

Im Schatten des Gipfels: Bourgeois Society, Metaphor, and Temporality in Heine's and  
Nietzsche's Mountain Imagery

by

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Ach, was seid ihr doch, ihr meine geschriebenen und gemalten Gedanken! Es ist nicht lange her, da wart ihr noch so bunt, jung und boshaft, voller Stacheln und geheimer Würzen, dass ihr mich niesen und lachen machtet — und jetzt? Ach, immer nur Vögel, die sich müde flogen und verflogen und sich nun mit der Hand haschen lassen, — mit unserer Hand! Wir verewigen, was nicht mehr lange leben und fliegen kann, müde und mürbe Dinge allein! Und nur euer Nachmittag ist es, ihr meine geschriebenen und gemalten Gedanken, für den allein ich Farben habe, viel Farben vielleicht, viel bunte Zärtlichkeiten und fünfzig Gelbs und Brauns und Grüns und Roths: — aber Niemand erräth mir daraus, wie ihr in eurem Morgen aussahet, ihr plötzlichen Funken und Wunder meiner Einsamkeit, ihr meine alten geliebten — — schlimmen Gedanken!  
(Nietzsche, *Werke*, 170)

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the poet Heinrich Heine and the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's critiques of the ideal through an analysis of how mountain imagery is employed in their work. It argues that their use of mountain imagery expresses a reactionary desire to affirm an ultimate ideal in an age where metaphysical ideals are increasingly unbelievable, resulting in an ideal which is self-undermining. This is achieved by identifying how mountain metaphors and allegories are utilized in their criticisms of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal-bourgeois culture, where the isolated summit parallels their privileging of individualism over and against mass culture. A discussion of the role of metaphor in their work demonstrates how the mountain heights come to represent an unattainable transcendence. A reading of Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence and Heine's reflections on temporality through the mountain journey allegories they use identifies a desire to affirm a radically new way of experiencing temporality, but an inability to do so.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The mountains have always been a place of marvel for mankind. As T. S. Eliot put it in *The Wasteland*, “in the mountains, there you feel free” (Eliot, 23). With their still, breathless strength, they become the hiding places of the gods, cooling looming in their speechless quietude. Their titanic mass makes meager even the works of man and many men have lost their lives as sacrifices to the evocative power of the yonder heights. It would seem a curious thing to risk one’s life for nothing more than the opportunity to reach a lonely mountain top, far from culture and riches. Yet, as George Mallory recognized, “there is something in man which responds to the challenge of [the] mountain and goes out to meet it, that the struggle is the struggle of life itself upward and forever upward” (Heil, 42). Like Mallory, the poet Heinrich Heine and the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche looked to the mountain heights for inspiration, even climbing mountains themselves. From below the mountains seem the ideal of striving, their aloof summits to call all challengers. For Heine and Nietzsche too, the mountain summit and the journey undertaken to reach it has profound symbolic importance.

Amidst the myriad of different metaphors and allegories taken up by Heine and Nietzsche in their respective writings, the mountain is bound up in their various discourses surrounding the ideal, coming to represent the ideal itself. Far from simple Romantics however, their representative association between the mountain and the ideal can be read as expressing the notion that an ideal is always already negated. Mountain metaphors are read through an analysis of three defining components of their work and thought: the critique of contemporary culture, the concept of metaphor itself, and newly developing concerns surrounding temporality.

Chapter 2 is concerned with Nietzsche's and Heine's critiques of 19<sup>th</sup> century, liberal-bourgeois society, both of which, detecting a distinct form of levelling at play, seek to affirm the primacy of the individual over the masses. After briefly introducing 19<sup>th</sup> century German society and its numerous historical critics, an analysis is given of Heine's political thought as it relates to his understanding of the transcendent potential of the artistic genius. A consideration of Heine as a German-Jewish author responding to Hegel's philosophy of history further clarifies his complicated stance on the connection between an individual and their society. Following a treatment of Heine's analysis, this chapter discusses Nietzsche's perspective on the Christian foundations of morality in liberal society once belief in a Christian cosmology has ceased to be believable. These analyses shed light on role mountain imagery plays in their discussion of the relationship between the individual and the modern world.

The subsequent chapter is a general treatment of the concept of metaphor in Nietzsche's and Heine's works. Introducing the topic with a short mention of the place of metaphor in the philosophies of Aristotle and Hegel, this section reflects on the role of metaphor in Nietzsche's work with the aid of his essay *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne*. This chapter also augments the analysis of metaphor through the consideration of commentaries by Heißenbüttel and Sarah Kofman. This theoretical groundwork provides the foundation for an in depth treatment of the mountain metaphors at play in Heine's and Nietzsche's imagery.

Heine's thought concerning the representability of temporality and Nietzsche's philosophy of becoming as they both respond to the shifting historical conditions of the nineteenth century is the focus of the fourth chapter. This chapter explicates Heine's

understanding of the contingency of the individual's experience of temporality through a reading of his writings on how the quickly proliferating technology of the railroad is redefining traditional perspectives on time and place. Nietzsche's reflections on being as becoming are read as arising out of a particular interpretation of the history of being in European society which is inextricably linked with his *Ewige-Wiederkehr-Gedanke*. Critical light is shed on this thought through recourse to a commentary written by Martin Heidegger.

Friedrich Nietzsche and Heinrich Heine's births are separated by 47 years; the defining events of their day vary considerably; and, as appreciative of Heine's work as Nietzsche might be, many of their ideas fall under what might be perceived as opposing sides. In spite of this, Nietzsche and Heine share in a common focus. That is, they share a unique perceptiveness and common focus on the nature of the ongoing transformations in 19<sup>th</sup> century European culture, their startling awareness of their age informing their prophetic concerns for the future.

## Chapter 2: The Redemption of Bourgeois Culture

The 19<sup>th</sup> century, Heine's and Nietzsche's century, "wird als die große Epoche des Liberalismus dargestellt" (Coutinho, 1126). In Germany "the most progressive and vital elements seemed to identify with liberal ideals" (Sheehan, 116). Liberal ideas, or at the very least signs of their influence, are found "in economic and cultural life, in representative institutions on every level, in the major organs of opinion making, indeed even in certain sectors of the administrative and judicial bureaucracies" (Sheehan, 116). To be "a 'liberal' in the middle third of the nineteenth century [...] did not entail membership in a specific political organization [...], but rather involved nothing more than the belief in a few vague and general principles" (Sheehan, 120). That is, the liberal cultural paradigm which comes forward in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany may be described as a more general cultural movement in which the state organization and structure remained essentially the same in spite of changing social and cultural perspectives. However, in some cases, "the liberalization of city government produced mass-based political organizations" on a local level (Sheehan, 120). What is notable about 19<sup>th</sup> century German society, and something which both Heine and Nietzsche were keen to observe, is the tremendous social and cultural transformation which one sees at this time. Specifically, they recognized the arrival of a modern man who stands for "christliche, demokratische Ideale, [und] betont die Gleichheit aller Menschen vor Gott," while simultaneously privileging individual reflective consciousness and, with the aid of technology, an instrumental perspective of the world (Coutinho, 1127).

Alongside Heine and Nietzsche there were "other attacks on the bourgeois system as it developed after the middle of the nineteenth century" (Tillich, 309). For one, "Marx



challenged the dehumanization of an economic order in which man is estranged from himself [...] and is transformed into a commodity” (Tillich, 308). The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard criticized the social leveling at play in bourgeois society which, predicated on the universality of reason, undermined the radical inwardness of the subjects encounter with truth in faith (Löwith, 130). Meanwhile, “Jacob Burckhardt prophesied the catastrophe of mass culture” (Tillich, 308).

This is the period that Heine and Nietzsche respond to. The time in which the promises of the Enlightenment, that humanity would finally be united by reason in a society founded on universal freedom and equality, finally question and seek to depose the aged and yet still powerful thoughts of the late middle ages. In such a society Heine and Nietzsche both recognize a historical crisis as European society moves into a unforeseeable future. Although separated by time, Nietzsche finds a friend in Heine’s writings as he attempts to combat “die romantischen, die christlichen und demokratischen Ideen des 19. Jahrhunderts” (Coutinho, 1127). For Nietzsche, Heine is “ein Vorläufer des neuen wiedergenesenen europäischen Menschen” (Coutinho, 1129). “Die Spötterneigung, die Unbeschwertheit gegenüber der Tradition, die Ablehnung des Christentums, die Skepsis gegen die reine Vernunft, die Nietzsche bei Heine bemerkte, empfand er als etwas Besonderes, als Seltenheit unter den Deutschen des 19. Jahrhunderts” (Coutinho, 1129).

## **2.1 Heine: The Sovereign Artist**

The writing of German-Jewish poet Heinrich Heine exposes the image of an individual who feels at odds with his age. Heine “felt threatened by the ruthless pressure

and unashamed utilitarianism of the business world, of which he had first-hand experience in Frankfurt and Hamburg,” and by “the mechanization of life which confronted him in a chaotically expanding London” (Reeves, 160). His critical perspective of contemporary society is reflected in “his fascination with the pre-literate *Anschauungsleben* of peasant cultures” as well as his admiration of “geniuses like Goethe and Napoleon” (Reeves, 73). In these cases, Heine dreams of modern reflective subjectivity being opposed by either the transcendent force of the sovereign genius or reconciled in the immediacy of a pre-literary culture. He identifies both the activity of the radical genius and the *Unmittelbarkeit* of peasant culture as harmonizing forces in the face of the fractured nature of reflective subjectivity. This analysis that European society as a whole is undergoing a historical movement from a harmonious, albeit pre-reflective, relationship with existence toward a relationship with being mediated by reflection, attests to the centrality of history in Heine’s philosophy. His reflections on the difference between European culture before the Enlightenment, represented in peasant culture, and the society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century speak to Heine’s awareness of the historical ground of human experience.

Heine’s emphasis on history as being essentially determinative of the subject’s experience is not surprising, however. He was after all a student of Hegel. Heine “personally knew Hegel and attended his lectures during part of the four semesters the poet spent studying in Berlin”(Presner, *Jews on Ships*, 522). Of any number of Hegel's lectures he might have attended, he is known for certain to have attended Hegel’s lectures on the philosophy of world history during the winter of 1822-23, a year before Heine’s *Harzreise* was put together (Presner, 522). Apart from his direct, personal

encounters with Hegel, Heine frequently interacted with Hegel's philosophy indirectly through Eduard Gans of the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden, of which Heine was an active member (Presner, 522). Correspondingly, Heine's writing can be and is read as an ongoing struggle to reconcile the "Left-Hegelian conception of the engaged poet" and "an essentially Romantic belief in the genius 'der kein Gesetz über sich leide'" (Reeves, 161).

If Heine's political and social writing, especially his later work, is to be interpreted as being primarily informed by Hegelian thought, it is important to understand key differences in their thinking, especially regarding the philosophy of history. Hegel's writing has "a strongly entrenched ambiguity and ambivalence [...] between two opposed ways of describing the End, or 'completion of history'" (Berthold-Bond, 14). It is the ambiguous character of his eschatological claims which enables such diversity in the interpretation of his historical philosophy, ranging from the politically radical to highly conservative. Despite this difficulty, the role of the completion of history in Hegel system cannot be so easily overlooked. This is because "Hegel's theory of knowledge, and with it his philosophy of history, are governed throughout by an eschatological vision" (Berthold-Bond, 14). Hegel's perspective on the eschatological structure of history is intimately linked with his idea of knowledge, essentially anchoring the frameworks at play in his philosophical system around the expectation that history has a moment of definite fulfilment. With this in mind, it is "the absence of the notion of a consummation of the End that Hegel takes as one of the fundamental failures of the philosophy of the German *Aufklärung*" (Berthold-Bond, 15). This notion is exemplified in Hegel's reading of Fichte, where he expresses dissatisfaction with Fichte's portrayal of the struggle of the

ego with the object as a continuous progression with the finite never being reconciled with the infinite (Berthold-Bond, 15). An ultimate resolution must be attained if the subject-object distinction is ever to be anything more than an infinitely regressing drift. If truth is to be "more than something relative to finite and subjective consciousness", the finitude of the world and the infinite quality of *Geist* must, eventually, reach a point of resolution where truth ceases to be a mere approximation and becomes absolute knowledge of the world (Berthold-Bond, 15). Such a resolution amounts to the fulfilment of *Geist*'s historical development and the moment in which it has completed "die Bewegung seines Gestaltens" (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 618).

Heine certainly has a developed sense of progress as a possible characteristic of a historical event, however his conceptualization of progress does not take it for granted as an implicit quality of the historical process. Rather, Heine "puts forward a view of history which does not relegate the present to a mere function of the future" (Reeves, 109). "Das Leben ist weder Zweck noch Mittel," unsubordinated to eschatological time (Heine, *Dritter Band*, 23). As such, the individual life is not simply a function of a greater historical structure (Heine, 22). He does, however, believe that a just, good social order is attainable. Progress can be achieved, but it will not be achieved by the forces of history alone (Heine, 23). Progress, the golden age of mankind, must be fought for and "can only be realized through the overthrow of an unjust status quo" in the form of revolution (Reeves, 109). As the possibility of socio-political change is not determined by a greater historical force or merely differed to a futural transcendent moment, responsibility for political progress rests upon the living individual. This, once again, shifts Heine's focus toward the individuated genius, a Napoleon who can change the fate of entire empires.

A fixation on the central place of the genius is carried forward from his early Romantic works to his later political writings. This is expressed in *Französische Maler* for example, a text written shortly following his move to Paris in the aftermath of the July revolution:

Sie wußten nicht, daß alle solche Abstraktionen nur allenfalls zur Beurteilung des Nachahmervolks nützlich sind, daß aber jeder Originalkünstler und gar jedes neue Kunstgenie nach seiner eigenen mitgebrachten Ästhetik beurteilt werden muß. (Heine, *Dritter Band*, 45)

The artist „gleicht jener schlafwandelnden Prinzessin, die des Nachts in den Gärten von Bagdad mit tiefer Liebesweisheit die sonderbarsten Blumen pflückte und zu einem Selam verband, dessen Bedeutung sie selber gar nicht mehr wußte, als sie erwachte“ (Heine, 46). The genius alone is capable of overcoming the entrenched perspectives of a place and time to incur progress upon a historical society. Heine’s political thinking in his French period can be understood as being in line with a form “of the Bonapartist principle whereby a philosopher king of exceptional talents would head a meritocratic society based on equality of opportunity, thus fusing a democratic ideal with those of intellectual aristocracy and monarchy“ (Reeves, 105). It falls upon the sovereign genius to, by merit of their talents, rise above the leveling forces at work in mass society.

“Heine takes his own proclivities and attitudes to be a measure for the spiritual ills of the historical period and he interprets his ‘martyrdom’ as the ultimate testimony to his poetic genius, i. e., to his sensitivity to fundamental historical crises” (Gray, 28). It is *Ideen: Das Buch Le Grand*, Gray argues, that “marks, by Heine’s own admission, his transformation from a romantic love poet to an engaged political writer” (Gray, 28). “In

this text Heine's romantic past is *aufgehoben*, cancelled out but simultaneously preserved, refunctionalized as a hermeneutic strategy" (Gray, 28). In *Die Romantische Schule*, Heine takes on the view that "romanticism as a backward-looking literary phenomenon represents a reactionary political threat precisely because of the inseparable interweaving of literary and political attitudes in Germany" (Gray, 30). Here, Heine identifies in the German literary public "a refusal to distinguish aesthetic semblance from the realities of life-praxis", which he perceives as undermining political mobility in German society (Gray, 30). Romanticism, by valorizing a mythologized past and making it present to the lived experience of the specific individual, serves to maintain the status quo. In failing to separate romantic aestheticism from life, the public bourgeois culture of literary society defer their confrontation with what Heine identifies as an unjust society. At the root of Heine's analysis of romanticism is the assumption that "literary-artistic conventions are intimately interconnected with general attitudes and opinions in the public sphere", thus his "attack on literary Romanticism represents his attack [...] on the public spirit of the Restoration" (Gray, 30). Therefore, Romanticism does not express a subversive counter-movement in the face of popular, Enlightenment society, but is rather an extension of the ideological substrata of the very culture it pretends to oppose.

This is not merely to suggest that literary-artistic activity is a product of its historical being, and therefore a reflection of the social, historical, or material relations of the time. Going further than that, this attitude proposes that literary-artistic actions are themselves historical actors. Heine is suggesting that art extends far beyond aesthetic expression, or even political expression, to become a form of direct political activity, even revolution. The sovereign artistic genius, if Heine is to be included in such a

category, is that individual who is always a stranger in mass society, forever a wanderer in strange climes, and in being also makes possible historical and social revolution. To be, the artistic genius must exist as a sovereign individual over and against the mass society they inhabit in order to make possible decisive, real world political change. This addresses a central question within Heine scholarship: "was Heine ultimately a political writer, or did he remain the sovereign artist?" (Reeves, 105) It is evident that the question can not be articulated so simply. Rather, Heine's political writing is consistent with both his thinking as a young-Hegelian and his Romantic focus on the sovereign genius. Heine's relationship with Hegel's thought, however, is an extremely complicated one and its role in Heine's work is irreducible to a simple variation on the Hegelian program with Romantic undertones.

As discussed earlier, in Hegel's philosophy of history the movement of Geist is directed, teleological, and contrasts with the movement of the natural cycle, which always remains in a circle and never produces anything new (Presner, 524). Since *Geist* moves forward rather than in a cyclical pattern, each period of world history represents a stage of progressive teleological development. The passage of historical development, Hegel argues, follows the passage of the sun, moving "von Osten nach Westen, von Südosten nach Nordwesten, vom Aufgang, zu seinem Niedergang" (Presner, 524). In other words, the light of reason, the sun, rises in the east and passes over the face of the earth before finally setting in the west, in the Germanic world (Presner, 524). "Jews are quietly placed in the oriental world" as an actor in the beginning of world history (Presner, 526). Hegel suggests that Jewish people "do not exhibit any freedom and are, instead, rigidly bound to laws but without the productivity of a state," their thinking

associated with "'particularity' and 'locality' [...] in contrast to the universality of Christianity" (Presner, 526). However, given the structure of Hegel's world history, one would imagine that at the very least people of Jewish descent who were active, engaged members of a contemporary European society could not arguably be excluded from the realization of world spirit. Even if they were to be excluded on the basis of their Judaism, Jewish people everywhere would gradually come to participate in Hegel's notion of the end of history through the proliferation of central European thinking around the globe.

Yet, "according to Hegel, Abraham refused to enter into any kind of familial, property, or national ties" and thereby condemned the Jewish people "to remain forever at the first stage of world history" (Presner, 526). Abraham's refusal refers to Abraham's hesitant willingness to sever the ties of the family and the community through his decision to sacrifice his son to God. This originary severance of the Jewish people from the rootedness of community perpetrated by Abraham, himself the mythic founder of the Jewish people, is understood as "a transgenerational Jewish trait that explains the state of Jew's in Hegel's Europe" (Presner, 526). Hegel equivocates the Jewish spirit here with the ideas of severance and particularity, qualities which stand in perpetual contrast to the Christian movement toward unity and universality (Presner, 526). This is the type of narrative concerning the place of the Jewish people in world history which Heine engages in his through his encounters with Hegel, both directly as well as through Gans and the *Verein*. As early as the first of his *Reisebilder*, *Die Harzreise*, Heine's attempts to find the place of the individual while balancing his Romantic tendencies, his political proclivities, and his response to Hegel's philosophy of history are clearly expressed.



“The *Reisebilder* evolve precisely on the cusp between Heine’s early defence of Romanticism and his searing critique in the 1830’s” and correspondingly serve as a transitional phase “in Heine’s evaluation of the political implications of romantic literary conceptions” (Gray, 29). Heinrich Heine’s *Harzreise* initially appears to be simpler than his later *Reisebilder* in terms of its structure and content. From the outset, it is clear in *Die Harzreise* that here Heine does not speak as “ein Philosoph, der ein Gegner des Positivismus ist, sondern der Romantiker” (Loewenthal, 67). The structure and form of the narrative is developed around the alterity between what Heine depicts as two fundamentally different compartments toward existence and their corresponding experiences of selfhood. The two conflicting worlds which Heine identifies are that of mass, bourgeois German society, which he finds in the towns and amidst his fellow visitors to the Brockenhotel, and that of the unassuming village folk he finds in the towns and villages nestled amidst the mountain peaks. The primary difference which Heine identifies between these groups can be articulated as the difference between an experience of consciousness mediated by reflection and an unmediated experience of consciousness (Reeves, 21).

Throughout *Die Harzreise* Heine comes across a wide variety of people: students, businessmen, citizens of Göttingen, the townspeople of the Harz region, and fellow travelers. Yet, by Heine’s estimation, “die Mehrzahl der Menschen, mit denen Heine auf seiner Harzreise zusammentrifft, sind Philister” (Loewenthal, 46). The distinctive quality which Heine identifies as characteristic of the Philistine, which comes to be applied to polite, bourgeois society more generally, is a fixation on the “Zweckmässigkeit und Nützlichkeit” of all things (Heine, *Zweiter Band*, 130). As he

jokes, “ich gab ihm Recht, und fügte hinzu, daß Gott das Rindvieh erschaffen, weil Fleischsuppen den Menschen stärken, daß er die Esel erschaffen, damit sie den Menschen zu Vergleichen dienen können” (Heine, 130).

What Heine’s satirical jabs express is his perspective that something is lost or disrupted in an experience of subjectivity structured by reflective consciousness. Here, nature cannot be simply experienced. The individual experiences themselves and the world around them as a by-product of reflection, in this case through the privileging of purpose and use. It is in this way that his criticism is “nicht nur gegen die Betrachtung der Natur unter dem elenden Gesichtspunkte der Zweckmässigkeit und Nützlichkeit [...], sondern gegen ihre grenzenlose Plattheit und völlige Verständnislosigkeit gegenüber den Schönheiten der Natur” (Löwenthal, 43). The Philistine may remark at the beauty of nature, but never truly experience it. This is exemplified in the cry of Heine’s anti-Semitic companion at the Brockenhotel when he screams “wie ist die Natur doch im allgemeinen so schön” (Heine, 145). His conceptualization of the Philistine and his equation of it with the membership of proper, bourgeois society represents a more general critique of an overall loss of “genuine feeling” which is replaced by the superficiality and hypocrisy of reflective consciousness (Reeves, 75). Seeking an experience of a more open, less mediated way of life, Heine spends time in the humble, isolated villages and towns of the Harz.

Among the “sinnigem, harmlosem Volke in der stillen, umfriedeten Heimlichkeit seiner niedern Berg- oder Waldhütten” Heine observes a people’s way of life through whose “tiefes Anschauungsleben,” through whose *Unmittelbarkeit*, endures

“die deutsche Märchenfabel” (Heine, 119). It is a characteristic of these folk tales “daß nicht nur die Tiere und Pflanzen, sondern auch ganz leblos scheinende Gegenstände sprechen und handeln” (Heine, 119). “Like the Grimms Heine regarded this peasant culture as one of innocence and childlike simplicity”, exemplified by their love of folk stories (Reeves, 22). Heine, furthermore, supposes “there to be an epistemological difference [...] [:] theirs is a life in which experience and knowledge are visual and open, ours is abstract and selective” (Reeves, 22). In the people of Klausthal Heine finds an ideal of pre-modern human existence, living out the immediacy of an *Anschauungsleben* in an age dominated by abstraction.

It is an ideal form of human existence, but an impossible one. Their way of life is left to haunt the aged mine shafts and quiet mountain towns as nothing more than a trace of a bygone age until that, too, becomes unrecognizable. Marvelous though their epistemic perspective may be, they are a population who is living in the past. Further undermining his own ideal, Heine’s portrayal of the mountain folk is infantilizing. He celebrates their unmediated encounter with nature and existence, however his description simultaneously characterizes them as naïve, simple, and childlike. This childlike simplicity turns political when Heine’s guide in the Klausthal silver mines recounts a visit by the Duke of Cambridge, on the occasion of which the townspeople held a grand feast. “Mit innerer Freudigkeit”, Heine’s guide points out the place where the noble visitor and his entourage sat and feasted (Heine, 117). Their simple joy in life becomes the means of exploitation by an otherwise disinterested aristocrat. Here, Heine strives to find beauty in the immediacy of their existence and yet he cannot allow himself to hold this image. Where he sought unity and simplicity he, ultimately, identifies an experience

of subjectivity which belongs to a more youthful Europe, maintained in pockets amidst mountain peaks through isolation alone and leaving its practitioners susceptible to exploitation at the hands of modernity. Yet, "wie bei den Romantikern ist für Heine der Gegenpol des Philisters nicht der Student" or the pre-reflective country peasant, "sondern der Dichter" (Löwenthal, 39). It is Heine himself, at each turn biographer, narrator, poet, and literary creation, who represents the social-historical dialogue surrounding the place of the individual in modern society.

## **2.2 Nietzsche: And the Last Man Blinked**

Nietzsche's critique of liberal-bourgeois society "explicitly or implicitly [...] permeates every part" of his philosophical thought (Tillich, 307). An overview of even a few of his more developed ideas, including the transvaluation of all values, his critique of Christianity, and his thoughts on truth and history, etches out the image of an individual who is profoundly concerned with the social and historical developments of his day. Even his self-description "of being 'out of season' (unzeitgemäss) is primarily a way of expressing his negation of his own time" (Tillich 307). As he prophetically announces in his autobiographical work *Ecce Homo*, "es wird sich einmal an meinen Namen die Erinnerung an etwas Ungeheueres anknüpfen – an eine Krisis, wie es keine auf Erden gab" (Nietzsche, *Werke*, 475). He fashions himself as the man who is capable of comprehending the great crisis of his day, the beginning of which is barely recognizable. Nietzsche's self-analysis reveals his own understanding of the importance of his work, namely that he conceives of his own writing as the writing of a testimony for his time.

Nietzsche's primary, foundational criticism of liberal society stems from his critique of Christianity. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, drawing on some of the themes developed in his early publications, he produces a genealogical narrative to explain "die Herkunft unserer moralischen Vorurtheile" (Nietzsche, 185). Within the narrative he proposes that the distinction between "Gut und Schlecht" is chronologically prior to the distinction between "Gut und Böse". Originally, he claims, "[Gut] heisst die Vornehmen, Mächtigen, Höhergestellten und Hochgesinnten" (Nietzsche, 185). This stands "im Gegensatz zu allem Niedrigen, Niedrig-Gesinnten, Gemeinen und Pöbelhaften" (Nietzsche, 185). This sense of good is embodied in the character of the nobility or the aristocracy for whom good is "alles überhaupt, was starkes, freies, frohgemuthes Handeln in sich schliessen" (Nietzsche, 190). Here, good and bad is a positive distinction. Bad can easily be reduced in this understanding to that which merely hinders positive action. The transition occurs when these noble-aristocratic values become the subject of an inversion perpetrated by the priestly caste wherein those values that were once good become evil and those values once considered bad resultantly become good (Nietzsche, 191). Nietzsche identifies the driving force of this inversion to be what he deems "Ressentiment", a relationship of alterity whereby the weak validate their identity by reimagining those stronger than them as individuals essentially in opposition to the defining powers of the cosmos. By conceiving of a world in which those they despise are not merely bad but themselves despised by the universe itself, by God, they fashion themselves as righteous. This relation is epitomized in his description of a herd of lambs who, not despised but rather adored by the hungry bird of prey soaring overhead, decree that "diese Raubvögel sind böse; und wer so wenig als möglich ein

Raubvogel ist, vielmehr deren Gegenstück, ein Lamm—sollte der nicht gut sein”  
(Nietzsche, 198).

To fixate on the veracity on Nietzsche’s etymological and historiographic claims is to fatally misunderstand his argument. What this narrative addresses is the consideration that moral judgments are, fundamentally, value judgments; they are questions of value. Simultaneously, and perhaps more indirectly, it illustrates the belief that the specific content of these value judgments is a part of one’s historicity. Rather than being attainable by way of reason and knowable *a priori*, value systems are relativistic and even those that gain historical dominance change and develop over time. Whether it came about according to his genealogical narrative or not, the notion of a moral itself as something distinct from other evaluating concepts like virtue is a historical happening, a development upon the general practice of valuing. At the level of morality in bourgeois society, at the level of values, Nietzsche recognizes the influence of Christian thinking on popular morality, even when “der Glaube an den christlichen Gott ungläubwürdig geworden ist” (Nietzsche, 489). Nietzsche identifies the influence of Christian thinking and morality in nearly all spheres of modern society: in the decadence of modern music, embodied in Wagner; in the values of the education system, which "gives precedence to the mediocre"; as well as in the sciences (Ausmus, 357). Christian thought, Nietzsche argues, has attained supremacy even in philosophy, which "has been dominated by morality to the point that even Kant, not to mention Schopenhauer, is an 'underhanded Christian'" (Ausmus, 357). The Christian morality of *Ressentiment* is woven into the fabric of the culture, internalized to such an extent that it exercises a

leveling power of society as a whole without having to outwardly rely on the dwindling authority of the church.

The consequence of Christian metaphysics, and, by extension, comparable metaphysics in general, is a contempt for the apparent world, for life itself, culminating in a form of passive nihilism. As expressed in *Der Antichrist*, “kommt es vor, dass Theologen durch das ‘Gewissen’ der Fürsten (oder der Völker —) hindurch nach der Macht die Hand ausstrecken, zweifeln wir nicht, was jedes Mal im Grunde sich begiebt: der Wille zum Ende, der nihilistische Wille will zur Macht” (Nietzsche, 491). Although it is by a will to power, a will to meaningfully encounter existence, that the Judeo-Christian cosmology exists at all, its concern for existence is directed towards transcendence of the worldly. This essentially amounts to a rejection of common, corporeal existence as meaningful. The significance it does retain in the cosmic context only exists by way of relation to a greater metaphysical truth. Examining the gilded scales of value, Christian metaphysics determines that life, in its finitude, is so void of positive value that one should long for the possibility of transcendence, for transcendence in death. Their will to life, driven toward the otherworldly, becomes a will to death and the renunciation of life (Nietzsche, 491). It is in this way that Nietzsche conceives of Christianity, and its more concealed expressions in liberal-bourgeois thinking, as nihilistic in their foundations.

Nihilism here is a consequence of the intersection between Christian thought and the Western philosophical tradition as it stems from Plato, historic adaptations of which shape the thought of contemporary culture. With this consideration in mind, it is tempting to equivocate Nietzsche’s central critique of Christendom, that it is a fundamentally nihilistic world view that in striving to transcend the apparent world denies life on life’s

terms, with his critique of liberal society. This would, however, understate the profound urgency with which he writes about the society of his age. It is something which, as he writes about it, imbues a sense of pressing concern. Nietzsche encounters Christianity, by his own evaluation, as an aged, wilting leviathan. God, “das Heiligste und Mächtigste, was die Welt bisher besass, es ist unter unseren Messern verblutet” (Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §125). Nietzsche’s words, triumphant and yet solemn, lend themselves as a eulogy for the domination of the Christian world view; God is already dead when Nietzsche announces it to the world. Liberal-bourgeois society, on the contrary, is something living, breathing, growing and is thus, by Nietzsche’s estimation, far more dangerous. This is all expressed in his characterization of “der letzte Mensch” in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Speaking to the gathered crowd, Zarathustra describes “der letzte Mensch” as the “Verächtlichsten”, for whom “jeder ist gleich” (Nietzsche, *Werke*, 553). Here the earth is “dann klein geworden, und auf ihr hüpfet der letzte Mensch, der Alles klein macht” (Nietzsche, *Werke*, 553). Zarathustra’s description expresses a deep concern regarding the levelling of humanity into a herd like mass which is individuated and yet simultaneously made uniform by the idea of the human being as a volitional rational subject.

In this sense, modern society is dangerous. For, with earnest belief in Christian metaphysics increasingly untenable, “es ist an der Zeit, dass der Mensch den Keim seiner höchsten Hoffnung pflanze (Nietzsche, 552). Nietzsche understands his age to be, on the one hand, “decadent”, whilst also feeling it is “the dramatic moment in world history” where the horizon finally appears “wieder frei” (Tillich, 307)(Nietzsche, 489). “The decadence to which Nietzsche opposes his ‘will to power’ is not decadence in general”,



but rather “the great decadence in which humanity reaches the stage of ‘the last man’, the embodiment of the individuated, liberal-bourgeois subject (Tillich, 307). The end of popular accordance with absolute metaphysical systems is an emancipatory event, making possible heretofore unseen things. Yet, it simultaneously leaves mankind vulnerable to newer, deeper forms of nihilism and life denial; Christianity may undermine the will to life, but it also historically exercises a stabilizing power over European society. Regarding the modern concept of society as a new nihilism, Zarathustra, himself a fictionalized prophet, rails against the rising prominence of the state as a new idol, raised upon the ground where Jesus once hung upon the cross (Nietzsche, 576). Detecting a looming threat, Nietzsche seeks the possibility of overcoming in the potentiality of the individual capable of retaining their sovereignty in the face of mass culture.

### **2.3 Die Gipfelburg**

Both Nietzsche and Heine oppose a social climate which they variously deem unjust or nihilistic in nature. Disillusioned with contemporary society, the weight of their hopes for a different world is wagered on individual potential, a relationship represented through their respective use of mountain imagery and metaphors. Although touching on a variety of different themes, mountain imagery plays an important role in Heine’s *Die Harzreise*. From the beginning of the poem that starts the text the mountain comes to represent an ideal of existence: “Auf die Berge will ich steigen/ Wo die frommen Hütten stehen/ Wo die Brust sich frei erschließt/ Und die freien Lüfte wehen” (Heine, 104). Heine seeks to climb into the mountains because he understands them to be an area where an emotive and unmediated encounter with the world can take place. Mountains are

dangerous to travel, sparsely inhabited, and an area where travelers are more generally left at the mercy of nature. The mountain traveler is drawn into what might be romanticized as a raw encounter with existence. One of the essentially distinguishing characteristics of this image of the mountain is that it addresses a social dimension. This quality of the mountain is expressed in the closing lines of the poem: “Lebet wohl, ihr glatten Säle!// Glatte Herren! glatte Frauen!// Auf die Berge will ich steigen,/ Lachend auf euch niederschauen” (Heine, 104). Heine’s ascension into the mountains in the narrative of *Die Harzreise* serves to draw up a region of physical, literal isolation from the social order, from the heights of which he will “Lachend auf euch niederschauen” (Heine, 104). Simultaneously, the journey through the stony mountain passes of the Harz figuratively represents the isolation and weariness experienced by a stranger, a wanderer. In this case, the poet-narrator is a wanderer passing through the various social orders they pass through, observing both the foolish revelry of the Philistine and the jolly tinkering of a rural peasant with the critical distance of a stranger.

In this way, the narrator-poet at the centre of *Die Harzreise*, a literarily constructed Heine himself, expresses the individuation necessarily experienced by the politically oriented artist in their encounter with popular society. Heine’s narrator, however, is not as simple a figure as this analysis suggests. Unlike Goethe, he is not first and foremost granted membership to the sphere of social and political inclusivity, overcoming mass society by merit of his genius. Rather, Heine’s narrator, as a Jewish person in 19<sup>th</sup> century German society, always already encounters social existence as an individual excluded from the dominant discourse. This is subtly expressed in *Die Harzreise* as he settles in for the night on the Brocken. Heine is made to share a room

with a business man who, not knowing his companion to be Jewish, makes an anti-Semitic comment (Heine, 153). Instead of openly confronting the man, Heine plays a trick on him. Placing a pistol on the nightstand and warning him of being a somnambulist, Heine succeeds in frightening the man out of a good night's rest (Heine, 153). Although humorous, this dynamic portrays the paradoxical relationship German-Jews like Heinrich Heine were forced to navigate as they encountered popular society. In this case, the experience of inclusivity is predicated on the choice of self-concealment or social exclusion, a decision which, insofar as it is never confronted by the membership of the inclusive sphere, radically individuates even those German-Jews who desire assimilation. He chooses inclusion and takes a minor vengeance as compensation.

This experience of radical individuation portrayed in Heine's *Harzreise* speaks to the extent that the German-Jewish population, no matter how willing and proud they may be as citizens of the culture and place they call home, remain in a state of exile. However, this can be taken a step further when contemplated as an encounter with Hegel's philosophy of history. As discussed, within Hegel's philosophy of history even Jewish members of German society remain forever in the early stages of world history. The Jewish people are passed over by the westward movement of *Weltgeist* on account of a characteristically Abrahamic fixation on the particular which denies the possibility of assimilation into Christian universality. This thesis amounts to more than simply excluding German-Jews from Hegel's idea of community. It is to deny the Jewish people a relationship with messianic time. Heine overcomes Hegel's severance through a simultaneous rejection of eschatological history altogether. In doing so, Heine assumes the role of an exiled wanderer traversing indefinite cultural boundaries, acting out a

contingent historical existence unbound by the security of a universal structure of history. This ridicules Hegel's need to frame historical development within a rational narrative while drawing attention to the inherent paradox contained within a Hegelian concept of universality which is founded on exclusion.

This is what is at stake in Heine's Harz journey. In his declaration "auf die Berge will ich steigen" Heine is both expressing his literal desire to retreat into the mountains from the pains of mass society and his figurative acceptance of the loneliness and isolation which that journey represents (Heine, 103). It embodies the alienation experienced by a figure who lacks the significance assured to the individual by a fixed place within a greater cosmic movement structure of history. Embracing this alienation, Heine's mountaineer moves through the winding passes, striding between peaks as he presses on into the murk of possibility and indeterminacy. It is the journey that he is left to choose or deny as a German-Jewish artist in 19<sup>th</sup> century society, forever peering from the outside in.

For Nietzsche too, the mountain is a place of isolation and reprieve from liberal-bourgeois culture. The lowness of bourgeois society is opposed by the towering heights of the mountain peaks where one finds "die Luft dünn und rein, die Gefahr nahe und der Geist voll einer fröhlichen Bosheit" (Nietzsche, 569). For, "wer auf den höchsten Bergen steigt, der lacht über alle Trauer-Spiele und Trauer-Ernste" (Nietzsche, 569). In the section of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* titled "Auf dem Ölberge" Nietzsche further evokes the mountain landscape as a place of remote seclusion: "so zeige ich ihnen nur das Eis und den Winter auf meinen Gipfeln – und nicht, daß mein Berg noch alle Sonnengürtel um sich schlingt" (Nietzsche, 665). Rocky outcrops and ice-locked mountain peaks are

remote, hard-to-reach locations, hence they function metaphorically as a place of isolation from the rabble:

Wie erlöste ich mich vom Ekel? Wer verjüngte mein Auge? Wie erflog ich  
die Höhe, wo kein Gesindel mehr am Brunnen sitzt?

Schuf mein Ekel selber mir Flügel und quellenahnende Kräfte? Wahrlich,  
in's Höchste musste ich fliegen, dass ich den Born der Lust wiederfände!

Oh, ich fand ihn, meine Brüder! Hier im Höchsten quillt mir der Born der  
Lust! Und es giebt ein Leben, an dem kein Gesindel mit trinkt! (Nietzsche,  
609)

Metaphorically the heights are designated as the site of the source of delight. Far from the helplessly grasping hands of the rabble, the joy of being is out of reach for all except those individuals who can undergo the hardship and suffering required to reach these secluded spaces.

However, Zarathustra “alternates between withdrawal into ever more rarified seclusion, and the desire to have at least a pedagogic contact with mere mankind [...] and yet when the visitors come they are allegorical repudiation-figures, received only to be derided” (Luke, 114). In spite of this pattern of repeatedly rejecting society, Zarathustra, as Nietzsche does in his other published works, often speaks as though he addresses non-specific peers or companions, as if imagining a scattered group of similar but otherwise unrelated individuals. The individuals of this elevated elite are each, like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, “ein Wanderer und ein Bergsteiger,” each encountering the “Weg der

Größe” where “Gipfel und Abgrund [...] ist jetzt in eins beschlossen” (Nietzsche, 648). It “is interesting to observe that the elated elite of the heights – ‘elevated’ [‘erhoben’], ‘superior’ [‘vornehm’] [...] – are conceived as a class but do not form a community” (Luke, 114). This can be read as merely signifying that the individuality of these figures necessarily involves an extreme degree of isolation, a class of mountain renunciants.

It can also, however, be read as having a greater figurative importance. Namely, that, insofar as his work is a response to a perceived crisis in Western civilization arising out a loss of believability in absolute metaphysics, both Zarathustra’s prophetic aphorisms and Nietzsche’s words speak to the collective experience of the death of God. Nietzsche doesn’t address a class of people in specific. He beckons the world to see this historical moment as if from a frigid mountain peak, possibility, spanning as far as the eye allows, tucked away in every valley, crag, and glimmering sea. Following this, each individual sharing in this colossal cultural event is, themselves, a wanderer and a mountain climber, fated to summits or abysses unknown. This is not intended to simply democratize Nietzsche’s elevation of the empowered individual. Rather, it calls attention to the notion that what is at stake in his discussion here is a potentially great opportunity which faces European culture as a whole.

The mountain journey, in one sense, is an idyllic representation of the individual overcoming the social forces at work in liberal-bourgeois society in the affirmation of existence. Furthermore, Heine’s traveling Jewish poet, a cross-cultural figure who is left with nothing but history, has a great deal in common with Nietzsche’s wanderer as representations of an individuality which is both contingently historical and alienated from popular society. Yet, held against the backdrop of a more general cultural and

historical confrontation with the end of dominant, durable metaphysical values this idealization of the individual casts a paler shadow. It hopes to shield the mythically transcendent potential of the individual against a great, historical crisis of faith.

Glimpsing the face of an ever more uncertain horizon, Heine and Nietzsche share in their mythologizing of the implicit tension between the strong individual and a levelled society. Their shared dream of a mighty *Gipfelburg* standing alone upon a mountain high, the common folk below but specks of dirt blown to and fro by the mountain air, takes the form of an ideal which, quite understandably, attempts to restabilize the position of the individual in a period of profound change. Yet, for all their power of imagination the vision of the ideal they portray is a broken one, that of a beautiful bird that will never fly. In this way, the mountain metaphor evoked by Heine and Nietzsche demonstrates the tendency of modern ideals to dissolve into their opposition. The privileging of the power of the individual as that force which can affirmatively confront the collapse of historical value systems amounts to an attempt to recentralize a world which is quickly losing its centre. The hopeful response to the end of all ideals is little more than an ideal itself. It is an ideal which, on account of its reactionary posture, makes scarce claims at longevity.

### Chapter 3: The Encounter with Metaphor

The role metaphor plays in the structure of language, as well as the function of figurative language more generally, is a prominent theme in the philosophical work of the twentieth century. They provide a foundation for the thought of figures as diverse as Martin Heidegger, Paul De Man, Richard Rorty, Jacques Derrida, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Theodor Adorno, the beginnings of which can be traced to the nineteenth century. Prior to the nineteenth century, the discourse surrounding the nature, role, and importance of metaphor is dominated by the Aristotelian analysis. Although metaphor is discussed by a variety of thinkers throughout the early modern period, Aristotle's work maintained centrality to such a point that "those who wish to propose new or different parameters for the analysis of metaphor must do so against the grain of the Aristotelian tradition" (Kirby, 518). In brief, Aristotle's argument imagines metaphor as a distinct poetic or rhetorical function of language where a species or genus name is transferred to another species or genus either through comparison or proportional analogy (Kirby, 533). An example of this would be the statement "'truly has Odysseus done ten thousand deeds of worth'; for [the species] 'ten thousand' is part of the genus 'many,' and [Homer] uses it here instead of 'a lot'" (Kirby, 533). This analytic, taxonomic description of metaphor stands in contrast to a later development in the idea of metaphor, that of Hegel's. With Hegel's analysis metaphor exchanges the sensuous for the spiritual (Dow Magnus, 65). The poet "uses metaphor to connect an already clarified meaning with some other, external reality" (Dow Magnus, 65). Metaphor grounds its "Bedeutung in einer damit vergleichbaren ähnlichen Erscheinung der konkreten Wirklichkeit" (Hegel, 517). However, these "symbolic forms of poetic comparison draw their life from the ambiguity that pertains to



them” (Dow Magnus, 64). That is, they are made possible by the ability of a radically free *Geist* to find common meaning in a variety of forms in language, even as they are divorced from an immediate, sensuous representation (Dow Magnus, 64). In this way, metaphor aids in conceptualization by allowing *Geist* to participate in its freedom.

Despite their differences, Hegel’s treatment holds with one of Aristotle’s central distinctions: the demarcation between literal and figurative representation in language. “In Hegel’s view, it is not difficult to distinguish between metaphorical and literal meaning, at least in living languages,” even as specific metaphors are repeatedly used to such a point that they acquire idiomatic significance (Dow Magnus, 67). Insofar as metaphor is merely a modification in the form of an idea which remains grounded in a clarified meaning, metaphor is still scarcely more than a poetic embellishment on descriptive language. Although Hegel elevates metaphor from a mere function of language to an expression of spirit is freedom, it is never unshackled from literal meaning nor is its content ever altered by the form of its representation. Metaphor, along with the more general category of figurative language, is an aesthetic concern, pouring from the poet’s pen or bound in service to the grand rhetorician as they attend their craft. However, the groundwork of the linguistic turn is not to be found in Hegel, but rather in those who lived to respond to his legacy. Two nineteenth century thinkers who perceive metaphor as potentially being a formative force in thought as well as the structure of subjectivity are Friedrich Nietzsche and Heinrich Heine. In the writings of Nietzsche and Heine, both poets themselves in either title or deed, metaphor is unbound from literal, descriptive language and assumes a new function altogether.

### 3.1 Heine: The Evacuation of Metaphor

Heinrich Heine encounters metaphor as a poet in the truest sense. In his work, metaphor, sometimes expressed through mythically fantastical apparitions and sometimes in the inscrutable everydayness of the worldly, takes on a variety of roles. Some of these are, naturally, to be expected; a poet, especially a Romantic poet, who is not kin to metaphor is limited in the scope of their flexibility within a given language. On a practical level, Heine's employment of metaphor and figurative representational language makes it possible to express his often controversial opinion without scruple in the face of the German censors. Even "the publication of the *Reisebilder*", which aren't the most controversial of the poet's writings, "exposed Heine to what would prove to be a life-long attack from Prussian censors" (Rosenberg, 265). Finding his writing constantly under the eyes of the censors, metaphor functions as a method by which Heine is able to express his social and political ideas. As discussed in Chapter 2, Heine seeks to actualize political changes through artistic expression. Metaphor as a methodological tool makes possible the expression of the socio-political change which Heine seeks to actualize through art, at least before his move to Paris in 1831 after failing, "branded by the stigma of being a German Jew", to secure "a job as a lawyer or professor in Germany" (Rosenberg, 265).

However, his poetry and prose is not so absolutely encompassed by either a simplistic symbolic or subjective reading of his metaphors. A symbolic, historical interpretation wherein his texts are populated by a series of fixed symbols corresponding to a historical reality is insufficient to account for the breadth and complexity of how he makes use of metaphor. Although it is conceivable that Heine might use metaphor and imagery to hide his transgressions from the censors, this claim falls short of accounting

for the entirety of his corpus. Nor can his metaphorical language be easily described as the actualized expression of a subjective feeling, grounding the articulation of his private emotional experience within the security afforded by the freedom of figurative representation. Certainly, one finds metaphor utilized by Heine in both these ways, whilst also paradoxically finding that the context within which he frames these metaphors undermines one's expectations regarding the representation of feeling as well as allegory.

Anthony Phelan discusses these themes in his critical analysis of the author Heißenbüttel's literary commentary on Heine's work. Commonly, "metaphor is understood [...] as an adequate and appropriate expression of emotion through poetic imagery, which corresponds to or is anchored in an accessible subjectivity" (Phelan, 35). He elaborates on Heißenbüttel's account of how metaphor operates in Heine's work:

In Heine, however, according to Heißenbüttel, the anchoring of metaphor in a stable relation of expressivity is upset by the effects of irony and cynicism; that is to say, the 'subject' veers away from the security of the metaphor, and perhaps means something else (irony), or, in a more extreme way, exploits metaphorical discourse for other purposes and abandons all claims to expressivity (cynicism). (Phelan, 35)

Phelan is unwilling to fully concede to Heißenbüttel's claims regarding the emptying out of metaphor in Heine. However, contrary to Phelan's criticism, Heißenbüttel's notion that the relationship between metaphor and subjectivity can be "seen as the site of the break in Heine's work" calls attention to an interesting dynamic in Heine's writing (Phelan, 35).

Heißenbüttel's analysis makes an important point about the connection between metaphor, cynicism, and irony. It calls attention to the notion that what is taken for

granted in the use of metaphorical discourse is that its meaning is secured by an expressible idea. That is to say, what is taken for granted in metaphor is that it is more than senseless imagery.

Heine's cynicism, intentionally or unintentionally, exposes this presumption as farce and resultantly projects a more generalized distrust of language's ability to articulate anything more than empty signs. In his poem "Seegespenst" Heine narrates a sea voyage, during which he finds himself looking "Hinab in das spiegelklare Wasser" upon a phantasmal, submarine city (Heine, *Buch der Lieder*, 159). As his dreamlike vision of the sunken cityscape becomes increasingly detailed, he recognizes a young girl amidst the bustle, presumably a specific or general representation of a lost love. This prompts him to say: "Unendliches Sehnen, tiefe Wehmut/ Beschleicht mein Herz, mein kaum geheiltes Herz", a lament which is accompanied by the release of three drops of blood which fall from a wound "Von lieben Lippen aufgeküßt" (Heine, 160). At a perfunctory glance, what Heine depicts in "Seegespenst" is hardly more than an expression of commonly Romantic sensibilities tending towards a prioritization of feeling over reason. Everything, from the impossible underwater city to the appearance of a forgotten love object, can be read as standing in for an ideal, the expression of longing for which is crystallized in the blood released from a literal wound of love. Heine, himself the narrator, is almost pulled over board with yearning; however, the sea captain grabs his leg and arrests his would-be descent.

Yet, in the poem following "Seegespenst" in the *Nordsee Zyklus* one sees this would-be Romanticism crippled with cynicism. The next poem in the cycle, titled "Reinigung", picks up where "Seegespenst" left off. Here, Heine rejects the feeling of

the previous poem, proclaiming to his longing: “Bleib du dort unten, in Ewigkeit,/ Und ich werfe noch zu dir hinab,/ All meine Schmerzen und Sünden, /Und die Schellenkappe der Torheit,/ Die so lange mein Haupt umklingelt” (Heine, 162). Regarding the vision he very nearly climbed overboard for, Heine now asks them to “Bleib [...] in deiner Meerestiefe” (Heine, 161). His tempestuous longing is dismissed as folly, a foolishness which he hopes to leave in the depths along with his “Schmerzen und Sünden” (Heine, 162). Furthermore, by undermining his initial expression, by calling it into question, Heine calls attention to the potentially mocking tone of “Seegespenst”, the melodrama of which satirizes the language of Romanticism. The metaphor itself, an equation of the pain of love lost with a physical, bleeding wound, is brought under scrutiny. The separate poems certainly depict two different but equally possible perspectives. Heine’s cynicism does not necessarily hold supremacy. However, the interjection of his skeptical attitude does serve to undermine the reader’s trust in Heine’s sincerity. The earnestness of Heine’s words, and thus the expectation that his imagery is rooted in a subjective feeling, is dragged before the pale spotlight of scepticism.

### **3.2 Nietzsche: The Occasion of Poetics**

Like Heine, Nietzsche is an opponent of the systemization of thought, so the temptation to find a system buried in his aphorisms and imagery, though alluring, is worthy of distrust. One might, instead, undergo a treatment of Nietzsche’s varied and sometimes contradictory thought by imagining his thinking as a variety of trajectories or moods tending towards particular themes, rather than a self-supporting system. As discussed, Nietzsche’s philosophical wanderings touch on the significance of metaphor, both directly and indirectly, throughout the vast breadth of his corpus. He does so most

explicitly and, perhaps, most famously in his brief essay *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne*. In *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*, Nietzsche, when asking “was ist also Wahrheit”, puts forward the consideration that truth is not but “ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen” (Nietzsche). “Die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, dass sie welche sind” (Nietzsche).

Nietzsche claims that truth, rather than being determined by correspondence between perceiving subjects or attained by way of rationality, is comprised of linguistic distinctions. To support his claim, Nietzsche begins by analyzing literal or descriptive language of the sort used to represent things in the world:

Jeder Begriff entsteht durch Gleichsetzen des Nicht-Gleichen. So gewiss nie ein Blatt einem anderen ganz gleich ist, so gewiss ist der Begriff Blatt durch beliebiges Fallenlassen dieser individuellen Verschiedenheiten, durch ein Vergessen des Unterscheidenden gebildet und erweckt nun die Vorstellung, als ob es in der Natur ausser den Blättern etwas gäbe, das „Blatt“ wäre, etwa eine Urform, nach der alle Blätter gewebt, gezeichnet, abgezirkelt, gefärbt, gekräuselt, bemalt wären, aber von ungeschickten Händen, so dass kein Exemplar korrekt und zuverlässig als treues Abbild der Urform ausgefallen wäre. (Nietzsche)

Nietzsche’s observation that the word “leaf” represents no leaf in particular, but rather “leaf” as a more general concept, at first seems obvious. Unless specified, one uses the word quite often to represent no leaf in particular. What is compelling about his analysis is, firstly, his observation that all language is essentially conceptual and, secondly, that

“das Uebersehen des Individuellen und Wirklichen” gives us “den Begriff” (Nietzsche). By this Nietzsche means to exemplify how at the root of every word or linguistic structure there is, first and foremost, a metaphorical leap. In order for “leaf” to exist the particularity of each leaf as it is always already encountered in the world must be denied; difference must first be overcome to make room for sameness. This is made possible through the “Gleichsetzen des Nicht-Gleichen” (Nietzsche). That is, it is made possible through metaphor, through the equation of things which are unequal.

It is clear that, for Nietzsche, the distinction between literal and conceptual is effectively indistinguishable. Words representing things function similarly to words representing feelings or ideas, each being grounded in an association derived from metaphor. Thus, “logisch geht es [...] jedenfalls nicht bei der Entstehung der Sprache zu, und das ganze Material worin und womit später der Mensch der Wahrheit, der Forscher, der Philosoph arbeitet und baut, stammt, wenn nicht aus Wolkenkuckuksheim, so doch jedenfalls nicht aus dem Wesen der Dinge” (Nietzsche). Even if one were to propose that the world exists objectively outside of subjectivity, this would mean to ascertain this notion “mit dem Maassstabe der richtigen Perception” which requires that it be measured “mit einem nicht vorhandenen Maassstabe” (Nietzsche). Language, by way of metaphor, constructs and thus informs the experience of the subject such that, as they go about existing, they encounter a world which is something more than an endless expanse of distinct and indescribable difference.

Language is not literal or descriptive, rather it operates by creating metaphors for objects and feelings whilst also developing referential association between these things. Nietzsche conceives of language as “no more than a referentially unreliable set of almost

entirely arbitrary signs” (Stern, 67). Signs which, although they bear no intelligible association with what they represent outside of their association with other signs, are experienced as richly connected to the world one perceives. “The lie” implicit in language is that it connects man to a distant cosmic order by “offering them reliable knowledge of that scheme” (Stern, 67). Rather than leave man at the mercy of indeterminacy in the endlessly shifting tides of becoming, language serves as a self-referential framework within which a world can be ordered. It is “nur durch das Vergessen jener primitiven Metapherwelt, nur durch das Hart- und Starr-Werden einer ursprünglich in hitziger Flüssigkeit aus dem Urvermögen menschlicher Phantasie hervorströmenden Bildermaße”, that the individual lives “mit einiger Ruhe, Sicherheit und Konsequenz” (Nietzsche). This functions such that, beginning with a metaphorical association between worldly objects and words, language gives rise to conceptual frameworks which exist in and through language itself (Stern, 70). These conceptual frameworks help create the experience of a seemingly fixed and unchaotic world, the nature of which is intelligible to the individual. Concepts here are not essentially distinguishable from other components of language; the borders demarcating literal and figurative uses of language are themselves merely conceptual. This is not to say that language is meaningless; the system “is a system not without meaning, but meaningful only in itself” (Stern, 70). Unlike in Aristotle or Hegel, language is now the occasion of poetics. An analysis of this idea in Nietzsche’s work is given thorough consideration by the French philosopher Sarah Kofman in her book *Nietzsche and Metaphor*.

In *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, Sarah Kofman proposes that, for Nietzsche, “metaphorical activity coincides with that of the will to power” (Kofman, 82). Keeping



with this thinking, “the deliberate use of metaphors affirms life, just as the privileging of concepts reveals a will to nothingness” (Kofman, 19). This establishes metaphor as bound up in praxis. It is not that metaphors themselves affirm life, but rather that the use of them reflects an affirmative comportment towards existence. This follows from a reading of Nietzsche’s thought wherein “a system must be evaluated according to its force and beauty” (Kofman, 19). It is not a question of knowing the ontological proximity of any given statement to truth, but rather “a question of knowing whether what made the system possible was a superabundant or a needy form of life” (Kofman, 19). The ballast against which the idea or system is weighed is not the feather of truth. The system is assessed according to the productivity of its relationship with existence.

It is Nietzsche’s “hypothesis of the will to power, an evaluative artistic force which posits forms but seeks also to master by means of them,” which “accounts for the generalization of metaphor [...] as well as for the illusion which passes them off as ‘proper’” (Kofman, 82). It is through Nietzsche’s hypothesis of the will to power that Kofman understands “the lie” of language to operate. Insofar as “the ontological nullity or plenitude of an ideal cannot be measured” an ideal is seen as “symptomatic of the power of the evaluating will—of its value, not its being; or rather, its being is exactly that” (Kofman, 128). It is in this way that “every ideal is affirmative; even negative ideals are affirmative of the evaluating being; they are means for it to stay alive” (Kofman, 128). Even the most life-denying will to power is affirmative as a nihilistic relationship with existence still participates in the establishment of a meaningful association with being, is still a positing will. It all operates within “the lie” implicit in language. For,

“every desire tends to impose its evaluation as absolute, tends to master, is ‘philosophical’” (Kofman, 82).

Certainly, Nietzsche’s idea that the creation of a uniform world by way of metaphor in language is the means by which the subject experiences themselves as meaningful, knowing individuals within a cosmic scheme reflects what he would later describe as the will to power. Whilst conceding that conceptual thought is yet another manifestation of the will to power, in Kofman’s study conceptual thought persists alongside metaphor at a textual level. Each metaphor, including the metaphor of conceptual thought, is a text inscribed by a will, each text expressing the character of that will. Conceptual thought, associated with a life-denying will to power, is represented as being in opposition to other forms of life-affirming metaphorical expression, taken up by one’s wills in the struggle to master the cosmos. Both orient the evaluator within an empowered relation to themselves and the world by making possible the experience of encountering a world as poetically or methodologically disclosed. Although a compelling and remarkably insightful treatment of the role metaphor plays in Nietzsche’s work, Kofman’s deconstructive approach seems cautious here.

It would seem that she is keeping with Nietzsche’s work by, despite reconciling them both with the will to power, not seeking to subordinate conceptual thought to metaphor or vice versa. Instead, her analysis focuses on metaphorical and conceptual, rational thinking as forms of discourse utilized in one’s attempt to posit claims about the world. Kofman maintains the binary of conceptual and metaphorical thought, of the formed, structural, Apollonian articulation and the fluid, formless, Dionysian. This correlates with Nietzsche’s own commentary on style which, as she points out, opposes

any consideration of a proper style through which to represent ideas: "Just as he multiplies perspectives, so Nietzsche intentionally diversifies his styles in order to save the reader from misunderstanding a single style as a 'style in itself' (Kofman, 3). For, "it is as vain to seek to impose a canonical model on writing as it is futile to seek to legislate universally in morality" (Kofman, 4). It is for the sake of respecting Nietzsche's stylistic multiplicity, "which, by combining all the 'genres' in its writing, deletes all oppositions with one great burst of laughter", that Kofman maintains the duality of conceptual and metaphorical expression in her analysis (Kofman, 5). Whilst acknowledging that conceptual language is, according to Nietzsche, metaphorical in character, Kofman's treats them as distinct methodologies.

Compelling though her analysis may be, Kofman risks understating the extent to which Nietzsche understands the conscious experience of the subject to be grounded in language, with language itself being essentially metaphorical. The self-identifying, conscious subject becomes a metaphor for the perceived unity of wills and bodily functions that make up the human being. Stylistic choices, then, become part of the will to power's efforts to encounter itself in a knowing, empowered relation to the universe by way of metaphor. Stylistic choice itself becomes a metaphor for the individual freedom of the subject. Regarding the extent to which they can be distinguished, each varied style of expression is bound by the same limitations which hinder all forms of linguistic expression in general and her argument borders on reducing Nietzsche's claims about the relationship between metaphor, language, and subjectivity to a question of rhetoric.

### 3.3: The Ascension of the High Ideal

For Heine and Nietzsche, their differing approaches to the nature of language as it is expressed in metaphor share profound implications. Heine's repeatedly calls upon metaphor, only to annihilate it in cynicism and irony. In doing this he drives sappers beneath the hardened walls of the subject's self-certain relationship with language as expression. Heine's language gives birth to birds with broken wings; Heine's language jests at building castles and produces flimsy cut outs; Heine's language etches out marathon runners of classical grace, but finishes his figures by cutting their tendons that they may never run. He does this, for example, in his poem "Die Lorelei". Heine's poem "Die Lorelei" describes a witnessed or imagined scene at Lorelei rock on the Rhine where the fantastical appearance of a golden haired maiden on the rocky height brings about the sudden demise of a distracted boatman and his skiff. Although "die Luft ist kühl und es dunkelt," the "Gipfel des Berges funkelt/ Im Abendsonnenschein", drawing the reader's attention upwards (Heine, 81). It is out of this "Abendsonnenschein" that "die schönste Jungfrau" appears, immediately following his description of the glimmering peak as if to draw equivocation between the flashing sunlight and the maiden's golden hair (Heine, 81). From these lines on the focus of the poem is decidedly upwards facing, pulling the reader's attention to the shimmering mountaintop up until the moment the boat capsizes.

Excluding the opening announcement of his sadness, the narrator of the poem passes over the poem as if describing a painting, contributing nothing beyond a description of the imagery (Feuerlicht, 84). Unlike in earlier renditions of the Lorelei poem such as those written by Brentano or Eichendorff, there appears to be a complete

lack of communication between the narrator and the maiden on the rock; she simply goes about singing and combing her golden hair, oblivious to her surroundings (Feuerlicht, 85). Furthermore, Heine's narrator attributes no emotional values to the siren-like figure, whereas Brentano and Eichendorff's versions describe her as evil or threatening (Feuerlicht, 85). The missing emotional signification within the imagery itself provides a scarce basis from which to posit the poem as having a biographical significance. In spite of this, the vague declaration of sadness at the beginning has been cited in various biographical interpretations of the *Lied*, some going as far as suggesting that the capsized ship functions as a metaphor for Heine's misery over a life of repeated failures (Feuerlicht, 86).

The narrator's announcement of sadness, however, cannot be disentangled from the distanced perspective which Heine establishes in the remainder of the poem. This describing as if from afar, as if the narrator is describing a painting, mutes the emotionality of the song and brings its fantastic elements into a more critical light. The narrator's misery here speaks to a cynical rejection of the Romantic imagery, which he correspondingly reviews from a distance safely removed from emotionality. His gaze is drawn up to the mountain summit, to a high ideal conceivable in his imagination but ultimately recognized by Heine as wistful folly. The glimmering mountain peak is identified with the ideal, only to have this meaning hollowed out by cynicism to leave mere imagery. On the part of the reader, the metaphor's secure foundation in subjective feeling is expected, but Heine undermines the legitimacy of this expectation by framing the metaphorical word play within his own cynicism.

Heine's poem "Bergidylle" makes similar use of mountain imagery, introducing an element of the fantastic only to have it deferred:

Dort hat einst ein Schloß gestanden,  
Voller Lust und Waffenglanz;  
Blanke Ritter, Fraun und Knappen  
Schwangen sich im Fackeltanz.

Da verwünschte Schloß und Leute  
Eine böse Zauberin,  
Nur die Trümmer blieben stehen,  
Und die Eulen nisten drin.

Doch die selge Muhme sagte:  
Wenn man spricht das rechte Wort  
Nächtlich zu der rechten Stunde,  
Drüben an dem rechten Ort:

So verwandeln sich die Trümmer  
Wieder in ein helles Schloß,  
Und es tanzen wieder lustig  
Ritter, Fraun und Knappentroß;

Und wer jenes Wort gesprochen,  
Dem gehören Schloß und Leut',  
Pauken und Trompeten huldgen  
Seiner jungen Herrlichkeit. (Heine, *Zweiter Band*, 135)

The poem speaks of a castle ruin on a mountain peak where, should a visitor speak the right word on the right hour, the forgotten time will be magically restored and the visitor will be named lord. Here, the remote setting of the mountain peak establishes the castle ruin as a location outside of common experience. There chivalrous, armoured knights and fair ladies alike overcome the centuries which have forgotten them and the knowing traveler can be a king, establishing supremacy through a mastery of language. That this poem speaks to the supremacy of language, especially in the hands of the masterful poet, is unambiguously expressed in the concluding stanza where Heine writes "Aber ich, ich hab' erworben,/ Dich und alles, Schloß und Leut'" (Heine, 136). Through the play of

language, the poet may contrive a world of hitherto unseen fantasticality, bringing back the dead or crowning themselves the ruler of a quiet, idyllic mountain kingdom. The run of the poem seamlessly bridges the space between his evening arrival and the next morning, giving the poem a dreamlike quality. Like a dream, its wondrous images are “erlebte”, as Heine puts it, only to dissipate in the morning light (Heine, 130). As before, Heine imitates a Romantic in his use of metaphorical language up until the moment that his visions are annihilated in cynicism.

Ascent or descent of high mountains is a dominant metaphor in Nietzsche’s writing, at times taking up so much space in the geography of his language that coexistent metaphors seem to only occur in their shadows. In the section of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* titled “Der Wanderer”, Zarathustra decrees: “ich stehe jetzt vor meinem letzten Gipfel und vor dem, was mir am längsten aufgespart war [;] ach, meinen härtesten Weg muss ich hinan” (Nietzsche, 648). Here mountain climbing is both his literal goal as a mountain climber as well as a figurative expression of the ideal of self-overcoming. To attain his final summit Zarathustra must overtake hitherto unconquered challenges, face new dawn. To do so “musst du verstehen, noch auf deinen eigenen Kopf zu steigen” (Nietzsche, 649). He must “über [sich] selber steigen—hinan, hinauf bis [er] auch [seine] Sterne noch unter [ihm] hat” (Nietzsche, 649). The task of the mountain climber, it would seem, is to climb over themselves to come up to themselves.

This idea that one has to climb over their own head, to overcome their limitedness to participate in their ownmost potential, is scarcely distinguishable from his earlier proclamation that “der Mensch ist etwas, das überwunden werden soll” (Nietzsche, 549). Speaking to a crowd of confused onlookers, Zarathustra takes this moment to introduce

the idea of the *Übermensch*: “Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Tier und Übermensch-ein Seil über einem Abgrund” (Nietzsche, 551). In this famous passage the concept of humankind is represented as being the tensile relationship between two extremes. An alternative metaphor is given directly afterward in the statement “daß er eine Brücke und kein Zweck ist, [...] daß er ein Übergang und ein Untergang ist” (Nietzsche, 551). The language employed here is consistently decisive: man is not that which passes over the bridge, but the connection itself. Just as a bridge is by its very character simultaneously a going-over to somewhere and going-back to somewhere while itself inhabiting a distinct space apart from its two anchoring points, man is represented by the expanse between two things which it is not.

Interestingly, this perspective is echoed in Zarathustra’s monologue in “Der Wanderer”. Mankind is metaphorically portrayed as a rope tethered between two opposing images; the animal expresses the recognizable extent of human limitation, while the *Übermensch* stands in as a metaphor for the unbridled possibility of possibility, lacking even a specific form. Keeping with this comparison, the *Übermensch* is to man what the summit is to Zarathustra. They both represent a remote ideal which can only be attained by overcoming oneself, while the unblinking maw of the abyss gasps below. The perspective expressed by Zarathustra, then, is that of man, a perspective whose character is structured by those spaces it reaches toward and are contained by. The summit represents the ideal of striving, capturing the immensity of sacrifice in the struggle to reach the peak as well as the jubilant elation of a victory attained within its vision.

Even in Nietzsche’s own writing, however, the architecture of the mountain metaphor contains the grounds of its own negation. Mountaintops are not always seen



from below, as Nietzsche recognizes. In *Morgenröthe* he speaks about the “Gipfel seiner Kraft” and in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge* he speaks of something coming “auf ihren Gipfel” (Nietzsche). In these instances, Nietzsche calls upon the metaphor of height, of the summit, to visualize something taken to its greatest possible extent. The mountaintop serves as an effective metaphor for striving after the ideal, however once the summit is reached the representative power of the metaphor is restricted. Hence, Zarathustra speaks about flight arising out of the elated, fast footed steps of the mountain climber but never actually takes to the skies (Nietzsche, 570). If the summit and the *Übermensch* are in this case both to be taken as representations of possibility, of striving, and sublimation of the will to power towards self-overcoming required to affirm life then Nietzsche dually represents the extent to which these ideals are implicated in the “lie” of language.

Heine and Nietzsche share in their idealization of the mountains, those colossal blocks of stone which tower over the world like the pillars of the heavens. In their works their cool and quiet heights become places of beauty, unfettered joy, and transcendence. For Nietzsche, the very character of language as a series of metaphors makes possible the deception that man encounters a knowable and highly structured cosmic scheme. It is in this way that Nietzsche’s mountain allegories are explicitly mythological. Furthermore, the specific structure of his mountain metaphor represent the summit as an ideal, but an unattainable ideal. With this in mind, the mountain is as representative of the ideal as it is representative of the instability of the ideal, always dissolving into its negation. Heine, on the other hand, repeatedly frames the mountain as a site of transcendent potential, only to cripple his poetic embellishments under the weight of his cynicism and irony. This disrupts metaphor’s expected association with subjective feeling, signing beyond the

forms to express a generalized distrust in language's capacity to generate anything more than groundless signs. The mountain ideal, for Heine as much as Nietzsche, is dislocated from the instance it is called upon, in each case appearing to earnestly express a meaningful idea about the world in spite it being clandestinely negated.

## **Chapter 4: Tides of Becoming, Tracks to Temporality**

A fundamental concern for the character of temporality has been a recurrent focus of philosophical investigation as far back as the Presocratic philosophers. This is understandable, as the experience of change occurring in time is, at least on some level, a trans-cultural concept. The 19<sup>th</sup> century is no exception and both Nietzsche and Heine, albeit in seemingly quite different ways, address the relationship between being, time, and subjectivity in their works. Heine is not, in the conventional sense, a philosopher. Concerning this, the study of his work is primarily assigned to any number of disciplines outside of philosophy where his sometimes quite rigorous philosophical queries receive less direct attention. Nietzsche's philosophy of becoming on the other hand has received, and continues to receive, a great deal of attention both as a central, consistent facet of his sometimes contradictory ideas and as a profound reflection on the character of the modern individual's encounter with history and existence. Although they might be academically cloistered within separate disciplines, both Heine and Nietzsche bring strikingly influential ideas to bear on the meaning of modern reflections on temporality, responding to shifting considerations which come to light with the developments of the nineteenth century.

### **4.2 Heine: Racing Toward a New Conceptualization of Time**

Heine's "finely developed sense for the paradox of time and the problem of representation of time and history manifested itself early on in the sophisticated manner in which he represented time's contradictory aspects" (Cook, 154). The complicated association between subjectivity, time, and history is a theme which his work attempts to

tackle over the course of his career, beginning as early as the *Reisebilder*. "Time emerges in Heine as a highly mediated construct that is predicated on a dynamic understanding of the past and the future", while the task of representing it is burdened by the ambiguity of the subject's private experience of temporality (Cook, 154). "Imagined as both continuity and discontinuity time emerges as an intrinsically dialectical concept that defies and resists ideological inscription" (Cook, 154). Insofar "as the dynamic force of the past is only realized in the present, understood as an ever-new present, time emerges as constant movement, that which mediates past and future but never comes to rest" (Cook, 155). The present always reimagines the structure of the present by discovering itself in the past it reconstructs, and altering itself thereby, while simultaneously finding itself to be the foundation of the future and correspondingly encountering possibility in light of it. In this way, the lines of demarcation between past, present, and future come to appear increasingly constructed, as they each come to be understood as fixed ideas imposed upon on an otherwise dynamic and unrepresentable temporality.

This analysis appears to share an affinity with Derrida's critique of presence in *Différance* where he argues that consciousness "offers itself to thought as self-presence, as the perception of self in presence", in the sense of being temporally present to itself (Derrida, 16). Derrida and Heine's arguments are by no means equivocal and they argue their conclusions by differing means, however it is not to be overlooked that their ideas on this issue share a central notion. Like Derrida, Heine is skeptical of considering the present as anything more than a construction founded on a relation of distinction between a rigidly defined past and future time, with the present, experienced as self-presence, existing in the space between those times and yet outside of time. The illusion of a past, a

present, and a future is generated through the essentially arbitrary suggestion of a distinction between past and future, along with which the present only exists for the conscious individual in the moment of reflection. Furthermore, the distinction between a past and a future exists only from the perspective of a subject who orders existence in terms of what was and what will be. Every moment the world slips over this linguistic line between future and past, leaving the present to the subject's experience of being present to themselves in reflection. Within the constructed timeline, the present is but the lip on the cauldron of time over which the momentum of the past boils over, overtakes its confines, and courses forth into the future. Yet, it inhabits a theoretical space which is on neither side of the division separating past and future. It is neither beginning nor ending. It is instead an imagined, timeless place which exists only in reflective consciousness.

This idea is expressed in *Harzreise* during a dream sequence in which Heine's recently deceased acquaintance, the Kantian Doktor Saul Ascher, appears to him as a ghost who tells him "Fürchten Sie sich nicht und glauben Sie nicht, daß ich ein Gespenst sei" (Heine, *Zweiter Band*, 128). Then the ghost proceeds to "einer Analyse der Vernunft, citierte Kants 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft', zweiter Theil, erster Abschnitt, zweites Buch, drittes Hauptstück, die Unterscheidung von Phänomena und Noumena, konstruierte alsdann den problematischen Gespensterglauben" (Heine, 128). With biting wit keen to the dry, clunky construction of Kant's critiques, Heine mocks Kantianism as a circular system that operates by creating categories and saying we conform to them. This is similar to Nietzsche's claim in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge* that knowledge attained by way of pure reason is effectively the same as "wenn Jemand ein Ding hinter einem Busche versteckt, es eben dort wieder sucht und findet" (Nietzsche). More importantly, the dream

goes on to make a comment on the concept of time through the symbolism of a "goldene Uhr" which Ascher reaches for and instead pulls "eine Handvoll Würmer aus der Uhrtasche" (Heine, 129). This critical inversion of the watch, as the symbol for man's subordination of time to reason, for a handful of worms, a formless, unthinking mass wriggling to escape one's clutching fingers, makes a clear statement about Heine's understanding of the impossibility of reconciling time with its representation. The golden watch in the pocket of the Kantian ghost represents a highly structured understanding of time, while Heine exchanging that order for the chaos of a handful of worms expresses his idea of time as an ever-shifting dynamic temporality that forever eludes ultimate comprehension by human reason.

Far from criticizing an Enlightenment approach to understanding time in favour of a romanticized conceptualization of temporality as some insurmountable expression of the primacy of nature over human reason, Heine's understanding of temporality is framed by historical contingency. This is exemplified in his remarks concerning a technology which is just beginning to literally traverse the European continent in Heine's lifetime: the railroad. Writing about the growing availability of railroads, Heine proclaims "daß unsre ganze Existenz [von Eisenbahnen] in neue Gleise fortgerissen, fortgeschleudert wird, daß neue Verhältnisse, Freuden und Drangsale uns erwarten, und das Unbekannte übt seinen schauerlichen Reiz, verlockend und zugleich beängstigend" (Heine, *Französische Zustände*, 122). Here, "in Heine's diagnosis the construction of railways monstrously broke with the order of pre-given experiences and expectations, inaugurating a new world and an unforeseeable future" (Presner, *Mobile Modernity*, 59). He goes on to claim that "sogar die Elementar-begriffe von Zeit und Raum sind schwankend. Durch die

Eisenbahnen wird der Raum getötet, und es bleibt uns nur noch die Zeit übrig" (Heine, 129). The time that Heine is responding to "is an age in which the fundamental prerequisites of being-in-the-world and narrating experience, namely, the ways in which space and time are known, organized, and related to one another, are completely reconfigured" (Presner, 60). What Heine addresses in his remarks about the railway is not a specific concern, nor is it merely a reactionary stance taken up in the face of technological development. Rather, what Heine is addressing is a general ontological upheaval.

A compelling component of Heine's observation is what it gleams about his expectations regarding the structure of time. He expresses his insight that with the development of new transportation technologies "die Elementarbegriffe von Zeit und Raum" have become "schwankend" (Heine, 129). In making this claim, Heine simultaneously discloses the sense in which he understands the framework of one's experience of temporality to be historically contingent. Time is not merely a dynamic, implicitly unknowable structure that is subjected to, and yet resists, arbitrary metaphysical frameworks which are thrust upon it by human hands. Instead, Heine recognizes the experience of time to be radically historical. Its content and form is here informed by, and mediated through, all the great and small forces and relations which surround the particular historical individual, such as language, history, technology, and social relations. This is not, however, to suggest that time doesn't march on regardless of human historicity. It suggests that, insofar as consciousness of time cannot exist for the individual outside of a particular human existence, one cannot attain objective ontological certainty regarding the structure of time. This notion is playfully depicted by Ascher's

golden watch of reason being transfigured into a handful of worms. Time as well as the structure of time itself is bound up in a ceaseless becoming which undermines reason's best efforts at ontological certainty, racing, just like Heine's trains, in to the unforeseeable.

## 4.2 Nietzsche: How the Real World Became a Lie

The encounter with being as becoming is of such fundamental import to comprehending the structure of Nietzsche's thinking that it is, arguably, the most central component of his thought. For Nietzsche, "Alles Unvergängliche — das ist nur ein Gleichniss" (Nietzsche, 601). All that is and all that ever will be is swept up in a tireless, contingent dynamism, a vast and incomprehensible river of becoming cascading from moment to moment. It appears that Nietzsche, for all of his skeptical attitudes towards fixed ontological claims, is making an absolute cosmological evaluation. Although prominently debated by such thinkers as Deleuze, in a close consideration of Nietzsche's thoughts of becoming they are shown to be mired in greater complexity. He develops his idea of becoming along two separate but intimately linked foundations: empirical experience and historical genealogy.

1. Die wahre Welt erreichbar für den Weisen, den Frommen, den Tugendhaften, — er lebt in ihr, er ist sie.

(Älteste Form der Idee, relativ klug, simpel, überzeugend. Umschreibung des Satzes „ich, Plato, bin die Wahrheit“) [...]

4. Die wahre Welt, unerreichbar, unbeweisbar, unversprechbar, aber schon als gedacht ein Trost, eine Verpflichtung, ein Imperativ.

(Die alte Sonne im Grunde, aber durch Nebel und Skepsis hindurch; die



Idee sublim geworden, bleich, nordisch, königsbergisch.)[...]

6. Die wahre Welt haben wir abgeschafft: welche Welt blieb übrig? die scheinbare vielleicht?... Aber nein! mit der wahren Welt haben wir auch die scheinbare abgeschafft! (Nietzsche, *Werke*, 341)

What Nietzsche composes here is effectively a genealogical narrative of the idea of becoming, a genealogical narrative which can be further brought to bear as a history of truth, a history of being, or a history of the subject.

Starting with Plato and ending in his own time, the structure of Nietzsche's genealogy frames the idea of becoming as a contingent historical phenomenon, gradually assuming prominence as the site of the ground of being shifts over time. With Plato "die wahre Welt" is the unchanging world of ideas, thus it is only comprehensible by the wise who can see past the illusory, sensuous world of change. A similar sense of the true world is maintained in Christian thought before Kant moves the site of the true world to the noumenal realm, to the unknowable things in themselves. The importance of this shift, as Nietzsche understands, is twofold. Firstly, in making the things in themselves unknowable to the subject it further perpetuates this process of distancing of the sensible world of becoming from a remote, unchanging reality which serves as the ground of being. Secondly, by proposing that one cannot know anything about the things in themselves Kant introduces an implicit skepticism to the architecture of the subject's experience of existence. That is to say, Kant's preclusion of the possibility of encountering things in themselves whilst simultaneously affirming the necessity of their existence gives rise to a situation wherein it becomes arguable that from the perspective of the subject they can hardly be said to exist at all. This implicit skepticism serves as the

bridge leading to the final steps of Nietzsche's fable, where the notion of the real world is ultimately forgotten.

Concluding his genealogy, Nietzsche associates the present day and its future with the end of the real world as it is previously understood. This statement directly compliments Nietzsche analysis of late 19<sup>th</sup> century European society as embodying an epochal shift away from popular belief in absolute metaphysical systems (Nietzsche, 489). With the coming of this new dawn the once secure rights and lines of longstanding absolutes are cut away and mankind is cast upon a sea of hitherto unseen possibility (Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §125). All that remains after the dismissal of the absolute is "die scheinbare" world, but, the binary of the real and the apparent forgotten, "mit der wahren Welt haben wir auch die scheinbare abgeschafft" (Nietzsche, *Werke*, 341). God no longer the determinate of the world as it is, all that remains, for Nietzsche, is the world as it appears. Nietzsche's genealogy proposes that up until this point the directly sensuous world characterized by becoming was subordinated to a fixed, overarching metaphysical superstructure, within which the dynamism of the sensuous world was relegated to mere appearance. The central argument which he puts forward here is that with the end of fixed absolutes and concealed truths what was once appearance ceases to be appearance and becomes a space where things can be experienced as real. In this way, the understanding of existence as ongoing becoming is presented as a historical phenomenon, an expression of a unique historicity. This equation of being with becoming serves as a foundational element of much of Nietzsche's thought, with profound implications.

In section 341 of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* Nietzsche introduces an interesting component of his philosophy of becoming through a story:

Wie, wenn dir eines Tages oder Nachts, ein Dämon in deine einsamste Einsamkeit nachschliche und dir sagte: ‘Dieses Leben, wie du es jetzt lebst und gelebt hast, wirst du noch einmal und noch unzählige Male leben müssen; und es wird nichts Neues daran sein, sondern jeder Schmerz und jede Lust und jeder Gedanke und Seufzer und alles unsäglich Kleine und Grosse deines Lebens muss dir wiederkommen, und Alles in der selben Reihe und Folge — und ebenso diese Spinne und dieses Mondlicht zwischen den Bäumen, und ebenso dieser Augenblick und ich selber. Die ewige Sanduhr des Daseins wird immer wieder umgedreht — und du mit ihr, Stäubchen vom Staube!’ (Nietzsche, 487)

The core of Nietzsche’s hypothetical is the question “würdest du dich nicht niederwerfen und mit den Zähnen knirschen und den Dämon verfluchen, der so redete? Oder hast du einmal einen ungeheuren Augenblick erlebt, wo du ihm antworten würdest: ‘du bist ein Gott und nie hörte ich Göttlicheres’ (Nietzsche, 487). It is clear that with this imaginative line of question Nietzsche has little interest in arguing for the cosmic fact of history as an endlessly repeated, closed cycle. Rather the impact of Nietzsche’s idea depends precisely on its hypothetical character. However, the same uncertainty that gives his question merit also leaves it subject to an unheard of freedom of interpretation. One of the more accessible interpretations is to treat it as a form of test which one takes up as they attempt to take stock of their existence, something which is supposed to spur them in pursuit of a life worthy of an eternal recurrence. Although a possible interpretation, the deep

significance which the confrontation with this question holds in Nietzsche's work suggests implications far greater than those posed by folksy wisdom.

Many of Nietzsche's most direct discussions of eternal recurrence appear in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. In fact, in the section of *Ecce Homo* dedicated to the writing of this text Nietzsche equates "die Grundkonzeption des Werks" with the "Ewige-Wiederkehr-Gedanke" (Nietzsche, 455). *Also Sprach Zarathustra* is a controversial text in the interpretation of Nietzsche's thought, as it is composed as a fictional narrative where Nietzsche himself never writes in the first person. This skeptical attitude, however, privileges a more formal approach to philosophical inquiry whilst undermining what the presentation of this text expresses. It is precisely the fiction of Zarathustra, the fiction of Zarathustra the prophet, which gives it a special significance. It is through fiction that *Also Sprach Zarathustra* fabricates the imagined prophet that Nietzsche thought the world would need after the death of God. It is in this way that it is "ein Buch für Alle und Keinen" (Nietzsche, 545). It is a book for all because it addresses a shared historical crisis and a book for none because what is defining about the historical crisis it addresses is the end of fixed absolutes. Zarathustra frames his message and arrival within the historical death of God within the first few pages of the introduction, depicting Zarathustra as a prophet of a specific time (Nietzsche, 549). This realization brings Nietzsche's discussion of eternal recurrence, as the fundamental conception of his text, into focus as a question which arises out of this same historicity, out of the death of God and the confrontation with becoming.

The significance of eternal return is climactically represented in one of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*'s final sections titled "Das trunkne Lied":

Lust aber will nicht Erben, nicht Kinder, — Lust will sich selber, will  
Ewigkeit, will Wiederkunft, will Alles-sich-ewig-gleich [...]

Saget ihr jemals Ja zu Einer Lust? Oh, meine Freunde, so saget ihr Ja  
auch zu allem Wehe. Alle Dinge sind verkettet, verfädelte, verliebt, —

— wolltet ihr jemals Ein Mal Zwei Mal, sprach ihr jemals „du gefällst  
mir, Glück! Husch! Augenblick!“ so wolltet ihr Alles zurück! (Nietzsche,  
774)

Breaking the bonds between human existence and the absolute means being snatched from the security of the stoney, unmoving riverside by the rushing waters of becoming, bringing humankind into a confrontation with history and existence unmediated by once dominant value systems. Taken here to its conclusion, to deny any part of not only one's own life but also history as a whole means to deny life itself within the grounds of what it means to live in a world which is left with nothing but history. Every lie, each smile, every heartbreak, each tender kiss, every uprising brutally put down, each great victory, and every cruelty perpetrated by a marauding army is affirmed, for anything less would be a denial of becoming. Following this line of thinking, Nietzsche presents his hypothesis of eternal recurrence as precipitating out of the central line of questioning concerning what it means to live in the joyful-painful world of endless becoming following the death of God.

Heidegger is critical of Nietzsche's attempt to pose the association of being with becoming alongside the hypothesis of eternal return, introducing his criticism in the brief

essay *Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra*. Heidegger recognizes how Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence as it is represented in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* reflects an attempt to overcome the Western metaphysical tendency to separate being from becoming through an affirmation of history and time (Heidegger, 422). Nietzsche, according to Heidegger, casts being in an eternal present, doing so through the Zarathustrian encounter with eternal return. In striving to say yes to all history, Nietzsche's Zarathustra has to think of being as an eternal singularity. This means to comprehend becoming as the sum of possible existing beings, as a being itself, so that it can be then affirmed as a whole. This criticism of eternal return mirrors the structure of Heidegger's critique of the average everyday understanding of the nothing articulated in *Was ist Metaphysik*. Here he argues that apprehending being as the sum of possible beings is an expression of the limitations of logic, but that it says nothing whatsoever about being as it is (Heidegger, 11). Like in *Was ist Metaphysik*, Heidegger is proposing that what is at work in Nietzsche's discussion of eternal return is a linguistic game, a trick of cognition that amounts to nothing more than propping up a metaphysics which thus undermines the becoming it claims to affirm. As he understands it, this constitutes in and of itself a metaphysical deception whereby being, which he defines as the beings of beings, becomes fixed to an eternal present (Heidegger, *Zarathustra*, 418).

Although an interesting close reading of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Heidegger's account falls short of fully considering the possibility that, insofar as the book's protagonist is Zarathustra the fictional prophet, the book is absolutely metaphysical and knowingly so, a mythic ideal. Nietzsche creates the character of Zarathustra precisely to act out a fantasy where nihilism is overcome by an ultimate metaphysics of life

affirmation. Hence Nietzsche refers to the hypothetical question of eternal return as “das größte Schwergewicht” in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* when writing without his prophetic mouthpiece. It is only when the support columns of absolute values buckle that the weight of history and becoming is felt, the full heaviness of which Nietzsche avoids claiming to know by remaining safely behind hypotheticals. In this way, the confrontation with eternal return is infinitely deferred in his work, existing forever as a question but never answerable beyond the desire to affirm life expressed in the words *amor fati*.

### 4.3 Zeitlich, Allzeitlich

From the perspectives of both Heine and Nietzsche, the traditional narratives surrounding being unfolding in time are being overturned and 19<sup>th</sup> century man is pulled into a radically new understanding of history and temporality. Heine recognizes the uncertainty of humanity’s future in the face of radical transformations in how people understand and experience space and time. This is interestingly represented in *Die Harzreise*, an account of his own mountain journey.

His voyage “begins with the specificity of a place, namely, Göttingen, and ends in a fragment, in an unspecified place” (Presner, 137). Structurally, the narrative of *Die Harzreise* mimics the form of conventional portrayals of time. It has a clearly constructed beginning and an indeterminate end spanning forward into the future. In a general sense, *Die Harzreise* appears to conform to the reader’s expectations regarding the structure of a travelogue. Yet, “*Die Harzreise* (1824), just like the other narrative journeys, is only

vaguely organized as a travelogue, for neither the narration of geography nor temporality conform to the expectations of national or relational coherence” (Presner, 137). Within the narrative of Heine’s mountain journey itself distances between locations as well as the passage of time are inconsistently narrated, sunrises giving way to sunsets and retellings of his dreams taking up more space than the days that follow them. There is an internal tension between the efforts of the individual to represent temporal experience, in this case Heine’s attempt to retell his Harz journey, and the impossibility of doing so.

Accounts of journeys to various destinations by wealthy men and woman already appear quite often throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Goethe himself recounts his trip through the Harz Mountains (Presner, *Jews on Ships*, 521). Appealing to this already established form, Heine primes the reader’s expectations of a more traditional portrayal of temporality with his narrative, only to disrupt this expectation through the fragmentary content of *Die Harzreise*. This is exemplified in his description of both the ascent and descent of the Brocken. It would seem that the process of climbing a mountain, which entails an ascent, a summit, and a descent, would provide a relatively natural structure for its retelling. The ascent of the Brocken in Heine’s account is, although brief, engilded with all the Romantic splendor one might imagine and builds up to his final arrival at the Brocken hotel on the summit. Heine descends from the mighty Brocken the next morning after a night fraught with drunken revelry. However, what is remarkable about the descent is the extent to which it hardly takes place. Accompanied by some students, they appear to surge down the mountain like a rushing stream and, escorted by dreamlike visions, arrive somewhere new in no time at all.



The expected architecture of the mountain journey and that of the travel sketch more generally are undermined by a narrative which makes no attempt to consistently or reliably depict space or temporality. Instead, Heine's journey appears to openly mock the best attempts of figures such as Goethe to represent the ceaseless dynamism of temporality. Simultaneously, the very act of representing time in this way, as a narrative, makes the concession that, though time itself may be unrepresentable, individuals still encounter time as historically structured. Though Heine may be capable at hinting towards the shakiness of these foundations, he ultimately recognizes that even he cannot outwit his own historical experience of time.

The form of the mountain journey serves to temporalize Nietzsche's metaphor, giving it an allegorical quality. The stale, timeless fixedness of the image is drawn out such that the metaphor itself is encountered as embedded within the stream of becoming. Rather than merely representing the ideal through the representation of the mountain, the journeying mountaineer can allegorically represent the process of its pursuit. The epitome of this allegory's use is found in Zarathustra's mountain wandering in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, though the mountain wanderer is a motif in Nietzsche's writing and appears in a number of texts such as *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*; *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*; and *Morgenröthe* (Nietzsche, 478). In each case, the careful stepping of the mountain climber holds tremendous representative power in Nietzsche's discussion of becoming. Frigid, isolated, and exposed, the mountain path is lonely and the traveler is trailed by death along their course. There is also the element of the most basic physical struggle; small, sloping forest mountains place athletic demands upon the body, while the greater peaks threaten the lives of even the strongest. The encounter with pain and the

participation in struggle are unavoidable elements of the mountain climber's existence, embedded within the very praxis of life.

It is in this way that Nietzsche's mountain climbing allegory represents the historical encounter with being as becoming. Like the mountaineer, the historical confrontation with existence as temporal and contingent correspondingly pulls humankind into an experience of life which may appear to be as ruthlessly unforgiving, difficult, and arbitrary as it is beautiful and giving. The mountain climber is allegorically acting out the question of eternal recurrence by participating in an existence where pain and joy, death and its overcoming, are experienced as intimately woven into the very fabric of life. Once again, the mountain wanderer comes to embody the perspective thrust upon Western humanity, left adrift in the tides of becoming following the death of God.

Yet, the outcome of this encounter remains unclear. Outside of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the hypothetical of eternal recurrence is deprived of a complete affirmation and even Zarathustra grows weary of the lonely summit, as if to suggest that Nietzsche himself finds something in the question of eternal recurrence unanswerable. Eternal return is, instead, eternally deferred, the question of an age that by its very nature cannot find it in itself to say yes or no. The mountaineer grows fatigued and overworked, dreaming of rest. However, this observation calls attention to an element of this discussion which has gone overlooked. Far from a simple choice between being a yes-sayer or a no-sayer, the desire to reject the world, to give up on one's wanderings and simply recoil, is an integral component of the suffering which the mountaineering allegory attempts to portray. Affirming becoming also includes the affirmation of those experiences which in every sense defies the world as becoming. In this way, the mountain

allegory can be read as portraying the ideal outcome of the confrontation with being as becoming wherein the individual can respond affirmatively to the hypothetical of eternal recurrence and affirm life as such. Simultaneously, this mythic ideal, as represented in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, appears unstable, more of a hopeful imagining than a sincere proclamation.

What their discussions call attention to is the notion that, although an awareness of temporality may be a unifying component of human experience, the significance and character of this experience is highly contingent. In this regard, a fundamental ontology of time seems impossible. Speaking to this notion, Heine and Nietzsche reflect on the ontological significance of the novel experience of temporality which characterizes their era. Both Heine and Nietzsche employ the image of the mountain and the allegory of the mountain journey in their respective portrayals of temporality. For Nietzsche, the affirmative stepping of the Zarathustrian mountain wanderer represents an ideal comportment of modern humanity towards becoming, whilst also remaining doubtful as to its possibility. Heine, meanwhile, concedes to the reality of experiencing time as constructed through narratives but uses the allegory of the mountain journey to express the unrepresentable dynamics of time.

In the works of both thinkers, notions of an ideal encounter with time are repeatedly plagued by skepticism. It would seem that none other than Zarathustra's fictional *Übermensch* is capable of soaring over the abyss like a great bird of prey and affirm the question of eternal recurrence, while Nietzsche himself maintains an uncertain distance. Even within the rigid boundaries of the metaphorical landscape painted in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the possibility of sublimating the will to power towards self-

overcoming such that all of becoming can be affirmed seems barred from human existence, the *Übermensch* representing an inherently inaccessible ideal. Nietzsche's mountain top becomes a myth, nothing more than a fabled possibility. Mankind, meanwhile, is perpetually caught in the indeterminate space between summit and abyss. Nietzsche fabricates a mythical narrative through which the world can be affirmed as becoming and yet his inability to commit whole heartedly to his ideal ultimately acts to undermine it.

Heine, on the other hand, is concerned with the difficulty of representing time, an act which is, on the one hand, a necessary component of modern life and an indominatable impossibility. Time is highly dynamic, repeatedly eluding man's attempts to subordinate it to a rigid structure. Despite this, a fixed representation of time is an almost inevitable product of memory and language. Attempting to gesture beyond this paradox, Heine manufactures a representation of time which is disjointed and inconsistent, exemplified in the portrayal of his trip up and down the Brocken. In the same way that opaque language might be used to sign toward the opacity of language itself, to its being always already deferred, Heine disrupts expectations regarding the representation of temporality. However, in attempting to sign toward time's unrepresentability by imitating its dynamic character Heine falls prey to the desire to capture time within the snares of human thought. The impossibility of its sincere imitation is a given and Heine's efforts in this regard are, at best, self-defeating.

Mountain climbing allegories are used to help articulate these ideal representations to great poetic effect. However, in each case, their ideal crumbles away into the winds of becoming, unaffirmed and unrepresented. Nietzsche and Heine utilize

the allegory of the mountain journey in their attempts to represent an ideal comportment towards temporality, however the way in which they use these allegories expose the dubious foundations of their ideal.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Just as mankind seeks the sublime in those things which seem foreign and impossible, fawning over the rotting corpse of every fresh leviathan that washes upon the shore, or, pondering from the safety of the observatory, in galaxies far, humanity seems enraptured by the poetry of the summit. For Heine and Nietzsche, the mountains sing, singing of a world they'd like see but have only glimpsed in their dreams. The image of the mountain takes on the form of an ideal, but an ideal which is inescapably disrupted by their specific historical being. The mountain peak is repeatedly posited as a site of strength, a place of overcoming, and a space of transcendence, representing an answer to the crisis of their age. That is, the image of the mountain comes to represent a redemptive ideal, poised to retrieve human society from the brink of the abyss. However, their attempts at imagining this ideal is self-defeating, amounting to an attempt to outwit the very historical crisis it responds to. Their new ideal is valid but, in keeping with their paradigm, it is always already negated from the moment it arises.

Nietzsche and Heine employ mountain imagery in their respective critiques of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal-bourgeois society, finding in them a symbol for the transcendent potential of the individual to overcome the levelling forces in mass culture. Here, the profound isolation uncovered in hard-to-reach mountain passes express a belief in the capacity, even necessity, of a vital individualism to surmount and ultimately redeem modern humanity. This takes on the form of a reactionary salvaging of the bourgeois focus on individualism in an attempt to recentralize a swiftly decentralizing world through a return to inwardness.

Furthermore, the way in which Heine and Nietzsche make use of mountain metaphors brings compelling ideas to bear on the variety of ways they each understand the relationships between language, metaphor, and subjectivity to operate. In their discussions, both thinkers shift away from the paradigmatically Aristotelian perspective that metaphor is essentially distinct from literal uses of language. Instead, both Heine and Nietzsche entertain the notion language itself is scarcely more than an ever shifting array of signs which are not meaningful in themselves, undermining any separation between figurative and literal representation. In this way, metaphor is utilized to make a claim on truth, to posit something meaningful about the world. Simultaneously, each claim on truth is just as viably cast aside as arbitrary in the absence of any durable ontological criteria. An ideal taken as truth or untruth behaves similarly in this case.

These elements of their thinking are inextricably linked to Heine's and Nietzsche's perspective regarding changing cultural perceptions surrounding the place of temporality in being, in this case expressed through the allegory of the mountain journey. Heine recognizes that technological developments brought with industrialization are restructuring conventional notions of distance and time, establishing a distinctly modern experience of being. Coupled with his thoughts concerning the impossibility of representing the inescapable dynamism of temporality, Heine begins to realize that the traditional arrangement of time is called into question by the very character of modern life. For Nietzsche, the increasingly tenuous position held by rigid metaphysical values in Western society is pushing the site of the "real world" from the eternal to the finite world of becoming. In the writing of both of these thinkers the mountain journey functions as an allegory for the historical confrontation with a radically new way of understanding

temporal existence, while simultaneously imitating the experience of temporality in time. In spite of this, the efforts to manifest an ideal comportment towards time and becoming risks claiming to be a fundamental ontology of temporality, thereby undermining the project they set out upon.

Seasoned mountain dwellers though they may be, the role of the mountain in their writings remains strictly symbolic. Even if both Heine and Nietzsche at times write about, or even for, the very mountains they idolize, something else is signed toward in their use of metaphor. One might even argue that, in moments, the way in which they make use of metaphor articulates the strength and weaknesses of their thought with greater proficiency than their more plainly stated efforts. Subjected to Nietzsche's own critical analysis, the nature of the mountain imagery they employ exposes their foundational value judgements and moralistic perspectives. Nietzsche's and Heine's mountain metaphors speak to a subtextual, one might even say unconscious, representation of one's essential assumptions to be discovered in the metaphor a writer calls upon, a biographical signature carved into the very language of the text itself.

Their mountain imagery betrays a deeply held desire to overcome the spirit of the age by grappling the ideal of ideals, some final form which may, ultimately, bring about the justification of existence itself. It is an ideal which, though Nietzsche and Heine may let themselves dream, neither thinker is untimely enough to find it in themselves to legitimately believe in.



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