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Philosophy as Bad Poetry: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on the Ancient Quarrel

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PHILOSOPHY AS BAD POETRY: SCHOPENHAUER AND NIEZTSCHE ON THE ANCIENT QUARREL

by

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Under the Direction of Jessica N. Berry, PhD

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ABSTRACT

In the final book of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates bans the poets from his ideal city. According to Socrates, the poets bring about corruption and decadence: instead of pursuing and producing the truth, poets reproduce falsehoods – "images" as opposed to "the originals." Only the philosophers, Socrates says, oversee the truth. However, Arthur Schopenhauer, the self-proclaimed inheritor of Platonic philosophy, seems to flip this idea on its head. Poets do manufacture images, but these images, Schopenhauer claims, are knowledge *par excellence.* In this paper, I explore Schopenhauer's contribution to the "ancient quarrel" between philosophy and poetry and argue that, for him, poetry is not only a truth-tracking endeavor, but is invaluable to the practice of philosophy itself. I, then, turn to Schopenhauer's "son," "pupil," and "born psychologist," Friedrich Nietzsche, to examine the relationship between poetry and health. I conclude by suggesting some implications that Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory might have for contemporary philosophers.

INDEX WORDS: Plato, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Aesthetics, Poetry, Philosophy

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For Mac Miller and Dr. Stock.

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And finally, to Plato, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche: Although you all are dead now, your works live on. Thank you for providing some "consolation in this wilderness of life" (WWR I: xx).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OA: "On Aesthetics," trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1970).

BGE*:* *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans J. Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

BT: *The Birth of Tragedy*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

EH: *Ecce Homo,* trans. Judith Norman and ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

FR: *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, trans. by Karl Hillebrand (New York, NY: Cosimo, Inc, 2007).

GM: *On the Genealogy of Morality,* trans. M. Clark and A.J Swensen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).

GS: *The Gay Science,* trans. J. Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

PP: *Parerga and Paralipomena* Vol 2, trans. E.F.J Payne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

Rep.: *Republic,* trans. by C. D. C. Reeve. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2004).

TI: *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. by Richard Polt (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997).

SE: "Schopenhauer as Educator" in *Untimely Meditations,* trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

WWR I: *World as Will and Representation* vol. 2, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publishing, 1966).

WWR II: *World as Will and Representation* vol. 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publishing, 1969).

1 INTRODUCTION

"*We talk so abstractly about poetry because we are usually all bad poets"*

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* §8

In his 1963 speech, "The Artist's Struggle for Integrity," James Baldwin makes the claim that the poets, by which he means *all artists,* are the "only people who know the truth about us." "Something awful is happening to a civilization," he warns, "when it ceases to produce poets," and "when it ceases to believe in the report that only poets can make." When considered in light of the history of Western philosophy, these claims ought to be striking. For it was Plato who, in Book X of the *Republic,* tells us of an "ancient quarrel" between poetry and philosophy. In this dialogue, Socrates warns that, if poets are to be taken seriously in a civilization that aims at truth and health, a corruption of that civilization will inevitably follow. While the poets are charged with producing falsehoods – "images" as opposed to "the originals" – only the philosophers, Socrates insists, apprehend the truth.

However, Arthur Schopenhauer, the self-proclaimed inheritor of Platonic philosophy, seems to flip this idea on its head. Although Schopenhauer genuinely believes that his philosophical system is the true extension of his "divine" teacher's, Schopenhauer nonetheless admits that "one of the greatest and best-known errors of [Plato is] namely his disdain and rejection of art, especially of poetry" (WWR I: 212). In fact, the nature of art, Schopenhauer argues, is such that it "leads to a clear and profound knowledge of the Idea of humanity," and poetry, "the art of setting the imagination into action by means of mere words," excels at this endeavor (OA, §4).[1] Poets *do* manufacture images, but whether these images are 'falsehoods' is

[1] Unless otherwise noted, this thesis is largely concerned with the wide scope of 'poetry' that Baldwin suggests, i.e., "all art." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'poetic' derives from the Greek *ποιητικός* (poietic, adj.) which means "creative, formative, productive, and active." It is also suggestive of the Greek *ποίησις* (poiesis) which

unclear: “all original thinking is done in pictures or images,” Schopenhauer says, and these images are knowledge *par excellence* (WWR II: 72).

So, what *does* it mean to be a poet, or to know the world ‘poetically,’ and how does the poetic character compare to that of the philosopher? To investigate this question, I consider both Plato and Schopenhauer’s account of the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry. Rather than putting the two in sharp opposition with one another, I argue that, for Schopenhauer, poetry is not only a truth-tracking endeavor, but is even necessary for the practice of philosophy itself. While the poet takes care to produce images of the “particular and *individual”* (whether that be an individual person, mood, scene, sensation, or object), the philosopher, much like a scientist, “operates by means of *concepts,* each of which represents countless individuals by once and for all defining and designating what is peculiar to them as a species” (OA, §4).

However, if Schopenhauer is right here – if poets are truth-tracking – then perhaps we are still left with Socrates’ original worry. According to Schopenhauer, those who engage with the truth are prone to the realization that life on earth is, at bottom, a constant strife, struggle, and suffering. If poetry facilitates the “clearness of consciousness” associated with this terrible realization, then will it also bring about the corruption of individuals and civilization? Though Schopenhauer does not answer this question, in the penultimate section of this paper, I turn to Schopenhauer’s young prodigy and born psychologist, Friedrich Nietzsche, to examine the relationship between poetry, truth, and health. In light of Nietzsche’s work, I argue that Schopenhauer’s aesthetic theory can indeed pave the way for a defense of poetry. I, then, conclude by suggesting some implications that Schopenhauer’s contribution to the ancient quarrel might have for contemporary philosophy.

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is a root-word used to form nouns that denote “the formation or production of something, especially of various organic substances.”

2 THE ANCIENT QUARREL

The final book of Plato's *Republic* begins with Socrates' reflection on the ideal city-state: "there are many other things about our city that make me think we were entirely right in founding it as we did," he says, "but I am particularly thinking of poetry when I say that" (*Rep., X,* 595a). Here, Socrates is referring to his decision, a decision that he confidently stands by, to ban poetry and to expel the poets from his Kallipolis. [2]

2.1 Poetry and Truth

Though Socrates readily admits of the pleasurable and charming nature of poetry, as a philosopher, a true 'lover of wisdom,' he feels inclined to warn anyone who listens to it to be careful. According to Socrates, poetry can easily corrupt the minds of all those who hear it, especially if those who hear it "do not have knowledge of what really is" (*Rep., X,* 595b). Rather than expressing the "Platonic Idea" of an object – its timeless, unchanging, and essential nature – poets, Socrates insists, create a mere *imitation* of that Idea.

When describing the nature of imitation, Socrates suggests that there are, for example, three ways to conceive of a "bed-maker:" as a god, a carpenter, or a painter (*Rep., X,* 597b). Neither the work of a carpenter nor the work of a painter captures the *ideal* form of the bed that is "found in nature" and so determined by a "god" (*Rep., X,* 597b). The carpenter, by merely creating a particular bed, is said to create an "illusion." In other words, because he bases his work on the ideal form of a bed, but does not produce the form itself, he creates a mere

[2] In the *Symposium*, Socrates, like Baldwin, suggests "that 'poetry' has a very wide range. "After all, everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing is a kind of poetry" (*Symposium,* 205b). In this sense, *all artists* are poets. However, as Socrates goes on, he notes that only those who practice melody and rhythm are called "poets" as such (Symposium, 205c). In Book X of the *Republic,* Socrates' focus is largely on poets as such.

representation of the ideal bed. And, as long as the painter takes for a model the bed made by carpenters, then the work of a painter would just be a 'representation of a representation' (*Rep., X*, 598b). While the carpenter is deemed a craftsman, the painter is an imitator: he is "the one whose product is three removes from the natural one" (*Rep., X*, 597e).

Imitation in regard to poetry, however, is a bit different from that of a painter. Rather than imitating the work of a craftsman, the poet disguises himself "as if he were someone else" (*Rep., III*, 393d), whether that be another person or a God. This kind of imitation is especially prevalent, Socrates thinks, in both tragedy and comedy (*Rep., III*, 394c). Poetry, he tells us, "imitates human beings acting under compulsion or voluntarily, who, as a result of these actions, believe they are doing either well or badly, and experience either pain or enjoyment" (*Rep., X*, 603c). As such, poets imitate what Socrates calls *natural* appetites– the "sexual desires, anger, and all the appetites, pains, and pleasures of the soul" (*Rep., X*, 606d).

Yet, although Socrates suggests that the work of poetry is imitative, he also acknowledges that a question remains open: "if a good poet is to write beautiful poetry about the things he writes about," might he also 'have knowledge of them when he writes, or else he would be unable to" (*Rep., X*, 598e-599a)? As one might expect, Socrates shuts this possibility down almost immediately. "Do you think that if someone could make both what is imitated and its image, he would allow himself to take making images seriously? […] if he truly had knowledge of what he imitates, he would take deeds much more seriously than their imitations" (*Rep., X*, 599a- 599b). That is, if the poet were genuinely concerned with virtue, we ought to think that he would dedicate his life to *being* virtuous. Although he might be good at portraying courage in his work, for example, this need not entail that, when the time comes to act courageously, the poet would have the capacity to do so. "Is any war in Homer's time remembered that was well-fought

because of his leadership or advice?" "None at all" replies Glaucon (*Rep., X,* 600a). Yet, men who are "wise of deeds," like philosophers Thales and Anacharsis, are those who leave us with "ingenious inventions in the crafts and other activities" (*Rep., X,* 600a); poets supposedly do no such thing. "Are we to conclude, then, that all poets, beginning with Homer, imitate images of virtue and of all the other things they write about, and have no grasp of the truth? [… That] the maker of an image – the imitator – knows nothing, we say, about what is but only about what appears" (*Rep., X*, 599e-601b)? Indeed, Glaucon affirms.

Thus, for Socrates, poets do not express, or even know, anything like the truth. Instead, knowledge of the Platonic Idea is the purview of philosophy. Though the artist might have an eye for beautiful things, and while he might love those particular instantiations of beauty, his "thought is unable to see the nature of the beautiful itself or to be passionately devoted to it" (*Rep., V*, 476b). While poetry is characterized by its perceptual and particular nature, the nature of philosophy, however, is said to be general and universal. Only the philosopher, Socrates tells us, are true lovers of wisdom, "passionately devoted to the thing itself" (*Rep. V,* 480a). In short, they are those who "always love the sort of learning that makes clear to them some feature of being that always is and does not wander around between coming-to-be and decaying" (*Rep. V,* 485a). Hence, for Socrates, when it comes to those who know the truth about us, we must, contra James Baldwin, turn to the philosophers and leave the poets behind.

2.2 Expelling the Poets

Not only does Socrates believe that the poets participate in a merely derivative sort of knowing, but, as such, he worries that their products will do great harm to others. The poets, he warns, are epistemically dangerous; they "get the most important things about human beings wrong," and,

therefore, must be forbidden (*Rep., III,* 392b). The "more poetic they are, the more they should be kept away from the ears of children and men who are to be free" (*Rep., III,* 387b). But what makes the nature of imitation so dangerous such that the poet's exile is supposedly justified?

On Socrates' view, the imitative nature of poetry is dangerous because it is a cause for corruption. By nourishing the natural appetites of the soul, Socrates argues that poetry will inevitably destroy the rational element of the soul – the part of the soul that does not pay heed to pleasure and pain, and that certainly does not get caught up with "the recollection of our sufferings and lamentations" (*Rep., X,* 604d). The work of a poet, Socrates argues, "nurtures and waters [natural appetites] when they should be dried up, and establishes them as rulers in us when – if we are to become better and happier rather than worse and more wretched – they should be ruled" (*Rep., X,* 606d). Poetic imitation, Plato warns, is "an inferior thing that consorts with another inferior thing to produce inferior offspring" (*Rep., X,* 603b).

On Socrates' view, the work of a poet "really consorts with an element in us that is far from wisdom" and "nothing healthy or true can come from their relationship or friendship" (*Rep., X,* 603a). Tragic poets, for example, falsely attribute "terrible and impious deeds" to the gods, even though "it is impossible for the gods to produce evil" (*Rep., III,* 391d-e). And, because philosophers are not "lovers of laughter," the comedic poets are mistaken when they represent "worthwhile people as [being] overcome by laughter" (*Rep., III,* 389a-b). In Socrates eyes, "if our young people listen seriously to these stories without ridiculing them as not worth hearing, none of them [will] consider such things to be unworthy of a mere human being like himself" (*Rep., III,* 388d). Thus, as long as we are concerned with developing a true, healthy, and well-governed city, then, he thinks, we would also be "justified in not admitting [the poet]" (*Rep., X, 605b*).

3 SCHOPENHAUER'S DEFENSE?

Despite the confidence displayed by Socrates in his legislation, he admittedly leaves open the possibility of granting the poets reentry into the city: "We will surely allow her defenders—the ones who are not poets themselves, but lovers of poetry—to argue without meter on her behalf, showing that she gives not only pleasure but also benefit both to constitutions and to human life" (*Rep., X,* 607d). However, until this defense is given,

> whenever we listen to her, we will chant to ourselves the argument we have just now put forward as a counter-charm […]. For we have come to see that such poetry is not to be taken seriously, as a serious undertaking that grasps truth; but that anyone who listens to it should be careful. (*Rep., X,* 608a)

Keeping in mind Schopenhauer's inheritance of Platonic philosophy—he often calls himself the true student of the "divine Plato" (WWR I: xv) and he vehemently claims that philosophical truth, insight into the "true and peculiar nature of a thing," is an insight into a "Platonic Idea" (WWR I: 129) – it might seem odd that Schopenhauer would be this defender of poetry. Yet, providing this defense, and attempting to resolve the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry, is, I think, a hallmark feature of Schopenhauer's aesthetic philosophy.

3.1 Knowledge and Truth in Schopenhauer's Philosophy

The metaphysical system that Schopenhauer presents in *The World as Will and Representation* is often taken to be a "modified Platonism" (Janaway 1998: 3). At the core of this system lies a "single thought" that Schopenhauer inherits from both Kant and Plato. Like these thinkers, Schopenhauer declares "the visible world to be a phenomenon which in itself is void and empty, and which has meaning and borrowed reality only through the thing that expresses itself in it (the thing-in-itself in the one case, the Idea in the other)" (WWR I: 172).

According to Schopenhauer, the entire empirical world – the *objective* world – is a mere *representation* of something universal and unchanging.[3] For the most part, Schopenhauer's account of the "world as representation" is on par with Kant's. Following Kant, Schopenhauer argues that the intellect perceives according to *a priori* structures which include time, space, and causality. In the *Fourfold Root,* Schopenhauer argues that the understanding, or the intuitive faculty of the mind, "looks to sensation for the material which gives content to it's *a priori* forms" (*FR:* 136). These *a priori* structures, once receiving sensory data, "produce the visible world" (*FR:* 67). In essence, Schopenhauer here is making the distinction between sensation and, what he calls, representations of perception: "what the eye, the ear, or the hand experiences is not perception; it is mere data. […] Only by the passing of the understanding" does the world stand out as representation, object for a knowing subject (WWR I: 12). For this reason, Schopenhauer argues – and this is what he thinks Kant had failed to recognize – that "All perception is intellectual" (WWR I:11). Once we have representations of perception, then reason works to conceptualize these representations. That is, it creates "representations of representations" (WWR I: 40). Here, perception gets transformed from an intuitive knowledge, or knowledge *in concreto,* to rational, abstract knowledge.

On Schopenhauer's view, the universal and unchanging "thing in itself" that is expressed in the world as representation is the *will* – a blind, restless, striving that has no ultimate end or purpose aside from the preservation and propagation of itself; "the *will-to live,* far from being an arbitrary hypostasis or even an empty expression, is the only true description of the world's innermost nature. Everything presses and pushes toward *existence,* if possible, towards *organic*

[3] On Schopenhauer's view, the word 'objective' does *not* mean 'exists independently of the mind.' Instead, Schopenhauer uses the term to quite literally mean something like, 'become object' or 'to become knowable by a subject.' "By *objectification* I understand self-presentation or self-exhibition in the real corporeal world" (WWR II: 245). Happiness, we might think, is *objectified* in a smile; sadness in a frown.

existence, i.e., *life"* (WWR II: 350).We might imagine this blind will at work, for example, when a spider spins a web prior to any conceptual knowledge of its future prey or when a one-year-old bird builds a nest for the eggs that it does not yet know exist (WWR I: 114). The will, Schopenhauer thinks, "is the innermost essence, the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole" (WWR I: 110).

At bottom, Schopenhauer thinks that both intuitive knowledge and rational knowledge exist as a tool for survival. Because the blind activity of the will, like the kind displayed by spiders and birds, would not guarantee the survival of more advanced creatures, Schopenhauer claims that humans would have to evolve to become 'knowers.' That is, in order to satisfy our complex system of needs, humans would have to evolve such that we could both perceive an empirical world and conceive of it in terms of the past, present, and future. "The will, which hitherto followed its tendency in the dark with extreme certainty and infallibility, has at this stage kindled a light for itself" (WWR I: 150). With this newfound ability to represent the world, Schopenhauer argues, comes the recognition that we are embodied individuals, existing in time and space, each with our own aims and ends that, when pursued, would lend to our preservation. An individual, he insists, seeks to acquire knowledge of an object so long as that knowledge can contribute to the satisfaction of his or her wants, needs, and desires. Thus, the human intellect is, for the most part, destined to serve our ever-desiring *will*.[4]

[4] When defining the nature of intellect in relation to the will, Schopenhauer provides a helpful example -- the plant: "As we know, it has two poles, root and corona; the former reaching down into darkness, moisture, and cold, and the latter up into brightness, dryness, and warmth; then as the point of indifference of the two poles where they part from each other close to the ground, the collum or the root-stock. The root is what is essential, original, perennial, whose death entails the death of the corona; it is therefore primary. The corona, on the other hand, is the ostensible, that which has sprouted forth, that which passes away without the root dying; it is therefore secondary. The root represents the will, the corona the intellect, and the point of indifference between the two, namely the collum, would be the *I"* (WWR II: 202-203).

However, while the intellect might enable successful action in the world, the knowledge that it procures is not necessarily insight into the "Platonic Idea" – the "definite species, or the original, unchanging forms and properties of all natural bodies, whether organic or inorganic, as well as the universal forces" (WWR I: 169). According to Schopenhauer, "the Ideas present themselves in innumerable individuals and in isolated details, and are related to them as the archetype is to its copies," however, "if the Ideas are to become object of knowledge, [it] can happen only by abolishing individuality in the knowing subject" (WWR I:169). In other words, if our intellect were to release itself from the service of the will – if it were to enter into a state of what Schopenhauer calls, 'pure' or 'objective' perception, – then the intellect would act as a "pure mirror" of reality. Instead of perceiving an object according to its relation to ourselves, in this state of perception, one would recognize the object according to its Idea. Consequently, this person, Schopenhauer insists, would gain insight into the "whatness, essence, or intrinsic nature of things" (Beiser 2014: 15). This insight is, as Schopenhauer often remarks, knowledge for knowledge's own sake.

According to Schopenhauer, knowledge for knowledge's own sake would be a kind of 'metaphysical' knowledge, or philosophical truth *par excellence* (WWR: 102). Though this insight is claimed to be rare, Schopenhauer suggests that it is indeed possible.[5] Some individuals, he argues, have such an *abnormal excess* of intellect –what Schopenhauer refers to as "*genius"* – that their capacity for perception overrides the striving of the will: "to make the matter really

[5] This possibility signals a major shift from Kant, who argues that knowledge is inextricably bound to representation. Although *almost* everything in the empirical world exists as an object (i.e., representation) for a knowing subject, Schopenhauer suggests that when it comes to the knowledge of our own body, we recognize ourselves as something other than mere representation; we also recognize ourselves as something *to to* different from representation, namely will. The key to "expanding our knowledge" of the world, Schopenhauer argues, is to take this "double knowledge" of ourselves – a knowledge, he thinks, no one would deny – and extend that knowledge to all objects in time and space (WWR I: 109-110).

intelligible, we might say that, if the normal person consists of two-thirds will and one-third intellect, the genius, on the contrary, has two-thirds intellect and one third will" (WWR II: 377). When "the intellect freely soars aloft" (WWR II: 364) because the "power of knowledge" exists in a much greater measure than "the service of the will requires" (WWR II: 370), the demands of the will are silenced, and the genius can become "entirely absorbed in an object" (*WWR I:* 185). Such a "great and powerful concentration," Schopenhauer thinks, lends itself to the "fundamental characteristic of genius:" to "always to see the universal in the particular" (WWR II: 379).

3.2 A Quarrel?

3.2.1 Poetry as a "serious undertaking that grasps the truth"

It is this understanding of the world, an understanding which Schopenhauer takes to be, at bottom, Platonic, that leads Schopenhauer to his defense of poetry. First, because a poet is characterized, in part, by her capacity for genius, the poet would, according to Schopenhauer, have insight into philosophical truth. On Schopenhauer's view, genius is a capacity attributed to poets, artists, and philosophers alike. It is, as we are frequently told, the "predominant capacity for the kind of knowledge from which all genuine works of the arts, of poetry, and even of philosophy spring" (*WWR II:* 376).[6] Not only do poets have the tendency to engage in objective perception, but to perceive a thing objectively– to recognize the will that is being expressed in the object – just *is* to perceive that object artistically, as an aesthetic phenomenon. "Objectivity

[6] Though this paper is concerned with poetry in the sense of all art (poiesis), on Schopenhauer's view, the signal difference between an artist and a poet (in the narrow sense) is the object of their perception. The poet, like the philosopher, perceives human beings – or, "the presentation of man in the connected series of his efforts and actions" (WWR I: 244) – objectively, while the artist's object can range from gravity to the human form. This distinction, then, is reminiscent of Plato's conception of poetry in Book III of the *Republic.* However, that a poet is concerned with human conduct, Schopenhauer argues, makes poetry the "highest" art. Insight into human behavior, Schopenhauer insists, is of both the greatest difficulty and the greatest achievement.

alone," Schopenhauer says, "qualifies one for becoming an artist; but it is possible only by the intellect being detached from its root, the will, by its being free to move, being nevertheless active with the highest degree of energy" (WWR II: 374).

Schopenhauer also addresses, albeit indirectly, Plato's argument that if the poets *did* have access to the truth, then they would not take their "work" as seriously as their "deeds." Interestingly, Schopenhauer argues the opposite. According to Schopenhauer, the poet is, like the philosopher, someone who possess "true, *profound* seriousness" (WWR II: 384, emphasis added). While, for most people, seriousness "is to be found exclusively in their own well-being and that of their families, […] only extremely rare and abnormal men, whose true seriousness lies not in the personal and practical, but in the objective and theoretical, are in a position to apprehend the essential element of things and of the world, and hence the highest truths, and in some way reproduce them" (WWR II: 384). That is, if truth requires that one not be conscious of the will – that the intellect does *not* retain a practical tendency – then truth might not be expressed in deeds; instead, the activity that encourages a purely objective attitude is the production of works.[7] According to Schopenhauer, "the difference between the capacity for *deeds* and that for *works*" is that "the latter demands an objectivity and depth of knowledge" and the former "demands the application of knowledge, presence of mind, resoluteness, and these require that the intellect shall constantly carry out the service of the will" (WWR II: 387).

Because of the poet's *profound* seriousness, Schopenhauer also argues that works of poetry are some of the few things that people ought to attend to: "How infinitely rare are human beings who are truly able to achieve something in poetry, art, or philosophy[;] […] their works alone and exclusively merit our attention" ("On Judgement, Criticism, Approbation and Fame,"

[7] As we will see in section 3.3., there will be one exception to this rule – the moral saint, who is neither a poet nor a philosopher.

PP II, §239). The work of the aesthetic genius, Schopenhauer tells us, is invaluable because it both grasps the truth, and makes that truth available for its audience. Not only is the poet determined to communicate her insights, but she also has a skill for presenting "things more clearly and characteristically by emphasizing the essential and eliminating the inessential" (WWR II: 370).[8] Moreover, because "genius consists in the working of the free intellect," all productions of genius – whether that be "music, philosophy, painting, or poetry" – are of "no use or profit" (WWR II: 388). When a perceiver is confronted with a work of art or philosophy, then, he or she is not confronted with an object that would excite the ever-desiring will.[9] Engaging with a piece of art, Schopenhauer argues, facilitates the same kind of perception that is necessary for creating it.

3.2.2 The Role of Poetry in Philosophy

However, while Schopenhauer does argue that poets have access to the truth, he seems to provide an even deeper argument that could help resolve the quarrel between philosophy and poetry: according to Schopenhauer, genius is a precondition for both poetry *and philosophy*. If to perceive something 'objectively' is to perceive it poetically, or with "artistic eyes" (WWR I: 244), then the philosopher *must also* perceive things poetically. On Schopenhauer's account, then, aesthetic perception becomes *necessary* to the practice of philosophy itself; without it,

[8] When speaking on the drive to reproduce these truths, Schopenhauer remarks of himself, "[Communicating this single thought], I have done simply because I was obliged to, and could not do otherwise, from an instinctive impulse which, however, was supported by the confidence that anything true that a man conceives, and anything obscure that he elucidates, will at some time or other be grasped by another thinking mind, and impress, delight, and console it. To such a man we speak, just as those have spoken to us, and have thus become our consolation in this wilderness of life" (WWR I: xx).

[9] For this reason, Schopenhauer objects to any work of art that contains images of "prepared and served up dishes, oysters, herrings, crabs, bread and butter, beer, wine, and so on," as well as "nude figures" that are "calculated to excite lustful feelings in the beholder" (WWR I: 208). When aesthetic perception is abolished, "the purpose of art is defeated" (WWR I: 208).

philosophical truth – insight into the true and peculiar nature of a thing – would be impossible to attain.[10]

Yet, although poetry and philosophy are in many ways "radically the same," they are, nonetheless, "very different in [their] tendency and in secondary matters" (WWR II: 407). While the result of "every purely objective, and so every artistic, apprehension of things" is "an expression of the true nature of life and of existence, an answer to the question 'what is life?,'" all works of art

> will always afford only a temporary, not a complete and final satisfaction. For they always give only a fragment, an example instead of the rule, which can be given only in the universality of the *concept.* Therefore, it is the task of philosophy to give for the concept, hence for reflection and in the abstract, a reply to that question, [what is life?], which on that very account is permanent and satisfactory for all time. (WWR II: 406-407)

By failing to articulate a concept, Schopenhauer suggests,

> Everyone has to stand before a picture as before a prince, waiting to see whether it will speak and what it will say to him […]. It follows from all this that all wisdom is certainly contained in the works of pictorial and graphic arts, yet only *virtuliter* or *implicite.* Philosophy, on the other hand, endeavors to furnish the same wisdom *actualiter* and *explicite* […] What it promises to supply would be, so to speak, a clear gain already realized, a firm and abiding possession, whereas that which comes from the achievements and works of art is only one that is always to be produced afresh. (WWR II: 407)

Schopenhauer even argues that a good poet would *never* reveal the concept that underlies her work: "we are entirely satisfied by the impression of a work of art only when it leaves behind something that, in spite of all of our reflection on it, we cannot bring down to the distinctness of the concept" (*WWR II*: 409). Genuine philosophical works, on the other hand, "have the stamp of honesty and openness so distinctly on their face" (*WWR I:* xxi).

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[10] Speaking to a similar point, Vasalou (2013) suggests that this is "a fact that may seem so self-evident that it risks escaping attention altogether: and this is that the act of [perception] examined above appears, not outside philosophy and once its task has been completed, but within philosophy itself" (Vasalou 2013: 56-57). In other words, not only would the artist be out of her day job if she could not engage in aesthetic contemplation, but the philosopher would be too.

This account of poetry, we might think, presents a problem for Schopenhauer's "defense." Schopenhauer, following Plato, believes that the truth is best captured by the philosopher, who traffics in *concepts.* Only a concept, he argues, can provide us with a firm and abiding possession of truth, one that does not need to be constantly produced afresh. Despite Schopenhauer's characterization of the aesthetic genius as profoundly serious, he nonetheless agrees with Plato that "all the arts speak only the naïve and childlike language of *perception*, not the abstract and serious language of *reflection*" (WWR II: 406). Moreover, Schopenhauer also echoes Plato's criticism that the poet is capable of providing only "an example instead of the rule" – their work is still bound to the individual and particular, rather than the general and universal. If truth requires that one has a conceptual grasp of the whole, then Plato would still have grounds to argue that the poets, unlike the philosophers, are lacking in truth and wisdom.

However, although Schopenhauer agrees that the work of a poet will provide only the example instead of the rule, he also claims what we imagine Plato would never concede – that an engagement with the individual and the particular is *essential* for universal knowledge. In his essay "On Aesthetics," for example, Schopenhauer says,

> If you consider how poetry and the plastic arts always take an *individual* for their theme and present it with the most careful exactitude in all its uniqueness, down to the most insignificant characteristics; and if you then look at the sciences, which operate by means of *concepts* each of which represents countless individuals by once and for all defining and designating what is peculiar to them as a species; -- if you consider this, the practice of art is likely to seem to you paltry, petty, and indeed almost childish. The nature of art, however, is such that in art one single case stands for thousands, in that what art has in view with that careful and particular delineation of the individual is the revelation of the *Idea* of the genus to which it belongs. […] For as the botanist plucks one single flower from the endless abundance of the plant world and then analyses it so as to demonstrate to us the nature of the plant in general, so the poet selects a single scene, indeed sometimes no more than a single mood or sensation, from the endless confusion of ceaselessly active human life, in order to show us what life and the nature of man is. […] For the particular and individual can be grasped only when it is made visible – which is why I have defined poetry as the art of setting the imagination into action by means of mere words. (On Aesthetics, §4)

While the poet might not explicitly reveal the concept underlying her work, recall that, for Schopenhauer, the "fundamental characteristic of genius" is "always to see the universal in the particular." "True wisdom," Schopenhauer remarks, "is not to be acquired by our measuring the boundless world, or, what would be more appropriate, by our personally floating through endless space. On the contrary, it is acquired by thoroughly investigating any individual thing, in that we try to know and understand perfectly its true and peculiar nature" (WWR I: 129).

Nevertheless, even if Plato *were* to concede that a poet does possess the truth, he might still disapprove of works of art given that their language *is* "childlike." However, for Schopenhauer, the childlike language of perception need not be an objection to poetry; "it is perception, above all, to which the real and true nature of things discloses and reveals itself" (WWR II: 378). The value of a childlike language, Schopenhauer could argue, is its ability to make the individual and particular visible by "setting the imagination into action." According to Schopenhauer, philosophical truth can be revealed only through the workings of the imagination, "for only by virtue of imagination can genius present to itself each object or event in vivid image" (WWR II: 379).[11] Works of poetry, therefore, would have value "as the means by which those who have no imagination may make up this defect as far as possible, and those gifted with imagination may facilitate the use of it" (WWR II: 379). By developing our imaginative capacities, engaging with works of art could help us all become better truth-trackers. "*Wisdom,"* that is, "the true view of life, correct insight, and clear judgement result from the way in which man apprehends the world of perception, not from his mere abstract knowledge, not from

[11] Here, Schopenhauer argues that perception cannot always be tied to "the real presence of things," or else "its material would be entirely under the dominion of chance, which rarely produces things at the right time, seldom arranges them appropriately, and often presents them to us in very defective copies. For this reason *imagination* is needed, in order to complete, arrange, amplify, fix, retain, and repeat at pleasure all the significant pictures of life" (WWR II: 379).

abstract concepts" (WWR II: 77). "Wisdom proper" is the "whole way in which the world presents itself in [one's] head (WWR II: 75), and with it, one "always apprehends every being according to its true nature" (WWR II: 77).

Thus, the task of philosophy, as Schopenhauer conceives of it, creates an interesting problem for the philosopher who does not take poetry seriously. Not only is the philosopher in the business of creating concepts – "representations of representations" (WWR I: 40) – but these concepts have value only if they get their "content from experience" (Beiser 2014: 13). Only once the philosopher has gained insight into the particular and the individual can he go about his job: "to bring them into his abstract knowledge, into reflection, is the business of the philosopher, who neither ought to nor can do more than this" (*WWR I:* 383). "True" philosophy, Schopenhauer often argues, is "not supposed to work *out* of concepts, but *into* them, in other words, to deposit its results in them" (WWR II: 83).[12] As such, an artistic engagement with the world would be vital for any achievement in philosophy; "to perceive, to allow the things themselves to speak to us, to apprehend and grasp new relations between them, and then to precipitate and deposit all this into concepts, in order to possess it with certainty; this is what gives us new knowledge" (WWR II: 72). For Schopenhauer, works of art do not only "afford us pleasurable aesthetic experiences" but they also "offer us valuable ways of viewing life, [develop] our cognitive and imaginative capacities, and [enrichen]and [deepen] our understanding of the world and ourselves" (Vandenabeele 2008: 17). In this light, poetry is not only pleasurable, but is beneficial, and is even indispensable for philosophy, which depends on it. Hence, Schopenhauer's defense.

[12] Schopenhauer contrasts this perceptual philosophy with every philosophy so far (which he takes to be most, if not all, philosophy before him) that "takes as its starting-point arbitrarily chosen abstract starting-points such as, for example, the absolute, absolute substance, God, infinite, finite, absolute identity, being, essence, and so on." The latter, he argues, "floats in air without any support, and can never lead to a real result" (WWR II: 82-83).

3.3 The Looming Question

Nonetheless, Schopenhauer's defense gets complicated. After all, the objective of the *Republic* is to create a healthy city –"the true city," Socrates' says, is a healthy one (*Rep., II:* 374e) – and the poets are banned inasmuch as they endanger our health. Socrates, for example, is insistent that we must refrain from "the recollection of our sufferings and lamentations" (*Rep., X*, 604d) because "all that shuddering will make our guardians more emotional and soft than they ought to be" (*Rep., III*, 387c). Yet, those familiar with Schopenhauer's legacy know quite well that, for him, "*all life is suffering"* (WWR I: 310). At the heart of Schopenhauer's 'pessimism' is his belief that, "absent of all aim," the essential nature of the will is one of endless striving – "every attained end is at the same time the beginning of a new course, and so on *ad infinitum*" (WWR I: 164). As such, life itself is characterized by lack and deficiency such that "the will, existence itself, is a constant suffering, and is partly woeful, partly fearful" (WWR I: 267). [13] For Schopenhauer, there is nothing more truthful than the tragic recognition that "those powers that destroy happiness and life" are "at any moment open even to us […]. Shuddering, we feel ourselves already in the midst of hell" (WWR I: 255).

The problem for "Schopenhauer's defense," then, is that "the person in whom genius is to be found suffers most of all" (WWR I: 310). Indeed, this is a truth that Schopenhauer takes to be old news: quoting Cicero's account of Aristotle, for example, he says "*Omnes ingeniosos melancholicos esse* [All men of genius are melancholy]" (WWR II: 383). This melancholia, Schopenhauer goes on, "rests on the fact that, the brighter the intellect enlightening the will-to-

[13] All the worse, he thinks, if the game between fresh desire and satisfaction does *not* go on *ad infinitum*. When this happens, we find ourselves with a "fearful, life-destroying boredom, a lifeless longing without a definite object, a deadening languor" (WWR I:164).

live, the more distinctly does it perceive the wretchedness of its condition" (WWR II: 383). While the "one advantage of genius over other men" is his ability to be "captivated by the spectacle of the will's objectification," he "himself bears the cost of producing that play; in other words, he himself is the will objectifying itself and remaining in constant suffering" (WWR I: 267). Though the genius might have access to the truth, "it does not deliver him from life forever, but only for a few moments. For him it is not the way out of life, but only an occasional consolation in it, until his power, enhanced by this contemplation, finally becomes tired of the spectacle, and seizes the serious side of things" (WWR I: 267).[14]

So, although Schopenhauer argues that taking "works" seriously is not an objectionable feature of aesthetic perception, he nevertheless equates a "serious side of things" with practical morality. The last words of *WWR I* Book 3, for example, the book on "the Object of Art," are "we will now in the following turn to the serious side," Schopenhauer's Book on Ethics. However, this seriousness associated with moral action might *not* be conducive to health, after all. When a genius does take "deeds" seriously, when she does become concerned with "the serious side" of practical affairs (WWR I: 267), then her deeds would end in her own destruction. The will, Schopenhauer argues, would react to the vision of its own restlessness and constant suffering in such a way that it would "negate" itself – "if this kind of knowledge reacts on the will, it can bring about the will's self-elimination, in other words, resignation. This is the ultimate goal, and indeed, the innermost nature of all virtue and holiness, and is salvation from the world" (WWR I: 152). The goal, for someone as seemingly pessimistic as Schopenhauer, is not to further humankind by preservation and propagation, but rather by elimination.

[14] Schopenhauer takes this transition to be that which is represented by St. Cecilia of Raphael (WWR I: 267).

Thus, in light of Socrates' objective to create a healthy society, we have to wonder whether the genius – be it a poet, artist, or philosopher – would help or hinder a civilization. Surely, a knowledge of "life as suffering" is at odds with Socrates' aim. Not only does a poet recognize life as suffering, but her work would help others attain the "clearness of consciousness" associated with this recognition (WWR I: 267). Schopenhauer, for example, argues that tragic poetry is the "summit of poetic art" precisely because its purpose lies in "the description of the terrible side of life" and, thus, can inspire a resignation of the will-to-live (WWR I: 252). If poetry facilitates the kind of knowledge associated with suffering and resignation, then will it also bring about the corruption of individuals and civilization? If so, Schopenhauer's defense might fail.

4 NIETZSCHE, THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Determining whether Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory could lead to a satisfying defense of poetry depends on whether poetry is conducive to health, or detrimental to it. However, because this is a question about health, perhaps it ought to be investigated by a *psychologist*, rather than a philosopher; perhaps neither Schopenhauer nor Plato have the credentials to answer it.

In this section, then, I will turn our attention to one of Schopenhauer's most famous "sons and pupils" (SE:136), a "born psychologist" (BGE: §45) and "investigator of souls" (BGE: §263), Friedrich Nietzsche. Although Nietzsche often scorns Schopenhauer's account of resignation – that is, his nihilistic "will to nothingness" – for being "the *detrimental* ideal *par excellence*, a will to the end, a decadence ideal" (EH, "Why I Write Such Good Books: *GM*"), whether this "decadence" is necessarily entailed by Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory is, I think, still an open question.

4.1 Poetry, Truth, and Health

Nietzsche, following Schopenhauer, maintains that life is characterized by suffering. "The truth is terrible" (EH IV: 1), he tells us, and to conceive of "reality as it is" leads to a recognition of "all that is terrible and questionable in it" (EH IV: 5).[15] Preserving the seed of his former educator's thought, Nietzsche remarks, "life itself is *essentially* a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, the very least, exploiting" (BGE: §259). As Jessica Berry puts it, Nietzsche believes that the world is a "complex and sometimes chaotic world that is, at best, indifferent to meeting our needs and fulfilling our desires. […It is] an inexhaustible source of

[15] For a further account of Nietzsche's remarks here, see: Leiter (2020) "The Truth is Terrible."

suffering for human beings" (Berry 2018: 401). Though the truth might be terrible, "one's fortitude in the face of all this is, as Nietzsche says, a measure of one's strength, health, and vitality" (Berry 2018: 401).

Not only does Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, view truth as something terrible, but he also suggests that poetry aims at truth. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche articulates a clear account of the poet's psychology: "Nothing can be more certain than this: what makes a poet a poet is the fact that he sees himself surrounded by figures who live and act before him, and into whose innermost essence he gazes" (BT: §8). Like Schopenhauer's genius, poets are characterized by Nietzsche according to their ability to perceive the world, and those in it, as an aesthetic phenomenon:

> For the genuine poet metaphor is no rhetorical figure, but an image which takes the place of something else, something he can really see before him as a substitute for a concept. […] What allows Homer to depict things so much more vividly than all other poets? It is the fact that he looks at things so much more than they do. […] Fundamentally the aesthetic phenomenon is simple; one only has to have the ability to watch a living play (Spiel) continuously and to live constantly surrounded by crowds of spirits, then one is a poet; if one feels the impulse to transform oneself and to speak out of other bodies and souls, then one is a dramatist. (*BT,* §8)

Though both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche suggest that an aesthetic engagement with the world is analogous to viewing the world as a spectacle or "play," "the sphere of poetry," Nietzsche says, "does not lie outside the world, like some fantastical impossibility contrived in a poet's head; poetry aims to be the very opposite, the unvarnished expression of truth […]. The Dionysian Greek wants truth and nature at full strength" (*BT,* §8).

However, while Nietzsche does recognize poetry as a truth-tracking endeavor, whereby the truths it tracks are terrible, he does not suggest that it results in sickness. According to Nietzsche, the "grotesque seriousness" (BGE: preface) that leads Schopenhauer to a "will-to-nothingness" is symptomatic of a deadly state of exhaustion (BGE: §10). It often reveals "a

certain *impoverishment of life"* where "the affects become cool, the tempo slowed, dialectic in place of instinct, *seriousness* impressed on faces and gestures (seriousness, this most unmistakable mark of a more laborious metabolism, of a struggling, harder-working life)" (GM III: §25). While this diagnosis is nonetheless consistent with Schopenhauer's remarks about resignation – that the genius is brought to the "serious side" only once she "becomes tired" – the poet, on both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's view, need not be characterized by the "grotesque seriousness" symptomatic of illness and exhaustion. Even in *WWR* Book 4, Schopenhauer maintains his belief that poetry and philosophy are not concerned with the "serious side" of practical morality: "all philosophy," he says, "is always theoretical since it is essential to it always to maintain a purely contemplative attitude, whatever be the immediate object of investigation; to inquire not to prescribe […] from such knowledge we get philosophy as well as art" (WWR I: 273-274).

Rather than resulting from a "grotesque" seriousness, Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, gives us reason to think that poetry results from a "*great* seriousness" that is perhaps symptomatic of a "*great health"* (GS: §382). When in a state of great health,

> we face a world so over-rich in what is beautiful, strange, questionable, terrible, and divine that our curiosity and our thirst to possess it have veered beyond control – alas, so that nothing will sate us anymore! […] another ideal runs before us, a peculiar, seductive, dangerous ideal to which we wouldn't persuade anyone, since we don't readily concede *the right to it* to anyone: the ideal of a spirit that plays naively, i.e., not deliberately but from overflowing abundance and power. (GS: §382)

Though the "great health" is rare, Nietzsche provides one example of those who might embody it: "Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to *live*: what is needed for that is to stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin; to worship appearance, to believe in shapes, tones, words […]! Those Greeks," he says, "were superficial – *out of profundity!"* (GS Preface: §4). Indeed, when referring to the "*profound*" seriousness characteristic of artists, poets, and philosophers,

Schopenhauer remarks, "only through it is man *great"* (WWR II:385). Additionally, the concept of a spirit that plays naïvely is also fitting for Schopenhauer's poet: "every genius is already a big child, since he looks out into the world as into something strange and foreign, a drama […]. He who throughout his life does not, to a certain extent, remain a big child, but becomes an earnest, sober, thoroughly composed and rational man, can be a very useful and capable citizen of this world; but he will never be a genius" (WWR II: 395).

However, might this "great" seriousness eventually give way to the sickly, 'grotesque' seriousness, as Schopenhauer seems to suggest? Perhaps not. Instead of culminating in exhaustion, the poet's seriousness might bring about a life-enhancing "cheerfulness." In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche tells us,

> The true thinker always cheers and refreshes, whether he is being serious or humorous, expressing his insight or his divine forbearance; without peevish gesturing, trembling hands, tear-filled eyes, but with certainty and simplicity, courage and strength, perhaps a little harshly and valiantly but in any case as a victor […]. For at bottom there is cheerfulness only where there is a victory; and this applies to the works of true thinkers just as much as it does to any work of art. Let its content be as dreadful and as serious as the problem of life itself; the work will produce a depressing and painful effect only if the semi-thinker and the semi-artist has exhaled over it the vapor of his inadequacy; while nothing better or happier can befall a man than to be in the proximity of one of those victors who, precisely because they have thought the most deeply, must love what is most living, and, as sages, incline in the end to the beautiful. (SE: 135-136)

Those characterized by "great seriousness," we might think, are those who have descended "into the depths of existence with a string of curious questions on [their] lips" (SE: 154). In doing so, they "enter into a labyrinth," and multiply "by a thousand the dangers already inherent in the very act of living, not the least of which is the fact that no one with eyes will see how and where [they get] lost and lonely and [are] torn limb from limb by some cave-Minotaur of conscience" (BGE: §29). Cheerfulness, Nietzsche seems to suggest, is the reward for continuously

confronting, and conquering, "the cave minotaurs" of conscience: "to behold the victorious god with all the monsters he has combated – that cheers one most profoundly" (SE: 135).

So, while she might not be "delivered from life forever" through aesthetic perception, it does not follow that the poet, the artist, or the philosopher, needs to be delivered from life forever.

> As if there weren't really any reward for taking all these things – the problems of morality – so seriously. To me it seems that, on the contrary, there are no things which would *reward* one more for taking them seriously; to which reward belongs, for example, that one might perhaps someday gain permission to take them *cheerfully.* For cheerfulness, or to say it in my language, *gay science*, – is a reward: a reward for a long, brave, industrious, and subterranean seriousness that is admittedly not for everyone. On that day, however, when we say from a full heart: 'Onward! Even our old morality belongs *in comedy!'* we will have discovered a new complication and possibility for the Dionysian drama of the 'Destiny of the Soul.' (GM preface: §7)

In other words, the "spectacle of the will's objectification" need not result in exhaustion, but can, instead, bring about cheerfulness, joy, and, ultimately, laughter. "[A]s I finally, slowly, slowly paint this gloomy question mark […] – it strikes me that I hear all around myself the most malicious, cheerful, hobgoblin—like laughter" (GS: §383).

"To maintain a cheerful attitude of mind in the midst of a gloomy and exceedingly responsible task," Nietzsche remarks in the *Twilight of the Idols, "*is no slight artistic feat. And yet, what could be more necessary than cheerfulness? Nothing ever succeeds which exuberant spirits have not helped to produce" (TI: Foreword). Thus, the real danger to health, Nietzsche argues, is not art, but those who banish art, *"all art,* to the realm of lies, and thus negate, damn, and condemn it. Behind this way of thinking and evaluating, which is bound to be hostile to art if it is at all genuine, [Nietzsche] had always felt its *hostility to life*, a furious vengeful enmity towards life itself" ("An Attempt at Self Criticism," *BT:* §5). In Book X of the *Republic*, Socrates' *anaesthetizes* life – he rids it of its *aesthetic* significance – but perhaps in doing so, he

endangers life and health. Taking Advil for a toothache, for example, might ease our suffering, but if we only treat our abscessed tooth with Advil, the infection will spread, and we will eventually die. Poetry, we might think, does not destroy and corrupt, but is a response to "people determined to believe that they can make suffering obsolete -- who don't understand yet a very simple physiological fact: that the pain which signals a toothache is the same pain which saves your life" (Baldwin 1963: The Artists Struggle for Integrity). While the truth might prove terrible and painful, it is nonetheless "a wound [that] stimulates the recuperative powers" (TI: foreword).

5 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

If Schopenhauer is right that poetry is invaluable to those interested in the pursuit of truth, then his account of the "ancient quarrel" might leave us with a new vision of philosophical endeavors. Schopenhauer's insights regarding poetry have, for example, urged some contemporary philosophers to consider taking a poetic approach to philosophy. For instance, Sandra Shapshay (2008) suggests that, "although contemporary philosophy often eschews 'meaning of life' questions, perhaps it should try to advance in these matters again by way of a Schopenhauerian symbiosis between what can only be shown and what can be said" (Shapshay 2008: 225). Elizabeth Millán (2017) ultimately concludes something similar: "instead of worrying about a given thinker being too poetic, perhaps we should be troubled by thinkers who are not poetic enough, for perhaps therein lies a real danger for philosophy: bereft of poetry, philosophy would become a field populated by reasoning machines, creating works that leave nothing for the imagination" (Millán 2017: 193).

Nonetheless, Schopenhauer's contribution here might even inspire a new task for philosophers altogether. If *poetry* is the endeavor that aims at truth – if it reveals to us the "toothache" – it is worth asking who the *dentist* is. Nietzsche, for example, tells us of a "new breed" of philosophers (*BGE*: §42) whose "conscience bears the weight of the overall development of humanity" (*BGE*: §61) and whose task is to "translate humanity back into nature […]; to make sure that, from now on, the human being will stand before the human being […]. This may be a strange and insane task, but it is a *task"* (*BGE*: §230). Rather than being those who furnish us with "dead concepts" (WWR II: 78), perhaps philosophers are those who bring the concept to life: they are those who "live truly and not the uncanny masquerade men are accustomed to live: which is why in their proximity we for once feel human and natural and

might exclaim with Goethe: 'How glorious and precious a living thing is! How well adapted to the conditions it lives in, how true, and how full of being!'" (*UM III*: 136, emphasis added).[16]

Thus, if Kallipolis is to be a *healthy* city, then perhaps Plato's decision to ban the poets is *not* justified after all. While philosophy and poetry may vary in their tendency and secondary matters, the capacity for the two is "yet radically the same" (WWR II: 407). Schopenhauer's aesthetic philosophy, provides, what he thinks is, a genuinely Platonic argument in support of the truth-tracking nature of poetry. Moreover, an aesthetic apprehension of the world, Schopenhauer argues, is the condition for *all philosophy*. If it were not for an artistic engagement with the world, philosophy would have no vital force. Although poetry does lead to a knowledge that life is constant struggle and strife, there is no cheerfulness without victory, and there is "no victory without struggle" (WWR I: 146). While philosophers might be "bad poets" because they make explicit and abstract the concepts that good poets keep implicit and perceptual, they are, nonetheless, "poets." Thus, if there is a quarrel between philosophy and poetry, then perhaps it is best conceived as a lover's quarrel; the poet does, "at his best, what lovers do, which is reveal the beloved to himself, and with that revelation, to make freedom real" (Baldwin, *The Creative Process*).

[16] A future paper might explore the relationship between a concept and a law. Interestingly, according to Nietzsche, "[every artist] knows how strictly and sharply he obeys thousands of laws at this very moment, laws that defy conceptual formulation precisely because of their hardness and determinateness (compared with these laws there is something floundering, multiple, and ambiguous about even the most solid concept)" (BGE: §188). If Nietzsche is right here, then perhaps *"true philosophers are commanders and legislators:* they say, 'that is how it *should* be!'" (*BGE*: §211). While this account of philosophy might be reminiscent of Plato's "philosopher kings," both Schopenhauer's account of genius and Nietzsche's distaste for moralizing should inspire a close examination of the kind of laws that would be created by this "new breed" of philosophers. In another paper, I have argued that Schopenhauer's account of "laws of nature" might be fruitful to unpack in this regard.

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