality... concealed...and Schopenhauer characterizes as the hallmark of philosophical ability, the gift of sometimes seeing other humans and indeed all things as mere phantoms or dream images."<sup>76</sup> The artist, he explains, can also see how reality is a dream, but "from these images he interprets life for himself, and... trains himself for life."<sup>77</sup> Even if these images he sees are negative, indeed pessimistic, he says "It is a dream! I will dream it further!"<sup>78</sup> Through his art, he is able to express that dream and make it his. This is due to what he calls the force of Apollo, who for the Greeks, was "the god of all shape-giving forces... the divinity of light, and governs also the beautiful semblance of the inner world of fantasy. The higher truth,

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<sup>75</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 18

<sup>76</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 19

<sup>77</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 19

<sup>78</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 20

the perfection... as well as the deep consciousness of nature that helps and heals in sleep and dream.” Thus he equates Apollo to what Schopenhauer calls the “Veil of Maya,” that illusion of representation that generates the *principium individuationis* (principle of individuation), which is the structure that separates individuals from the unity of the will. Apollo is the force of Representation for Nietzsche, while Dionysus is the rupture that shows the Will. Dionysius was the god of wine, but also of satyrs, and orgies; in summary, of reveling and intoxication. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian force both celebrates and destroys, revealing the paradox at the heart of existence. It revels in humanity by embracing life’s chaotic energy—ecstasy, suffering, and transformation—. Still, it also exposes the ultimate meaninglessness of all things by shattering illusions of order and permanence. In the Dionysian state, through music, intoxication, and artistic rapture, the boundary of the *principium* dissolves, and the will itself is unveiled, no longer hidden behind individual identity or rational constructs. The Dionysian thus allows humanity to experience life in its most intense, overflowing form, but it also dismantles the comforting illusions of stable meaning and morality. Through the expression of itself “as member of a higher community,”<sup>79</sup> humans sing and dance, forgetting their individuality and understanding the “mysterious primordial unity... he feels himself a god... The human is no longer artist, he has become artwork: here, to the great and blissful satisfaction of the primordial unity, the artistic force of the whole of nature reveals itself amid shudders of intoxication.”<sup>80</sup> This feeling would happen originally in the Dionysian festivals and orgies, where especially the music would arouse terror and freedom in the listeners.<sup>81</sup> By having consciousness past the *principium individuationis*, the human now becomes god-like (or pure will) under the Dionysian

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<sup>79</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 22

<sup>80</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 22

<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 26

spell, and sees past the beauty of the Apollonian world-edifying drive, into the depths of the mystery of the universe: “[The Apollonian Greek realizes] that his Apollonian consciousness was only a veil covering over this Dionysian world before him.”<sup>82</sup> Thus the Apollonian is used by Nietzsche as Schopenhauer’s “Representation,” while the Dionysian is the “will.” Tragedy serves to see this alteration between primal unity (Dionysian) and dispersal into multiplicity (Apollonian) as the pulse of nature itself, and lets the spectator accept his place in life.

The Apollonian drive has been predominant throughout history according to Nietzsche. Nietzsche says that in Ancient Greece, “‘Titanic’ and ‘barbaric,’... would the effect aroused by the *Dionysian* have seemed to the Apollonian Greek...”<sup>83</sup> Still, through Dionysian music, with its intoxication and freedom from the illusions of representation and the mythos that the Greeks built for themselves with their Mount Olympus, the Greeks “[The Apollonian] must have sensed still more: his entire existence with all its beauty and moderation rested on a veiled subterranean ground of suffering and knowledge, which would be disclosed to him again through the Dionysian. And look! Apollo could not live without Dionysus! The “Titanic” and the “Barbaric” were in the end just as necessary as the Apollonian! ...”<sup>84</sup>

While Homer was the prototype of Apollo, and remained the predominant source of Greek mythology, Archilochus was the one of Dionysus. Archilochus is known as the founder of lyric poetry and a prominent musician (which would eventually shape Tragedy.) Instead of being “sunk in the pure intuition of images...The Dionysian musician without any image is himself entirely primordial pain and primordial echo of the same.”<sup>85</sup> He had been thought to write his songs while intoxicated, and what made him a Dionysian was that “the images of the lyric poet

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<sup>82</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 27

<sup>83</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 33

<sup>84</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 33

<sup>85</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 38

are nothing other than he himself and only various objectifications of him...he is permitted to say 'I': only this I-ness is... [the] truly extant and eternal, resting at the ground of things, through whose copies the lyrical genius peers into that ground of things.”<sup>86</sup> The artist, for Nietzsche, is redeemed from his individual will and shows the deeper meaning of the world through his work: “The individual, with all his limits and measures, here underwent the self-forgetting of those Dionysian states and forgot the precepts of Apollo. Excess unveiled itself as truth, as contradiction, and a bliss born of pain proclaimed itself from out of the very heart of nature. So it was that everywhere where the Dionysian penetrated, the Apollonian was abolished and annihilated.”<sup>87</sup>

## Aesthetics as Justification

Unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche establishes that art as the Greeks saw it is the only way to be redeemed from the illusions of everyday life. When Schopenhauer argues that art gives a respite from the suffering that comes with the will to life, Nietzsche declares: “Only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified.”<sup>88</sup> It is not through the ascetic and negation of the will to life that humans can truly find meaning; instead, Nietzsche argues for humans to create their own meaning through art. Life might entail suffering and maybe there is no true purpose for life apart from desiring and willing more. Through art, though, humans become creators: we are “at once subject and object, at once poet, actor and spectator.”<sup>89</sup> We become larger than what the *principium individuationis* normally allows for and

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<sup>86</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 38

<sup>87</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 38

<sup>88</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 41

<sup>89</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 41

surrender to the greater Dionysian force, to the ultimate underlying unity, like a “musical mirror of the world... *Melody is what is primary and universal*... the lyric poet... interprets music through the image of willing, while he himself, fully released from the greed of willing, is the pure unclouded eye of the sun.”<sup>90</sup> Aesthetics thus becomes the fulfillment of humanity. Instead of attaining to morals like Kant’s imperative, Nietzsche here argues that through art, humans can find meaning in their daily lives. Although this happened with the Dionysian in the Ancient Greeks, though, he believes that his current society remained stuck in the Apollonian, with edifices of morals and beauty that were mere illusions of what life is.

## Greek Tragedy

For Nietzsche, the Apollonian and the Dionysian did not meet each other for the most part, except in Greek tragedy. Attic tragedy had the advantage of being “an art form that is just as Dionysian as it is Apollonian.”<sup>91</sup> Greek tragedy consisted of a chorus and the main characters in the drama. Because there was both a play structured in an Apollonian way with dialogue and Dionysian music, Nietzsche believes that the tragedy signified the union of both drives. The chorus (which according to Nietzsche was meant to represent Dionysian satyrs at first) would sing during the play, as the ideal spectator.<sup>92</sup>

Aeschylus and Sophocles especially embody this fusion of Apollonian and Dionysian in tragedy, whereas Nietzsche sees Euripides as the downfall of the Dionysian in art. While Aeschylus and Sophocles used Dionysus to reveal the unity and suffering inherent in existence, Euripides rejected this intoxication and instead sought to impose a rational, Socratic vision

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<sup>90</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 42, 45

<sup>91</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 18

<sup>92</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 53



centered on the maxim “know thyself,” ultimately leading to the “suicide” of Greek tragedy.<sup>93</sup> Euripides thus became a thinker instead of a poet. He created works that were rational instead, and structured in the ways of philosophy. If “‘Virtue is knowledge; sin only arises from ignorance; whoever is virtuous is happy’: [then] in these three basic figures of optimism lies the death of tragedy.”<sup>94</sup> One who was creating art through pure feeling and intuition would be creating unvirtuous art. With Euripides, the Dionysian needed to be disposed of. “To cut that original and omnipotent Dionysian element out of tragedy and to erect it purely and anew upon an un-Dionysian art, morality and worldview — this is the tendency of Euripides, now unveiled for us in bright light.”<sup>95</sup> Euripides rid himself of the Dionysian, and all further forms of arts until Nietzsche’s times were informed by this style of art.

The Dionysian here stands against the Socratic, and Nietzsche says that the latter succeeded against the former. Plato would not even consider tragedy a philosophical art because it was full of illusion. Instead, the highest virtue of humanity is to have tangible knowledge, and the philosopher becomes the most important. From philosophy then science came, and everything had to remain part of logic, and nothing outside: “Whoever once makes clear to himself how after Socrates, that mystagogue of science, one philosophical school followed the other, like wave upon wave, how the never anticipated universality of the thirst for knowledge, as a genuine task for every higher capacity, stretched out to the farthest corners of the civilized world and led science out onto the high seas... cannot avoid seeing in Socrates the one turning point and vortex of so-called world history.”<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche sees Euripides' turn toward Socratic rationalism as the beginning of a shift where reason replaces instinct and myth, leading to a

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<sup>93</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 70

<sup>94</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 89

<sup>95</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 76

<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 94-95

rationalization of existence. Nietzsche believes that Socrates' emphasis on logic and self-conscious reasoning reduces life to something that must be understood and categorized rather than felt and experienced. It reduces life to the Apollonian drive. As this intellectual approach gained dominance after Socrates, it evolved into the scientific mindset, where theoretical abstractions are more important than the immediate and chaotic forces of existence (the will, or the Dionysian). For Nietzsche, especially when it comes to art, this process strips life of its depth and mystery, replacing the tragic vision of the world with a sterile interpretation of reality. This Socratic-scientific knowledge is where Nietzsche believes his present situation in Germany was: a decadent culture, where reason and logic suppress the primal life-affirming forces of art. This shift can thus be traced all the way to his own time in Germany. For Nietzsche, modern society is trapped in a similar Socratic-scientific mindset, valuing intellect over instinct and stifling the creative, Dionysian spirit.

## The Genius as the Dionysian

Although Nietzsche seems pessimistic, he believes that German society, which had Greek tendencies due to its poets and musicians, could return to the same Dionysian drive of the Ancients. For him, the rise of the Socratic society had also meant the demise of great music. But the Germans had broken themselves free from the pure Apollonian drive and were leading to a revival of music as seen with Beethoven, and especially with Wagner: "From the Dionysian ground of the German spirit a power has arisen, which has nothing in common with the primordial conditions of Socratic culture and in terms of which it is neither to be explained nor excused, but will be experienced by this culture much more as something terribly-inexplicable,

as overpoweringly-hostile, *German music*, which we are to understand chiefly through the powerful path of this sun from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Wagner.”<sup>97</sup> For Nietzsche, the rule of the logical was beginning to dwale due to the beauty and release that came from the music of these great German artists: “The modern human begins to suspect the limits of that Socratic desire for knowledge and from out upon the wide deserted sea of knowledge longs for a shore”<sup>98</sup> The beauty of German music had started to show a different perspective on reality than the Socratic one. Nietzsche believes this aesthetic revival is beginning to occur through Wagner’s music, much like before it had occurred through Archilochus. Furthermore, he wants political and educational institutions to serve the goal of creating this genius that will drive the German nation out of the Apollonian and into the Dionysian, artist and creator.

## The Genius and Intellectual Aristocracy

Much like Schopenhauer and Plato, early Nietzsche proposed (although in vaguer terms) an intellectual aristocracy that would advance society. His genius was the person destined to do so. But he had to be created through the German institutions, which means that a radical change had to occur, both in the educational system and in the political one. A study of *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, and his *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books* will uncover how he believed this genius would arise, and how similar his political thought was to Schopenhauer.

For Nietzsche, no other culture had been able to repeat the number of geniuses that the Ancient Greeks were able to put forth. This is because the Greek and German political and educational views were completely different. Nietzsche argues that the Greeks had a necessity

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<sup>97</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 123

<sup>98</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 112

for slaves, which allowed for the higher castes to pursue artistic goals, and create the genius. This shares similarities to Schopenhauer's idea of the intellectual aristocracy being supported by the rest of society. Still, Nietzsche does not seem to have the aversion to slavery that Schopenhauer had; in fact, he seems to be encouraging it. For him, the state was the means for this genius to be created: "The authentic goal of the state [is] the Olympian existence and the ever-renewed production and preparation of genius, in relation to which everything else is merely a tool, an aid and a facilitator..."<sup>99</sup> Under this Greek conception of society, the majority thus lives to serve the purpose of creating the higher artistic and military man. "Every person, in all his doings, only has dignity insofar as, consciously or unconsciously, he is a tool of genius; from this the ethical consequence is to be drawn directly, that the "human in itself," the utter human, possesses neither dignity, nor rights, nor duties: only as a completely determined being, in the service of unconscious goals, can the human excuse his existence."<sup>100</sup> Thus the Greek conception of society is very different from the modern perspective of the state protecting each citizen from others through a social contract, which also declares all men to be equal. This conception was furthered by war, which Nietzsche says is a necessity since genius arises through struggle, and the first military genius (the first rulers) then leads to the artistic geniuses<sup>101</sup> (A fact heightened since every Greek citizen had to be in the army of their city-state.) "Every talent must develop itself in struggle, so goes the Hellenic popular teaching: whereas nothing makes modern educators more skittish than the unleashing of so-called ambition,"<sup>102</sup> Nietzsche said. While the Greeks understood the struggle, and shame that it takes an individual to become a genius,

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<sup>99</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 23

<sup>100</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 23

<sup>101</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 22

<sup>102</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 34

modern society was working towards the alleviation of struggle for all, and thus the death of genius.

This artistic struggle had to be developed in the minority for Nietzsche. “So that there can be a broad deep and fertile soil for artistic development, the vast majority must be put in the service of a minority, beyond the measure of their individual requirements... to make the production of an art world by a tiny number of Olympian beings.”<sup>103</sup> Nietzsche explains that the reason why the Greeks were able to create so many geniuses was because the artists were part of their own intellectual elite, supported through the work of the rest of society. Modern Germany worked very differently. Nietzsche believed that through the democratization of education, this Greek idea of struggle and the intellectual aristocracy had been forgotten. “Universal education” to him meant “uniform education” where everyone had to think the same or the non-genius majority would ostracize them. In fact, in his six lectures *On The Future of Our Educational Institutions*, he would say that Beethoven, Goethe, and the like had appeared in German history *despite* German culture, and not because of it: “In spite of you they created their works, against you they directed their attacks... Who can imagine what would have been allotted to these heroic men to accomplish, if that true German spirit by means a strong institution had spread its protective roof over them, that spirit which, without such an institution, drags out its scattered, crumbled, degenerate existence.”<sup>104</sup> Having a broader educational base thus meant narrower thinking to Nietzsche, and the demise of the intellectual minority, without the struggle that the Greeks had to go through to become the genius.

Thus society and education needed to change for the genius to be created. Germany needed to return to the Dionysian and introduce its own genius through myth and art. The

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<sup>103</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 15

<sup>104</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions. Six Public Lectures*, 78

educational institutions needed to begin cutting down students who were not capable of achieving this goal, and the professors who served the “culture of the day” had to be fired. All of this, of course, with the aid of the state. Here, the state becomes an active actor in German society. Instead of protecting rights, it is encouraging inequality and should put its resources towards creating the genius once more. Nietzsche thus argues for a more authoritarian government, since genius cannot be created under egalitarian conditions: “All education begins with the opposite of that which one now praises as academic freedom, with obedience, with subordination, with discipline, with servitude.”<sup>105</sup>

## Early Nietzsche’s Schopenhauerian Politics

This final section will show how Nietzsche’s early political ideas were highly influenced by Schopenhauer, though some distinctions apply. While both thinkers are highly anti-democratic, Schopenhauer ultimately thinks in a pessimistic way: every human will continue to be under the spell of the will to live, and only the ascetic can truly redeem himself from the mediocrity of society and daily life. The wheel of life and the illusion it entails keep running despite anything individual humans do. Schopenhauer’s subsequent politics as laid out in Chapter II are pragmatic. For him, they are the best way to deal with a society that is egotistical and will continue to be so forever. The monarch is supposed to be the best to control this society and to lead geniuses to be created since the masses are not afraid of the smarter people gaining power. Instead, early Nietzsche believes this wheel can be stopped, and the system can be

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<sup>105</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, 101

changed by “people who are not yet caught up in the dizzying haste of our bustling age, and who still take no idolatrous satisfaction from throwing themselves under its wheels.”<sup>106</sup>

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche start from the same political basis and then diverge in the methods to do away with their current situations. Both of them believe that egalitarianism is not the right way for society to work. For Schopenhauer, it leads to anarchism and will put down the more intelligent people because the masses are scared. Nietzsche agrees with these ideas. The genius can seldom be created if everyone thinks they are entitled to the same rights as the others. What he does not agree with is that the state is there to protect individuals from others. This was Schopenhauer’s starting ground in his political philosophy. He took the teachings of Hobbes and Locke and applied them to his philosophy of the will. Nietzsche instead sees the state as a tool for his main goal: “the ever-renewed production and preparation of genius, in relation to which everything else is merely a tool, an aid and a facilitator.”<sup>107</sup>

Early Nietzsche had a conception of the state similar to Schopenhauer's. Like Schopenhauer, he sees the state as originating in conquest following the natural *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all).<sup>108</sup> A strong military genius imposes order upon the chaotic masses: “violence gives the first right, and there is no right that is not at its foundation arrogation, usurpation, violent action.”<sup>109</sup> This warlike foundation establishes a hierarchy where a warrior caste dominates a base of enslaved workers, ensuring the development of a higher culture. The state functions as an “iron clamp”<sup>110</sup> that prevents society from dissolving into a Hobbesian war of all against all. Nietzsche said that there is a “tremendous necessity of the state,

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<sup>106</sup>Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, 6

<sup>107</sup>Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 23

<sup>108</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 19

<sup>109</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 17

<sup>110</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 19

without which nature would not, by means of society, achieve its redemption in semblance, in the mirror of genius.”<sup>111</sup> For this to occur, he describes how individuals often blindly follow its dictates, unaware that they are merely means to the state’s own goals.<sup>112</sup>

This final goal of the state, where Nietzsche differs from Schopenhauer, is the genius. Where Schopenhauer envisions the state as a mechanism for preserving stability and allowing geniuses and ascetics to emerge in isolation, Nietzsche sees it as a tool for cultivating and renewing genius through struggle and hierarchical education. Nietzsche believes that existence has no value in itself,<sup>113</sup> apart from art. Art creates that meaning for humanity and shows the spectator the unity and suffering inherent in existence. The genius is the person who returns humans to a connection with their nature and the Dionysian and is thus more important for Nietzsche. He therefore expands on Schopenhauer’s idea of genius and transforms it into a societal effect rather than an individual one. The state does not exist just for the purpose of controlling the masses, but for the creation of this genius, the necessary force for shaping culture, the person who can reconnect humanity with the Dionysian, and giving life meaning through art.

## A Critique of Nietzsche’s Early Politics

At first, it appears that Nietzsche shares many of the same mistakes Schopenhauer makes in his early writing. The anti-democratic ideas of an intellectual aristocracy that he shares with Schopenhauer are against the metaphysical idea of everyone being the same will under the illusion of objectification. But Nietzsche appears to break from Schopenhauerian metaphysics

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<sup>111</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 18

<sup>112</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 20

<sup>113</sup> Nietzsche, *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, 13



even though he uses his terms to explain his idea of tragedy. Nietzsche believes that the world is absurd, not that it is pure will that desires more at every level of objectification. He is revolutionary because he believes it has no meaning at all. Although this is a nauseating idea, he believes that art (and ultimately tragedy) is what allows humans to affirm their life and find meaning in it despite the absurdity that lies outside. “Here in this greatest threat to the will [nausea], there approaches as a saving, healing enchantress, *art*; she alone is able to bend those nauseating thoughts concerning the dreadful or absurd in existence into representations with which one can live: these are the *sublime* as the artistic taming of the dreadful and the *comic* as the artistic discharging of the nausea of the absurd. The satyr chorus of the dithyramb is the saving deed of Greek art; in the middle world of these companions of Dionysus those previously described impulses exhausted themselves.”<sup>114</sup> Art gives meaning to existence by transforming chaos and suffering into something beautiful and affirmative. It allows humans to endure and even celebrate life despite its inherent meaninglessness. Through art, individuals reconnect with the Dionysian forces of creation and destruction, and experience a deeper truth beyond rationality, which grants life depth, and allows for a sense of transcendence.

Nietzsche gives a redemptive quality to art then, not because it gives us a respite from the will to life like with Schopenhauer, but because it allows us to affirm our own lives and become the creators of meaning in the absurdity that surrounds us. Nussbaum eloquently says in her essay on Schopenhauer’s influence on Nietzsche, “Tragedy shows that the world is chancy and arbitrary. But then, by showing how life beautifully asserts itself in the face of a meaningless universe, by showing the joy and splendor of human making in a world of becoming... it gives the spectator a way of confronting not only the painful events of the drama, but also the pains

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<sup>114</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 51

and uncertainties of life, both personal and communal - a way that involves human self-respect and self-reliance, rather than [Schopenhauerian] guilt or resignation.”<sup>115</sup> And who can create such art but the genius? Nietzsche says that “insert for once a genius, an actual genius, in the midst of this mass — immediately you notice something unbelievable.”<sup>116</sup> He believes that the only way humans can find true meaning is with the genius creating redemptive art.

This is his ultimate difference with Schopenhauer, and what makes Nietzsche’s political philosophy congruent with his metaphysics. Because he does not make any statements about equality under the law, or of metaphysical equality, he is not going against his own structure by proposing an authoritarian state that only cares about the genius and disregards “the masses.” Although this idea goes against our modern understanding of liberal democracies, Nietzsche remains consistent under his schema of nature and society. The world to him is absurd, and so are human-made rules and Socratic structures. These so-called truths are for him mere “metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding.”<sup>117</sup> We think we know the world, but in reality, we are just wishing to understand the world under our image. All philosophical concepts are as meaningless as the world, and what has a truly redemptive quality is art, as it allows us to create and become involved in affirming our lives despite the meaninglessness (while philosophy attempts to find meaning in everything.)

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<sup>115</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, “Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Dionysus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway, *Cambridge Companions to Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 368.

<sup>116</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, 102

<sup>117</sup> Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, 4

Nietzsche's early politics are then Schopenhauerian at the base, but he then expands them to fit his metaphysical conception of the world. He attains to some of Schopenhauer's politics, but what we call contradictions in Schopenhauer cannot be called so in Nietzsche because he has a different conception of the world and metaphysics. His anti-democratic ideas are congruent with his absurdist metaphysics. Still, it is clear that Schopenhauer's influence is all around Nietzsche's first works, and it will continue to affect him even when he ultimately rejects his previous "first teacher," as Chapter IV will show.

# Chapter IV: Nietzsche's Politics Beyond Good and Evil

*"Political philosophy is an experiment that began with Aristotle and ended with Nietzsche."* - Dr. William Shapiro (1946-2023), Emory Oxford College Professor of Political Science

**Abstract:** Nietzsche's early work assigned a significant role to the state: the creation of the Genius who can revive the Greek Dionysian art. The state and educational institutions would establish inequality, with all resources from the majority geared toward enabling the minority to succeed and instigate an aesthetic revolution that affirms and gives meaning to humanity. This chapter instead explores some of Nietzsche's middle and later works: *The Joyful Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Here, Nietzsche becomes anti-political, understanding the state as the remnant of the idols of the past: an institution that places morality and herd mentality over self-overcoming and a life beyond morality. For him, the state becomes secondary in the universe's meaninglessness, and its sole purpose is for the overman to overcome it. The proper place for politics in the philosophy of the will thus becomes clear: there are no grounds for the state beyond the "herd" morality that rules the day.

## Introduction

Nietzsche's views shifted between the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and *The Joyful Science* (1882). He believed he had let go of his previous influence of Schopenhauer and Wagner. Nietzsche rejected most of what he preached in his first significant work in the foreword of the 1886 edition, with the addition of the "Attempt at Self-Criticism." He says it was "a book perhaps for artists with a secondary propensity for analysis and retrospection ... with an artists' metaphysics in the background, a youthful work full of youthful courage and youthful melancholy, self-reliant, defiantly-independent, even where it appears to bow before an authority with proper reverence [Schopenhauer]... How very much I now regret that at that time I did not yet have the courage (or the immodesty?) to permit myself, in every observation of such idiosyncratic intuitions and wagers, a language of my own— that I laboriously sought to express, in Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulations, foreign and novel evaluations, which from the ground up run counter to the spirit of Kant and Schopenhauer, as well as to their taste! ... I attached hopes [in Wagner] where nothing was to be hoped for..."<sup>118</sup> Nietzsche viewed this book as entrenched with his thoughts but formulated through Schopenhauer's language. This is seen in his critique of Schopenhauer's pessimism. For him, the universe has no intrinsic meaning but also no pessimism. The Dionysian artist replenished humanity's meaning by creating. He showed the absurd nature of the world and the place we have in it, but in doing so, he also generated a purpose to live for the sake of creating. This was the true purpose of genius for Nietzsche. On the other hand, Schopenhauer preached for the ascetic, for the denial of the will to life. The genius could only momentarily see the will but then lived a life full of suffering. Nietzsche saw in the genius the end of suffering.

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<sup>118</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 6, 11, 12.

Although Nietzsche arguably showed a “soft” criticism of Schopenhauer, he later entirely went against Schopenhauer’s philosophy of pessimism and instead created his own metaphysics, which had repercussions in his political thought. This chapter explores those thoughts: Nietzsche ended political philosophy by denying all morality and shared belief. To show this, it focuses on his claims that “God is dead,” the overman will overcome himself and society, the scientists and creators further humanity, and his criticism of the herd mentality and politicizing with no purpose. In exploring these thoughts, the late Nietzsche will be shown as a destructive thinker who sought to build a bridge to a future of new meanings and -maybe- new politics. At the time, unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche sought to bring down the foundations of the political system that he lived in.

## Nietzsche as Destructor

To understand the main difference between Nietzsche’s early and later thoughts, it is of utmost importance to dissect his most famous quote, “God is dead.” He first introduced this idea in *The Joyful Science*. In section 125, called “The Madman,” Nietzsche says, “Where has God gone? ... we have killed him - you and I!... God is dead! God stays dead!... How do we console ourselves, we murderers of murderers?... Isn’t the magnitude of this deed too big for us? ... whoever is born after us will belong to a higher history than all history to this day, on account of this deed!”<sup>119</sup> Nietzsche here establishes that religion, which has ruled men since the dawn of time, has ended. Religion is based on nothing else but belief, and Nietzsche wants to get rid of all belief and superstition. His philosophy is godless. And for him, morality comes from religion

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<sup>119</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science / Idylls from Messina / Unpublished Fragments from the Period of The Joyful Science (Spring 1881–Summer 1882)*, vol. 6, trans. and with an afterword by Adrian Del Caro (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2023), 129

and the herd: “Wherever we encounter a morality we find an estimation and order of rank of human drives and actions. These... are always the expression of the needs of a community and herd... since the conditions of the preservation of one community have been very different from those of another, there have been very different moralities... Morality is herd instinct in the individual.”<sup>120</sup> Values are how societies control themselves and individuals from leaving or becoming greater. Morality is a mere organizer with no intrinsic value but relative to the society in which it exists. When it comes specifically to Western Europe, this morality was said to be based on Christianity. By declaring that God has died, though, Nietzsche is also saying that Europe’s current morality has perished. But if everything established up to that point stemmed from religion, humans needed to become gods themselves to go past this deed. By becoming creators, humans would be able to grow into higher selves. Morality thus has to be overcome, much like religion for Nietzsche.

For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer did not go far enough in his criticism of moral philosophy. Although he had gone against Kant for basing his moral framework in Christianity, Nietzsche argues that denying life as the ascetic has much more to do with religion than Schopenhauer would like to admit. He contradicted himself by both denying religion and having “cleanliness in matters of the Church and of the Christian God...”<sup>121</sup> His morals, for Nietzsche, were based on belief much like religion: “... the nonsense about *compassion* and the breaking through of the *principium individuationis* enabled by it as the source of all morality... these and similar *excesses* and vices of the philosopher are always accepted first and made into an article of faith...”<sup>122</sup> Schopenhauer’s philosophy required faith for Nietzsche. Faith in the “one will” and

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<sup>120</sup> Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science*, 124

<sup>121</sup> Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science*, 107

<sup>122</sup> Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science*, 107

in the *principium individuationis*. Once those principles were believed, then his morality could be seen as accurate. But this is the same issue that Christianity and all European philosophers had for Nietzsche: Christian morality and Schopenhauerian morality both require faith.

“Schopenhauer... a pessimist, a denier of God who stops before morality- who says Yes to morality...”<sup>123</sup>; even more, all morality is based on faith. Nietzsche wishes to destroy those ethical foundations for the new generations of the future to create their own individual meaning and to be free from the herd instinct of his day.

To lead the path toward generations that would overcome religion and morality, Nietzsche argued that the most “evil” men were needed to break the prevailing institutional beliefs. “I welcome all signs that a manlier, more warlike age is beginning, that above all will restore honor to courageousness! For it shall pave the way for an even-higher age and marshal the strength that the new age will require someday - the age that will carry heroism into knowledge and wage wars for the sake of ideas and their consequences... the secret to harvesting the greatest fruitfulness and the greatness enjoyment from existence is: *live dangerously!*”<sup>124</sup> Since “evil” and “dangerous” are but two moral words created through the herd instinct, Nietzsche proposes that men should start being amoral, and what would even be considered as immoral. Men should begin creating their own meaning after letting go of the old superstitions. For Nietzsche, this is done by going against all that was frowned upon before. This will ultimately break down the instinct of morality and lead to new frameworks of existence being built. Although Nietzsche sees the path toward those new frameworks, he does not know what they will be. He does understand they need to overcome everything that kept us herdlike before.

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<sup>123</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil / On the Genealogy of Morality*, vol. 8, trans. and with an afterword by Adrian Del Caro (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 82

<sup>124</sup> Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science*, 166-167



“Perhaps that very renunciation will also give us strength with which to bear renunciation itself; perhaps human beings will rise ever higher from the point where they no longer *flow out* into a god,”<sup>125</sup> Nietzsche declares. Humans should stop believing in others and create meaning for themselves, Nietzsche proposes. This is a significant task not meant for everyone at his time. They must teach that “morality is something forbidden!... I ask of god that he rid me of god...”<sup>126</sup> To escape from the herd mentality, denying all morality and religion, one must become a higher man, which leads to the Overman (*Übermensch*). This is done through the Will to Power (*der Wille zur Macht*).

## Will to Power

Much debate has surrounded Nietzsche’s idea of the will to power. Some call it a psychological study of humans, while others say it is Nietzsche’s foundational metaphysics.<sup>127</sup> What is certain is that it is built upon Schopenhauer’s idea of the will to life. Schopenhauer believed that this will to life was the essential drive of humanity and nature. Its only purpose was to desire more. Once that desire is fulfilled, more wishes will come up until we die. Nietzsche does not share this pessimistic view of the world. The will to power is the drive towards meaning in a universe without meaning. It is not just the desire to survive, like Schopenhauer’s, but the drive to grow, assert dominance, create, and overcome obstacles. Everything in life, from art to politics to personal ambition, expresses this force. “I [life] am that which must always overcome

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<sup>125</sup> Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science*, 168

<sup>126</sup> Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science*, 172, 173

<sup>127</sup> R. Lanier Anderson, “Friedrich Nietzsche,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2024 Edition), eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2024/entries/nietzsche/>.

itself. Indeed you call it a will to procreate... but all this is one, and one secret... the truth was not hit by him [Schopenhauer] who shot at it with the word of the 'will to existence': that will does not exist... what does not exist cannot will; but what is in existence, how could that still want existence? Only where there is life is there also will: not will to life but -thus I teach you- will to power..."<sup>128</sup> This is the ultimate reality Nietzsche sees. We cannot know anything about the universe apart from how we exist in it. For him, the will to power is the drive that makes us live this way. The will affects only itself, and he sees "our entire life of drives as the taking shape and ramification of a basic form of the will... The world seen from inside, the world determined and characterized on the basis of its "intelligible character" - it would precisely be "will to power" and nothing else..."<sup>129</sup> This is Nietzsche's description of our drives. We have a deep urge to assert power and transform the world. But the will to power is not equal in all. Not every human wants to transcend himself and society because the institutions of morality have tried to erase this drive. The will to power will appear in its highest form with the one that wants to do away with those institutions: the overman. "'Men are not equal.' Nor shall they become equal! What would my love of the overman be if I spoke otherwise?"<sup>130</sup> The overman is the person whose will to power allows him to overcome society, morality, and religion.

## Zarathustra and the Overman

Nietzsche's higher self, the overman, is described by Zarathustra, the main character of his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This philosophical character, inspired by the creator of

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<sup>128</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 227.

<sup>129</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 39,40

<sup>130</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 213

Zoroastrianism, is meant to be the first immoralist. Throughout the book, this prophet-like preacher journeys to find the overman, the ideal human who overcomes society and morality. Zarathustra is like that same madman who first declared God's demise. Coming down from his hermit's cave, Zarathustra wants to preach the truth to society: God is dead, and we are a bridge to the overman that will annihilate all remains of the old religions. "Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: *shall* be the meaning of the earth!... Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman - a rope over an abyss... what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not end..."<sup>131</sup> This person is mankind-overcome, the will to power is so big that he becomes the creator of his own meaning. "Whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness: but this is creative."<sup>132</sup> Contemporary society links the animalistic past and the overcoming future the overman creates. All virtue, pity, and justice must be gone to achieve this future. This is done through the denial of values. One must become the metaphorical figure of a lion, who powerfully creates his own meaning, to then be a child who is "innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel... the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world."<sup>133</sup> The will, as a drive towards new horizons here, sets itself as innocent as a child: it does not know what the future entails, but it strives towards it.

This view of the best man is very different from Schopenhauer's. Here, the overman is not an ascetic who denies this world of illusion to see the essence of the universe. Instead, he must be "hungry, violent, lonely, godless: thus the lion-will wants itself. Free from the happiness

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<sup>131</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 125, 126

<sup>132</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 228

<sup>133</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 139

of slaves, redeemed from gods and adorations, fearless and fear-inspiring, great and lonely...”<sup>134</sup> Nietzsche believes Schopenhauer’s ascetic was ultimately religious in nature, and thus makes the same mistakes than Kant and all the moralists had made until him. Instead, Zarathustra said, “I taught them to work on the future and to redeem with their creation all that has been. To redeem what is past in man and to re-create all ‘it was’... this I called redemption and this alone I taught them to call redemption.”<sup>135</sup> Nietzsche thus breaks away from Schopenhauer’s philosophy and becomes the creator of his own. Through the will to power, the overman strives to leave the chains of herd morality, which is made to keep society down. Thus, Nietzsche, through Zarathustra, establishes that current society and its values must be overcome by a creator, which is similar to the Dionysian artist of Nietzsche’s youth.

## Nietzsche’s Ultimate Politics

While early Nietzsche continued a tradition of respect for the state and politics, utilizing them to create the Dionysian genius, later Nietzsche broke with political thought and strives for the end of the state. With a philosophy that denies all morality and intrinsic metaphysics, Nietzsche turns to show how the state forwards these same ideas. This is seen in a key chapter of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “On the New Idol.” Here, Nietzsche says the state has tried to replace the old God. It lies when it says, “I, the state, am the people,”<sup>136</sup> Instead, “every people speaks its tongue of good and evil, which the neighbor does not understand. It has invented its own language of customs and rights. But the state tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and

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<sup>134</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 215

<sup>135</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 310

<sup>136</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 160

whatever it says it lies- and whatever it has it has stolen. Everything about it is false...”<sup>137</sup> The state tries to impose itself as the ultimate truth, exclaiming that “On earth there is nothing greater than I: the ordering finger of God am I...”<sup>138</sup> Morality is subjective, but the state acts like there is only one truth, with its laws and constitutions. And it not only says there is one truth but also imposes that truth on all its citizens. This makes it Nietzsche’s most dangerous enemy. The state is the new idol of his age, and people have begun to believe in it more than in religion itself.

However, there cannot be any overcoming within the state, according to Nietzsche. “Only where the state ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous: there begins the song of necessity, the unique and inimitable tune. Where the state ends- look there my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman?”<sup>139</sup> The overman must overcome himself and society. This must be done outside of the state that imposes one morality. The future for Nietzsche is one where everyone can create their own meaning, which entails their own morals, too. As long as the state is the main organizer and imposer of morals, then the society of overmen cannot exist. In that society, “the mob blinks: ‘we are all equal...there are no higher men...man is man; before God we are all equal.’... But now this god has died. And before the mob we do not want to be equal...”<sup>140</sup> The foundational belief of modern states is thus refuted under Nietzsche’s philosophy. If the will is not Schopenhauerian but only a drive that wishes to impose itself, then there is no essence that every human shares. Humans have different iterations of the will to power, and in fact, the majority remain as part of the herd for Nietzsche, striving to believe in old faiths like Christianity and the state. According to Nietzsche’s perception of the

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<sup>137</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 161

<sup>138</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 161

<sup>139</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 162

<sup>140</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 398

world, there is no room for the state if it is the only source of belief for society. It is something that must be overcome.

Nietzsche can thus be said to be the end of political philosophy. Before, for Nietzsche, the state was a secondary tool to create genius, but now it is a pointless idol that stops the overman from achieving its goal. Man can overcome itself only outside of the state, and the kings of the past “have become false, overhung and disguised with ancient yellowed grandfather’s pomp, showpieces for the most stupid and clever and anyone who haggles for power today... what do kings matter now?”<sup>141</sup> Nietzsche says, implying that the old institutions of the day were like the gods of the past, dead. The state is a mere tool for creating slavery of the mind, and, in his eyes, even when it becomes a democracy, it furthers its goals of being that new idol who everyone prays to and believes to be the ultimate truth.<sup>142</sup> By ridding morality of its “*a priori*” or intrinsic value, Nietzsche also rids the state of its justification and authority. There is no point in punishment or law when there is no good or evil. The overman is that step *beyond good and evil* and thus is also meant to go beyond the need for politics and the state. The ultimate politics of the will is, therefore, the demise of the state. Nietzsche destroys the foundations of metaphysics and then those of politics.

This is a step Schopenhauer did not take even when he preached for his political philosophy. He remained pragmatic and tried to develop the best state according to the will, although he failed and showed his own biases more than his philosophy, as Chapter II showed. Nietzsche instead was able to develop his political ideas through his non-metaphysics. For him, there is no meaning in the world and no intrinsic meaning in humanity apart from what we

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<sup>141</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 357-358

<sup>142</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 148

create. This means that there is also no absolute value to the state and the morals it sets to impose.

Nietzsche breaks away from the trends of political philosophy that had begun with Plato and Aristotle and sees the state as an obstacle rather than the solution to humanity's problems. The overman must overcome society's values, and the state must be included. Although Nietzsche does not say what he thinks that future would entail, it can be seen that he does not envision politics as we do today. Instead, each person creates their own meaning and values. It is hard to see what this would look like, but it must include a political philosophy that is completely different from those of his time. One where morality can be subjective, and each person can be the creator of their ethics without punishment or education. By going against the metaphysics and morals of his time, Nietzsche also sets up the destruction of the prevailing political philosophy of his day. Whether a politics can exist that is based on the will to power —beyond good and evil— remains to be seen.

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