Nietzsche and the fate of Romantic thought

The old and the new Nietzsches

The alternatives in some of the most controversial debates in recent philosophy often come down to whether what is at issue is in essence a Hegelian, or a Nietzschean position. The differences between Habermas and Rorty, or between the early Derrida and Davidson, for example, can be seen in these terms. These figures are all what Habermas would call 'post metaphysical' thinkers. However, despite their renunciation of the idea of a foundational 'first philosophy', Habermas and Davidson wish to sustain a universalist conception of rationality; Rorty and Derrida, in contrast, think that such a conception is a residue of a philosophical past which it is time to leave behind. Significantly, the former do not give a decisive role to the aesthetic, whereas the latter do, and it is not fortuitous that what is at stake in both positions can be elucidated in terms of the interpretation of Nietzsche. Whereas, for Habermas, Nietzsche is part of a questionable tradition of critiques of modern rationality, Rorty thinks he offers the possibility of escaping from many tired philosophical obsessions via his rejection of representationalism and the correspondence theory of truth, and via his concern with self-creation. At the same time he contends that Nietzsche must also be regarded with caution because he was not a democrat, and had no investment in what to Rorty matters most, namely the reduction of human cruelty and suffering. For post-structuralists this latter worry seems to play virtually no role in their view of Nietzsche. He is instead an epochal figure who, along with Heidegger, has decisively changed the face of philosophy in ways which go to the heart of Western civilisation. This more dramatised view relies in some respects on the sort of questionable assumptions about the history and the effects of Western philosophy that we encountered in de Man in Chapter 7. Adorno warns in *Negative Dialectics* that 'The new beginning at a supposed zero-point is the mask of strenuous forgetting' (Adorno 1975 p. 79). One of the problems with the 'new Nietzsche' is that this kind of amnesia can be seen to be present in some of his recent reception.

Two approaches to Nietzsche suggest how this might be the case. The first has formed the focus of recent work by Robert Holub, who shows that Nietzsche was reliant at times on contemporary ideas that even his most fervent admirers

would have great trouble taking seriously, and that he used questionable secondary sources for his knowledge of many of the thinkers in modern German philosophy whom he was so eager to dismiss.¹ The second approach will inform this chapter, namely the revelation of the extent to which the structures of thought upon which Nietzsche relies are part of a Romantic aesthetic tradition which requires a more adequate presentation than it has generally received. Furthermore, especially in relation to the questions at issue in the present book, some of the positions of the Romantics are arguably superior to those of Nietzsche. This is not least because the Romantics see themselves as offering a corrective to some of the reductions in Enlightenment thinking, rather than a totalising critique of rationality.

Many advocates of the 'new Nietzsche' might object, however, that such an approach misses the point. If Nietzsche's thought is as revolutionary as they suggest, then measuring it by standards developed from a tradition he aims to overcome makes it impossible to appreciate just how different he is from what preceded him. Rorty has suggested one problem with this position in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, namely that by making his attitude to his philosophical predecessors into a unified overall story Nietzsche puts himself in the position where one has to 'claim that none of the descriptions that applied to them applies to you', so that one is 'acting as if a redescription of one's predecessors got one in touch with a power other than oneself', such as the 'Will to Power' (Rorty 1989 p. 107). When Nietzsche does this, Rorty argues, he rejoins the metaphysics he opposes with other aspects of his thought, and is therefore open to the same kind of objections as are appropriate in relation to anyone in the tradition of strong foundationalist thinking. The aptness of this criticism will become apparent when we consider some of Nietzsche's responses to the questions we have been concerned with so far.

However, there is a further objection to the approach I shall adopt which has more force, and which involves a central issue in contemporary debate. Nietzsche is, like Rorty, in many respects a performative thinker. What matters are the *effects* of what he says, language for Nietzsche not being primarily a means of representation, but rather, as it already was for Schleiermacher, a form of social action. The evident fact that Nietzsche makes inconsistent statements about so many questions cannot, in this perspective, be a reason for accusing him of an inconsistency which invalidates his 'position'. This is because he is not aiming at a set of coherent true statements about the matters which concern him, but rather at performative effects on those who think that seeking for true statements about topics like, precisely, 'the Truth', should be the aim of philosophy. For Nietzsche these people are involved in a practice they would be better off giving up, and persuading people to do something different, as any politician knows, is more likely to be a question of rhetoric than of consistent counter-argument.

The standard way of countering this stance is to argue that it involves a performative contradiction. By employing language in this manner, one is relying

on the fact that one holds it to be *true* that such people should give up their pursuit of philosophical goals. One is therefore covertly relying on truth at the same time as arguing for its subordination to something else. This argument will in some contexts be a valid objection to some of the Nietzschean strategy. However, the argument starts to look less generally compelling when it is considered in relation to aesthetic questions, where the issue of rhetoric becomes more complex.

As Gadamer has shown, the concern with the '*Wahrscheinliche*', both with what appears to be true and with the 'truth of appearances', which is initiated by Aristotle's attention to rhetoric as the complement of analytic and dialectic, comes in the eighteenth century to form a link between Baumgarten's new concept of aesthetics and the discipline of hermeneutics. Even though, Gadamer suggests, 'the tradition of rhetoric broke off particularly thoroughly' in eighteenth-century Germany, 'it remained effective in an unrecognised way in the realm both of aesthetics and of hermeneutics' (Gadamer 1986 p. 111). If Nietzsche's texts are themselves regarded as literary works, and their rhetoric is therefore a part of their aesthetic status, their argument-based, truth-claiming aspect need only be one of their aspects, and may not be the most significant. What a novelist may argue to be true in a novel, for example, might not be what makes their work significant, because the arguments are only presented by one voice in a polyphony of different voices with different rhetorical effects. Such a conception of language and art is, as we have seen, already part of Romanticism. Schlegel's conception of irony puts in question the assumption that texts must inherently be about truth in a limited, propositional sense. Look, for example, at the essay 'On Incomprehensibility', where Schlegel at one point plays with the strategy of claiming that what he is saying is not ironic, a claim which it seems impossible to make in the context of a text about irony, because the very making of the claim ironically undermines it.

The core problem for the interpreter of Nietzsche is that performative *effects* are not something which can be inferred directly from a text.² The effects themselves will depend upon the recipients of the text, and the identifying of performative intentions depends on the vagaries of interpretation. At the same time, it is clear that Nietzsche *has* had performative effects, and did have performative intentions. One cannot, for example, make him into a liberal democrat, even if some of his ideas may be usable in some contexts for democratic purposes (as they were for the pre-First World War German Social Democrats). In the light of the effects of anti-democratic thinking on German history, these intentions can hardly be said to be unproblematic. The question is, therefore: were such texts likely to achieve things one would find desirable, and are they likely to do so now? Some of the decisions on this question must be made in terms of Nietzsche's historical role, and here one has a right to be vigilant. However, it does seem evident, especially from his reception by Derrida, Nehamas, Rorty and others, that Nietzsche's texts also offer other resources of a different kind. Given his relationship to the tradition at issue in this book, my question will be

whether these resources really offer so much more than those established by some of his predecessors.

One response to the sort of issues raised by Nietzsche's texts is the – explicitly Hegelian – argument by Robert Brandom that the shared social practice of fulfilling the commitments entailed in any discursive claim made to another person has priority over the preferences and desires which give rise to what one may claim. While an advocate of a Nietzschean stance may wish to give priority to the literary, strategic and ironic aspects of Nietzsche's texts, in Brandom's view this prioritisation cannot be self-legitimising and itself needs justification. Brandom's rationalism suggests the kind of challenge which any defence of a Nietzschean strategy must face, and similar views have also been advanced by Habermas and others. What this comes down to is in many respects a decision on the very status of theorising in philosophy. Brandom's claim is that theory cannot just be performative, and that the traditional goals of philosophical legitimation can therefore still be pursued. They can, moreover, be pursued in a form, which, *pace* Nietzsche, does not rely on a representationalist conception of truth and regards language as social practice. However, the goals do entail the kind of universal claims that Nietzsche (in some respects, at least) opposes.

Nietzsche, like post-structuralists such as Lyotard, would regard this position as involving a different version of the closure inherent in the pursuit of metaphysical aims, and therefore as blocking access to what may be outside existing kinds of legitimation. Concern with the possibility that philosophy has been the source of a repressive failure to engage with the radically 'other' is, of course, the reason for the extensive attention to the aesthetic in such thinkers. The question which is decisive for the present book, is, therefore, the relationship of aesthetics to rationality. The Idealist hopes for an integration of the subject into a new conception of nature that would harmonise what we know with what we should do give way later in the nineteenth century to a much more fraught view of the subject in relation to the ideas of reason and nature. In order to see why, we need to consider certain aspects of the anti-Idealism of Schopenhauer and Marx, before turning in more detail to Nietzsche's own texts.

Schopenhauer: music as metaphysics

The importance of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) for the work of the early Nietzsche is well established. However, it is not clear that Nietzsche's rejection of Schopenhauer in his later work means that he in fact rejected all of the elements of Schopenhauer's thought which had been central to his early texts. Schopenhauer is an interestingly symptomatic thinker in the present context, because he gives a decisive role to music in his philosophy, but at the same time adopts a largely rationalist conception of natural science. He also combines an anti-Idealist naturalism, which would only become influential, well after he published his main work in 1818, in the wake of Darwin and Wagner in the

1850s, with a Platonism that is the basis of his investment in art. Schopenhauer's main animus is directed against any attempt, like that of Hegel, to suggest that history can be understood teleologically, as the locus of the realisation of reason. Instead he regards history as the zoology of the species mankind. The reasons that this view leads Schopenhauer to lend such importance to art take one to the core of some of the philosophical questions raised by aesthetics in modernity. Schelling regarded art as a means of coming to terms with the cognitively inaccessible motivating forces upon which reason is founded, and this gave art an active role in the subject's self-understanding. Schopenhauer, in contrast, regards art as the only means of temporarily escaping the fundamentally futile nature of reality. Art's essential role is therefore not to enlighten us about ourselves, in order to make possible new ways of dealing with the world, but rather to enable us to *escape* what we already intuitively know about the irredeemable nature of what we are. This latter position will be what eventually leads Nietzsche to reject Schopenhauer, but Nietzsche's subsequent ideas retain some of the problems of what he rejects.

Like Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, Schopenhauer develops his philosophy by questioning Kant's division of the world into phenomena and noumena. He differs from Kant over the notion of the world 'in itself', to which he thinks we have direct intuitive access. The world's 'most inner essence, its kernel, the thing itself' he terms 'according to the most immediate of its manifestations: Will' (Schopenhauer 1986 I p. 67). The Will is the real ground of the world which science can only cognitively apprehend as appearance. Like Freud's id, the Will therefore cannot appear as itself and has to be accessible to us in a different manner from what can be known. What is meant by the Will can be understood via our own body: 'The parts of the body must . . . completely correspond to the main desires via which the Will manifests itself, must be the visible expression of these desires: teeth, gullet and intestine are objectified hunger; the genitalia the objectified sex drive; grasping hands, swift feet correspond to the already more indirect striving of the Will which they represent' (I p. 168). This conception provides a metaphysical, rather than a biological, answer to the question why the body is constituted in the way it is. The phenomenal world is grounded in the Will, which objectifies itself in different ways in all of nature, but never appears as itself.

This conception should already be familiar. Schopenhauer relies, without admitting it, on Schelling's assumption that: 'As the object is never absolute then something per se non-objective must be posited in nature; this absolutely non-objective postulate is precisely the original productivity of nature' (Schelling I/3 p. 284). The Will, Schopenhauer claims, is apparent to us in that kind of consciousness in which each person 'recognises his own individuality [*Individuum*] in an essential way, immediately, without any form, even that of subject and object . . . as the knower and the known here coincide' (Schopenhauer 1986 I pp. 172–3). His claim echoes what is intended by the notion of 'intellectual intuition' that Schelling developed in relation to Fichte.

Schelling's argument was that if an implausible idealism is to be avoided, Fichte's version of intellectual intuition, in which 'If I think an external object then the thought is different from the object, but if I think myself then subject and object are one' (cited Schelling I/6 p. 154), must extend beyond the empirical subject to a grounding identity between subjectivity and objectivity. This identity is the condition of overcoming the Kantian division between appearances and things in themselves. My thoughts of my empirical self *qua* object are in fact just as transient, just as much part of the realm of appearance, as those of external objects, which means they cannot grasp the 'absolute identity' required to overcome the subject-object division. Schopenhauer avoids the term 'the absolute', but his notion of the Will has the same function as the absolute in the structure of the argument.³

The key problem, then, is the status of the Will, which is only available to us in an 'intuition', in which the subject-object split is immediately overcome. Schopenhauer's Will is inherently at odds with itself: 'the Will in itself . . . is an endless striving' (Schopenhauer 1986 I p. 240). Its self-objectifications continually seek to overcome each other in order to sustain their identity, but in the case of any particular thing this identity is bound ultimately to be destroyed: the only real identity is therefore the absolute identity of the Will. The structure of this conception is again very close to structures encountered in German Idealism. Schelling says of time, for example, that it 'is itself nothing but the *totality appearing in opposition to the particular life of things*' (I/6 p. 220), and much the same can be said of the Will. The difference is that the destruction of the particular by the Will is not seen by Schopenhauer as enabling us to comprehend the absolute by the revelation of the necessary structure of developmental change. For Schopenhauer any transcendence of the incessant battle for self-preservation in which appearing nature consists is only temporary and does not lead to a progressive development. Each particular being owes its existence to its negation of other parts of existence, but there is no sense in which this means that the highest aspect of existence is, as it is for Kant and the Idealists, the rational, thinking subject.⁴ Knowledge is essentially the means for preserving the individual, so the principle of subjectivity is self-preservation, not a capacity for self-transcending reason which can lead us to a moral goal. This post-Hobbesian vision leaves open the question of why the subject should then preserve itself at all, which Hobbes had answered in terms of the self-justifying capacity for continuing self-gratification. Unable to tolerate the consequences of such a view, which just promises a life of endlessly renewed dissatisfaction, of the kind inherent in the very nature of the Will, Schopenhauer seeks a way of transcending the Will that is based on aesthetic contemplation.

Schopenhauer's conception of art derives from Kant's notion that aesthetic contemplation is a pleasure free of appropriative interest. In order to reinforce the idea that this pleasure is not based upon the continually renewed need to overcome dissatisfaction, Schopenhauer combines Kant's notion with a Platonist metaphysics. Both the thing in itself and the Platonic Idea testify for

Schopenhauer to the limitations of the time-bound phenomenal world. We can only transcend these limitations by separating our cognition from its motivation by the Will. To do this one must lose the sense of one's individual, Will-determined existence, and lose oneself in contemplation of the object, becoming a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless *subject of cognition*' (Schopenhauer 1986 I p. 257). This idea has an important consequence for his account of the subject, and it is here that the real source of Schopenhauer's link between pessimism and aesthetics becomes apparent. Only by losing ourselves as individual, sensuously receptive subjects can we achieve a state which is not dominated by the transient world of pain and pleasure. Aesthetic contemplation dissolves the opposition of subject and object, not in order to give the intelligible subject the ultimate role in the constitution of the truth, as is arguably the case in Fichte and Hegel, but rather to overcome the individuated, desiring subject. The artistic genius is therefore characterised by a capacity for objectivity which allows him (in Schopenhauer one can advisedly say 'him') to apprehend the essence of things, their Idea, without being distracted by any relation to the object generated by passing wishes or desires.⁵

For Schopenhauer the art object's aesthetic status therefore primarily derives from its *universality*. His aesthetic theory becomes an inverted Platonism. Whereas, in the *Republic* at least, Plato attacks art for only representing the single object, not the Idea, Schopenhauer maintains that art is the only locus in which the Idea can be represented. The higher truth becomes attainable by eliminating the illusion that the subject could relate to a world which means something essential to it *qua* sensuous subject. This elimination requires a relationship to things of disinterested contemplation which takes one beyond the temporal world. Schopenhauer therefore does not regard the historical development of the subject as part of a larger, philosophically intelligible story. He 'cannot help seeing the same thing in all history, like in a kaleidoscope one always sees at every turn the same things in other configurations' (V p. 526). As such, there are clear metaphysical answers to the questions of human existence: finite human existence is ultimately vain because of its basis in the Will. In consequence, art, at least temporarily, makes insight into the essential nature of our existence tolerable.

Schopenhauer attempts to demonstrate the *metaphysical* truth of art in his account of music, giving music the kind of privileged philosophical role it had at times for the early Romantics. As we saw in Hegel, the idea of the truth of art is threatened in modernity by new kinds of legitimation in the scientific, legal and political spheres, which rely on excluding particularity from the realm of the highest truth. Schopenhauer, though, sees the highest truth as still located in art, not in science, law or philosophy. Despite his Platonic (and Buddhist) antagonism to the Will-driven sensuous subject, Schopenhauer regards the 'intuition' present in art as superior to concepts. 'Intuition' is contemplation which apprehends the object without first seeing it in terms of defining concepts. Schopenhauer explains intuition further via the example of literary meta-

phors, similes, parables and allegories. Although poetry employs concepts, these are not what make something poetry. Poetry results instead from the manner in which the concepts are made into non-discursive *images*. The argument is similar to one we encountered in Schleiermacher. A poem for Schopenhauer achieves its sense of completeness via its rhythm and rhyme. It thereby becomes a 'sort of music' and appears to be there for its own sake, not 'as a simple means, as the sign of a signified [*Zeichen eines Bezeichneten*], namely the sense of the words' (II p. 550). Once this priority has been established, the meaning of the words simply appears as 'an unexpected bonus, like words to music' (II p. 550).

It should now be easier to understand Schopenhauer's investment in what he himself terms the 'metaphysics of music'. Music is the crucial component in a metaphysical conception of aesthetic autonomy. The reason for Schopenhauer's elevation of music is that, unlike other forms of art, music is non-representational and thus is least bound to the world of appearance that can be grasped in concepts. Music has the status of the 'true general language': it 'does not talk of things, but rather of nothing but well-being and woe, which are the sole realities for the *Will*' (V p. 507). Words take one into the realm of concepts and abstractions; absolute music, on the other hand, combines direct access to the world of feelings with a basis in the pure forms of mathematics. It is this combination which is so powerful, as we saw in Chapter 7, because it seems to bring together the two most distant and opposed aspects of modernity, the individual feeling subject, and the condition of possibility of the modern sciences.

The Will is 'divided in itself'. This fact is most obviously manifested in us through desire, which entails an inherent incompleteness and a need on the part of that which desires to move beyond itself. In Hegel desire is only an early, undeveloped stage in the subject's self-constitution. The culmination of this self-constitution takes place when the subject becomes capable of an intersubjective recognition of the other that transcends the subject's desire to consume or destroy the other. Because music expresses mere subjective inwardness, it fails, like the primitive manifestations of desire, to engage with the other in a developed manner. For Schopenhauer, in contrast, music is the source of the deepest insight into the nature of reality *because* it speaks directly of desire. Music is, though, grounded at the same time in 'completely determinate rules which are expressed in mathematics, which it cannot deviate from without completely ceasing to be music' (I p. 358). It therefore crosses the Kantian divide between the sensuous and the intelligible, much as Hamann claimed that language does. The mathematical proportions in music are sensuously heard as *intelligible* connections. If the 'maths' is wrong because of the use of a note that does not take adequate account of the proportions on which the intervals are based, the music also sounds wrong. The point is that one does not have to *know* explicitly the mathematical way of expressing dissonance to be able to hear it, because we hear dissonance primarily via the way in which it impinges on our feelings. Music 'directly affects the Will, i.e. the feelings, passions and emotions of the hearer' (II p. 574). The language of music is universal in the way that

geometrical figures, the a priori forms of intuition, are universal: 'the world of appearances or nature, and music' (I p. 365) are, therefore, two different expressions of what is ultimately the same.

Schopenhauer goes so far as to maintain that, because music is the direct image (*Abbild*) of the Will, it is 'the metaphysical to everything physical in the world, the thing in itself to every appearance. One could accordingly just as well call the world embodied music as embodied Will' (I p. 366). Like the early Schlegel, he therefore thinks music and philosophy are inseparable from each other. If one succeeded in giving a complete conceptual explanation of music one would have 'the true philosophy' (I p. 369), in which sensuous and intelligible are united. The point is, of course, that such an explanation is impossible in purely discursive terms. What is to be explained matters precisely because it articulates what words cannot. Music is thus regarded as an indication of the limits of philosophy. This, however, leads to an instructive problem.

If what music says is inaccessible to discursive language, assertions about music's philosophical significance cannot claim to be true, and the question is what status they therefore have. One productive way of approaching this problem is to acknowledge that music can *show* what cannot be said, so that any attempt to say *what* music shows will inherently involve Romantic irony. This irony entails, as we saw, the negation of any assertion, but not in favour of a determinate contrary assertion, because all determinate assertions are relative to other assertions. No assertion could be definitive, unless one were able finally to grasp the totality of interlinked assertions. Our finitude renders this impossible, so irony is the inevitable result of attempts to articulate the highest things. This conception led the early Romantics to the idea that it is only via a constant interplay between different forms of articulation that we can come to terms with the limitations of each form. However, Schopenhauer does not deal with the question of music and philosophy in this manner. The way he does tell us something important about the relationship between conceptions of philosophical aesthetics and cultural politics.

Schopenhauer's claim is that music best represents the unconscious forces which are the productive ground, not just of our representations, but also of the rest of the world: 'the composer reveals the innermost essence of the world and pronounces the deepest wisdom, in a language which his reason does not understand' (I p. 363). The key here is the notion of rationality, which Schopenhauer simply equates with what is conceptually determinable, thereby rendering music extra-rational, and creating a divide between reason and its other. The difficulty is that *claims* about this other rely upon there being a clear division between it and reason, but the division cannot be established in rational terms. In consequence, any claims must rely on 'intuition'. This creates a rigid division between the rational/conceptual, and the irrational/intuitive. What is required can only be directly experienced, not established via a theoretical claim about intuition. The claim must therefore be resistant to any discursive articulation at all. This is not only a questionable position in epistemological terms, but also

excludes the possibility that music, rather than offering an escape from reality, might actually be able to contribute to a notion of reason which helps us come to better terms with reality by revealing it and constituting it in new ways.

For Schopenhauer music, *qua* aesthetic experience, temporarily redeems one from the fundamental suffering in which life consists, but it does so whilst expressing precisely what makes life a torment. In Odo Marquard's terms, aesthetics moves towards 'anaesthetics'. Music, as *The Birth of Tragedy* will argue, thus plays a role analogous to tragedy, which presents the worst human events in the form of aesthetic appearance whose purpose is to render the unbearable bearable. The problem with this position becomes apparent in the fact that Schopenhauer argues wholly within the specific Western musical tradition which develops with Viennese classicism: the resolution of tension within sonata form is the best example of the sort of music he is referring to. What he says – and something similar will apply to Nietzsche's early view of Wagner – is therefore predicated upon the development of specifically modern music. The music in question moves away from the more static contrapuntal music of the past and opens up the new harmonically-based dynamism and possibilities for subjective expression encountered in Beethoven. How, in that case, is it that such historically developed music expresses a metaphysical truth which transcends history?

Schopenhauer does state that his argument about the metaphysical status of music cannot be proven, 'because it assumes and establishes a relationship of music as a representation [*Vorstellung*] to that which essentially never can be a representation' (I p. 358). He argues that the basis of what we term reason is the drive for self-preservation, and for the propagation of the species. Self-preservation is the 'basic endeavour of the Will in all its appearances' (II p. 386). Such claims, as we shall see again in Nietzsche, are faced with the problem that what they seek to establish undermines the very possibility of establishing anything determinate. Discursive argument must, for Schopenhauer, always be motivated by the Will, as the intuitively accessible ground of all appearances, including, of course, the appearance of the argument itself. The ground of the argument is therefore self-preservation, but this means we have no reason to accept its truth, and should, even in his own terms, seek instead to establish why Schopenhauer thinks the argument contributes to self-preservation. What would enable us to move from Schopenhauer's claims to a valid account of a metaphysical principle like the Will? The answer is that nothing could, except an act of intuitive faith which could never be cashed in as a discursive claim. Schopenhauer is here clearly involved in a performative contradiction. This cannot be circumvented in the manner Nietzsche sometimes achieves, because Schopenhauer claims to be telling us the ultimate truth about things, while at the same time saying that this cannot be done. Freud is faced, as we have seen, with a structurally similar problem with regard to the grounding role of the id. He echoes Schopenhauer's view when he insists that a 'drive can never be an object of consciousness, only the idea [*Vorstellung*] that represents it'. Freud

then has the problem of how to show that the representation is of a drive at all. The difficulty this involves is evident in the way that his accounts rely heavily on metaphorical resources that preclude a definitive statement of the theoretical point. The shared structure of the problem here is in fact a classic problem for metaphysics. How is one discursively to articulate a non-discursive condition of possibility of discursivity?

These arguments might seem pretty conclusive, but it is clear from the influence of Schopenhauer, not least upon Wagner, Nietzsche and Freud, that he articulates something vital in the experience of modernity. The limits of Schopenhauer's ability to make a philosophical case for his metaphysical proposals are pretty evident, but one of the key features of the aesthetic is the way in which it keeps open the idea of the 'unsayable'. In this respect, even though Schopenhauer's account falsely ontologises the significance of music, its insistence on the combination of music's non-representational character with music's ambivalent relationship to conceptuality can begin to suggest why music may be more apt than other forms of art to the modern experience of the I that is not, in Freud's phrase, 'lord in its own house'. Furthermore, music makes limitations in discursive thought apparent in ways which, as Schlegel and Schleiermacher showed, can then be translated into the claim that other forms of art cannot be understood in merely discursive terms. The links of music to the theoretical articulation of the notion of aesthetic autonomy are crucial here, but Schopenhauer himself does not deal adequately with this theme.

His problem is the absolute status which art must have if his argument is to work. This status is most easily conferred on music because music is least connected to empirical representation, to the relative world of transient objects. The argument is, though, suspiciously circular. Schopenhauer's claim is that art reveals the essential truth about existence. The claim relies, however, on an essence of art with which one must already be familiar if one is to apprehend something as an object of aesthetic contemplation at all. The essence of art consists in its making possible a temporary escape from subordination to the Will. How, then, do those who cannot attain denial of the Will gain access to this essence? Schoenberg criticises 'Schopenhauer's demand that the evaluation of works of art can only be based on authority. Unfortunately he does not say who bestows authority nor how one can acquire it' (Schoenberg 1975 p. 136). Even beyond the questionable circularity of Schopenhauer's argument, there is something arid about its implications. It leads to a monolithic notion of art as the source of the temporary negation of contingent subjectivity, and so omits any sense of the complex developments in the history of subjectivity that are required for modern notions and forms of art to emerge in the first place. A metaphysics of art of this kind ultimately reduces all art to the same significance. By sustaining a sphere of complete philosophical autonomy for art Schopenhauer displaces it from the role of actively enlightening us about the nature and limits of our capacity for cognitive rationality. The intensity of Schopenhauer's antipathy to anything like a theological consolation for the nature of existence means that his

alternative has to be equally radical in the other direction. However, the result of this is a debasement of the finite, feeling subject which could actually be shared by certain kinds of theological conception.

Many of the theories we have examined so far have been concerned with the idea of consciousness' ground in an other which is not accessible to conceptual thought. This concern has often led the theories to be equated as all equally part of the history of modern irrationalism. It is therefore important to differentiate responses to the idea of the limits of conceptual thought. If the ground of consciousness becomes, as it does for Schopenhauer, an ontological principle, the Will, there is little more to be said about it, apart from revealing that it is what is at work in all areas of life which might have previously been regarded as being based on reason, altruism, individual creativity, and so on. The resulting pessimism about the subject's essential nature has, though, been generated by *reflection* upon what motivates what we call reason. The problem with Schopenhauer's account of music as the most effective means of access to the motivational ground is that he tends to reduce music to one significance which, despite all claims to the contrary, he then articulates in the general language of theory. Schoenberg says of Schopenhauer:

he loses himself . . . when he tries to translate details of this language *which the reason does not understand* into our terms. It must, however, be clear to him that in this translation into the terms of human language, which is abstraction, reduction to the recognizable, the essential, the language of the world, which ought perhaps to remain incomprehensible and only perceptible, is lost. (Schoenberg 1975 p. 141)

Whether music is really better regarded as 'incomprehensible' is itself questionable. If music reveals the limits of what can be said, it is not therefore per se incomprehensible, as mere random noise might be. Music must be *understood* to reveal the limits of the sayable, even it generally cannot be said to mean anything semantically determinate. In contrast to Schopenhauer, the Romantic views encountered in earlier chapters avoided the kind of link between music and philosophy in which music becomes merely the means of sustaining an otherwise unwarrantable philosophical thesis. The Romantic conception can thus incorporate both the new autonomy which makes music into a greater resource for exploring the unsayable, and the manner in which music is connected to other ways of interpreting and articulating the world.

Schopenhauer is, then, on the one hand oriented towards the future, by his anti-metaphysical rejection of a redemptive view of both internal and external nature, and the past, because his aesthetics becomes subordinated to a static Platonic metaphysics. For aesthetic thinkers after Schopenhauer the task can be characterised in terms of Peter Dews's phrase, the 'limits of disenchantment' (see Dews 1995). If Platonising options are rejected, how can a conception of art be developed which comes to terms with modern, non-redemptive temporality, without eventually undermining the notion of art altogether? It is Nietzsche who probably radicalises the question of the significance of art and

beauty more than anyone in the nineteenth century, and the extent to which he may invalidate some of the Romantic ideas we have examined becomes a vital question. In order better to understand Nietzsche's radicalism we need, though, first to look at a famous example of Marx's engagement with art.

Marx, mythology and art

Some of the main questions that set the agenda for aesthetic theory in the twentieth century appear in a passage from Marx's Introduction to the *Grundrisse*, written in 1857, in which Marx ponders the relationship of art to the general development of society (Marx 1974 pp. 30–1. All quotations from Marx are from this passage). Why is it that societies, like ancient Greece, whose capacity for controlling nature is not highly developed, can produce great works of art? The way this question highlights aesthetic concerns in the second half of the nineteenth century is evident in the fact that Nietzsche will ask closely related questions about Greek art in *The Birth of Tragedy (BT)* (1872), linking them to music. Echoing Idealist and Romantic philosophy, Marx sees Greek art as based on mythology, which he characterises, in the manner of the later Schelling, as a collective 'unconsciously artistic processing [*Verarbeitung*] of nature'. Mythology makes sense of natural forces via the imagination, by telling stories about them and making them into repeatable images. These images give a feeling of control over what is otherwise alien. What, though, happens to art, whose basis is the mythological overcoming of the forces of nature in the imagination, when humankind can really control natural forces through technology? Marx asks: 'Is the contemplation [*Anschauung*] of nature and of social relations which is the basis of Greek fantasy and thus of Greek mythology possible with self-actors [i.e. automatic machinery] and railways and locomotives and electric telegraphs?' Modern art requires the artist to have a 'fantasy independent of mythology', because modern science 'excludes every mythological relationship to nature', but what space does that really leave for art? The questions Marx is asking here are, of course, a more praxis-oriented version of what Hegel argues in the *Aesthetics* about the role of art in modernity, where the essential truth is located in the sciences and in other universalising modes of thinking.

The new investment in the non-representational and non-conceptual medium of music in the nineteenth century becomes easier to understand in the light of Marx's assumptions about the need for a 'fantasy independent of mythology'. The rise of the idea of music as the highest form of art, which is part of what makes possible the emergence of aesthetic autonomy, is also an indication of a coming crisis in art that is clearly connected to the growing success of the sciences. Mythology is tied to the particular, and this diminishes its capacity to illuminate the world in the more general terms demanded by modernity. For art to be sustained as a source of truth and meaning, fantasy must therefore employ forms of articulation which establish an independence from the demands involved in the sciences, at the same time as not losing the

immediate particularity essential to art. Fantasy may, as a consequence, move away from the attempt to represent the world in images and stories towards the attempt to say what other ways of articulating the world cannot. This move leads not least to a new kind of relationship to the irredeemable aspects of human temporality and transience, as the changed relationship between music and tragedy in the nineteenth century that is the theme of *The Birth of Tragedy* suggests. Human transience combines a profoundly individual moment, relating to the modern subject's feelings in relation to its fragility, with a universal sense of the new temporal character of a post-redemptive world. Marx's comments highlight one side of the changes in the relationship between subject and object which occur in modernity when nature comes to be seen more and more in terms of instrumental reason's capacity to control it. The increase in the ability to control nature should, in his terms, lead to the disappearance of myth. However, Marx underestimates those dimensions of the modern subject, suggested by the changes in existential time just referred to, which are not provided for by such control. The importance of the early Nietzsche lies in his attention to the reasons why the increased ability to control nature fails to achieve a new integration of humanity and nature of the kind which the later Kant, and the post-Kantian Idealists and Romantics had hoped for.⁶

One manifestation of the issue Marx discusses becomes apparent in the art of the second half of the nineteenth century. Zola, for instance, sees his novels as actually having quasi-scientific status. However, he will, in *La bête humaine*, make a locomotive into a mythical object, giving it a status equivalent to anthropomorphic nature in mythology. His novels also combine an attention to the most dominant technological and commercial aspects of modernity with a re-mythologising of nature itself, for example, in *La terre*. Zola's mythologising of 'second nature', human society and its products, recurs throughout the Rougon-Macquart cycle, such as in the links of the mine to Tartarus in *Germinal*. His work exemplifies the tendency of nineteenth-century art to adopt mythical patterns as a way of sustaining itself in the face of a society whose essential processes are no longer visible in the actions of individuals (see Adorno 1974, Bowie 1979). What gave rise to the Idealist demand for a 'new mythology' which would make abstractions sensuously available to society as a whole is evident in the way that the art of Zola's period tends to invoke *old* mythologies as a way of trying to come to terms with modern society. The importance of such art is not least as an indication of the difficulties involved in Marx's analysis.

This re-emergence of mythology can be understood in terms of Max Weber's suspicion that the competing value-positions of modern societies might well end up looking to many people like the multiplicity of competing natural powers represented in mythology in traditional societies. In this interpretation art may, as Zola's work suggests, attempt to organise into images and stories those aspects of modern *social* life whose functioning seems like the workings of *nature* do to societies lacking the real means to control it. The risk is, of course,

that what are actually soluble problems of human organisation therefore come to be seen as natural fate.⁷ The Introduction to the *Grundrisse* itself does not offer any plausible explanation of why it might be that in modern societies neither art nor mythology cease to play a vital role in people's lives, despite those societies' increasing control over nature. Indeed, in the case of Wagner's *Ring*, mythology, in conjunction with music, will form a new, compelling, but highly problematic, response to capitalist modernity. In Wagner, as Marx's argument suggests would be the case, the mythology on its own is no longer believable. However, the power of the myths is transferred into the music in a manner which is a key indication of the inadequacy of accounts of myth and modernity like that of Marx. The persistence of Wagner's capacity to exercise this power, even despite the fact that his work becomes linked to the most evil political movement in modern history, is an essential factor in the attempt to understand modern culture.

Marx also reflects on Greek art in specifically aesthetic manner. Although it is not surprising that Greek art and epic have their foundations in 'certain forms of social development', the 'difficulty is that they still give us aesthetic pleasure and in certain respects are valid as a standard and unattainable model'. This claim is clearly in tension with his developmental view of history as the process of elimination of imaginary control over nature in favour of real control, suggesting that the relationship between the mythical and the aesthetic is more complex than he assumes. It is precisely this complexity which will become evident in the early Nietzsche's work on music and mythology. Marx tries to overcome the problem of Greek art's continuing generation of aesthetic pleasure by suggesting that the Greeks are the children of the human race. They possess a naivety that is now inaccessible to us, but which we value in children and try to 'reproduce on a higher plane'. The charm of Greek art lies in the fact that its basis – 'unripe social conditions' – can, like childhood, never return. This exercise in nostalgia is, as has often been noted, inadequate to account for the perception, throughout Marx's century and beyond, that Greek art has an enduring power which is not diminished by the development of modernity.

At the same time, the attempt to suggest against Marx that Greek art is 'eternal' in its appeal merely regresses to a pre-modern position. What grounds are there for making such a claim, which requires an appeal to a contingent future for its validity? Similarly, the related idea that Greek art's appeal results from the universality of its themes can be used to argue for the immortalisation of 'soap operas', which also deal with families and power. The real question here is not answered by humanist generalisations, and Marx is at least aware of part of the difficulty. His initial puzzlement at the continuing power of Greek tragedy is in many ways an appropriate response to this phenomenon. Greek tragedies' capacity for generating new meaning in differing social contexts can never be definitively explained, and that is what makes them so *aesthetically* significant.⁸ Marx's problem lies, therefore, in his failure to distinguish the function of myth in a traditional culture from the significances myth can help to gen-

erate in a modern art work. His direct contributions to aesthetic theory are not in fact that substantial, drawing mainly upon existing views from German Idealism and Romanticism. The real potential of his work for aesthetics can be derived rather from the ways he offers of understanding the conditions and possibilities of artistic production in relation to a general theory of social labour. Little that he himself says is, though, able to account for the specific power of aesthetic products, which he in many respects simply presupposes. This presupposition will become increasingly hard to make in relation to aesthetic modernism, where the very status of 'art' is put into question.

In the light of the problems in Marx's position it seems questionable to assert, as Terry Eagleton and others do, that a properly Marxist aesthetics should be regarded primarily as part of a theory of ideology, or that philosophical aesthetics itself is just part of the ideology of the emancipated bourgeoisie. One of the reasons music is so significant in modernity is precisely because it shows the limits of the notion of ideology when it is applied to art. While music can clearly be employed to reinforce dominant cultural and political assumptions, it need not just be reducible to these assumptions, in the same way as subjects need not be reducible to the ideological assumptions and practices they both reflectively and unreflectively adopt. The most insightful Marx-oriented aesthetic theory, of Bakhtin, Lukács, Bloch, Benjamin and Adorno, which emerges after Marx in the twentieth century, by no means adopts the view of art as inherently ideological, and is often concerned instead with the *resistance* of art to ideological appropriation, a resistance which music exemplifies in key respects.

The decisive aspect of Marx's thought in subsequent Marxist aesthetic theory is actually the theory of the commodity, and many of the most significant developments of this theory rely on structures of thought derived from German Idealism. In the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant had stressed the importance of that which has no price in his concept of 'dignity'. He did so as a way of claiming that rational beings possessed a value which transcended the form of value which was now dominating his world. The commodity is defined precisely by its price, which takes priority over the value of the thing as an individual use-value: the amount of money the thing is worth makes it in one sense equivalent to any other thing worth that sum. The development of modernity is not least a result of the commodity form offering a means of exchanging anything for anything else. This possibility speeds social and material interchange and facilitates social innovations. Critiques of modernity often concentrate on the cultural consequences of this development, suggesting that it destroys the intrinsic value, the 'dignity', of things. This criticism arises from a structure of thought that is germane to nearly all the post-Kantian thinkers. Commodity form is in fact a form of 'reflection', in the sense we explored in Idealism: what an object is *qua* commodity becomes wholly defined by its negative relationship to other objects within a differential system. Marx regards this system as a kind of metaphysics, that obscures the reality of things in the name of an abstraction.

Similar ideas will later be advanced in Adorno's view of the commodification of culture and in Heidegger's ideas concerning metaphysics as the subjectification of being.

The difficulty for such positions is that it is no longer clear in a post-theological world whether there *is* any intrinsic value that does not derive from a thing's relations to something else. Kant argues that rational beings are 'ends in themselves', so that they cannot be merely the means to others' ends, but it is arguable that in any society one is inescapably likely – and often willing – to be a means for others' ends in many of one's roles. If Kant fails to show that rational beings have access, via their capacity for self-determination, to an intelligible realm of freedom which is not subject to the laws of the appearing world, the notion of the absolute intrinsic value of the rational being becomes open to question. The structure of this problem is another version of the clash between immediacy, this time in the form of non-relational value, and mediation, which renders all values relational.

In the aesthetic theory that follows Kant the ideas of the irreducible particularity of the object and of the subject's disinterested relationship to the artwork are often invoked as a counter to the idea that the modern world is constituted wholly in terms of conceptual, economic and linguistic 'mediation'. However, theoretical claims involving immediacy inherently give rise to the problem of mediating what is supposed in one crucial respect to be immediate. The difficulty lies in the need to appeal to an immediate ground which is only intuitively accessible. At the same time, this kind of immediacy seems in some respect to be germane to the very possibility of art. If art cannot reveal things in ways which cannot be discursively mediated it can be dissolved into other forms of discourse. It may be, though, that one can only appeal to art's status in this respect as a kind of regulative idea. This idea generates the ongoing social demand to legitimate the claims of the artwork, even though there can never be a decisive way of doing so, of the kind which may be possible for claims in the sciences. Without such a conception art becomes merely, as Hegel's position might be seen as implying, a form of mythological expression which is no longer essential to the truths that determine modernity. The ensuing question here is whether art's problematic status is therefore to be understood as an index of a fundamental crisis in modern culture that is occasioned by the dominance of the commodity form. Adorno's insistence on aesthetic autonomy derives from his conviction that the dominance of the exchange principle is so universal that only something which is able to counter that principle can offer insights into an otherwise deluded reality. Unsurprisingly, a stance of this kind, which seeks to base a Marxist account of aesthetics on the autonomy of the artwork, is still highly controversial.

The most significant Marxist aesthetic theory emerges from the tensions between modern art's autonomy and its status as '*fait social*'. The suspicion that the sustaining of aesthetic autonomy will lead to art's loss of any real socio-political role gives support to conceptions of art which regard it as a means

towards achieving pressing extra-aesthetic, historico-political tasks. However, in contrast to the demand for *engagement*, autonomous art can be regarded as the location in which otherwise unarticulated possibilities for the transformation of human existence may be preserved, including possibilities which previously received their expression in mythology. These tensions closely echo those between the beautiful and the sublime, between the new mythology and aesthetic autonomy. In the twentieth century what is at issue in these tensions leads to debates which cost lives and determine cultural politics in often very destructive ways. It is Nietzsche's radicalisation of questions concerning modern culture which begin to suggest why this is the case.

In contrast to Hegel, Nietzsche ceases to regard philosophy's continuous self-undermining, which is so characteristic of modernity, as constituting a progression that incorporates the refuted views of the world into a higher synthesis. The destruction of a metaphysically grounded notion of history tends to work in two key directions, seen in Marx and Nietzsche. Marx aims at a historical realisation of the aims of philosophy which would make it superfluous, as mythology is supposedly made superfluous by insight into its origins in an underdeveloped capacity to control natural forces by technology. He is therefore one of the first to talk of the 'end of philosophy', in the sense of the abolition of the need for philosophy by the achievement in practice of the goals that Idealism formulated in theory. Nietzsche, in contrast, questions the legitimation of any higher collective historical goals on the basis of a Schopenhauer-influenced interpretation of the link between subjectivity and its motive force, which he terms the 'will to power'. Much of Nietzsche's most important work originates, then, in an attempt to transform the philosophies we have considered so far by revealing their failure to overcome the illusions of the metaphysical past. Music plays a vital role in this attempt, for reasons we shall now consider.

Art, myth and music in 'The Birth of Tragedy'

Nietzsche's first major work, *The Birth of Tragedy From the Spirit of Music (BT)*, published in 1872, addresses the relationship between mythology, art and science examined in the Introduction to the *Grundrisse*. The *BT* can be read as a manifestation of what happens to the ideas on art and mythology encountered in the *System Programme (SP)* and Friedrich Schlegel's *Discourse on Mythology* in the wake of Schopenhauer's philosophy and the growing separation, both in practice and in theory, of aesthetic, moral and scientific concerns in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is important to establish just how much the *BT* derives from the traditions we have considered so far, in order to be able to assess whether Nietzsche's later attempted break with these traditions broaches wholly new ground.

In the *SP* art was regarded as the means by which freedom could be communicated to all strata of society by sensuous means, rather than as an abstract idea. The teleology of human action and the teleology of nature were linked in art,

so that abstract ideas became available through perceptible images. The *SP* concluded with the demand for a 'polytheism of the imagination and of art', and a 'mythology of reason', which would integrate into the whole of society the new potential released by science, art and critical philosophy, in the way that myths integrated nature and society in traditional cultures. However, the *Discourse on Mythology* already began to question whether what was required was just a 'mythology of reason'. Schlegel's stress on the productive potential of the 'original chaos of human nature' suggested that the dominant conceptions of reason might also be an obstacle to what was needed in a post-theological modernity. The early Idealist and Romantic conceptions were often linked to the revival of the idea of Dionysus, the God who combines creation with destruction, who is the 'other of himself'. Dionysus can be understood in two differing ways. Whereas Hegel thought it possible to adopt what was inherent in the Dionysian identity of opposites for a teleological conception of unified reason which emerges from the division embodied in Dionysus, Schopenhauer's Will, which is also divided against itself, was conceived of in a non-teleological manner and was, of course, linked to non-representational music. It should therefore be no surprise that Nietzsche presents Schopenhauer's Will as Dionysus in the *BT*, or that he also links Dionysus to music.

Nietzsche belongs here to an established Romantic tradition. As we saw, the Romantic idea of 'infinite reflection' in art was associated with music because of its freedom from representational determinacy. The connection of Dionysus to music encountered in the *BT* is already present in Schelling's *Die Weltalter* (Ages of the World (*AW*)) of 1811. In the *AW* Schelling attempts to show how consciousness arises out of unconscious nature. The story is not far from the model of consciousness which leads Freud to the dictum that 'where It [*Es*] was, I [*Ich*] should become'. Schelling suggests the emergence of rational thought is far more of a struggle than it was in the *STI* or his identity philosophy, and uses music as a means of understanding it. 'Divine madness', the state associated with Dionysian intoxication, is a result of the battle between that aspect of nature whose essence is to remain part of the inherently unconscious primeval One – which is a force of contraction, in contrast to the absolute 'I' of the *STI*, which had to limit its infinite expansion if it was to become conscious of itself – and that aspect which strives beyond the One towards consciousness, which is a force of expansion:

As long as the contracting force maintains a predominance over the expanding force it is stimulated on the inside in a still dull manner into a blind unconscious activity [*Wirken*] by the beginning battle; mighty, violent . . . products arise, like those which arise from the play of forces in dreams when the reasonable soul does not intervene and the forces work for themselves. (Schelling 1946 p. 43)

The development of consciousness consists in the painful liberation of a potential which is always threatened by the force of contraction and which relies on that force to be able to become something determinate.

Schelling goes on to suggest that *music* expresses the conflict between consciousness and its ground. Dionysus's wagon, which is pulled by wild animals, is accompanied by music: 'For, because sound and tone only seem to arise in . . . that battle between spirituality and physicality, only music can be an image of that primal nature and its movement, for also its whole essence consists in circulation, as it, beginning from a tonic [*Grundton*], always finally returns to the beginning, however many variations it may go through' (p. 40). Music manifests the ground of diversity in unity by its combination of the need for differentiation with a basis in unity: the note which is constituted by vibration between the presence and absence of the vibrating body is a unification of these opposites. This unity is not, though, the kind we saw in Hegel's account of music: rather than being an image of teleological time it is an image of the circular time of mythology. In a later version of the *AW* music is talked about in terms which parallel Schopenhauer's view of the Will and music. The relationship between the notes in a piece of music is, Schelling claims, like the 'original movement' of attraction and repulsion characteristic of nature's chaotic pre-conscious productivity. Schelling's overall concern, unlike Schopenhauer's, is still with how reason and freedom *can* emerge from chaos. In the later *Philosophy of Revelation* (1841–2), where Schelling will give an account which makes reason's relationship to brute facticity even more problematic, he still attempts to sustain a conception of reason. In the *BT*, on the other hand, Nietzsche, much in the manner of Schopenhauer, uses almost exactly the same scheme as is apparent in the *AW* to argue that 'reason' is merely a human invention which we impose on a primal chaos.

It is important to make a key distinction with regard to such claims. To say that reason is 'merely human' can mean at least two different things. The claim is consistent with positions which cannot accept the metaphysical realist idea that there is a ready-made world whose truth exists wholly independently of anything we say or think about it. The problem with this position is that it inherently leads to scepticism, because nothing that we *say* could ever confirm that *what* we say corresponds to the world as it is *independently* of what we say. In one sense, positions which think of truth in terms other than correspondence might be said to regard truth as an invention of human beings. This is unexceptionable in so far as it need have little or no effect on the contingency of *what* is true, which is still independent of what anyone wishes to be or consciously tries to make true, without this meaning that the idea of the world of the metaphysical realist is therefore intelligible. The crucial difference between this position and the other kind of theories of truth as the merely human is that in the latter theories a further assumption is made, namely that what truth really is can be stated in a theoretical claim about the nature of the illusion in which truth has until now consisted. Instead of correspondence, truth then becomes, for example, that which best enables an organism to survive which has developed with certain kinds of needs.

At this point one is justified in making the objection that the claim involves

the performative contradiction we observed above. The result is as follows: Evidence against the idea that truth is really just generated by x cannot be cited because it will, in the terms of this theory, necessarily be a result of a mistaken view of what gives rise to such evidence, which must always be x itself. The same problem arises in psychoanalysis, in relation to the question of 'resistance' to the analyst's claims about what the analysand is repressing. In both cases it may actually be true that counterclaims against the theory, or the analyst, are based on self-deception. However, given that the argument about truth as self-deception may itself also be false, any account of truth necessarily entails a dimension which transcends this argument and thus renders the argument impossible to propose without contradiction. Nietzsche is often anything but clear about the difference between these two kinds of theories, using the empirical fact that large amounts of communication may indeed be rhetorical, strategic and self-deceiving to make *transcendental* claims based on that contingent empirical fact. The underlying issue here is the one we have repeatedly encountered, namely the relationship between the 'mediated' world of knowledge and the ground of that world, and this is the theme of the *BT*.

In his own later self-criticism Nietzsche says of the *BT*: 'I sought laboriously to express strange and new evaluations with Kantian and Schopenhauerian formulations' (Nietzsche 1980 1 p. 19). The novelty of the book consisted, he asserts, in the way that it set itself the task of '*seeing science from the viewpoint of the artist, but art from the viewpoint of life*' (1 p. 14). Much of the force of the book lies in its account of the limits of natural science as a means of rendering the world meaningful. By this stage of the nineteenth century, in which the positivist belief in science as the only locus of reliable truth is increasingly the norm, this is a provocative position. However, it should be clear from Schelling's and the early Romantics' views of the limits of the understanding and the need to integrate its products into a 'new mythology' that this cannot really constitute the novelty of the *BT*. The *BT*'s novelty actually lies more in its separation of aesthetics and morality, developing Schlegel's hints which we examined in Chapter 2. The provocative nature of the *BT* for classical scholars of the time (and since) lay in its contention that the art which was the source of the ideals of a classical education, the ideals of the good, the true and the beautiful, arose out of an insuperable violent and meaningless division within being.⁹ Because the ground of being is so terrible it can only be justified to us in the form of beautiful *Schein* ('appearance', but also 'illusion'). As such, art cannot be an indication of a potentially new organic relationship to nature, and is independent of an ethics oriented in a Kantian manner towards the ideas of reason. The terrible ground of being, Dionysus, is above all revealed in *Rausch*, intoxication, loss of self, as well as in music. The redeeming realm of appearance, which includes dreams as well as mythology, science and plastic and literary art, is Apollo. At the same time great art, initially in the form of Greek tragedy, requires both Dionysus and Apollo.

Once again, Schelling, whom Nietzsche almost certainly read (see Frank

1988 pp. 55–7), anticipates Nietzsche: ‘Not at different moments but at the same moment to be simultaneously drunk and sober is the secret of true poetry [*Poesie*]. This distinguishes the Apollonian enthusiasm from the simply Dionysian enthusiasm’ (Schelling II/4 p. 25). In the manner of Schelling’s *Philosophy of Art*, Nietzsche regards Apollo and Dionysus as being Greek culture’s sensuous expression of what we now express in abstract concepts. Nietzsche himself converts Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of art into a story about Greek mythology and its relation to modern culture. The essential difference of the *BT* from Schopenhauer is that, instead of relating aesthetic contemplation to a ‘buddhistic negation of the Will’ (Nietzsche 1980 I p. 56), it regards art as ‘the completion and culmination of existence which tempts one into living on’ (I p. 36). Art is already, then, as he will later put it, a ‘stimulus to life’. Nietzsche derives important parts of his argument, via Schopenhauer, from Fichte’s and the early Schelling’s metaphysics. For the latter the world of objects is the manifestation of the absolute I’s attempt to ‘intuit’ itself, and the result in Nietzsche is a similar view of art to that of the *STI*: ‘In the Greeks the “Will” wanted to intuit itself [*sich anschauen*] in the transfiguration of genius and the world of art’ (I pp. 36–7).

This ‘intuition’ excludes, as it did for Schopenhauer, any involvement of the individual subject: ‘we demand in every type and every level of art above all and first of all the conquering of the subjective, redemption from the “I”’ (I p. 43). The artist’s aesthetic contemplation must be devoid of ‘interest’ and desire: ‘To the extent to which the subject is an artist it is already redeemed from its individual will and has become like a medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates its redemption in appearance’ (I p. 47). The individual subject is merely a mouthpiece for the ‘true subject’, and the argument is at this point just another version of Schopenhauer’s Platonic metaphysics of art. Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche excludes the side of art which addresses us as sensuous subjects from the truth because it would subject us to the inherent lack generated by the Will. Given the shared misogyny of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, this suggests a line of enquiry linking aesthetics to the philosophical concerns of feminism. Antagonism to the senses and antagonism to the female go hand in hand in parts of the Western philosophical tradition (see, for example, 1984). Nietzsche will admittedly later revalue the senses, but he does not change his mind with regard to women.

Nietzsche’s vision retains the faults of Schopenhauer’s in its assumption that the ‘one truly existent subject’, which could also be called Nature, Life, Will, is intuitively accessible as the other of rationality. Fichte’s and Schelling’s struggles with how one can grasp what transcends reflection seem forgotten, as does their investment in freedom as that which could make sense of this transcendence. Nietzsche sees no problem in suggesting we have access to what is effectively the absolute by surrendering to the higher power. Significantly, the argument is couched in theological vocabulary. The point of art is not essentially anything to do with ourselves and instead is really for the pleasure of the ‘true

creator'. Indeed, we ourselves are 'images and projections' for this creator. The real direction of the argument becomes apparent when Nietzsche asserts that we 'have our highest dignity in the significance of works of art – for only as *aesthetic phenomenon* is existence and the world eternally justified' (Nietzsche 1980 1 p. 47). Art enables us to contemplate a world with no telos, without this leading to the desire for self-annihilation born of despair at the transience and destructiveness of the world.

Nietzsche goes on to employ a questionable version of Schelling's argument that the genius combines conscious and unconscious production to back up his own position. In the act of creation the genius merges with 'that primal artist of the world' (1 p. 48) and thus transcends reflection by being both subject and object. Where Nietzsche's view of the cultural importance of art can lead is apparent, however, in a passage, written in early 1871 for the *BT*, which was not included in the book but which is consistent with the structure of its argument. Nietzsche reflects upon the role of slavery as the condition of possibility of Greek art and proposes that in modern culture 'the misery of the laboriously living masses must be further intensified in order to enable a number of olympic people to produce the world of art' (7 p. 339). Ethical imperatives take second place in the face of the need to produce great art as the justification of an otherwise meaningless existence. The separation of ethics and aesthetics thus leads to a perverted pseudo-ethical imperative. This imperative results from the assumption that the only answer to questions of meaning in a post-theological world lies in the overcoming of everyday human existence in the name of a world of art. The production of this world can justifiably ignore the rights of individual subjects in the name of superior beings who create new meanings. A related position later recurs, minus the aesthetic imperative, when, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he says that a 'good and healthy aristocracy' will 'accept with a good conscience the sacrifice of a host (*Unzahl*) of people who will have to be repressed and diminished to incomplete people, to slaves, to tools *for its sake*' (5 p. 206).

The Idealists and the early Romantics thought that the flowering of modern culture would depend upon the creation of a new public sphere and of universal free communication. Art was consequently inextricably linked to politics and ethics, and to the realisation of the freedom of the subject. Nietzsche's petit-bourgeois, elitist vision, in contrast, translates easily into the fascist 'aestheticisation of politics' described by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s. The power of ideas like Nietzsche's to influence politics in the modern world can be seen as deriving from the failure of what was intended by the project of a 'mythology of reason'. A socially sanctioned collective renunciation of critical thinking clearly has great seductive force in times of crisis. Aesthetically manipulated events and experiences dictated from above which offer a feeling of unification with a larger entity often have greater appeal than critical politics of the kind demanded by the democratic Left. Nietzsche's brutal remarks may be understood as simply making an invalid projection of the conditions of possibility of great art in the pre-modern past onto the modern present (which means, of

course, that he is concerned with the same issue as Marx), but he nevertheless reveals what can happen when the ethical wholly gives way to the aesthetic, instead of there being an interplay between the two. Even then, however, the issue Nietzsche points to is not wholly obviated by these kinds of objection.

This becomes apparent if we relate Nietzsche's diagnosis of the state of the culture of his time to our contemporary situation. In the *BT* the essence of modernity is regarded, as it was in Schlegel's *Discourse*, as the lack of a 'centre'. Nietzsche's formulations could, despite their refusal to celebrate it, be seen as an account of what has now come to be seen as postmodernity:

think of a culture which has no firm and holy original abode [*Ursitz*], but is condemned to exhaust all possibilities and to nourish itself meagrely from all cultures . . . What do the massive historical need of dissatisfied modern culture, the gathering around itself of countless other cultures, the consuming desire to know, point to, if not to the loss of myth . . . ? (1 p. 146)

Worries about the consequences of the decentring of culture are inseparable from the tradition of aesthetic theory. Is diversity actually a cultural gain, or does it, by destroying unified social aspirations, lead to an undermining of what can render life collectively meaningful? The problems involved in any answer to this question are inseparable from modernity. While the acceptance of the need to acknowledge cultural diversity is one of the great advances initiated by thinkers like Herder and the Romantics, it is far from clear that diversity is of its own accord a positive value. Culture thrives on criticism, and criticism needs exemplary models which can reveal the deficiencies of inferior cultural production. However, Nietzsche has little to offer here. Unlike Schlegel and the Idealists, who wished to synthesise a new mythology out of cosmopolitan diversity, Nietzsche at this time sees the answer to the decentred state of culture in terms of a '*re-birth of German myth*' (1 p. 147), a solution which will have disastrous echoes in the twentieth century. He will, one should remember, later move to a – in some respects – cosmopolitan, anti-nationalist position, but he never gives up the idea that healthy culture is the product of superior beings, rather than of education, cultural opportunity and democratic debate. In the *BT* Nietzsche invokes a 'splendid, internally healthy, age-old power' (1 p. 146) which is hidden under the surface of a decadent culture, and which can reawaken. Such a reawakening must, of course, happen spontaneously and unexpectedly because the people who bring it about have no conscious say in the workings of this power.

The flaw in this position is simple, and we have encountered other versions of it already. If the essence of modernity is the demand for self-legislation, the appeal to a grounding power which transcends the existing social world and can transform it has no prior claims to legitimacy, otherwise that power is playing the same pre-modern role as 'dogmatism' and illegitimate feudal traditions. It is, then, no surprise to see Nietzsche toying with inhuman ideas like the producers of art being sustained by the suffering of the masses. Who, though,

decides who these producers are, if not people in society who must try to justify their superiority to the rest of society? Nietzsche's appeal to the primal force goes along with his insistence on the separation of the aesthetic from the ethical. The Dionysian force which gives rise to tragedy, and which tragedy and music enable us to contemplate, is prior to any ethical considerations, as the nature of his appeal to it would suggest. Nietzsche attacks those accounts which use ethical categories to explain Greek tragedy, insisting that tragedy has nothing to do with a Schillerian 'arousing of moral-religious powers' (1 p. 143). Tragedy is rather what enables the aesthetic contemplation of the horror which is the ground of existence, a horror which, once revealed, would otherwise render life intolerable. Only a culture unified by mythology is able to find ways of enabling such contemplation to have a positive role in rendering life justifiable.

Once again, nothing discursive can justify this argument. Our access to the creative forces Nietzsche sees as present in tragedy is always as historically situated subjects. Any ontological claim concerning primal forces, of the kind on which the *BT* relies, must identify these forces as the ground of our own thinking, and this raises yet again all the problems of reflection seen in Fichte and Schelling, which recur in Schopenhauer and Freud. How do we *know* that it is the primal force which is acting? If it is to act as *primal* force it cannot be available to knowledge, which is inherently secondary and derived. The answer has to be in terms of a prior 'intuition' of an essence which escapes discursive thinking. In the context of the idea of a re-birth of German myth the notion of such intuitive access is incipiently racist: presumably only the members of the German nation will be able to attain it.

However, as we have seen, the significance of the aesthetic in some respects derives precisely from its extension of our understanding of the world in non-discursive, 'intuitive' ways. This is why the issues raised in aesthetics are necessarily uncomfortable ones. The choice seems to be either to subsume art in a Hegelian manner into the realm of intersubjective cultural legitimation, and thereby run the risk of losing the essence of aesthetic experience by subordinating it to discursive articulation and validation, or, by suggesting that art offers something resistant to wholesale mediation, to run the risk of the kind of intuitionist irrationalism present in the worst aspects of the *BT*. The choice between these abstract alternatives cannot be made on methodological grounds alone: what is at stake here has differing significances at different times. It is, of course, in music that the resistance to mediation is most obvious, and this is why Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, makes it his main focus.

In the *BT* Nietzsche is concerned with the fact that everything in modernity, and particularly the natural sciences, fails to offer a serious counter to what Max Weber will term the 'disenchantment' of the modern world, a disenchantment which points inexorably to our irredeemable transience and fragility, despite modern technical advances which can further self-preservation. Nietzsche thinks the only possible response to disenchantment lies in our capacity to create illusions that sustain life. The fact that these are illusions follows for him from

intuitive insight into the Dionysian nature of the real. The *BT* radicalises Kant's and Idealism's ideas about the limits of scientific knowledge as the means of articulating the truth about our existence into a view that *all* human cognitive and imaginative activity, be it scientific or aesthetic, is essentially 'artistic', creating significance which the world otherwise lacks. The question is then, of course, *which* significances are most appropriate for successful life, and this question will form the centre of much of Nietzsche's later work. Nietzsche pursues the consequences of the restricted nature of the understanding that concerned the German Idealists and early Romantics, retaining the idea of human cognitive and other activity as 'artistic', in varying versions throughout his philosophical career.

The capacity for the creation of appearances, which Nietzsche terms 'art', including both science and religion in the category, is itself grounded in the Dionysian, the noumenal force that engenders the phenomenal world. Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche tries to overcome the difficulty of explaining our access to this Dionysian ontological principle by referring to music: 'The world-symbolism of music cannot in any way be exhaustively grasped with language, because it is symbolically related to the primal contradiction and the primal pain in the heart of the primal One, and thus symbolises a sphere which is superior to all appearance and prior to all appearance' (1 p. 51). Only music can really say what the 'justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon' means: 'The pleasure which the tragic myth creates has the same home as the pleasurable feeling [*Empfindung*] of dissonance in music. The Dionysian, with its primal pleasure [*Urlust*], which is even perceived in pain, is the common womb of music and of the tragic myth' (1 p. 152). Dissonance in music reveals to us the transience and incompleteness of individuated existence by giving rise at the same time to a striving for the infinite, a striving for harmonic overcoming of all differences, which is in these terms a return to the unconscious primal One.

The *BT* offers, however inadequately, a way of understanding some of the appeal of certain kinds of music in modernity by linking music to the temporality of myth. Mythological time can be regarded as a way of escaping the abstract sequential divisions and unidirectionality characteristic of the dominant forms of modern, rationalised temporality. In *The Raw and the Cooked* Lévi-Strauss claims myth and music are both 'languages which, in their different ways, transcend articulate expression, while at the same time . . . requiring a temporal dimension in which to unfold. But this relation to time is of a rather special nature: it is as if music and mythology needed time only in order to deny it. Both indeed are instruments for the obliteration of time' (Lévi-Strauss 1975 pp. 15–16). In the more metaphysical terms of the *BT*, tragedy therefore affirms eternal life, and the death of the hero is only the destruction of one form of appearance of the Will: "We believe in eternal life", tragedy shouts; while music is the immediate Idea of this life' (Nietzsche 1980 1 p. 108). A rebirth of myth is possible through music because music is the counter to 'Socratic optimism', the belief in the progress and perfectibility of mankind by science.

Science is, in this view, ultimately just another means of trying to conceal the real horror at the ground of being, not the revelation of the real nature of things.

Art, in the form of music, is a more apt response to the nature of existence because it does not require concepts. Concepts necessarily take one into the regress of causal explanations which lead to the 'abyss'.¹⁰ At the same time music expresses the creative principle of existence in a manner which makes existence's destructive aspect tolerable. Although, by unfolding in time, music relies on the divided nature of all phenomenal existence, it also conveys an affective overcoming of that existence, albeit at the price of the loss of reflective self-awareness. It is at this point that one comes up once again against Schopenhauer's problem, namely that music seems therefore to be reduced to a single metaphysical significance. This view is simply inadequate to the sheer diversity of ways in which music can signify in a secular society. Nietzsche's argument is itself a historical one, concerning the need for modern Germany to rediscover myth, but this rediscovery is then seen as the return to something originary and mythical, rather than as a new revelation of the kind hoped for by the Romantics. Nietzsche's vision is undeniably powerful, affecting many subsequent artists and thinkers, but he himself came to be dissatisfied with it. The question is: if music is not an answer to metaphysical questions about the transient nature of human existence, what is its significance? Answers to this question offer a way into the further development of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Myth, music and language

It is in relation to language and art, particularly music, that one can best see the differences – and the continuities – between the early and the later Nietzsche. Nietzsche's legacy for subsequent aesthetic theory in many ways depends on how he rejects or transforms many of the ideas of the *BT*. The relationship of myth, music and language is, for example, central to Nietzsche's view of Wagner in the *Untimely Meditations*, (1876), entitled 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth'. Here Nietzsche equates the poetic with the mythical in a manner derived from aspects of Schelling and the Romantics. Myth is a thinking in 'processes that can be seen and felt . . . Myth does not have a thought for its basis, as the children of an artificial [*verkünstelt*] culture think, but it is itself a form of thinking . . . The *Ring of the Nibelungen* is a massive thought system without the conceptual form of thought.' Wagner 'forces language into an original state where it thinks virtually nothing in concepts, where it is still itself poetry, image and feeling' (Nietzsche 1980 1 pp. 485–6). This idea is connected to the assumption that myth functions as the locus of meaning in cultures which do not have the conceptual apparatus of modernity. The foundation of the idea is therefore an 'original state' of language which we have lost, and which music will help to restore.

Unlike Schleiermacher and the early Romantics, who thought music and lan-

guage were complexly interrelated in ways that can point to new potential in both, Nietzsche here suggests that conceptual thought is a 'fall' from something higher. When Schelling talked of language as 'faded mythology' he was aware that the notion of a recovery of the lively particularity of myth that had been lost was in contradiction with the universalising necessities which determine the nature of language in the modern world. Nietzsche, in contrast, claims that the fallen condition of language in modernity can be immediately overcome. The structure of thought involved here is, once again, highly questionable. It recurs, for example, when Heidegger talks of the 'language of metaphysics' which obscures the question of being and which it is his task to circumvent. The underlying problem lies in disentangling the significance from early modernity onwards of the revaluation of music as a non-conceptual language that changes the perception of poetic and other language, from the kind of philosophical claims made by Heidegger and Nietzsche. The problem is that these claims are subject to the logically impossible demand of circumscribing the totality of the language they see as questionable while avoiding using that language and so falling prey to what they are questioning. How can one *say* when one has really got in touch with the original state of language, or that one has avoided the language of metaphysics? Discursive claims to this effect involve the performative contradiction of using concepts to make assertions about what is dependent on the non-conceptual. As we have seen, the only valid approach here is to appeal to what music or a poem can show that cannot be said, but this sits ill with the broader philosophical claims about the nature of an era that Nietzsche infers from his ideas about the state of language.

The specific claims Nietzsche makes here are in many respects based on a Romantic cliché, not on the real substance of early Romantic thought. Language has fallen ill because it has become too closely linked to conceptual thinking, and has lost its connection to feeling, and thus to 'nature'. It therefore works solely by convention, like a machine, and only music, now seen as a 'return to nature' (1 p. 456), as well as a 'purification of nature' (the two hardly seem compatible), is the 'language of true feelings' (1 p. 458). This version of what can be a valid topos of cultural criticism – a critique of the dehumanising effects of bureaucratic, racist and other kinds of language is eminently possible in terms of the counter-example of poetic language – is simply too schematic and universalising. The implied language of 'false feelings' (whatever that might mean) must presumably be conceptual language, but the borderline between this and other kinds of language need not at all be the same borderline as that between language whose effects are cruel and stultifying, and language which is liberating and creative. In such passages Nietzsche falls below the level of thinking about music which enabled the Romantics to formulate notions of aesthetic and literary autonomy that were based on music's non-representational character and on the reciprocal and changing dependence of language and the 'musical'.

What is really wrong with Nietzsche's position does not, though, lie in the claim that music tells us something important about the functioning of language

in modernity. It clearly does, though it does not tell us what Nietzsche says it does. The problem is that those who may suffer from the narrowing of language into mere instrumentality, individual subjects who have feelings here and now, seem not to count in his argument. The liberation of the aesthetic from whole-sale subordination to the ethical, which can, in some circumstances, open up new resources for ethical and existential exploration, can also lead to a dangerous aestheticism when the idea of music is linked to the return to amoral, mythical forces. Nietzsche's ideas about a return to mythical origins actually result from a particular way of understanding the most technically advanced music of Western culture. The great achievement of Wagner's music, whatever Wagner may have thought he was doing, is to articulate specifically *modern* experience, not a lost, primordial experience. The sheer complexity and ambiguity of the affective dimensions of *Tristan und Isolde* far transcend anything deriving from merely mythical traditions. These dimensions of the work have to do with the modern awareness of the subject's failure to grasp its ultimate nature, not with some kind of ultimate insight into the ground of being. Otherwise the continuing power of such works for very different audiences becomes incomprehensible.

Nietzsche is anything but clear what he thinks about language in the earlier 1870s. In *The Dionysian Weltanschauung* (1870), for example, he still regards conceptual language as lacking something essential and as therefore needing to return to something lost. Those forms of communication that Nietzsche also sees as 'languages', such as dance and song, which offer a more immediate access to the world of feeling, are superior to verbal language because they are 'thoroughly instinctive, without consciousness' (1 p. 572). Wagner, he claims, combines these 'languages' into a higher unity in his operas, mixing gestural and musical languages, the realm of the image and the realm of sound. There is nothing here of particular philosophical significance. The 1871 fragment on music and language is, however, much more interesting.

Nietzsche here begins to become aware of the problems in Schopenhauer's ontology of the Will, because he advances a more sophisticated view of language than he does elsewhere in this period. Words, he argues, in the manner of Saussure, are only symbols, not of things in themselves, but of representations (*Vorstellungen*). In consequence, even the notion of the 'life of drives' (*Triebleben*), the fundamental reality for Schopenhauer, is itself only a representation, and the "Will" is nothing but the most general form of appearance of something which is wholly undecipherable to us' (7 p. 361). We saw a similar point in Freud's claim that we only have access to drives via the representations that are attached to them. The problem is, of course, that the 'something' sounds rather like Kant's thing in itself, and we still seem to be moving in the direction of an appeal to a non-discursive intuition if the something that is wholly undecipherable is to be accessible at all. Following the Kant of the *Critique of Judgement* and Schopenhauer, the main forms of appearance of this primal basis are the sensations of pleasure and displeasure, which are not subject

to rule-based cognition – as suggested in Cascardi's description of the individual as 'an irreducibly particular centre of affectivity' (Cascardi 1999 p. 48) – and thus are in possible tension with their articulation via general signifiers. These sensations are symbolised in language by the '*tone of the speaker*'. They contrast with the consonants and vowels, which constitute 'gesture symbolism', being conventionalised gestures of the lips, tongue, and so on, rather than the articulations of a conceptual truth 'behind' language. The tonal, 'musical' basis of language – rhythm, pitch, dynamics, tone, etc. – is seen as 'comprehensible beyond the difference of languages' (Nietzsche 1980 7 p. 361). Conceptual language, on the other hand, is reduced to the conventional, collectively repeated repetition of differentially constituted verbal gestures in a society. These enable what Schleiermacher saw as 'construction', the creation of identity of cognitions by a habitual consensus about usage within a particular language. Thinking of language in this way begins to move in the direction of an anti-metaphysical conception, for which language is primarily a form of social action. At the same time, the vital dimension for Nietzsche is access to the essential underlying reality, which happens in music, not in the conceptual dimension of language which reduces difference to identity. As we shall see, this suspicion of identification will be central to most of Nietzsche's thought.

Nietzsche suggests in the fragment that, although music may give rise to a multiplicity of images, it is impossible for images or concepts themselves to produce music, because they are of a radically different order from each other. He consequently offers a new way of attempting to understand the significance of the aesthetic autonomy of music. Regarding music as a language of feelings is mistaken, he argues: 'What we call *feelings* are . . . already penetrated and saturated with conscious and unconscious representations and thus not directly the object of music, let alone able to produce music out of themselves' (7 p. 364). Feelings have a history in which the growing differentiation of what may initially be largely inchoate tensions, of the kind inherent in the idea of the Will, is part of what feelings are. The genesis of music is consequently not explicable in terms of already constituted feelings that are simply represented or expressed in music. 'Music' itself makes articulated feeling possible: think of the way in which rhythm and gesture can give a shape to otherwise inarticulate feelings, or of the way music can give rise to feelings one previously did not have. Nietzsche here echoes ideas we encountered in Schlegel's remark about the Orphic period in Greece, where 'rhythm in this childhood of the human race is the only means of fixing thoughts and disseminating them' (Schlegel 1988 2 p. 16), and in Novalis's question: 'Might musical relations be the source of all pleasure and unpleasure?' (Novalis 1978 p. 772).¹¹ Feelings are, then, in a sense only symbols of *music*, as the ground of possibility of articulated feelings. Nietzsche here opposes the commonplace in some Romantic thinking (and in his own other work at this time) that music is the language, in the sense of the 'representation' of feelings.¹² The shifting relationship of musical to linguistic articulation means that determinate articulation of the world is reliant upon chains of

differentiation which concepts, as themselves articulated in language and thus as reliant on the same kinds of differentiation, could never wholly grasp. By arguing in this way Nietzsche begins to deconstruct the idea of an immediate intuition of the ground of representations which gave rise to some of the problems in his other work at this time.

However, not all the issues involved in questions of intuition are obviated by these arguments. The specific Romantic concept of ‘feeling’ – pre-propositional immediate self-consciousness that ‘cannot feel itself’ – without which particular feelings would have no locus of significance, suggests an intuitive dimension without which differentiation could not function as significant differentiation, and would instead be mere dispersal. Nietzsche, like De Man, gives no account of the subject which hears music *as* music. The medium of articulation may be a necessary condition of the differential constitution of feelings, but it is not a sufficient one. The constitution of music as music, as opposed to as mere noise, requires a self-conscious ground of connection between the phenomena which can give rise to something non-semantically intelligible. Nietzsche has little interest either here or elsewhere in a subjectivity which might be more than the epiphenomenal result of an ontological basis such as the Will, or, later, the ‘will to power’. It should be apparent from what I have said so far that removing the subject from a decisive role in aesthetics removes the point of art. The question is how to arrive at an adequate account of that subject and its relationship to its means of articulation. Nietzsche has little to offer here, despite his undoubted insights into the deficiencies of some models of the subject.

Nietzsche’s argument in the 1871 fragment is most interesting as a statement about absolute music that goes beyond the more reductive arguments seen in Schopenhauer. His refusal to give the cognitive dimension of language priority results from his claim that this dimension is itself grounded in the ‘tonal basis’, the musical in language. The musical is generally comprehensible in ways that particular verbal languages are not, even though it is non-semantic. Nietzsche’s conception here actually points in the direction of the later Heidegger’s approach to language. We get a sense of the essence of language, Heidegger maintains, when we cannot find the right word, rather than vice versa: ‘Then we leave what we mean in the unspoken, and by doing so, without really thinking it, we experience moments in which language itself distantly and fleetingly brushes us with its essence’ (Heidegger 1959 p. 161). Heidegger’s pursuit of a wholly new kind of ‘thinking’ does not lead him explicitly to make music part of what he is seeking. However, what both he and Nietzsche point to is in fact closely related to the idea of Romantic irony. This was Schlegel’s response to his insight into the limitations of the sayable. Romantic irony derives precisely from the realisation that one cannot say what matters most and can therefore only point to it via the acknowledgement, even as one says it, of the ultimate failure of what one says. It is through music’s simultaneous demand for, and resistance to semantic determination that this conception can best be understood. Without the changes in music in the early modern period this whole con-

ception seems unlikely to have developed. Despite the other shifts in his philosophical position that we are about to consider, Nietzsche will often keep trying to avoid reducing music to what can be said about it, or to a general philosophical theory.

The illusion of truth

The essay 'On Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense' (1873) contains the seeds of Nietzsche's later philosophy, which he will develop after the split with Wagner. At the same time, it is a distillation of many themes which we have seen as originating in aesthetic theory, which Nietzsche now attempts to mobilise for philosophy as a whole. The problem of truth arises, he maintains, from the attempt to make what are inherently particular human perceptions universally valid. He therefore contests the possibility of an Idealist harmony between the subjective and the objective: 'Between two absolutely different spheres like that between subject and object there is no causality, no rightness, no expression, but at the most an *aesthetic* relation, I mean a suggestive transmission, a stammering translation into a completely strange language' (Nietzsche 1980 1 p. 884). The argument is Kantian in some respects, except that the synthesising activity of the transcendental subject now consists in an essentially arbitrary historical production of metaphors: 'Truth is a moving army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations, which were poetically and rhetorically intensified, transmitted, elaborated, and which, after long use, seem canonical and binding to a people: truths are illusions which one has forgotten are illusions' (1 pp. 880–1). Nietzsche is characteristically silent on how to avoid the obvious performative contradiction his assertion entails: how can he identify the illusion, if he wishes *truly* to assert that all truths are illusions? What, in that case, is the difference between truth and illusion?

Samuel Wheeler says of Nietzsche's argument: 'How could metaphors . . . fail to live up to the literal without the possibility of something to live up to. That is, without the possibility of Platonic or Cartesian spirit tokening to be the full-fledged "literal"?' (Wheeler 2000 p. 119). If one thinks, as the Romantics already began to suspect, that the correspondence theory of truth is unintelligible, it is, as Wheeler suggests, a strange form of nostalgia then to make its unintelligibility into a drama in which truth is supposedly not in touch with the real, and is therefore an illusion. If, as Nietzsche himself claims, there cannot be said to be bits of the world which make our sentences true, what we say cannot be merely *illusory*, as that would entail there still being a true nature of things that we are missing, a claim which is clearly contradictory. As we saw above, it is perfectly possible to claim that truth or reason is in one sense 'merely human' because words and things cannot be said to correspond, as long as one does not make the further positive claim which Nietzsche makes.

Nietzsche's argument really relies on the kind of anthropological stance which became very popular in the wake of Darwin. The intellect is a means for

the self-preservation of the individual, and is consequently most adept at deception, 'truth' not necessarily being the most effective means of self-preservation. As such, the aesthetic creation of 'truth' is merely one aspect of self-preservation, which has no inherent advantage over aesthetically created deception. Nietzsche's divorce of aesthetics and ethics is now even more radical, and he shows no awareness, either of a normative dimension to communication that is not simply based on power over the other, of the kind present in Schleiermacher, or of the fact that deception itself relies upon knowing what one thinks to be true. Like many contemporary evolutionary theorists Nietzsche obliterates the difference between the natural and the cultural.

This generalised attempt to undermine truth relies on the contentious idea that language is essentially based on a specific conception of convention.¹³ The argument is in fact not far from Schleiermacher's account of one aspect of language as the creation of identity from difference by schematism: 'overlooking the individual and the real gives us the concept' (Nietzsche 1980 1 p. 880). However, Schleiermacher did not prioritise convention, regarding all communication instead as 'a constant test as to whether all people construct identically', and he was able to account for linguistic innovation in terms of an individuality that could gain general intersubjective acceptance. Inherent in Schleiermacher's position was therefore the search for social consensus based on mutual recognition of individuality, not on mere reduction of difference to identity. Nietzsche, in contrast, thinks the truth constituted in language is in fact a socially instituted *compulsion* to construct identically. He thus prefigures psychoanalytic theories which regard insertion into the 'symbolic order' as a form of primary repression. Such theories fail to see that language also makes possible the redeeming articulation of what may otherwise remain inchoate suffering or tension. In the *AW* Schelling offers a far superior account of the tension in language between its ability to articulate and express in novel and individual ways, and the possibility that it will, as he puts it, 'congeal' into static schematisation. Nietzsche only sees one side of what is a more complex picture, and paints himself into a metaphysical corner which fails to do justice to the tension in the nature of language between repression and expressivity.

For Nietzsche, language just converts the world into something reductively anthropomorphic, into the 'endlessly broken echo of an original sound' (1 p. 883), so that the world becomes merely the reflex of humankind. Mistaking the result of the reflection of ourselves in the world for objective truth results, he asserts, from the fact that 'man forgets himself as subject and, indeed, as *artistically creating* subject' (1 p. 883). This forgetting allows man to live with a sense of security, which would be destroyed were he to understand the real nature of his belief in objective truth, namely that it is a creation with no external, or even – as it had in Kant – internal, foundation. *All* human production is therefore 'aesthetic', including the production of truth. Though it is actually unclear how any questioning of truth could arise at all in this conception, Nietzsche's interrogation depends on the idea that truth is a repressive reduction to identity of

something which inherently resists our identifications. 'Truth' is the domination of one controlling power, the need for self-preservation based on identity, over the resistance of a world which is infinitely particular and differentiated. The world in question still sounds, though, like the true Platonic world which Wheeler suggests is lurking in Nietzsche's argument, rather than one which we are aware is always open to redescription and re-evaluation, because there is no way finally to match up the divisions within a language and 'a natural segmentation of the world' (Wheeler 2000 p. 120).

The historical dimension of Nietzsche's text offers rather more possibilities, once one moves away from a general philosophical claim about language to the justified concern that certain kinds of *use* of language might be damaging to our being in the world. Modernity is associated by Nietzsche, as it was in aesthetic theory from Hamann, Schelling and the Romantics onwards, with the repression of 'intuition' (*Anschauung*), in the sense of the particular, immediate relation to the world which concepts cannot capture. While this view can, as it surreptitiously does for Nietzsche, involve a reversion to a myth of the given, such that the truth about the world is contained in this original intuition, we have seen that the tradition of aesthetics offers other ways of considering immediacy. Despite the confusions Nietzsche creates in relation to this issue, his concern to defend intuition against its being swallowed by abstraction will inform his more interesting reflections on music. The reasons for this defence form the basis of his later work, and also explain his persistent attention to aesthetics in his critiques of metaphysics.

Nietzsche's suspicion of the modern devaluing of intuition is a function both of the critique of language as the creator of repressive identity and, when he develops his ideas in more interesting directions, of the theory of 'nihilism'. It was Jacobi who brought the term nihilism into wider currency at the end of the eighteenth century, referring to philosophies which reduced the world to the functioning of endless chains of deterministic laws and so failed to show why the world was intelligible to us at all. Nihilism for Nietzsche, in contrast, is inextricably linked to the history of philosophy since Plato: 'The need for a *metaphysical world* is the consequence of being unable to derive any *meaning*, any *what for?* from the world at hand. "Consequently", it was decided, "this world can only be *apparent*"' (Nietzsche 1980 12 p. 374). 'Psychological nihilism' is a result of three factors in modernity. The first is the failure to find any teleological meaning in existence, such as a movement towards a moral world order, so that 'becoming' ceases to have a goal and is just arbitrary change; the second is the realisation that there is no unity in the multiplicity of existence which would enable one to believe in one's own value as part of something greater; the third is the loss of the belief in a supersensuous world, which is accompanied by the realisation that one cannot bear this world without that other world (cf. Nietzsche 1980 13 pp. 47–8). Nihilism is therefore a *result* of metaphysical beliefs which have turned out to be illusory. Because meaning was sought in a world which does not actually exist, the world which does exist appears

meaningless. Schopenhauer's philosophy devalued the transient sensuous world in the name of art as the means of temporary access to the non-transient world, in order to come to terms with irredeemable facticity. Nietzsche, having still been attached to ultimately Platonic notions even in the essay 'On Truth and Lie', now has to take a very different course, because there is only one world.

It would be misleading to claim that his response to this situation is a logical development from his awareness of the failure of the metaphysical theories of previous Western philosophy. An effective critique of metaphysics cannot just be a critique of the illusory idea of a supersensuous true world apart from the transient world of the senses. Nietzsche (presumably approvingly) cites Feuerbach's attack on Hegel, for example: "healthy and fresh sensuousness" . . . against "the abstract philosophy" (12 p. 261). This revaluation of the sensuous cannot, however, make the sensuous into a new basis for philosophy. Its very status as the sensuous depends upon its counterpart, which has now been put into question, so that the nature of the line between the two must also be contested. Nietzsche will have a tendency in the face of such difficulties to opt out by either simply asserting his attachment to the opposite principle or by dogmatically positing the intuitively available 'real' basis of the illusions of previous philosophy in the form of the 'will to power'. Like Schopenhauer's Will, the will to power is the principle of all change, which is now the result of the victory of one quantum of will to power over another. The will to power therefore becomes the condition of possibility of any kind of differentiation, which gives it the same role as the absolute, as the One which makes possible the many as the other of itself. Much of the confusion of Nietzsche's later philosophy is a result of the dilemmas generated by this ultimately metaphysical principle. At his best, Nietzsche will suggest more interesting perspectives than those offered by the will to power.

Music and metaphysics

Just how radically Nietzsche can change his mind is easily demonstrated by two passages from *Human, All Too Human* (1878), which endorse the opposite view of music to that of the *BT*. The passages mark the beginning of a complex series of new reflections on the significance of music which form part of Nietzsche's attempt to overcome metaphysics and to respond to nihilism. The first passage is a reflection on religion and art which could be used to summarise Hegel's *Aesthetics*, and which involves the issue Marx pondered in the *Grundrisse*: 'One must have loved religion and art like mother and nurse – otherwise one cannot become wise. But one must see beyond them, be able to grow out of them; if one stays in their spell one does not understand them' (Nietzsche 1980 2 p. 236). There is no suggestion here of the need for a Romantic synthesis, of the kind still present in the *BT*, which would transcend divisions between art and science. Indeed, Nietzsche tends here to see science as self-legitimizing, rather than as leading to the abyss that gives rise to the need for a new mythology. The

second passage is a reflection on 'absolute music', which argues that it is either a very primitive form of articulation, or the result of the historical mixing of music with complex concepts and feelings: 'In itself no music is deep and significant, it does not speak of the "Will", of the "thing in itself"; the intellect could only think something like that in an age which had conquered the whole extent of inner life for musical symbolism. The intellect itself first of all *read this significance into the sound*' (2 p. 175). The historical point is clearly valid: the 'idea' of absolute music is a result of particular historical developments. However, the passage neglects the Romantic reflections on music, philosophy and language we have looked at so far. It assumes, rather as Hegel does, that all there is to be said about music depends upon concepts, and that what it offers is symbolism of 'inner life', which has now been conquered by the intellect. The idea we have encountered in Novalis and Schlegel, and in Nietzsche's fragment on music and language, that what constitutes music is itself essential to the constitution of thought now seems forgotten. Nietzsche, perhaps rightly, wishes to say farewell to the Schopenhauerian link of music to ontology, but here he does so in too one-sided a manner.

The direction of Nietzsche's ideas at this time is most apparent when he also claims that music is, precisely, just a remainder of metaphysics: 'the highest effects of art can easily produce a resonance of the metaphysical string which has long been silent, indeed has broken' (2 p. 145), referring as an example to part of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth. Elsewhere he is insistent that 'Music is precisely *not* a general, supra-temporal language', arguing that it is a 'late-comer of every culture', and that contemporary German music may soon be incomprehensible to anyone else (2 p. 450). Nietzsche is, of course, spectacularly wrong about the German music of his time, which may not have supra-temporal significance, but which has a culture-transcending power which he provocatively refuses to countenance. Nietzsche the performative thinker now begins to come to the fore. The inconsistencies that emerge in the texts we are now considering both suggest new ways of looking at the issue of music and undermine any sense that one might arrive at a decisive characterisation of the significance of music. There is here another connection between Nietzsche's varying approaches to music and Romantic irony. In the same way as music cannot be said to state anything semantically determinate, attempts to grasp music themselves fail to reach ultimate adequacy to what they seek to grasp and so are undermined, even as they may also offer important insights into music. The question is, what happens if the notion that music, like Romantic irony, is a way of pointing to the absolute, can no longer be sustained? Is the alternative the assumption that all a post-metaphysical modernity can permit is the idea of a mere arbitrary collection of competing forms of articulation which are inherently never fully determinate, and none of which has any privileged role over the others? Questions like this go to the heart of aesthetics: what, then, are the limits of the disenchantment of art, and what role does music play in that disenchantment?

Nietzsche's deflationary view of music in texts like *Human, All Too Human* is essentially a result of his suspicion that music could, by becoming the new locus of feelings of transcendence, take the place of the metaphysics he now wishes to overcome. At the same time he remains aware that music does pose important questions for post-metaphysical philosophy that are not exhausted by his deflationary view. The fact is that the borderline between the metaphysical and the non-metaphysical becomes notoriously elusive in relation to the meaningfulness of music. Music in the broadest sense – which can just be rhythm (Schelling, remember, sees rhythm as the 'music in music') – is constituted both by the 'positive' materiality of the notes, as sensuous phenomena and, also, like language, by the 'negative' gaps between the notes, by differentiality. The differences are 'nothing', but not in the sense of absolute non-being: the difference between B flat and C is not the same difference as that between B and C. As we saw in Chapter 7, the subject, which is not reducible to its articulation by the signifier, can be situated in terms of its role in making the differences between the signifiers significant. Musical articulation would not be possible without the differences via which acoustic elements become determinate and meaningful. A further consequence of this is that the silences in great music can be as important as the articulated sounds: the 'pause' in the second movement of Schubert's great C major symphony is, for example, not the same silence as any other silence in another piece, even though all silences are in one sense identical. Silence thus seems to be the non-articulate ground of musical and linguistic articulation. The point is that this can only be so because there is a subject which is continuous between the moments of a piece: silence is the absence of sound, and absence is absence *to* somebody or something, not absolute non-existence.

When he moves away from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche argues that the mistake is to see music as an expression of something else, the Will, rather than as being irreducible to other things. This view should seem more convincing in the light of the above. Music is therefore not the expression of an intuitively known principle, and is better understood in terms of its ever-differing revelations of the consequences of the fact that the ground of articulation cannot itself be articulated. Music can, then, be both a temptation to metaphysics, if it is supposed to announce some pre-existing truth beyond itself, and can be used to oppose metaphysics, because it is non-representational and discloses aspects of the world which would not exist as such without music. Because music resists wholesale appropriation in scientific terms – acoustic frequencies or any other quantifiable, conceptualisable aspect of music are necessary, but not sufficient, for something to be music – it keeps alive issues which are germane to the role of aesthetics in modern philosophy. Nietzsche's main objection to Wagner – and this is one of the few constants in the philosophy of the later Nietzsche – will be precisely that Wagner attempts to turn music into something determinate.

Nietzsche's own contradictory interpretations of what music is themselves become an indication of the possible nature of a post-metaphysical aesthetics.

Instead of being the locus of a positive answer to metaphysical questions, art is seen as offering something that is lacking in cognitive and ethical responses to essential questions about modern existence. However, what art offers need not be, as Habermas and others claim it is, merely an expressive dimension otherwise missing in those responses. For thinkers like Adorno the resistance to discursive articulation, particularly of the paradigmatic modern art of music, can make accessible what the other spheres of modern culture may repress. Music plays a special role in this respect because of the way it links both affective and structural dimensions of modern existence, at the same time as being a non-representational form. The difficulty for a post-metaphysical aesthetics is that, *qua* theoretical discipline, its success must in one sense also be its failure. A discipline which is concerned with the individuality of the work of art is faced with the paradox that an adequate theoretical characterisation of that individuality would ultimately dissolve what it sought to reveal. Unlike disciplines such as the psychology of music, music history, or musicology, aesthetics cannot succeed in terms of its ability to bring its object under the appropriate concept, which leaves it open to the constant threat of redundancy. At the same time, aesthetics is a reminder to these disciplines that they rely on pre-interpretations which cannot be definitively grounded. What will make a post-metaphysical approach to aesthetics successful lies, then, in what is revealed by showing the limitations of any particular perspective on a work or aesthetic event. This more negative function of aesthetics, which already lay behind some of the Romantic (but not the Hegelian) conceptions we have examined, is developed in Nietzsche's best work. What is missing in that work, though, is an adequate account of the role of the subject in a conception of art which can no longer rely on the seeking of metaphysical goals. His reasons for this desideratum have to do with the reasons for his radical rejection of metaphysics, which he expressly connects to his accounts of music.

In contrast to the *BT*, Nietzsche comes to be suspicious of music which intoxicates the listener, associating this with the effects of religion: 'The dangerousness of the Christian ideal lies in its value feelings, in that which can do without conceptual expression: my fight against latent Christianity (e.g. in music, in socialism)' (12 p. 453). Certain kinds of music thus become part of the tradition of morality which Nietzsche wishes to overcome. Christian morality loses its metaphysical ground once God is dead and is therefore part of the history of nihilism. The music which has the effect of religion similarly gives the illusion of a higher purpose to life, in which one can lose oneself. When this purpose is revealed as illusory, vital creative energy will turn out to have been directed towards nothing. Nietzsche often relates music's lack of conceptual articulation to the attempt to replace theology: it encourages one to indulge in indeterminacy and so prevents attention being paid to the real concerns of daily life that become central once the greater goals are revealed as illusions.

At the same time, however, conceptual articulation still involves for the later Nietzsche, as it did in 'On Truth and Lie', the reduction of irreducible intuition

to 'truth'. The positions are simply incompatible: insistence on the concept, construed as that which imposes identity, militates against individuality and indeterminable uniqueness. Nietzsche never resolves this tension. He tends to think in a way which prevents mediation between extremes, preferring what may be interpreted as a 'performative inconsistency' to the kind of unclosable dialectic proposed, for example, by Schleiermacher. Hegel suggested that philosophy is 'its age grasped in thought'. Nietzsche's stance highlights the tension in the age of modern capitalism between the production of collective – potentially repressive – identity, and the production of isolated individuality, but he offers little which might help move beyond that tension.

However, a philosophy which claims productively to overcome the metaphysical past ought to have more to offer in relation to this tension than Nietzsche does. Nietzsche is often seen as a counter to dialectical thinking because he rejects the idea that the resolving of difference leads to a higher identity. Too often, though, the rejection of the metaphysical version of dialectic leads merely to a static juxtaposition of contradictions which leaves no alternative but the performative stance described above. There is no simple way of understanding the consequences this has in relation to Nietzsche's thought as a whole: indeed, it can be argued that regarding his thought 'as a whole' is itself mistaken. In what follows I shall, therefore, pursue the ramifications of just one strand of Nietzsche's thought, though it will soon become apparent that this rapidly takes one into general questions that affect the whole of his philosophy.

Nietzsche's reflections on music and language take on a particular intensity in relation to Wagner. However much his polemical stance may have been generated by his personal break with Wagner, these reflections obviously transcend their immediate occasion. Nietzsche claims that in Wagner's music the lack of articulation leads to 'swimming', instead of 'dancing' (2 p. 434, 6 p. 422), because the music loses all sense of balanced proportion and therefore threatens to dissolve as 'music'. This claim shows what Nietzsche now thinks music really is: Wagner is '*chaos* instead of rhythm' (6 p. 422). Music is rhythm, in the sense it had for Schelling, the 'transformation of a succession which in itself is meaningless into one which is meaningful . . . the institution of unity into multiplicity' (Schelling I/5 pp. 493–4). Nietzsche adheres in his later work to a 'classical aesthetics', an aesthetics of proportionality and unity. However, his classicism does not explain the real difficulties which he tries to confront when he talks about music.

In his influential work on Nietzsche, Heidegger concurs with his objections to Wagner, but misunderstands them in a way that has important consequences. Like the Nietzsche of the passages from *Human, All Too Human*, Heidegger is a Hegelian in relation to music. In fact, he simply borrows part of the argument from Hegel's *Aesthetics*, giving little evidence in his writings of being explicitly aware of music in a way which would bear seriously on the rest of his thought. When Heidegger discusses the '*Gesamtkunstwerk*' he seems to be following Nietzsche, but is actually following Hegel, when he maintains: 'According to the

intention the music should be a means of showing the drama to its best advantage; but in reality music becomes the real art in the form of the opera . . . Poetry [*Dichtung*] and language remain without the essential and decisive forming power of real knowledge. The dominance of art as music is artificial and thus the dominance of the pure state of feeling' (Heidegger 1961 pp. 102–3). This supposed 'dominance' of feeling is the culmination of what Gadamer will term the 'subjectification of aesthetics', the location of the significance of art in the feelings of a subject, which he associates with Kant and the Romantics. Aesthetics, the 'logic of sensuousness', is therefore the historical complement of the end of great art, because it separates art from truth by making it 'subjective'. The fact that music takes on the status of the highest art 'already has its basis in the increasingly aesthetic attitude to art as a whole; it is the conception and evaluation of art from out of the naked state of feeling, and the increasing barbarisation of the state of feeling itself into the naked seething and surging of feeling which has been left to itself' (p. 105). This is a peculiarly crass judgement on the development of music in the modern period, and Heidegger's attitude towards feelings in music has more than a hint of repression about it. Moreover, if one can show that the change in the status of music does not entail the triumph of the subjective in aesthetics, then the argument that the rise of aesthetics is just part of the subjectification of being ceases to be tenable. This is why Nietzsche's responses to music have more than just local significance for aesthetics, and go to the heart of the debate about aesthetics and modernity.

Unlike Heidegger, Nietzsche does not regard music as just an expression of feeling. (As we saw, Heidegger's own later discussions of language may be more reliant on music than he realises.) Heidegger's argument about Wagner in fact misses most of the point both of Nietzsche's variable view of music, and of his critique of Wagner. Nietzsche is actually not exclusively concerned with music's domination of the verbal arts. At the beginning of *The Case of Wagner* Nietzsche says: 'Have people noticed that music *liberates* the mind? gives the thought wings, that one becomes the more a philosopher the more one becomes a musician? – It is as though lightning flashes through the grey sky of abstraction' (Nietzsche 1980 p. 14). The point here is that musical articulation can escape the repression of the sensuous by abstraction, at the same time as sustaining creative thought. Nietzsche's real concern is with the fact that Wagner's music is 'theatrical', and so lacks an essential attribute of the aesthetic, the absence of an ulterior purpose. The crucial passage is the following, which, for once, is consistent with many others:

Wagner was *not* a musician by instinct. He proved this by giving up all lawfulness and, more exactly, all style in music, in order to make of it what he needed, a theatre-rhetoric, a means of expression, of the amplification of gestures, of suggestion, of the psychologically-picturesque . . . *he increased the linguistic capacity of music into the unmeasurable* – he is the Victor Hugo of music as language. Always provided that one first of all considers it valid that music *should be allowed* in certain circumstances not to be music, but language, but a tool, but ancilla dramaturgica. (6 p. 30)

As in the fragment on music and language, 'real' music should be autonomous, not reducible to language, to representation, or even to being the expression of feelings. By language in this context Nietzsche clearly means rhetoric, pragmatic utterance. Given the performative nature of his thought, the demand that music avoid rhetoric has special significance. Far from underestimating modern music, or just regarding it as the culmination of the decline of art into subjective feeling, Nietzsche is aware of how important music is for many of his arguments, precisely because it is not directly performative and is not just an expression of the feelings and desires of a subject.

Heidegger, then, misses an important point of the kind he himself makes about language in poetry. Nietzsche suggests that music itself can bring about new – aesthetic – feelings in the subject, of a kind which could only be occasioned by such a non-representational medium. Consequently, instead of merely expressing existent feelings, music can have world-disclosive power, just as much as poetry. Indeed, music need not merely function at the level of aesthetic feeling in the narrower sense implied by Nietzsche. It can even render aspects of the objective world accessible: for example, music can affect what one sees in a film, or give significance to a landscape which it would otherwise not possess. The earlier Heidegger saw this kind of world-disclosure in terms of moods which were not simply 'subjective', but the later Heidegger, whose concern is precisely with non-instrumental forms of language, fails to appreciate how far this concern is inherently linked to music. It seems clear from these points that the relationship of aesthetics and subjectivity has to be re-examined in a way which invalidates quite a lot of the rhetoric directed against the subject in the traditions influenced by Heidegger. This becomes particularly apparent with regard to art's relationship to sensuousness.

It is, of course, odd that Heidegger, who wishes to bring metaphysics to an end, should adopt the antagonism of a Plato to the world of the senses in his view of music. One has, though, to be careful to specify what is really in question here. Part of the point of both Romantic and Idealist thinking was to escape the sensuous/intelligible divide and the problems to which it gives rise. The difficulty is that this escape can end, as it does for Hegel, with the self-negation of the transient sensuous world being seen as the route to philosophical insight into the intelligible absolute, an insight which devalues the sensuous as the 'merely transient'. Art, particularly music, disrupts this metaphysical idea by its reliance both on time and on sensuous particularity. A Bruckner Adagio can be heard as conveying something like 'noble sadness', but the banality of such a verbal description reveals what makes the shape and development of the particular movement significant. This particular development is unlike any other, and is not captured by the general terms used to characterise it. Without the sensuous particularity of the music, which is manifested in contrasting degrees of acoustic intensity and shifts of mood and temporality, a whole dimension of insight into the possibilities of temporal existence is lost. Given Nietzsche's desire to revalue the sensuous, by denying the possibility of a Hegelian

Aufhebung of the particular into the conceptually universal, how does he regard music's relationship to metaphysical questions?

The fifth book of *The Gay Science* most clearly spells out the questions raised by music for the later Nietzsche. In Section 370 Nietzsche outlines his critique of Romanticism, by which he largely means German music, Schopenhauer and Wagner. Art is regarded here as a means of dealing with the contradictions of 'growing, struggling life'. Life necessarily involves suffering: if the suffering is a result of an excess of life, then a 'Dionysian' art is required, which involves acknowledgement of the tragic unavoidability of destruction if life is to remain creative. Romanticism is the result of the needs of those who suffer from the '*impoverishment of life*', who seek peace, quiet, a calm sea, redemption from themselves by art and knowledge, or also intoxication, convulsion, numbing, madness' (3 p. 620, cf. 6 p. 425). Romanticism therefore shares the attributes of metaphysics which lead one away from the immediacy of sensuous life here and now. How this sensuous immediacy is construed is the decisive issue. In Section 372, entitled 'Why we are not Idealists', Nietzsche considers the traditional antagonism of philosophy to the senses in a manner not so far from the *BT*'s critical view of Socrates: "Wax in the ears" was at that time almost a condition of philosophising; a real philosopher did not hear life any more, in so far as life is music, he *denied* the music of life, – it is an old philosophical superstition that all music is music of the sirens' (3 pp. 623–4). In a characteristic reversal Nietzsche ponders whether the best thing to do is to acknowledge that 'Ideas' may be more dangerously seductive than that which appeals to the senses. An unwritten section of the projected but abandoned *Will to Power* is entitled, echoing Novalis, 'Value of "transience"' (13 p. 210), suggesting Nietzsche's opposition to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of art, which sees the only value in the escape from transience.

The later Nietzsche's positive investment in certain, usually Italian, music derives, therefore, from its freedom from the metaphysical attitude of Schopenhauer and Wagner, which he terms the 'religious need masked as music' (13 p. 210). His concern is with music which creates diversity rather than unity. In Section 373 of *The Gay Science*, "Science" as Prejudice', Nietzsche attacks the notion that natural science's mathematisation of the cosmos is the only possible interpretation of the world, indeed he suggests that it may turn out to be 'one of the *most stupid*, that is, the poorest in meaning [*sinnärmsten*] of all possible world-interpretations'. He cites as evidence the fact that a scientific evaluation of music which relies upon 'how much of it can be counted, calculated, brought into formulae' would be absurd: 'What would one have grasped, understood, recognised of it! Nothing, almost nothing, of that which is really "music" in it! . . .' (3 p. 626). Significantly, he leaves open the question of what 'music' is in such a context, rather than seeking to determine its essential nature.

The problem is now that if Nietzsche is to avoid the trap he thinks scientific accounts of music fall into, he has to find ways of circumventing the conceptual reduction which threatens any philosophical determination of the nature of music. This would seem to be one of the reasons why Nietzsche mixes a

bewildering number of different ways of talking about music in the later work. In a note of 1884, for example, Nietzsche describes music as ‘an echo of states whose conceptual expression was *mysticism* – feeling of transfiguration of the individual. Or: the reconciliation of inner contradictions into something new, *birth of the third*’ (11 p. 75) – what might sound like a Hegelian dialectical reconciliation actually lies, though, outside conceptuality altogether. Elsewhere, in the notes of autumn 1887, Nietzsche can still claim, in line with his critique of the concept, that ‘*In relation to music* all communication via words is brazen; the word depersonalises; the word makes the uncommon common’ (12 p. 493). Music becomes a corrective to the view of language which begins with ‘On Truth and Lie’. Such statements presuppose music’s ability to say more than other forms of articulation, rather than being merely another form of articulation which, like verbal articulation, does what it can. Nietzsche’s assumption in this passage would seem to point in a metaphysical direction of the kind suggested by Hoffmann and others. As we have seen, Nietzsche is fairly consistent in his demand that music should remain free of a metaphysics which would create the illusion of taking one beyond the sensuous world, rather than investing it with a new value. How can these differing views be sustained? The ambiguities here take one to the heart of his thinking.

Aesthetics, ‘interpretation’ and subjectivity

We need now to look more closely at what Nietzsche says about subjectivity and art in the later philosophy. A major tension in these writings derives from their shifting conceptions of the status of aesthetics. Most notoriously, Nietzsche claims aesthetics is ‘nothing but an applied physiology’ (6 p. 418), rejecting Wagner’s music for its detrimental physical effects: ‘And so I ask myself: what does my whole body really *want* from music at all? For there is no soul . . . I think it wants its *relief*: as though all animal functions should be speeded up by light, bold, lively, self-confident rhythms’ (6 p. 419). The best music is that most suited to the organism, and ‘aesthetics is indissolubly bound to . . . biological preconditions’ (6 p. 50). In such passages Nietzsche falls squarely into the same trap as many critiques of metaphysics. If the problem with metaphysical accounts of what there is derives from the attempt to provide an ultimate ground of explanation, it is no good seeking to find a further ground which will replace metaphysics by playing the same role in the same manner, because the results will be just as circular. In the passage cited Nietzsche grounds the explication of aesthetic ways of articulating the world on another way of articulating the world, biology. However, one can equally do the opposite, by arguing that the science of biology itself is really founded in ‘aesthetic’ production, as he himself argued in ‘On Truth and Lie’. Just as nothing in a piece of music can explain the physiology of the organism which produces the music, nothing in biology can account for a piece of music *qua* aesthetically particular phenomenon. It is not that biology and music have nothing to do with each other, but neither can be the

ground of the understanding of the other, without the resulting explanation simply failing to grasp what matters about what is being explained.

The vital issue here is rhythm, whose importance in some of the best writings on music, language and philosophy has been apparent at various stages of our investigation. Rhythm, Schelling's 'music in music', has the kind of in-between status which keeps recurring in aesthetically decisive phenomena. There is, on the one hand, a sense in which nature can be said to function rhythmically, from cyclical phenomena, like day and night, to the heartbeat of some kinds of living organisms, but the idea that these recurrences can be apprehended *as* rhythm is not 'natural' in the same sense. The role of rhythm in the very intelligibility of the world of nature is the key question here. Schelling insisted that rhythm converted a non-rhythmic, meaningless succession into a meaningful one, and this points to a crucial constellation. Rhythm is both linked to cognition *and* to somatic pleasure, and is therefore a further instance of something which does not fit on one side of the sensuous/intelligible divide.

Self-consciousness and rhythm are, then, inseparably connected: natural rhythm cannot be such without what connects the moments of which it consists, and what can connect moments into rhythms cannot make something into something determinate without having something repeated to organise.¹⁴ This pre-conceptual identification of something as the same through the connection of its different moments is 'rhythmic' in Schelling's sense, because it makes arbitrary succession into something meaningful. The establishing of 'meaning' also relies, as we have seen, upon the kind of existential continuity of the self which the Romantics termed 'feeling'. The consequence is that it may not be abstruse to claim that language is derived from more fundamental rhythmic forms of identification, of the kind which are necessary at some minimal level for what we term music. Such an account already takes one well beyond mere biology, and is at the same time based on anthropologically plausible assumptions. The more germane question in the present context actually concerns the point at which music becomes a specifically *aesthetic* phenomenon, which, of course, takes one even further from the biological. Although one might think of music as Darwin and Edward Gurney do, as originating as a means of attracting a sexual partner, this does little to explain why one organism should want to create a means of stimulation for another in situations which are no longer immediately – or even potentially – sexual. This question leads to questions of communication and intersubjectivity, not to a supposedly biological reduction of the issue of the kind Nietzsche too often engages in. The genesis of something does not determine what it can become in new contexts.

At his best Nietzsche is aware of these objections. The section, 'Our new "Infinite"' of *The Gay Science*, which follows the passage mocking the pretensions of science to grasp music, relates to the refusal to reduce music to any evaluation in terms of something else. Nietzsche here presents a version of the Romantic notion of 'infinite interpretation'. The 'perspectival character of existence', the result of the loss of an absolute conception, Nietzsche argues,

applies also to the human intellect itself, which can only see itself in terms of its own perspectives. This returns us to the questions of reflection which we have found in Fichte, Schelling and the Romantics. A perspective entails a splitting of two aspects – the ‘view’ from which something is surveyed, and the something itself. The structure involved here is the same as gives rise to the problems both of the correspondence theory of truth and of self-identification. What guarantees that a perspective is a correct one, unless there is an ‘absolute perspective’ which ensures the correspondence of the perspective to the reality of the scene, or an immediate identity between the two aspects of the self, of the kind Fichte sought in ‘intellectual intuition’, with all the resultant problems? An absolute perspective is not a perspective in the normal sense of the word at all – as Nietzsche himself will argue – and the Romantics reject Fichte’s epistemological notion in the name of an ontological conception of the self which is always more than it knows, and which can therefore never achieve a final – cognitive or reflexive – perspective on itself. The overall result of this situation for Nietzsche is the anti-reductionist assertion that the world ‘has again become “infinite” for us: to the extent that we cannot reject the possibility that it *contains infinite interpretations in itself*’ (3 p. 627). In later texts Nietzsche claims that this infinity of interpretations is dependent upon the radical meaninglessness of existence, to which meaning must be given. Significantly, he still sees the idea initially in relation to music: ‘That is the way it is with notes [*Tönen*] but also with the destinies of peoples: they are capable of the most various interpretation . . .’ (12 p. 359). This contention is evidently incompatible with the idea that aesthetics can be reduced to physiology, which is just one aspect of our perspectival relationship to the world and ourselves. The problem is then whether these perspectives are any more than essentially ‘Fichtean’ projections onto a world which therefore itself has no determinate conceptual effect upon what we hold to be the case.¹⁵

Nietzsche’s ambiguous relationship to music is, then, a result of his veering between a biological reductionist view of aesthetics, a related desire to rid aesthetics of any trace of metaphysics, a residual ‘Fichtean’ projectionism, and an attachment to what are in fact anti-reductionist ideas from Romantic aesthetics. Any approach to Nietzsche must attempt to disentangle the commitments involved in these conflicting approaches and see how they might relate. Infinite interpretation, which Nietzsche often relates to music, is central to the later writings, and it is striking how often in the notes from 1885 onwards Nietzsche also echoes Idealist and Romantic views of subjectivity. One side of his efforts is directed towards the destruction of the notion of the unified subject in the name of a subject constituted in terms of the conflictual nature of the ‘will to power’, and this leads to his claims that a world which is stable or unified is another Idealist illusion. The subject is to be dislodged from a privileged legislative role as the location of intelligibility by the revelation of its inherent dependence upon an ungraspable Other, which is yet also itself. In many respects Nietzsche says little that is fundamentally new on the question of subjectivity:

much that we observed in Schopenhauer recurs, though usually in affirmative, rather than negative terms. He does, however, take certain questions we have looked at a stage further.

In common with his epigones, Nietzsche identifies all philosophies of the subject with the metaphysics he wishes to overcome: 'What separates me most thoroughly from the metaphysicians is this: I do not concede to them that the "I" is that which thinks: instead I take the *I itself as a construction of thought*, of the same status as "matter" "thing" "substance" "individual" "purpose" "number": thus as a *regulative fiction*' (11 p. 526). Nietzsche's assertion echoes both Lichtenberg's claim that '*It thinks*, one ought to say, as one says: *it's thundering (es blitzt, literally 'it's flashing (lightning)')*'. To say cogito is already too much as soon as one translates it as I think. To assume the *I*, to postulate it, is a practical need' (Lichtenberg 1994 II p. 412), and Schelling's remark against Descartes (circa 1833–4) that 'It thinks in me, thinking goes on in me, is the pure fact, in the same way as I can say with equal justification: "I dreamed", and "It dreamed in me"' (Schelling 1994 p. 48), as well as echoing aspects of the critique of Idealism common to Feuerbach and Marx. This subversion of the reflexive subject is not, though, sufficient to obviate all the issues we have encountered concerning subjectivity: regarding the 'I think' as a moment of merely illusory self-grounding knowledge, for example, does not evade the problems of reflexivity. In Nietzsche's passage just cited, 'thought' must synthesise itself into a reflexively aware 'I', otherwise there would be nothing to subvert, but it could only do so if it were already conscious in some non-reflexive sense: Schelling's 'It' is obviously not an inert object. Nietzsche's further claim in this connection is that language itself perpetuates the delusions of the metaphysics of subjectivity via the necessities of the grammar of subject and predicate. This idea is another version of his claims about the perspectival nature of existence: we think we see a world made up of Strawsonian 'sentence-shaped items', among which we include ourselves as the 'I that thinks', but this is because our language supposedly gives us no alternative.

Nietzsche contends that both the synthesising of that which thinks into the I, and the synthesising of effects from 'outside' into the object are really aspects of the will to power acting upon each other. Kant's 'transcendental unity of apperception', the I which 'must be able to accompany all my representations', therefore consists of a series of warring aspects, whose unity is a deception:

We need unities in order to calculate: there is no reason to assume for this reason that such unities exist. We borrowed the concept of unity from our concept of 'I' . . . If we did not consider ourselves unities we would have never formed the concept of a 'thing'. Now, fairly late, we are thoroughly convinced that our conception of the concept of I does not guarantee any real unity. Nietzsche 1980 (13 p. 258)

Thought is therefore 'just a *certain behaviour of drives in relation to each other*' (3 p. 558), and 'What we call "consciousness" and "spirit" is only a means and a tool by which not a subject but a *struggle wishes to preserve itself*' (12 p. 40).

Self-consciousness is reduced to the self-preservation of quanta of the will to power which are opposed to each other (though why they should remain in this self-preserving relation of opposition is unclear).

The problem here is the one indicated earlier by Wheeler: Nietzsche has to rely on what he opposes, in order to dramatise his opposition to it. The 'real unity' whose existence he denies has to be the unity of a metaphysically conceived substance. For any unity to 'exist' in Nietzsche's terms means for it to be as real as what is, so to speak, 'really real'. In such passages he makes it very clear what is 'really real', namely the opposing 'drives' that constitute both thought and the I. All this means is that he proposes a Heraclitean ontology of difference, in opposition to a Parmenidean ontology of sameness. But what allows him to choose between what is 'really' a unity, and what is 'really' endless difference, without just re-running all the arguments about the Same and the Different from Plato to German Idealism and Romanticism? At this point Nietzscheans have a tendency to volunteer the argument from performativity, but this seems of little help. These remarks of Nietzsche cannot be construed as rhetorical strategies to undermine or circumvent the traps of metaphysics, because the assertions are themselves so patently metaphysical. They are remarks about the real ground of explanation of phenomena in the world. Unmasking conceptions of the I in post-Cartesian philosophy is a favourite contemporary pastime, but if the result is a theory which cannot begin to deal with inescapable questions about self-consciousness – that require some kind of answer if such issues as self-deception, moral conflicts, aesthetic pleasure are even to be intelligible – all the unmasking achieves is a repression of the real issue, not a brave new approach.

Nietzsche's more reductive approaches suggest the power of the conceptions we considered in Romanticism, which do not consider the I to be an absolute ground. Schleiermacher's account of the I, for example, does not lead to a unified, self-transparent subject, but rather one which strives to attain a unity that is thwarted by the fact that what it is transcends what it can know. The subject's inherent lack of unity forces it into self-interpretation, which is impossible to complete, but which is not simple dispersal. If it were merely dispersal, basic facts of conscious life would become inexplicable. Nietzsche's justifiable denial that subjectivity could be a secure philosophical foundation for truth is questionably combined with his attempt to account for a subjectivity without which the point of his claims to undermine the notion of the I would dissolve.

His basic strategy is to posit an underlying true subject whose divided nature renders it inherently self-deceptive: the will to power. However, no consistent line is discernible in his approaches to this issue. At times, for instance, he gets oddly close to Fichte, though he wants to avoid Fichte's Idealism, in favour of a voluntarism of the subject, which also seems to echo aspects of Leibniz's *Monadology*: "Thingness" is only created by us. The question is . . . whether that which "posits things" alone is real . . . *The subject alone is provable: hypothesis, that there are only subjects* – that "object" is only a kind of effect of subject on subject . . . a modus of the subject' (12 p. 396). His attacks on subjectivity as

a ground of cognitive certainty often echo both Fichte, and Schelling and Romanticism: 'One would like to know what *things in themselves* are like: but look, there are no things in themselves! But even supposing there were an in itself, an absolute [*Unbedingtes*], then it *could not be known* for precisely that reason! Something absolute cannot be known: otherwise it would precisely not be absolute!' (12 p. 141).¹⁶ Nietzsche also echoes the notion of the infinite activity which limits itself that Schelling develops from Fichte in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*: the idea of an object is 'the sum of the *limitations* [*Hemmungen*] experienced of which we have become *conscious*' (12 p. 98). However, he rejects any teleological development in this self-limitation of the will to power. The ascending genealogy of consciousness of the *STI* now becomes instead a genealogy of repression, the story of the growing obstruction of creative potential by science and morality because of their reduction of particular intuitions to general terms. At one point Nietzsche even adopts a central contention of the *STI*: '*visible* organic life and the *invisible* creative spiritual working and thinking contain a parallelism: via the "work of art" one can demonstrate these two sides most clearly as parallel' (12 p. 139). In true Romantic fashion, he also sees the world 'as a work of art which gives birth to itself' (12 p. 119). It may be that these remarks are just Nietzsche's working through of others' positions in his notes, but the question then is what he has to offer as an alternative.

In the wake of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Schelling presented aesthetic production as a way of overcoming the limits of the understanding and thereby opening up a relationship to nature that is lacking when nature is seen solely in terms of objectifying empirical science. Nietzsche, in contrast, starts from the premise of the radical meaninglessness of existence, of the kind familiar from the materialist science of his day. However, the way he uses this premise again falls prey to Wheeler's objection of nostalgically presupposing a metaphysical world in order to confront one with the consequences of its absence, rather than accepting that this whole picture is based on the 'bemoaning of a deficiency that is a necessary deficiency in every case, and so a deficiency only relative to an impossible dream' (Wheeler 2000 p. 118).

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche formulates a defiant challenge: the universe 'is neither complete, nor beautiful, nor noble, and does not wish to become any of these, it absolutely does not strive to imitate mankind! It is not touched at all by any of our aesthetic and moral judgements' (Nietzsche 1980 3 p. 468). Such judgements are, he thinks, still tinged with theology, and he asks, echoing the young, Feuerbach-influenced Marx: 'When will we be allowed to begin *naturalising* ourselves with the pure, newly found, newly redeemed nature' (3 p. 469). However, the real question is whether it makes sense to invest so much in the idea that nature is not 'per se' beautiful, apart from in terms of countering a theological approach to nature. As we have seen, the beauty of nature is clearly affected by history, but the fact that nature can be beautiful in differing ways at different times suggests there is more at issue than this radical subjective/objective split.

New encounters with nature can shake us out of rigid conceptions or lifeless ways of being. This need not simply be a result of our projections, even if there may be no strong metaphysical arguments available which would allow one to invoke Kant's 'code through which nature talks to us figuratively in its beautiful forms'.

In the light of the growing ecological crisis, it seems clear, moreover, that an aesthetic failure on the part of humankind does indeed touch nature. It does so, for example, when no account is taken of the effects of human action upon the natural world, of the kind observable in the wake of Chernobyl or of other man-made environmental catastrophes, which distort any kind of ecological integration in ways of which nature on its own seems to be incapable. Schelling's point was always that we are ourselves part of nature, and that the question is therefore how to conceive of the subjective, the locus of our judgements, as not totally separate from nature. Frank has made the main structure of his argument clear: 'Instead of saying that nature is mind (which would be absurd), one must rather say: there is an X . . . and this X is on the one hand nature and on the other hand mind (these would be the predicates of X); but that does not mean that mind therefore is as such nature, or nature is as such and in the same respect mind' (Frank 1991 pp. 143–4). Nietzsche simply concentrates on attacking a representational notion of knowledge and beauty which his Romantic predecessors already suggested was inadequate to these issues. Once the representational notion has been put into question, appealing to it in order repeatedly to show its failure is both nostalgic and actually likely to obscure new ways of thinking about our place within nature.

It is perhaps important to add that none of these objections to Nietzsche involves a denial of the essential indifference of a nature which will destroy the species humankind when the sun explodes and which will in all likelihood decline in the end into entropy-generated stasis. However, if Nietzsche is serious about the 'value of transience' his real problem ought to be the consequences of failing to see what nature has to offer us, not nature's now pretty firmly established ultimate futility as far as the human race is concerned. Once again the question is Dewey's 'limits of disenchantment'. The point of the aesthetic tradition prior to Nietzsche was that it sought resources in new relationships between 'internal' and 'external' nature. The Idealist version of this search can, it is true, entail indefensible claims to commensurate mind and nature. Does this mean, though, that there is no longer any possibility of rethinking the consequences of living in a deterministic nature which, not least because we are part of it, is not fully grasped by exploration of its law-bound aspect?

By the time of the work on *The Will to Power* Nietzsche's view of art's relationship to nature becomes more cynical, but the significance of the aesthetic has actually become even greater. Art has come, in the manner of the *BT*, to include science and philosophy of every kind, but not in a higher synthesis which would integrate us into nature, as proposed by the *System Programme* or

the *Discourse on Mythology*. Instead: 'man must by nature be a liar, he must more than anything else still be an *artist* . . . And he is too: metaphysics, morality, religion, science – All inventions of his will to art, to lie, to flight from the "truth", to the *denial* of the "truth"' (Nietzsche 1980 13 p. 193). Art is still the stimulus to life in the face of a meaningless existence. The problem, of course, is what the 'truth' is that is being denied. At such points it seems clear that Nietzsche is actually revelling in the performative contradiction of making claims about something his argument precludes, but if that is the case, one still needs to understand what the performative effect might be. Two strands of Nietzsche's thought emerge here. One is 'deconstructive', attempting to overcome metaphysical claims by undermining the possibility that they could ever be an absolute foundation for our truth claims beyond our own practices of validation. The other, the concern with the will to power, is metaphysical, even though the aim may be deconstructive: this becomes apparent in what Nietzsche says about 'interpretation'.

It is worth remembering here that Nietzsche's view of language has a deeply questionable element which is apparent in claims like the following. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche maintains that 'the spell of certain grammatical functions is in the last analysis (*im letzten Grunde*) the spell of *physiological* value-judgements and racial conditions': as such, 'unconscious domination . . . by the same grammatical functions' determines what can be thought by a thinker of a particular race. It is therefore no surprise that Nietzsche's 'interpretation' is founded on an agonistic view of nature, of the kind we encountered in Schopenhauer. 'Interpretation' is, as it must be, given Nietzsche's ontological assumptions, a power struggle over identity, which takes place both in the natural and the cultural world: 'The will to power *interprets*: in the constitution of an organ it is a question of an interpretation' (12 p. 139). 'Interpretation' depends upon power differentials, in which one power subordinates another. The plant subordinates the materials it needs to constitute its identity, mankind constitutes nature as the object of its fight for self-preservation, and the successful artist, scientist, politician, race (?) constitutes the chaos of a meaningless world in forms according to their will. Crucially, Nietzsche separates 'interpretation' from subjectivity by again suggesting that it is grounded in something that transcends it, which he, of course, is therefore able to identify: 'One may not ask: "*who* is interpreting then?" rather interpretation itself, as a form of the will to power has existence (but not as a 'Being', rather as a *process*, a *becoming*) as an affect' (12 p. 140). Interpretation is, then, an activity of the will to power, and the truth from which we fly when we invoke 'metaphysics, morality, religion, science' is the underlying nature of being as will to power.

However, Nietzsche himself suggests a problem in this conception of interpretation as a series of power differentials: 'Simple differences in power could not feel themselves as such: there must be a something there which wishes to grow, which interprets every other something that wishes to grow in terms of its value' (12 p. 140). The characterisation here must, then, be of a kind of *subject*.

It is something which must be able to feel itself as limited and as able to develop. This drive for greater power only makes sense if that which wishes to grow has, however minimally, a self-conscious identity beyond its mere difference from the other, otherwise the growth in power could not be registered as a growth in *its* power and would have no motivating force. Furthermore, the associated idea of a 'transvaluation of all values' that will result from the destruction of metaphysical goals and the acknowledgement of being as will to power also requires something for which a value *is* a value, rather than a stimulus for a natural instinct. Value cannot, as Nietzsche himself makes clear, be interpreted merely in terms of relations between differing quanta of the will to power, of the kind which might be used to describe the lion's relationship to the value of the lamb. Unfortunately, he has little useful to say about what a value might be that is not subject to that kind of reduction. We saw in Chapter 4 that a Hegelian response to the development of ethical consciousness via the growing acknowledgement of the autonomy of the other is faced with the problem of how one could be aware of the freedom of another at all without one already being pre-reflexively familiar with freedom oneself. Schelling's middle work in particular tries to come to terms with the contingency of the development of freedom, which cannot be grounded by reflection in the other, but this does not lead him into the kind of reductive physicalism present in many of Nietzsche's remarks.

Now some of this might seem unfair to the Nietzsche who has been enthusiastically adopted by those, like Rorty, who regard him as a resource for pragmatism. The simple answer to this worry is that the deconstructive Nietzsche of the theory of 'infinite interpretation', who comes closest to the anti-essentialist strand of the Romantics, too often seems to rely on the Nietzsche of the will to power, who advances the metaphysical argument that the ground of the understanding of the manifest world are different quanta of will to power. What else can one infer from the remarks on 'interpretation'? Rorty sees Nietzsche as part of the crucial idea, directed against the metaphysical tradition, that we 'must give up the idea that we are answerable to anything other than ourselves'. We saw one possible objection to this in Chapter 5, with regard to the idea that natural beauty can be understood as an indication of a responsibility to something beyond ourselves, rather than merely as a moment of 'private transcendence'. Although not being answerable to anything beyond ourselves can be construed in terms of a defensible attempt to evade commitment to the pursuit of the Platonic goals of much of Western philosophy, it can also involve the danger of a narcissistic relationship to things which the best of the aesthetic tradition, from Hölderlin to Adorno, regards as one of the main threats in modernity. Nietzsche's idea of the 'intoxication' of the creative artist, 'the increased feeling of power; the inner compulsion to make of things a reflex of his own fullness and completion' (13 p. 356), contrasts with what motivated artists such as Hölderlin and Beethoven. They were fired, not by a narcissistic relation to things and people, but by a desire to create new possibilities of non-repressive community by transcending existing means of articulation.

Nietzsche's conception actually makes aesthetics highly *dependent* upon the subject: the idea of transforming things into a reflex of oneself is, of course, an echo of a familiar (if unjustified) construal of Fichteanism. Nietzsche's attachment to the autonomy of music, which is directed against a narcissistic view is, of course, at odds with the reduction of aesthetics to 'intoxication'. Just how arbitrary his mixing of conceptions can become is evident when he returns elsewhere to reductionist claims: 'Keep in mind that every art which has physiology against it is a refuted art . . . One can refute Wagner's music physiologically' (13 p. 471). However, if the value of music is assessed physiologically, it is no longer autonomous, but rather a means towards the well-being of the organism. Aesthetic pleasure becomes just pleasure, and art becomes no different from a tasty soufflé. Nietzsche's essential objection to Wagner's music was that it was in the service of something else; now the objection is that it fails to serve the body in a healthy manner. He just does not like the effect Wagner has on him any more, and aesthetic judgement is a question of personal (physiological) preference – if Wagner makes you feel more powerful and in control, he can presumably be 'proven', rather than refuted. Nietzsche, by this time, happens to feel better listening to Bizet.

Despite their mutual inconsistency it is important to remember that all these differing assessments of music can actually play a role in how people relate to music and how it affects them. To this extent Nietzsche's refusal to remain with a particular approach may be said to be in line with a pragmatism which sees different ways of talking about something in terms of making it a tool for differing purposes. Whether this is an adequate response to the major questions of aesthetics can, though, be seriously doubted.

On the one hand, Nietzsche seems to sustain an aesthetic concern with art's autonomy as a vital aspect of modern culture, and this is in line with his consistent attention to music. On the other hand, this concern would at the same time appear to be something which, in the terms he proposes elsewhere in these texts, is susceptible to unmasking via the idea of the will to power. Any judgement about aesthetics must be referred to the condition of possibility of differentiation, the will to power. A positive aesthetic judgement will increase the quantum of power, a negative judgement will diminish it. This actually tells one nothing at all about the aesthetic judgement *qua* specifically aesthetic judgement, because the same kind of differentials constitute the way we apprehend or deal with the rest of reality, as the conception of 'interpretation' suggested. The metaphysical foundation therefore drops out of the equation in dealing with actual differences between our 'interpretative' practices, because its implication is the same whatever happens. Any attempt to sustain this foundation would draw one back into the familiar circle in which the judgement that the will to power is the correct explanation of the phenomena is itself determined by a greater quantum of will to power than the alternative. If one accepts that the metaphysical part of Nietzsche's conception is redundant, it seems possible then to adopt a pragmatist approach which seeks to assess the different kinds of

purpose served by aesthetic production and reception in relation to other kinds of relationship to the world. Nietzsche *can* often be very profitably read in this latter manner, though one wonders whether the more than questionable aspects of his work one must ignore in doing so should not give his supporters more pause for thought than they usually do.

The problem with this short-cut to a post-metaphysical account of aesthetics is that it fails to deal adequately with a crucial issue which has emerged at various points in this book. The two terms aesthetics and subjectivity already suggest what is in question here: one of the connotations of 'aesthetics' is of a publicly accountable philosophical discipline; 'subjectivity' often has the connotation of something private. Rorty wishes to separate 'public' discourses of social cooperation from the 'private' search for transcendence, not least because he justifiably thinks the attempts of thinkers like Heidegger to make the latter into the former can be disastrous. At the same time, the culture and philosophy of modernity is characterised precisely by attempts to combine the 'public' and the 'private' in some kind of new synthesis. In the light of the story told in this book, Rorty's judgement on this issue seems too schematic, as I try to show further in the Conclusion. While some of the key insights in modernity have undoubtedly been into the ways in which the public, in the form of the symbolic orders into which we are socialised, constitutes what we are 'privately', the desire to transcend the forming impact of language, history and socialisation, in order to attain an irreducibly individual identity, is often regarded as vital to being human and as the source of the imaginative resources which sustain a post-theological culture. The further need for this identity not to become merely a way of repressing the cultural other has also become a decisive part of the debate, as it had already begun to be for thinkers like Herder, Schleiermacher and the early Romantics. Tensions between these aspects of modernity have been a major factor in the aesthetic reflections of the thinkers we have considered so far. In the Conclusion I consider these issues in relation to contemporary theoretical concerns, some of which have been sparked by the renewed attention to Nietzsche's questions concerning a post-metaphysical culture.

Notes

- 1 The pieces by Holub are the following: 'Nietzsche and the Jewish Question', *New German Critique* 22.3 (1995): 94–121; 'Nietzsche and the Women's Question', *German Quarterly* 68.1 (1995): 67–71; 'Reading Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Rhetoric, Genealogy, Perspectivism in Ahistorical Context', *Why Literature Matters: Theories and Functions of Literature* (eds) Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann. Heidelberg: Carl Winter (1996): 248–63; 'Nietzsche's Colonialist Imagination: Nueva Germania, Good Europeanism, and Great Politics', *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (eds) Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox and Susanne Zantop. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press (1998): 33–49; 'The Birth of Psychoanalysis from the Spirit of Enmity: Nietzsche and Psychology in the Nineteenth Century', *Nietzsche and Depth Psychology*

- (eds) Jacob Golomb, Weaver Santaniello and Ronald Lehrer. Albany: SUNY Press (1999): 149–169; ‘Understanding Perspectivism: Nietzsche’s Dialogue with His Contemporaries’, (to appear in a *Festschrift* for the 100th birthday of Hans-Georg Gadamer, edited by Ulrich Arnswald and Jens Kertscher in MIT Press); ‘The Pen Is Mightier Than the Whip: Nietzsche’s Confrontation with the Women’s Question’, (to appear in *German Quarterly*); ‘The Elisabeth Legend or Sibling Scapegoating: The Cleansing of Friedrich Nietzsche and the Sully of His Sister’, (to be published in *Nietzsche: Godfather of Fascism?: On the Uses and Abuses of Philosophy* (eds) Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (Princeton: Princeton University Press)).
- 2 This problem admittedly can apply to any text, but which is more central in relation to Nietzsche than many authors because of the history of his reception.
 - 3 Schopenhauer seems to have been most influenced by Schelling’s 1809 essay on human freedom, which claims that ‘Willing is primal being’ (see Bowie 1993 chapter 5).
 - 4 It is worth remembering that Schopenhauer was at the same time a misogynist and an animal lover. The reason why his thought caught on in the wake of Darwin is also apparent here.
 - 5 It is arguable that this view of the sensuous world corresponds to one aspect of Hegel’s conception of philosophy, if one takes the links of Hegel to Plato seriously.
 - 6 A combination of Marx’s conception with that of Nietzsche will be the basis of Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.
 - 7 This is one of the key themes of Adorno’s Wagner book.
 - 8 This does not mean that they are somehow mysterious: there are plenty of significant interpretations which account for tragedy’s importance in certain historical situations. The problem is how they continue to appeal in differing contexts.
 - 9 See Wolfgang Lange (1983): ‘Tod ist bei Göttern immer nur ein Vorteil. Zum Komplex des Mythos bei Nietzsche’ in (ed.) Bohrer, pp. 111–13.
 - 10 Nietzsche’s idea of how science leads to a regress of explanations seems to derive from Jacobi’s idea of the nihilistic world of ‘conditioned conditions’ which requires a further principle of coherence to be intelligible (see Bowie 1997).
 - 11 Cf. also the remarks on Kant and schematism’s relationship to rhythm in Chapter 1.
 - 12 As we saw in Chapter 7, if anything, Romantic philosophy is a reaction *against* the idea of music as the representation of feelings.
 - 13 Davidson has argues that this gets things the wrong way round, conventions only being possible on the basis of language.
 - 14 Kant’s insistence that concepts require intuitions if they are not to be empty, and intuitions concepts if they are not to be blind would, in this conception, be a subsequent development of this more fundamental idea. I think this is what Schlegel and others were suggesting in the remarks on rhythm cited in earlier chapters. See also Bowie 2001.
 - 15 This is a more than questionable reading of what Fichte means, and just refers to the most extreme Idealist formulations of the ‘positing’ of the I. When Rorty says we are tied to the world causally but not representationally he moves in this direction, as his attachment to Nietzsche would suggest, though he is in certain respects closer to the Romantics.
 - 16 Cf. my remarks on perspectivism above.