



Suffering in Nietzsche: Motive and Mask

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Abstract: This essay presents two chapters from my (unpublished) book, based on my doctoral dissertation, *Suffering in Nietzsche: Motive and Mask*. The first chapter ("The Problem") poses the question of my research, the second chapter ("The Conclusion") was previously published in German and Serbo-Croatian with the title "Suffering: Motive and Mask."

The Problem

1.

Ich, Zarathustra, der Fürsprecher des Lebens,
der Fürsprecher des Leidens,
der Fürsprecher des Kreises—dich rufe ich,
meinen abgründlichsten Gedanken.¹

"I, Zarathustra, the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle—it is you I call, my most unfathomable thought."²—In this, perhaps the most crucial and surely one of the most dramatic passages in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche brings together in an emotion-charged incantation a triad of what we must recognize as the equally fundamental themes that epitomize Zarathustra's mission. It is well known that Zarathustra speaks for (i.e., advocates) life, which includes and culminates in the Superman; he speaks for

the circle, i.e., the unending circularity of time—Eternal Recurrence. Somehow, interpreters stop here and overlook the third mission of Zarathustra, namely to be advocate of suffering. Moreover, this mention of suffering, surely not by accident but rather by design, stands between the two polarities expressed by the progression of life toward its highest form and the apparent negation of such becoming in the prescribed, inescapable circle of eternal recurrence. Suffering, with Zarathustra as its advocate, thus stands here in double relation: It is covalent with the two other powerful ideas of Nietzsche, *Übermensch* (Superman) and *Ewige Wiederkehr* (Eternal Recurrence), and, through its placement in the sentence between the two, it represents a link between these two otherwise so disparate thoughts. It is only through suffering, which informs the creation of the Superman as well as the expression and acceptance of Eternal Recurrence, that the new world order, conceived by Nietzsche and expressed by Zarathustra, can come about.

It is not surprising that scholars have closed their eyes to this particular aspect of Nietzschean thought since it is the least comprehensible and most puzzling of his often difficult ideas. Whenever suffering is recognized as an element in *Zarathustra*—and that is rare—it is usually passed over by ascribing no topical

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Munich: DTV 1999, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1967-1977, 1988. [Henceforth cited as KSA] Here, Vol. 4, *Zarathustra*, "Der Genesende," p. 271.

² All translations from German in this essay are by the author.

validity to it in its own right; rather, it is relegated to a minor position as the function of a life of tremendous suffering, as Nietzsche's life is understood.

2.

The idea that anyone should advocate suffering, no matter for what ulterior purpose, especially if the advocate is an avowed non-Christian, is repulsive in a predominantly post-Christian era. Indeed, by the late nineteenth century, during Nietzsche's most productive years, the idea of taking suffering upon oneself and inflicting it on others for a greater good was no longer acceptable, save for a very small number of the deeply religious. Progress—the watchword of the age—included also the alleviation if not elimination of pain and suffering. And then Nietzsche published his incisive criticism of just about everything Western man had achieved and of which he was so proud. Once more pain, suffering, and death had been given positive value, not for their own sake but for what can and must be achieved through them. Social hierarchies, elites we would call them today, had begun to loosen their stranglehold on society, and ordinary people could, at least in theory, break through social barriers by their own efforts. But Nietzsche preached hierarchy and nobility. People began to be more open with each other, to assume a more natural, less ceremonious stance in social interaction. Nietzsche, however, was the advocate of the mask, of hiding one's true self from others, of the deliberate assumption of a certain stance to demonstrate one's nobility. What were his readers—what are we—to make of this?

One way of approaching this question is to ignore it, i.e., to act as if this emphasis on pain is not worthy of examination—a mere blip on the screen of Nietzsche's panoramic worldview, as it were. Or it might be considered an attempt on his part to give meaning to his own life of unrelenting suffering, both spiritual and physical. Neither option does justice to the man or his work, the first even less than the second.

However, there is another option available to us that has not been explored sufficiently: namely, to take Nietzsche seriously in everything he writes, in his correspondence as well as in his published works; to keep in mind that Nietzsche the writer, philosopher, critic, gadfly, and visionary if you will, is the same person who writes desperate letters to friends and family, indeed to anyone who will listen; that just as Zarathustra, his son, as he calls him, suffers for a noble though unpopular cause, so does his creator—or so it

seems or he would have you believe. This, then, is what I propose to do: to treat the topic of suffering as it concerns Nietzsche's life and work, in particular to assess its importance to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and to Nietzsche as its author.

The method I shall use consists of a two-pronged analysis of the two manifestations of Nietzsche the writer: one, the published work, the other, his correspondence as he expresses his life and ideas through it, each prong seeming to stand by itself without reference to the other. Suffering has a function within each, and we shall see what this function consists of, whether the function in the one is comparable to the function in the other.

The work is *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and the correspondence is that of the *Zarathustra*-period, i.e., roughly from 1879 to the middle 1880s.

Why *Zarathustra*? It is central to Nietzsche's thought; it contains practically all of Nietzsche's main ideas (the works preceding it and those published after it have been considered both by Nietzsche and by Nietzsche-scholars to be precursors to, commentaries on and elaborations of Nietzsche's thoughts in *Zarathustra*); it stands on the threshold of Nietzsche's self-awareness as a prophet; it is, in spite of some lapses into vulgarity and tastelessness, a most compelling and seductive piece of literature and is, therefore, the widest-known if not the best-known of his works; finally—and this last fact is perhaps the decisive one—this crucial aspect of the work has somehow been overlooked by interpreters, and yet *Zarathustra* is permeated with references to suffering. In my treatment of *Zarathustra* I have restricted myself to Parts I, II, and III for the following reasons: These three parts belong together, chronologically as well as in thought content. As we shall see, there is a progression in them from the first intimations of the Superman to the revelation of Eternal Recurrence. Part IV, written later, seems tacked on and incomplete and offers little that is new in relation to our topic.

In the correspondence I have chosen to concentrate on two periods: 1879-1880, and 1882-1883. These years have one important factor in common: Something happened to Nietzsche; his life was changed by events, some within his control, some without. Most of the events in Nietzsche's life were interior events, punctuated perhaps by visits to and by friends and family, and seasonal removals to what he considered healthier climates. Interior events, by their very nature, are not observable by third parties and, thus, we have

no evidence of their occurrence beyond the testimony of those who are experiencing them. However, what is of significance here is the way in which he communicates them to family and friends, and how frequently he does so. Based on this criterion also, 1879-1880 and 1882-1883 come out at the top of the list.

In 1879 Nietzsche's illness led him to resign from his teaching post, luckily with adequate pensions, and he set out to be what he called a *fugitious errans*. Relieved of academic duties, he was able to devote himself for the next ten years to a life of scholarship and creativity, interrupted only by bouts of illness. These, according to his reports, were very severe in 1879, and physical suffering dominates the correspondence of this year. By 1882 his physical condition had improved, and the emphasis shifted to psychological and spiritual suffering. 1882 is the year of the "Lou-Episode," of unwarranted hopes and demands on Nietzsche's part, the thwarting of which led to complications and enmities stretching from one end of Europe to the other. In his behavior Nietzsche fails himself, with sad consequences for himself as well as those close to him.

3.

There are various ways of dividing the years in which Nietzsche was active as a writer. Each has its justification for the different chronological divisions into periods of creativity, and each can be granted validity with its own context. Karl Jaspers, in his book on Nietzsche, for example, marks a break in 1876 and 1880, and again in 1883. Lou Andreas-Salomé (*Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken*) divides Nietzsche's productive years into two ten-year stretches, from 1869 to 1879, the years of Nietzsche's Basel professorship, and from 1879 to 1889, his years as *fugitious errans*; this is followed by the eleven-year darkness of Nietzsche's mental illness and death. My own inclusion of 1879 as belonging to the *Zarathustra*-years (the inclusion of 1883 needs no explanation) has some added justification: Although Nietzsche published two other works between 1879 and 1883, i.e., *Menschliches*, *allzu Menschliches* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, there are contained in the production of these years the ideas that will later find full expression in *Zarathustra*, and even pages (e.g., "God is dead," the beginning of the preface to *Zarathustra*) taken verbatim or almost verbatim into *Zarathustra*. It is very difficult to determine when exactly certain ideas arise in the mind and by what they are nourished. According to one source, for example, the idea of *Zarathustra* (the *work* if not *Zarathustra* as

bearer of the message) arose even before 1879 in Nietzsche's mind. The source of this information is Bernard Szarlitt (Bernhard Scharlitt), who claims to have been a friend of Peter Gast (Nietzsche's friend and amanuensis) in Weimar and worked in the Nietzsche Archive. Szarlitt claims that Gast told him the following: Shortly after his flight from Bayreuth and Wagner, Nietzsche had first entertained the thoughts and ideas leading to *Zarathustra*. The Superman became more and more of a utopian ideal for him. For a long time he intended Napoleon to be the bearer of his message, until he received the work of a resident of Vienna completely unknown to him, Siegfried Lipiner. The latter had already founded a Nietzsche-Club in Vienna. Lipiner's *Entfesselter Prometheus* (Prometheus Unchained) aroused Nietzsche's enthusiasm, which he expressed time and again in conversation with Gast. Reading this work convinced Nietzsche to make *Zarathustra* instead of Napoleon the bearer of his message. Gast considered Lipiner to be the "catalyst of *Zarathustra*." There was a second Polish influence on Nietzsche (Lipiner was from Tarnów): Chopin. According to Gast, Nietzsche wrote down the first thoughts about *Zarathustra* while reading Lipiner. While Nietzsche was thus engaged, Gast had to play him Chopin constantly on the piano. Nietzsche told Gast "that the sounds of this music had a wonderful effect on his style." It happened once that Nietzsche woke Gast in the middle of the night and asked him to play Chopin, since Nietzsche was just then working on a chapter of *Zarathustra*.³ Bernoulli gives independent verification of both, Nietzsche's interest in Chopin and in Lipiner's book in the late 1870s (FOFN 305, 307). This biographical item demonstrates the cogency of including the correspondence of 1879 in the *Zarathustra* period.

4.

In an article about Nietzsche, Walter Jens writes:

Most likely there is no one (no matter of which century) whom we know better than Nietzsche. We know his

³ Newspaper clipping "Die Entstehung, des Zarathustra" von Bernhard Szarlitt, *Neue Freie Presse* (Wien), 9. Dezember 1933. Found by me in Jaspers-Nachlass, folder marked "Zarathustra Grundlehren." Bernoulli, too, refers to Lipiner's *Entfesselter Prometheus* "by which Nietzsche was totally enthralled." Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, *Franz Overbeck und Friedrich Nietzsche: Eine Freundschaft*, 2 vols., Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag 1908, here, Vol. I, p. 307. [Henceforth cited as FOFN]

illnesses and his thoughts; his hopes and his dreams; we know his moods—but also the temperature at the places where he had lived. The work ... is the most comprehensive soul-diary, the most candid confession, the most pitiless journal (pitiless to the point of shamelessness) that has ever been kept.⁴

Jens also writes that Nietzsche, rather than develop a system, has produced in his work "fragments of a great confession." This brief quotation, characteristic of the approach to Nietzsche represented by Jens, may serve, in its lack of differentiation, its over-simplification and its uncritical acceptance of the Nietzsche-mythology, as one of our points of departure. Jens fails to distinguish between published works and material intended for publication by Nietzsche himself, on the one hand, and his correspondence to family and very close friends, on the other. Clearly the day-to-day concerns with which he regaled his mother (e.g., that the ham she sent him in one of her innumerable "CARE packages" was too salty⁵) cannot be lumped together with his finely polished aphorisms; nor can the embarrassingly detailed account of his physical state, especially in *Ecce Homo*, be considered in the same light as any of his major works written prior to the time when his incipient mental illness began to hold sway even in his writings designed for publication.

Also, Goethe's phrase, "fragments of a great confession," which gained the popularity of a slogan, has been applied with great facility both by authors about their own work and by interpreters about this work when it is felt that such a relationship between life and work will tend to enhance the substance of both or make up for shortcomings in one or the other. Sometimes it has this desired effect and helps our understanding and appreciation. Often, however, the interpolation effected by this loaded phrase tends to obfuscate issues by hiding inadequacies or preventing us from looking at the work in its own right. A second consideration here is the fact that the phrase can basically be used in two ways: On the one hand, the author as a person can be understood better through his work; on the other hand, the reader is made to interpret the work in the light of the author's life. In the

latter case, it might be the intention of the author himself—and I believe this to be the case with Nietzsche—to have his work read with the help of a dispositional biographical background supplied by him; i.e., the story of his life, his suffering, his triumphs are meant to deepen the reader's insight into the work's message. It is an effective literary device—whether intended as such or not—and, used by a gifted author, will in some way and for some time achieve the desired result. However, one must consider carefully the life of the author from a whole range of perspectives and, at the same time, be prepared to let the work speak for itself, and must judge it on its own merits without positive or negative evaluation by a dispositional reference to the life or personality of the author.

Finally, in the short quotation from Jens (which is used here paradigmatically to stand for a great number of interpreters and not because of the uniqueness of his insight) we have the basic apparently unshakable presupposition that what Nietzsche confesses about himself corresponds to the truth. This is the crucial presupposition which we have to examine carefully. At one time I too had accepted unquestioningly the picture Nietzsche paints of himself, until my study first led me to doubt and then to reject absolute credence in what Nietzsche says about himself and to discover more and more evidence of his manipulation of facts to conform to the image of himself that he believed would serve him best—and he was right in this assumption.

There is no question that the work has to be related to, or in some way even determined by, the life of its creator. In the case of *Zarathustra*, the important movement proceeds in the opposite direction: The mission and the work inform the life as Nietzsche presents it to the reader. *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (fiction and truth) are merged for a purpose and usually without Nietzsche's acknowledgement of such tampering. In the *Nachlass* of 1878-1879, Nietzsche writes: "Even the artist can easily be mistaken about himself. But gradually, his nature is altered in accordance with his favorite constructs" (KSA IV₃ 434)." To which, however, one must add: If the nature of the artist does not change, then he can change the image, the mask he presents to the world. This is Nietzsche's method. Specifically, it is the mask of the suffering solitary genius and prophet unrecognized in his time and by his contemporaries, misunderstood and even scorned by friends and family, disappointed that mankind is not reaching for the highest possibilities envisaged by him, who is kept from voluntary death by the consciousness of his mission. This, in several

⁴ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 9, 1974. Supplement: *Bilder und Zeiten*, p. 1.

⁵ Curt Paul Janz, *Die Briefe Friedrich Nietzsches: Textprobleme und ihre Bedeutung für Biographie und Doxographie*, Zurich: Theologischer Verlag 1972, p. 97. [Henceforth cited as *BFN*]

variations, is what Nietzsche wants us to see, and he wants us to read and judge his *Zarathustra* against this background. His close friend Franz Overbeck had some inkling of this when he wrote: "Nietzsche let the effect of his teaching depend to a great extent on an understanding of his life" (*FOFN2* 252)." Nietzsche himself, writing to another friend about *Zarathustra*, illustrates this point. We read in a letter to Karl Hillebrand:

Everything that I have thought, suffered and hoped is contained in *Zarathustra*, and in a way such that my life now seems to me to be justified. And then again I am embarrassed in front of myself: for here I have stretched out my hand, [reaching] for the highest crowns that mankind has to bestow.⁶

5.

We have alluded to the role of suffering in Nietzsche's life and work and its effect on Nietzsche interpretation. But how is the term "suffering" to be understood? The use of "suffering" must conform to the many forms, levels and aspects of awareness and expression of suffering that we find in the testimonies of Nietzsche's mind, i.e., his writings. The scope of this awareness and the richness of such expression may suggest that the theme of suffering in Nietzsche is as comprehensive as what in other thinkers would be expressed as the problem of evil. However, the distinction between evil and suffering may help in determining a use of the latter term that is appropriate to what Nietzsche had in mind.

"Evil" is a value term, the most general negative value term. Something is said to be evil if it is evaluated negatively, as opposite of good, or opposed to good, the most general positive value term. The designation of something as evil is an act of consciousness, simply because any act of valuation is an act of consciousness. However, the evaluation of something as evil does not involve a reference to, and does not necessarily involve the occurrence or an experience of something as evil. One is able to judge something as evil without its being tied to an actual or potential threat to one's existence, or risk of one's being. It is precisely the presence, together with the awareness of negative value, of the consciousness of being actually or potentially subject to what is of negative value, that marks the difference between suffering and evil. Suffering is something

experienced; one is aware of it in the actuality and concreteness of life, as something that is or may be detrimental to it or an impairment thereof, such that from the standpoint of this or that life it is judged to be negative. The standard of negative evaluation is not separable from the experience of suffering. This negative evaluation does not exclude, of course, the possibility of some eventual benefit derived directly or indirectly from suffering.

Any kind of characterization of the use of "suffering" requires, for its success, the striking of a familiar chord in the one to whom this characterization is proposed or imparted. Suffering is an irreducible experience; in particular it is not exhausted by conceptual definition. No one can know from a definition of suffering what suffering is or means unless he or she has suffered. Although we know what it means to suffer, even though we may recognize that this person suffers or claims to suffer, it does not follow that we understand in what way that person suffers or how this or that event can evoke suffering in him.

In Nietzsche's references to suffering we may distinguish levels or realms of suffering; kinds of suffering; an ambience of suffering; and functions of suffering. These distinctions, though we can make them in theory and apply them to specific instances of suffering, are not usually evident as such within the organic unity of his writings, whether these writings are published or publishable works, his notes, or his letters. Yet they are useful for our purposes.

A distinction between different levels or realms of suffering would include: physical suffering, engendered by bodily functions or dysfunctions, caused by illness, consisting of different pains. Psychological suffering is often accompanied by physical suffering, such as fear, depression, anguish, disgust. Spiritual suffering, arising from one's adherence to standards, such as suffering from—not the effects of—but the very presence of, for example, vulgarity, violence, perfidy—in short, what Nietzsche would call *das Leiden am Menschen*, i.e., man's falling short of the ideal. We may also speak of existential suffering, suffering that is constituted by the impingement on the wholeness or soundness or integrity of the person. Here we may make a twofold distinction: On the one hand, there is suffering that is immediate, such as grief, hopelessness, loneliness; on the other hand, there is suffering that is mediated by some idea of personal integrity, such as dishonor, insult.

Kinds of suffering cut across distinctions of realms and levels of suffering: Certain kinds of suffering recur

⁶ Richard Oehler, *Nietzsches Briefe*, Leipzig: Insel Verlag 1917, p. 265.

in Nietzsche with a consistency that compels us to regard them as constituting the main substance of his motive of suffering. These kinds of suffering are *Mit-Leiden* (com[-]passion, lit. suffering-with),⁷ *Leiden-Machen* (making-suffer), *Entsagung* (renunciation), *Einsamkeit* (solitude or loneliness), *Opfer* (sacrifice), *Überwindung* (overcoming), *Askese* (asceticism), and simply undifferentiated *Leiden* (suffering). Of these, the first is the one to which Nietzsche has the most ambivalent attitude, decrying it at one time, demanding it another. The second, *making-suffer*, is a key concept for Nietzsche; it has great power over him who makes suffer as well as over the sufferer himself. To do full justice to it would take us too far.

In Nietzsche the actuality of suffering cannot be imagined without the ambience of suffering. There is, of course, the mood of a person and the mood prevailing at a time or in a social relation that has bearing on the disposition to or the actuality of suffering. Beyond that, landscapes, weather conditions, seasons, and locations are in Nietzsche usually associated with different evocations of suffering. In this ambience, we should also include Nietzsche's extremely rich language of suffering and his sensitivity to the ability of language to evoke awareness of suffering.

Nietzsche is interested in suffering not so much as a fact but in its function, in the role it plays and which it can be made to play. Thus suffering can be a motive of realization, be it artistic creation or the attainment of higher forms of life, such as the Superman. Another function of suffering is that of weeding out, where suffering either disciplines man toward a higher goal or breaks a man into relinquishing his right to exist; in this way the proclamation and acceptance of Eternal Recurrence is associated with suffering. Still another function of suffering that we shall meet is that of the mask of the suffering prophet. It is in this sense that Nietzsche regards his life as the appropriate vehicle for the message contained in his works, in particular in *Zarathustra*, as we shall see.

6.

I speak of the theme of suffering in Nietzsche as a *motive* rather than a *motif*. 'Motif' and 'motive' have two distinct though not unrelated meanings. In the one sense, both connote a theme that runs through a work

of art. Of these, 'motif' is the more commonly used. It lacks, however, the thrust of 'motive,' a purposive, impelling force. Of the two, only 'motive' has associated with it the connotation of *willing*, of *deliberateness*. Hence, my choice of 'motive' rather than 'motif.'

The Conclusion

The years between his departure from Basel in 1879 and the completion of *Zarathustra* in 1883 were the most critical for Nietzsche, both as regards his personal life as well as his creativity. A careful perusal of his correspondence with friends, colleagues and family members, as well as relevant documents tell us how he fared in that period, his relation to others, and how he thought about his work. To be sure, the persona that emerges is complex but the abundant material permits us to sketch the contours with a few brushstrokes.

We have traveled with Nietzsche, by way of his correspondence, through some of the most crucial years of his life and his creativity. What have we learned about him, his work and his mission as he perceived them, his relationship to others? In spite of the complexity of the man, our findings can be summarized in relatively brief form. What we can say about Nietzsche with certainty is the following: He was ill—more so in 1879 than in 1882-1883; this is attested to by the persons who were able to observe him and report on him. He moved his place of residence repeatedly, trying to follow the sun in the winter, blue skies but shady walks in the summer. He had trouble with his eyes but not so much that he was unable to read or write, except during acute attacks of what has not been definitely diagnosed, but which expressed itself in migraine-like headaches and digestive troubles. His pension allowed him to live simply (but not necessarily frugally), travel, and even put some money away. He thought. He wrote. He had devoted friends, who did all they could to make his life easier but were not always enthusiastic about his writings; even Gast dared, on occasion, to voice reservations, i.e., in regard to the elitist tone of *Zarathustra* and later works, but right away felt guilty about having upset the Master. He complained almost constantly: e.g., about his health, the weather, his family, his publisher, his friends, his accommodations, his loneliness, his not being alone, life in general and his life in particular, of being misunderstood.

As one reads Nietzsche's letters, one is struck by the monotony and repetitiousness of so much that he says as well as by the almost complete self-centeredness

⁷ In this study I shall refer to *Mit-Leiden* as (capitalized) Compassion.

of his communications.⁸ However, we do not intend to focus on Nietzsche's character, as expressed in his letters. Nor do we want to, or believe it possible to, state the true relationship between the "real" Nietzsche and how he presents himself to others. We have seen some discrepancies, e.g., between what he writes about his aloneness and our knowledge that his friends were close by or even with him; his exaggerations, such as hyperbolic statements about one particular time being the worst of his life; his tendency to imply, or say outright, nasty and often untrue things about friends or relatives behind their backs. No doubt Nietzsche was often ill, felt lonely at times or misunderstood or disappointed. But none of this makes him stand out among those who are—or consider themselves—creative in one way or another. Illness, loneliness, being misunderstood, do not in themselves constitute the uniqueness of Nietzsche, that which sets him apart from ordinary human beings or from creative persons. What does set Nietzsche apart is the use to which he puts the givens of his life, the pattern that emerges and the myths—or masks—with which he confronts us, to advance the cause of Nietzsche the man and creator, as well as of his works.

The answer to the question as to what constitutes such masking in the case of Nietzsche must be approached from different directions. Basically, what I call his mask refers to the way of acting out, more or less deliberately and purposefully, the mythology Nietzsche has created about himself in order to project

a certain image. As in myth, there is usually some truth contained in this projection. In the case of Nietzsche, we are dealing with a self-projection that, in the main, does *not* stand in direct contrast to Nietzsche the person, to the extent that we have come to know him or are able to come to know him. It is not the kind of situation of Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; nor is there similarity to, for example, the situation of Søren Kierkegaard, who publicly presented himself as a man-about-town, an idle playboy, and yet stood many hours a night at his high desks, struggling with his God and turning out books, often under pseudonyms, that bear witness to this agonized struggle and are seminal for contemporary man's encounter with ultimate questions. Nietzsche's case is different: For one thing, he did not have to invent himself in the way Kierkegaard had to act out his public persona of a wastrel and invent his pseudonymous authors. Nietzsche merely used the raw materials of his life, re-shaped them, emphasized some aspects, played down others, repeated and hammered home what seemed most important to him. To some extent every person may be guilty—if guilt it is—of rearranging or reordering the details of his life in varying degrees in order to make himself more acceptable to himself and to others. But what we lack, in comparison with Nietzsche, is the desire or ability to create as well as propagate a new version of ourselves against which our life and our life's work could be measured and found to be all the more valuable.

How do we know that we are not reading such design into Nietzsche *ex post facto*, as it were? How can we be so certain that his work is not merely an expression of and a monument to his heroic overcoming of incredible hardship, contrary to what many interpreters claim, starting with Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche or perhaps even Nietzsche himself, who in his last years before darkness overtook him told his readers how to interpret him and his work? For one thing, we have seen the overwhelming evidence of his exaggerations, discrepancies, the self-centeredness and self-enhancing that Nietzsche practiced between 1879 and the middle 1880s. But now we shall also look at some of his other writings, published and unpublished, from approximately the same period that, however, are much more theoretical and programmatic in character than what we have examined previously. As I excerpt some of these, we shall see in a new light the correspondence between intention and invention, between what Nietzsche intends to convey and what

⁸ One major exception could be found in some of his letters to Peter Gast in which he speaks about music and extols Gast's compositions. In this connection one may ask oneself whether Nietzsche really cared so much about Gast's music as he indicated or whether his enthusiasm for it was not at least partly due to his rejection of Wagner. This possibility suggests itself because his avowal of his great love for *Carmen*, which he knew Wagner despised, a love he later admitted (to Carl Fuchs) he had expressed only to annoy Wagner—unless this, too, is not true. Assuming that Nietzsche understood something about music—as he claimed—it seems he should have expressed his true concern for Gast by telling him the truth about his musical talent, sooner rather than later. Or was Nietzsche under the impression that he could hold on to Gast that much more securely, i.e., have him available for editorial work, if he continued flattering him, without consideration for the possible long-range consequences to Gast's life?—It must be said, however, that Nietzsche, according to his letters, did try to get a hearing for Gast's music at various times and various places, and that he tried, at least once or twice, to give Gast some small remuneration for his services, which the latter rejected.

means he chooses to do so. In *Sanctus Januarius* we find, in aphorism 290, the following:

One thing is necessary: To endow one's character with a certain "persona" – a great and rare art! It is practiced by him who oversees everything that his nature has to offer in the line of strengths and weaknesses, and who then inserts it all into an artful plan, such that each appears as art and reason and even the weakness delights the eye.⁹

A similar thought is expressed in aphorism 299, "What One Should Learn from the Artists." Here we are to learn what the artist does, namely "to make things beautiful, seductive, desirable," and to apply this knowledge to our lives: "we, however, want to be the poets of our life, beginning with the smallest and most ordinary" (NGM 175f). Among the methods employed are:

Distancing oneself from things until one no longer has much of them in one's vision and has to add much to what one sees *in order to see them still* – or to see them from a different perspective, as if they were just one facet – or position them in such a manner that they partially block each other and permit only perspectival views – or look at them through colored glass or in the light of the sunset. [NGM 175]

In the Fall of 1884, in what we now call *Nachgelassene Fragmente* (unpublished fragments), Nietzsche takes a look at his life and notes, among other things: "Probability of success: Pyramidal. Broad conception of my life. Making use of failures." About the places where he has chosen to live, he says:

To the Engadine I owe *life*, Zarathustra.

To Nice I owe the *completion* of Zarathustra.

Both places belong to my task: Nice as cosmopolitan, Sils as [the region of] high mountains (*both* are to contribute the *impression* I make).

The implications here are clear; one, Nietzsche plans to use his 'failures' to further his success; two, even his choice of abode is utilized to contribute to the impression he makes on others in his function as author. He wants to be considered both hermit and cosmopolite, a "higher man" in the physical sense as well as someone whose association with Nice symbolizes association with his task: Nice means

clarity, light (cf.: "I need sunny skies above me!") and the immensity of the ocean, which, in Nietzsche's terms, signifies the future, the open expanse of possibilities; finally, Nice symbolizes culture and the roots of ancient (Roman or even pre-Roman) civilization. All these images are to be evoked in the reader in associating Nietzsche, his city, and his task.

Under the title of "What is Noble?" Nietzsche listed a number of traits that he considered essential for someone who wished to lay claim to membership in the nobility. He had intended this for a preface to "Miscellaneous Opinions and Sayings," but had eventually written a different preface. This "fragment," however, is interesting for us here since it is basically a short manual on how to behave (reminiscent of the *Enchiridion* of the Stoic Epictetus, and even more of Aristotle's discourse on *megalopsychia* in *Nicomachean Ethics* IV, 3), i.e., what noble persons do and do not do, especially in relation to others. A few excerpts will give the flavor of this prescription, and it should be of value here to see how many of these "laws" Nietzsche did – or tried to – carry out or embody in his own life.

What is noble? Preface to "*Miscellaneous Opinions and Sayings*"

meticulousness in the most superficial things, even [giving] a frivolous appearance in word, garb, stance, insofar this meticulousness serves to delimit, sets apart, protects from misunderstanding...

Enduring poverty and neediness, also illness.

Avoiding small honors, and mistrusting everyone who praises lightly...

Our doubts about the communicability of the heart goes deep; solitariness not as a choice but a given.

The conviction that one has duties only toward one's peers, and behaves toward the others as one sees fit...

Always feel to be the one who awards the honors...

Always disguised: the higher the type [of person] the more [he] needs to be incognito...

The pleasure in formality: the protection of all that is formal, the conviction that politeness is one of the great virtues...

Being able to keep silent: but about that not a word in front of listeners.

Tolerating long lasting enmities: lack of easy conciliatoriness...

Not wanting to have anything in common. His books, his landscapes. [KSA VII₃ 265ff.]

Possibly slightly prior to this entry Nietzsche wrote down what he considers a "great man." This man

⁹ Karl Schlechta, *Nietzsches Grosser Mittag*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann 1954, pp. 168f. [Henceforth cited NGM]

is colder, harder, more unscrupulous and without fear of the "opinion"; he lacks the virtues connected with "respect" and being respected, in short, everything that is part of the "virtue of the herd." If he cannot lead, then he will walk alone... He does not want a "sympathetic" heart but servants, tools; in dealing with people, he always tries to shape them in some way. He knows that he cannot communicate his self to others: he finds it tasteless to become "familiar"; and he usually is not when people think he is. Whenever he is not speaking to himself he wears his mask. He would rather lie than tell the truth: it takes more intellect and will power. There is a solitariness in him that cannot be touched by praise or blame. [KSA VII₃ 265ff.]

And, taking up one of the points of this last excerpt, namely the other person as means, he writes, also in the summer of 1885: "A human being that strives for greatness considers everyone whom he encounters on his path, either as a means or a delay or as a temporary resting place" (KSA VII₃ 320).

Views akin to these are found repeatedly in Nietzsche's notes of this period, scattered in various combinations and with slight modifications. In his published works, there is a whole section (thirty pages in *NGM*) in *Beyond Good and Evil*, called "What is Noble?" We can see that this topic of nobility or greatness (Nietzsche never draws a clear line between the two) is one that occupies him a good part of the time, especially since he himself wants to be considered great or noble. In the above excerpts we find, in the form of a program, much of what Nietzsche did or wanted to do or which could serve as an explanation for actions that otherwise might have seemed odd or, for that matter, commonplace. For example, politeness, dressing carefully, giving the impression of something hidden, of a mystery surrounding him, belonged to Nietzsche's appearance as his friends testified, among others Lou Salomé in the first chapter of her Nietzsche-book (this part of her book she claims, as we have seen, had been read and approved by Nietzsche):

But whenever he was in a dark mood, then his solitariness spoke gloomily, almost threateningly, out of [Nietzsche's eyes] as if out of secret depths – out of those depths in which he always remained alone, which he could never share with anyone, before which he was himself struck with dread – and into which his spirit ultimately descended. Nietzsche's behavior, too, gave a similar impression of something hidden and suppressed.... pleasure in disguising himself. This trait represented the obverse of his solitariness, out of which Nietzsche's interior life must be understood in its

entirety – a self-inflicted increasing aloneness and a growing tendency to relate everything back to himself.¹⁰

The noble person cannot be noble without solitude—*ergo*, Nietzsche stresses his solitude at any and all occasions. Being silent is another characteristic that Nietzsche claims for himself, but it is a silence that contains enough hints to his audience to make certain they know that there is something he is not telling, that it is important, but that there are good reasons, usually connected with Nietzsche's mission, why he must be silent.

Everything that is deep loves the mask; in fact, the very deepest things have a hatred for image and symbol. Should not the opposite be the proper disguise in which a god wrapped his nakedness? [KSA V 57]

Such a hidden one who, out of instinct, makes use of language in order to be silent and keep things to himself and is inexhaustible in finding excuses to avoid communication, wills and sees to it that his mask roam around in the hearts and minds of his friends in his stead.... [KSA V 58]

Every profound mind needs a mask: moreover, a mask grows constantly around each profound mind, thanks to the always false, that is, shallow interpretation of each word. [KSA V 278]

One more mask! A second mask!

We have seen how Nietzsche, in his letters, speaks of *his* landscapes, e.g., the Engadine (1879); and we have already quoted in this chapter his notes regarding the importance of certain places for his image. 'Long hatreds' reminds us of his unwillingness or inability to stop raking up the Lou-affair over and over again, as well as his remarks in his letters to the effect that he cannot forgive Lou Salomé ("as yet" is sometimes added). His considering others as means rather than ends in themselves is a revealing testimony to one of the great faults of his relationships with his friends and raises again the question of discipleship. The impossibility of communication, either by choice or inability on his part, is related to the wearing of a mask as well as to a strange kind of approbation of untruth: It is more of a challenge to the mind to will to lie than to tell the truth. Any ordinary person can be truthful: Therefore, it is incumbent on the noble person to prove his nobility through doing what the ordinary person

¹⁰ Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken*, Dresden: Carl Reizner Verlag 1926, pp. 19f.

cannot or will not do. Whatever the "herd" does is not noble or great. Therefore, the great must needs do the opposite. Of course, this kind of attitude completely disregards the self-value of an act. All action becomes re-action and is desirable because it sets the agent apart. The question is whether Nietzsche meant to say what he really did say here and in other similar passages, or whether his remarks constitute yet another mask. If this is the case, then he has succeeded all too well; for a mask is meaningful only if someone somewhere recognizes the mask for what it is as well as the need for it, and sees that it hides at least something. Unfortunately, in this case it seems impossible to look underneath the mask or to know that it does not hide—anything.

There is another, important way of explaining the nature of what the mask is for Nietzsche. So far, we have assumed that there is a true Nietzsche, who exists behind a mask or masks, i.e., that the mask is an entity distinct from what it hides. Jaspers tends to this interpretation, when he writes: "If whatever is true is not straightforwardly so, then the mask belongs to existence; [i.e.,] not the mask that is merely meant to deceive but the mask that protects, such that it can be penetrated only by [someone with] genuine insight that hits upon the truth."¹¹ The mask must be penetrated to arrive at the truth, but few have the capacity to do so and then face what they encounter. (Nietzsche: "how many generations must come and go in order to bring forth a few who can understand"). Jaspers sees Nietzsche facing the problem of the communicability of that which cannot be expressed outright, and likens the role of the mask in Nietzsche to Kierkegaard's indirect communication and use of pseudonyms. At play for Jaspers is also Nietzsche's view that talk about the truth is not the truth per se but interpretation. We are also reminded of Jaspers' own idea of symbols functioning as ciphers of transcendence; but, ciphers or symbols do not serve to hide the truth from all except the "few who can understand" but express what cannot be expressed in any other way. With respect to our topic, Jaspers' point is that what is masked is not the person Nietzsche; instead, it is the otherwise inexpressible truth that is behind the mask, the mask being its closest expression. Erich Podach, however, goes to the other extreme:

The "mask" is a favorite concept of Nietzsche's. One cannot avoid using it. But it should be used merely as a means of description. In the case of Nietzsche, the concept, which is controversial to start with, is inadequate, indeed wrong. With him it is, in the last analysis, not a matter of holding masks in front [of his face]. This would presuppose the presence of a "genuine" [what Podach calls, for lack of a more apt expression, an archetypical] personality that is concealed by the masks. However, the "masks" are always Nietzsche himself, they embody his very being that would very soon be divided in its core. It is for this reason that in his case the question of genuineness cannot be raised at all in many instances. Among the many Nietzsches there is not a single one that could claim to be the "true" one. This does not mean that we must give up the possibility of knowing the true Nietzsche. Indeed, it is one of the most important approaches to this end. The actual Nietzsche was a whole that progressively fell apart, a multiplicity that was [self-] contradictory from the very beginning.¹²

I would take a position that falls roughly between the two and slightly outside either: There are certain elements contained in Nietzsche's masking himself which seem at first contradictory. The mask represents a deliberate attempt on Nietzsche's part to project a certain image to the world. At the same time, however, he wants to become and be what is merely projection: Appearance and being thus merge, if not in reality, then at least in intention. This intentionality is one aspect that Podach ignores in the quoted passage. Instead, he hints strongly at a personality that is split in many different ways, a multiplicity of Nietzsches contained in one person; this would amount to the mask's being a harbinger of psychosis. Of course, mental illness precludes intention: One is overcome by it, usually without awareness that one is ill; or, in the rare cases where different personalities in one person are aware of each other; such awareness is accompanied by a desperate feeling of helplessness where the emergence of these different personalities is concerned. However, this is not the place to indulge in psychiatric speculations beyond pointing out that this kind of explanation for Nietzsche's mask is inadequate. "Two souls inhabit, alas, my breast" is a common human experience as far removed from programmatic projection of an image as it is from mental illness.

¹¹ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens*, Berlin: W. de Gruyter, p. 403. [Henceforth cited as *NEV*]

¹² Erich Friedrich Podach, *Nietzsche und Lou Salomé*, Zurich, Leipzig: Max Niehans 1937, pp. 114f. [Henceforth cited as *NLS*]

And Jaspers, who sees the significance of mask in the theory of truth articulated by and operative in Nietzsche, sidesteps the question of its relation to the person Nietzsche, and thus to the question of intentionality, altogether.

How does the question of mask relate to the topic of suffering? Among the excerpts quoted above from "What is noble?" there occurs the phrase: the "enduring of poverty, need, even of illness." In *Beyond Good and Evil*, in the chapter "What is Noble?" we find a key passage, which elucidates and intensifies the importance of suffering and its relationship to nobility and mask:

The spiritual arrogance and disgust of every human being who has suffered deeply – how deeply men can suffer almost determines their hierarchy – his shuddering certainty, which permeates and colors him completely, that by dint of his suffering he knows more than the most clever and wisest men can ever know... this spiritual and silent arrogance of the sufferer, this pride of the chosen of knowledge... of the almost sacrificed, considers all forms of disguise to be necessary in order to ...protect himself from all who are not his equals in pain. The deepest suffering makes [men] noble; it separates.... There are free impudent spirits who would like to hide and deny that they are broken proud incurable hearts; and at times foolishness itself is the mask for a knowledge that is calamitous and all too certain. The result is that it behooves the more refined humaneness to show reverence "before the mask" and to avoid practicing psychology and curiosity at the wrong place. [KSA V 225-226]

This passage draws a strong line from suffering and pain to knowledge and nobility, and thence to the mask. Suffering is the prerequisite for knowledge, but both the suffering and the knowledge choose to be masked. Nietzsche asks here that the mask not be lifted to expose what is underneath. If we take this "reverence before the mask" seriously and assume that Nietzsche does, we cannot reconcile this with his own constant expressions of suffering as we have encountered them in the correspondence. The most plausible way of dealing with this discrepancy is the following: Since, for Nietzsche, knowledge is linked to suffering and the greater the suffering the deeper the knowledge, this suffering must become explicit so that others may appreciate the depth of the knowledge, i.e., the greatness of his ideas. Far from hiding the suffering, it must be emphasized, one must draw attention to it in its uniqueness and depth. Establishing this in all its ramifications and various expressions such as pain,

solitariness, lack of communication, and asceticism, must be the first step, and indeed represents the first mask, a first myth to be set up. Only on the basis of this explicit suffering can Nietzsche then put on a second mask, so to say, namely hide—or pretend to hide—his agonies. It must be admitted, however, that he was never as good at donning the second mask as the first. Even in *Zarathustra*, which he on occasion has called his "most cheerful work," the cheerfulness must be inferred rather than encountered directly. The very failure in *Zarathustra* of laughter or dancing to convince is due to the constant overt emphasis on the suffering it is supposed to hide or overcome. This failure most likely is intentional, since suffering, as we have seen, legitimizes knowledge and insight and is thus essential, in accordance with Nietzsche's thinking, to the positive reception of the work.

We must remember, of course, that when I speak of "putting on a mask" this is meant as an abbreviated expression for the use Nietzsche makes of the raw materials in his life in order to project those parts of it that conform most closely to his picture of the ideal man. It is quite likely that, at times, little manipulation of facts is necessary, that the degree and intensity of the hyperbole vary with the situation, that perhaps, on occasion, he is not even aware of doctoring his life to fit his ideas, that all is not always cold calculation and grandstanding. Nor should we disregard the obvious fact that just about every life has influence on that life's work. We are not proposing a "nothing but"-theory but are demonstrating here the strong current that flows from the idea, i.e., the work, back to the life and informs it accordingly, even if only in appearance and not in substance.

Myths and masks hide or distort truths; originators of myths and masking must be regarded with suspicion, their utterances weighed as carefully as possible against some available objective standard. Why is it, then, that Nietzsche manages to escape such suspicion so frequently? There is, of course, Nietzsche's very persuasive language that makes what he says sound like a confession wrung out of him and, therefore, above suspicion. Repetition, as we have seen, is another important method of Nietzsche's. The more frequently something is said, the more likely it is to be believed. It would seem, however, that there is another explanation for the credulity of interpreters, namely that they overlook what I have called the first mask. In this way they miss Nietzsche's first and crucial step, namely that he presents himself to his readers in

accordance with an ideal conception of himself rather than as he is in his immediacy. We thus find respected scholars and interpreters writing the following: "Few men have fought more heroically against illness and agony, seeking to derive insight from their suffering, utilizing their talents to the last, and making their misery a stepping stone to new and bolder visions."¹³ Or: "When a man brings to this work of seduction [away from Christianity] outstanding talent and earnestness, a naturally noble character and a hatred of sham and pretence, the tragedy is all the greater. Such is the tragedy of Friedrich Nietzsche."¹⁴ "Nietzsche himself was so sensitive and so understanding of pity that he conceived his ideal man as beyond pity" (NPC 89). In these sentences one can almost hear Nietzsche speaking about himself and his life; his own image of himself is accepted almost verbatim. A more specific example is the following:

The first part of *Zarathustra* was written at the beginning of February 1883 in Rapallo near Genoa. The first draft took only ten days, after [Nietzsche] had spent some time preparing himself inwardly. On the 13th of February the manuscript was ready for the printer, "precisely in the sacred hour in which Richard Wagner died in Venice.".... It is doubtful that anyone else has said anything more appropriate about the form and tenor of this work than Nietzsche himself. The great characterizer has drawn himself too with the best and surest hand. It is therefore important for us to find out what Nietzsche relates in *Ecce Homo* about the external circumstances of the creation of the work.¹⁵

Here, too, besides the inaccuracy of dating *Zarathustra I* (it seems to have been written in January, not February), we find uncritical acceptance of the myth of ten days (more than just inward preparation had preceded the first draft), the story of completing the manuscript in relation to Wagner's death, and finally blindly swallowing the creation-myth in *Ecce Homo*, disregarding the time lag (five years) as well as Nietzsche's mental state at the time (1888), which ought to have been obvious even to the reader completely

¹³ Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*, New York: Viking Press 1954, p. 59.

¹⁴ Frederick Charles Coppleston, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosopher of Culture*, London: Burs, Oates & Washbourne 1942, p. 205. [Henceforth cited as NPC]

¹⁵ Siegfried Vitens, *Die Sprachkunst Friedrich Nietzsches in Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Bremen-Horn: W. Dorn 1951, pp. 25f.

unschooled in psychology. Thomas Mann, one of the most important literary interpreters of Nietzsche, writes about Aschenbach:

At one time Aschenbach expressed precisely this at a hardly visible place, [namely] that almost all that is great, that is there, that is there as an in-spite-of, has come to be in spite of sorrow and agony, poverty, solitariness, weakness of body, vice, passion, and a thousand impediments. But that was more than an experience, it was nothing short of the parable of his life and fame, the key to his work.¹⁶

It is usually assumed that Mann modeled Aschenbach in part after Nietzsche. If this is so, then Mann, too, succumbed to exactly the kind of interpretation that Nietzsche would have liked (perhaps with the exception of ascribing vices to him), namely that his work be seen as an "in-spite-of" against the background of suffering. Finally, a short quote from Podach, which speaks for itself: "Friedrich Georg Jünger wrote words in his *Nietzsche* (1949) that testify more to an idealism that shrinks from nothing than to a heroic idealism: 'Even though he did not think too highly of chastity, he lived chastely, totally chastely, without any monastic vow, to be sure, but like an eremite.'¹⁷ Jünger surely made it easy for himself.

It is much harder to find scholars who approach Nietzsche's pronouncements about himself with a questioning and skeptical mind, and who are courageous enough to dispute some of Nietzsche's projected images of himself. Overbeck is one of them. His remarks about Nietzsche's solitude are interesting in light of his own close relationship to Nietzsche: "Nietzsche was by far not as solitary as it seemed to him; rather than being truly a hermit, he pretended to a hermit-like existence or liked himself in that role and wanted to be a hermit" (*FOFN1* 320). And Curt Paul Janz, fresh from Weimar and a study of the hitherto unpublished materials, writes:

Nietzsche's own testimonies [about himself] occupy a special place, in particular where they intentionally serve as biographical evidence. Here we must expect, unfortunately, to encounter all kinds of trickery, from

¹⁶ Thomas Mann, "Der Tod in Venedig," in *Ausgewählte Erzählungen*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, pp. 452f.

¹⁷ Erich Friedrich Podach, *Ein Blick in Notizbücher Nietzsches: Ewige Wiederkunft, Wille zur Macht, Ariadne: Eine Schaffensanalytische Studie*, Heidelberg: Wolfgang Rothe Verlag 1963, p. 191. [Henceforth cited as BNN]

conscious intentional misinformation with false dates up to, let us say, "free" interpretations. Nietzsche constructed a myth about himself even before his sister did so, and not just during his last years. As early as 1866, in a letter to his mother, and in 1871 in a letter to [his friend] Erwin Rohde he claimed, for example, to have interrupted his musical and compositorial activities, which simply was not true and was to serve merely to present each piece of music he submitted as something extraordinary and outstanding.... The questionable nature of his claims about the fabulous speed in which he conceived [or drafted] complete books has already been discussed sufficiently in the literature. [BFN II 157f.]

What did occur in those ten-day periods is, according to Janz, "the final phase in the writing of the books," a "process of crystallization out of the multitude of drafts" (BFN II 158) We can give credence to Janz's claim, since he has carefully gone through this "multitude of drafts."

On a different level, Podach demythologizes Nietzsche's legitimation to write about history, politics, and social conditions:

His provocative exaggerations, coupled with his indiscriminate rejection of the situation of his time, his rousing phraseology when glorifying martial virtues, and his pseudo-revolutionary fake anti-bourgeois mentality left him open [to exploitation].... His political ideas and [sudden] inspirations were much too vague and unrealistic to be effectual. He had no concise notion about state and justice, society and economics, even though he pretended to himself and to others to be thoroughly conversant even with these areas. He lacked political experience. He loathed politics... [He suffered] from gaps in his education that could not be closed anymore.... In regard to social questions he was a life-long illiterate. Whatever he had to say about the nature and influence of democracy and liberalism, with big words and seasoned with political spitefulness, he dredged up out of the depth of his own mind. [BNN 33]

Peter Heller touches on the theme of masking in Nietzsche by briefly considering the question: "Whence the inclination to and need for the mask?"¹⁸ However, Heller does not carry his inquiry through to a recognition of the programmatic use of facts in Nietzsche's life to serve as a mask of his authorship, much less to a recognition that suffering is a, and perhaps the basic motive of both, of the work and the

message of which he is the author as well as of the mask of the work and the message, i.e., of the author. Heller restricts himself to regarding the mask on the one hand as a "symptom of insecurity" (ELD xxxiii) which is really a psychologizing interpretation, and on the other hand, in apparent agreement with a similar treatment of masking in Jaspers (NEV 403ff), as an expression of the circumstance that for Nietzsche truth is never present as such but always only in the form of interpretation (ELD xxxiv). As regards the applicability of Nietzsche's notion of masking to Nietzsche himself, Heller, again in apparent agreement with a predecessor, this time Frederick Copleston,¹⁹ regards Nietzsche's works to be a succession of masks, and this leads him to raise the question what the 'real' Nietzsche is behind these different masks, i.e., "We, however, ask about the constants, about that which endures throughout the change of personas and masks in the movement of Nietzsche's thinking" (ELD xxxiv). However, the question raised by Heller can be raised without reference to the theme of masking in Nietzsche. The deeper significance of applying the theme of masking to Nietzsche himself does not lie in that question but in its association with suffering as a motive of Nietzsche's mind and in his appearance as author of his messages, insofar as these are motivated by the awareness of suffering.

Already in Podach's *Nietzsche und Salomé*, i.e., in the 1930s, Podach had written: "As Nietzsche's life demonstrates, it was a horrible mistake to assume that one could 'do away with' reality or raise it to the level of 'myth according to one's whim'" (NLS 109). Nietzsche must have been very powerfully motivated to attempt such self-mythologizing, to attempt to appear to his contemporaries and his future readers as a very special kind of person, leading a kind of exemplary life that would raise him and his work in their estimation. Did the kind of image he wished to attain originate with him, or was he perhaps influenced by someone who generally was influential in his life, or could he have tried to imitate someone or live up to an ideal that he found in the writings of someone he admired?

Within the space of a very few pages of *Schopenhauer as Educator*,²⁰ published in 1874, Nietzsche

¹⁹ Frederick Charles Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 7, Part 2, Garden City, NY: Image Books 1965, pp. 169f.

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen: Aus dem Nachlaß 1873-1875*, No. III, Taschenausgabe Vol. II, ed.

¹⁸ Peter Heller, "Von den ersten und letzten Dingen," Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter 1972, p. xxxiii. [Henceforth cited as ELD]

makes a number of statements about Schopenhauer, which seem uncannily prophetic as regards his own life years later, his demands on himself and his readers, and the way in which he wants to be read and understood. Some of these are mirrored in his correspondence, others emerge as themes in *Zarathustra*, and we may well ask ourselves whether and to what extent this imposes an already formed frame of reference on Schopenhauer, which he then transfers to himself after Schopenhauer's influence over him has palled. I shall cite a few salient examples in the order in which they appear:

I guessed that I had found in [Schopenhauer] that educator and philosopher for whom I had been searching for such a long time. However, only in the form of a book: and that was a great deficiency. I exerted myself all the more to see through the book and to imagine the living man whose great testament I had to read and who promised to make those his heirs who should and could be more than just his readers: that is, his sons and pupils. (UB 226)

I place value on a philosopher precisely to the extent that he is in a position to be an example....But the example must be given through his visible life and not merely through his books, hence in the way in which the philosophers of Greece taught, [namely] through mien, bearing, garb, aliment, and manner, more than through speaking or especially writing. How much we still lack to [achieve] this brave visibility of a philosophical life in Germany! (UB 227)

We see the very strong emphasis here on the interconnectedness of life and work, which becomes so very important for Nietzsche. The emphasis, at least in his relation to Schopenhauer, must needs be primarily on understanding the man through the work, rather than the reverse; and only when the importance of the life is given its due can the reader achieve what Nietzsche here ascribes to Schopenhauer, but what really applies to him and his own vision of the ideal reader, namely, to go beyond mere readership and become a son or disciple. Nietzsche ascribes much of his own misery to never having had this kind of reader.

Nietzsche returns to this relationship of work and life, specifically in the case of Schopenhauer, further on:

That Schopenhauer can be a role model that is definite in spite of all [his] scars and stains. Indeed, one might say: That which was imperfect and all too human in his

nature leads us precisely in the most human sense into his proximity, for we see him as sufferer and fellow sufferer and not merely in the rejecting sovereignty of the genius. (UB 237)

Nietzsche further maintains that, in spite of his suffering, the philosopher has to lead an exemplary life. However, as one reads on, one is struck and disappointed by the very superficial nature of this exemplary life. Surely, mien, stance, clothing, diet, and deportment need not reveal to us the true nature of a person, that which makes him "all-too-human." We would have perhaps expected goodness, mercy, decency, learning, and wisdom—surely not the superficial rules of grand appearance. Did Nietzsche truly believe that the attributes he listed can be the only outward visible signs of greatness? Or is his list of behavioral patterns an early indication of what nobility means to Nietzsche, as is his insistence on the necessity of masking his own self and the selves of the Higher Men, which he advocated so strongly in later years?

Later in *Schopenhauer as Educator* (UB 228) we find introduced two concepts, both related to suffering, which are to play an increasingly important role in the 1880s both in Nietzsche's letters and in *Zarathustra*, namely danger and perishing:

[Schopenhauer] was squeezed, as it were, from the outside as well as the inside by the most tremendous dangers, by which any weaker creature would have been crushed or shattered. There were...strong signs that the man Schopenhauer would perish. (UB 228)

Many or most exceptional men, and Nietzsche mentions Hölderlin and Kleist here, do succumb to these dangers. Only a few "natures of steel" such as Beethoven, Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Wagner can stand fast. And even they show traces in their works of the suffering they have endured (UB 229). We, who know in retrospect what Nietzsche himself wanted to achieve and how he suffered by not achieving the goals he set himself, cannot but be amazed at the apparent similarity of pattern in this early description of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's later relationship to his own life and work:

The looming danger that his great deed would be undone again simply by lack of attention to it brought about a terrible and hardly controllable disquiet in him; there was not a single significant adherent on the horizon. (UB 230)

Nietzsche might be speaking here of himself and the fate of his own writings. Nietzsche too suffered

Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, Leipzig, C.G. Naumann Verlag 1906, pp. 209ff. [Henceforth cited as UB]

greatly through his lack of disciples. He thought he had found one in Lou Salomé, as we have seen, and what he says here about Schopenhauer, eight years before his "Lou-experience," seems to apply to him and his own version of the Lou-episode. "Thus, in his yearning for wholly trusting and compassionate people, he often made the wrong choice." However, Schopenhauer had a dog to which he could turn for some kind of solace. Perhaps, with all due respect to Gast, one might conceive of him as fulfilling a similar function for Nietzsche, in his almost completely uncritical acceptance and devotion, taking on every job Nietzsche doled out to him, restoring Nietzsche's ego as needed; while, at the same time, Nietzsche, who found Gast immensely useful, did not have the highest opinion of him.²¹

One passage here reminds us of Nietzsche's euphoria in 1888 when Georg Brandes held the first series of lectures about him: "and at last [Schopenhauer's] loud and even louder triumph that he is now actually being read ('legor' et 'legar') has a something of a painfully-touching quality" (KSA I 353). We too read of Nietzsche's bragging in the last year of his conscious life about the many countries in which he is read (without mentioning that the number of readers in each country can be counted on the fingers of one hand), as something painfully touching, but with an admixture of embarrassment.

Lastly, Nietzsche discusses Schopenhauer's loneliness, and we recognize here the ever recurring theme of suffering: Schopenhauer was "all hermit" (Nietzsche as the "hermit of Sils" is one striking parallel):

Not a single equally constituted friend consoled him — and between none and one, as always between something and nothing, there lies an infinity. No one who has true friends knows the nature of true aloneness....Oh, I realize that you don't know what constitutes aloneness. [KSA I 353]

The implication here is, of course, that Nietzsche does indeed know such aloneness. And yet this was written at a time when he seems to have had a number of close friends. His chronic illnesses had not yet struck (Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche places their onset in the

year 1875). Seen from a purely biographical, factual viewpoint, there seems to be no objective basis for the experience of utter aloneness, especially at this time. In any case, we are fully justified in questioning, on the basis of what Nietzsche says here, whether the justification of the suffering he expresses later in his work and especially in *Zarathustra* really can be said to have its origin in his own wretched physical and—starting a bit later—inner mental state, for by this time he seems to have worked out, with the aid of at least Schopenhauer, a rudimentary theory of interrelation of life, work, and suffering. The exceptional person is bound to suffer and asks the question:

What is the value of life anyway? The marvelous, creative person shall... answer: Do you affirm this life in your deepest being? Is it enough for you? Do you want to be its advocate, its redeemer? For [it takes] only a single truthful 'Yes!' out of your mouth—and this seriously accused life shall go free. [KSA I 363]

We have now strong confirmation of our theory. Nietzsche, long before he had perfected his idea of the suffering great man, had found a paradigmatic personality in Schopenhauer, whose life he could emulate to become, as he states much later, his philosophical heir (as he also wanted to be Wagner's, as we have seen). Thus, Nietzsche's life, as he wanted others to know it, became, to a great extent, his creation in accordance with the hoped-for success of his mission. To be sure, Nietzsche's mission differed from that of Schopenhauer, even though the motive of both was the same, the motive of suffering, the motive of coming to terms with the inescapable reality of suffering. Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche deny that suffering derives its meaning from the promise of salvation granted by a transcendent source. Salvation, for Schopenhauer, is possible only in oblivion, in stilling the senseless, untamed will, as in art. Nietzsche, on the other hand, is restlessly in search of the road to affirmation, even if it is the affirmation of suffering, where suffering is not permitted to break man but is joyfully affirmed as the life-giving challenge of overcoming and paving the way for higher forms of humanity.

It is in this sense that suffering is no less the motive of Nietzsche's message and mission as it is of the creation of the mask of himself, the author of the message.

²¹ See Janz's discussion of the hold Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche had over Gast because of some unflattering remarks about him in Nietzsche's letters, which she threatened to expose, such as: Gast "is a blockhead and awkward in company; I have to overcome too much that is distasteful to me." (Letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche of May 4, 1883) (BFN II 36).