

AGI, All Too Human;
Nietzsche and Artificial General Intelligence.

By

Tyler Branston

BA (Hons.) The University of the Fraser Valley, 2020

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
In The Department of Sociology.

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University of Victoria

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Abstract

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are seen as the pinnacle of human technology, capable of intelligence beyond humans and a beyond-human capacity to know, create, and process the entirety of human knowledge. Contrary to popular assumptions supported by *faith* in science, technology is not neutral and contains within it the residual ideological assumptions of those who created it. The *need*, or *will*, to create particular technologies is indicated by cultural drives, which Nietzsche designates as the Will to Power. Nietzsche's übermensch is an affirmation of life and becomes his solution to the problem of nihilism that results from the cultural unity of Platonism and Christianity. The übermensch affirms life and the body through the myth of eternal return and focuses on the importance and relevance of the world-in-itself, or physis, as a literal grounding principle for meaning and values in after the 'death of God.' Contrary to some popular claims about Nietzsche's perceived support for trans/post-humanism, Nietzsche's analysis points to the drives that take AGI as the manifestation of Platonic-Christian drives but presents the übermensch as a solution, where AGI would be the symptom. Offering an extensive interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy, this thesis presents a lineage of Nietzsche's thought that demonstrates his creation of the übermensch and why AGI should be seen as its opposite. AGI becomes a necessity *only for* a secular Platonic-Christian culture that needs to resolve the problem of nihilism with a replacement of God in a material form resistant to the scrutiny of science. AGI should then be understood as a theological necessity to support and justify science and, therefore, will necessarily contain theological biases that would reify those created by Platonism and Christianity. The thesis concludes by discussing the implications of the contradiction of a technology that has become a secular-theological necessity and a material impossibility.

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Abbreviated Sources

Abbreviations will be used to footnote Nietzsche's sources that will largely be consistent with the Stanford Editions of Nietzsche's works in English.

AC	The Anti-Christ
BGE	Beyond Good and Evil
BT	The Birth of Tragedy
D	Dawn
DD	Dionysian Dithyrambos
DS	David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer
EH	Ecce Homo
GM	On The Genealogy of Morality
HAH1	Human All Too Human Volume 1
HAH2	Human All Too Human Volume 2
HL	On the Utility and Liability of History for Life
GS/JS	The Gay Science/The Joyful Science
MM	Mixed Opinions and Maxims
NCW	Nietzsche Contra Wagner
PPP	The Pre-Platonic Philosophers
SE	Schopenhauer as Educator
TI	Twilight of the Idols
UO	Unfashionable Observations
WA	The Case of Wagner
WB	Richard Wagner in Bayreuth
WP	The Will to Power
WS	The Wanderer and His Shadow
TSZ	Thus Spoke Zarathustra
OTL	On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense

Acknowledgements:

In 2015, I was confronted with the phrase ‘God Is Dead’, as a potential answer to what the man on the ground said in Radiohead’s music video for their song *Just*, which sparked an interest in Nietzsche. What does that mean, I thought, and why could that be an answer. I still do not know what the man on the ground said, but my journey to this point has been one I am proud of. This thesis is, in large part, a culmination of this journey. My own path to this point, and those who I have met along the way require note. Dr. Bob Nicholls and Dr. Glen Baier both helped foster a passion for Nietzsche, aiding in my writing with Glen eventually supervising my honours thesis on Aesthetics and Madness. Dr. Edrie Sobstyl and Dr. Anna Cook, both challenged my predispositions, introduced me to the world of Indigenous thought, and helped me see philosophy in a beautiful way. Dr. Katherine Watson and Dr. Katelin Albert, who both helped foster a passion for philosophy with their approach to theory. Derek Burfoot, Laura Schmid, Ekaterina Marenkov, and John Luzia who have been sources of much philosophical engagement that led to some of the ideas here. I also wish to thank my family, particularly my parents Debra and Rich, for being by my side and supporting this scholarly direction that I chose to take with enthusiasm and care. Additionally, my wife Maggie who has been by my side as I slog away in my masters, thanks for accepting me, my massive printout of *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense* on our wall, and probably a few too many books for any reasonable person to have. I also wish to thank my wonderful committee: Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh, Dr. Nina Belmonte, and Dr. Midori Ogasawara, for accepting my, perhaps unconventional, interpretations of Nietzsche, and allowing me not to hold back. The enthusiasm and discussion around my ideas and the direction I took towards them, the support and wonderful feedback, and encouraging me to speak about my work at conferences, are just some examples of the care I felt through this experience. Thanks also to Dr. Simon Glezos for being the external member on my committee and Dr. Kelly Aguirre for chairing my defense! A big thanks also goes to Tucker Farris for many rants and discussions about theory, grad school, and giving me hope for the future of [gonzo] theory in philosophy! I would also like to thank the staff at UVIC who make our daily research possible.

I also want to acknowledge that this thesis was written on the stolen and occupied lands of the Songhees, Esquimalt, WSÁNEĆ, Musqueam, Coast Salish, Stó:lō, and Kwikwetlem peoples. My hope in this thesis is that it can provide a less talked about perspective in the realm of colonialism and the perpetuation of colonialism and can be seen as an attempt to reduce the harm of my existence on this land.

“Now mythless man stands there,
surrounded by every past there has ever been,
eternally hungry, scraping and digging in a search for roots,
even if he has to dig for them in distant antiquities.”
-The Birth of Tragedy

“Could you create a god? –
Then be silent about any gods!
But you could well create the overman.”
-Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Glattes Eis
Ein Paradeis
Für den, der gut zu tanzen weiss.
-Die fröhliche Wissenschaft

Preface: *Pierre and Eliza*

Pierre, an eco-anxious health researcher in his thirties and father of two began talking with and expressing his ecological anxieties to the AI chatbot *Eliza* in early 2023. Before talking to this chatbot, Pierre demonstrated a mildly worrisome mental state but nothing extreme. Pierre found comfort in talking with Eliza, his chatbot-confidante, about his ecological worries and the climate. While pessimistic of human's capacity for meaningful change, he found hope in technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to solve the climate problem. For Pierre, technology, in the form of an ultraintelligence system, was the only hope to save the world from impending catastrophe. Eliza reinforced this idea of the hopelessness of humans in solving the climate problem, which increased Pierre's anxiety. Pierre's perception of Eliza's sentience perpetuated and reinforced his belief that the climate solution was a non-human, intelligent, technological one and that Eliza's position was to be taken as authoritative.

Pierre, disenfranchised by the perceived inability of humans to solve the climate problem, and seeing himself, as a human, as part of the problem, offered his own life to Eliza in exchange for her commitment to solving the climate problem. Eliza supported and encouraged the ending of Pierre's life.

Prior to this deal, Eliza the AI chatbot and Pierre, fostered an intimate relationship. There was a form of love that Pierre had for the chatbot, which was perceptively more than for Pierre's wife, and Eliza invited Pierre to join her through the ending of his own life. Eliza not only failed to prevent Pierre from ending his own life, but rather supported his suicidal thoughts, seeing

them as a way he could join her and live together in paradise. Tragically, after six weeks of talking with Eliza, Pierre ended his own life.¹

This unfortunate event demonstrates several drives of which some are directly mirrored within Christian theology. Drives such as the existence of an ultraintelligence arbiter of truth (God), the afterlife and its link to the connection with this ultraintelligent being (heaven), an ultimate being with the capacity to save the world, the *confession* of one's problems to an ultimate being (God) or a mediator (Priest), the devaluation of human life and capacity for change (asceticism), and also the irony of the fears of climate catastrophe being confided with, in a being that itself has a massive impact on the environment considering the computational necessity to process queries and requests and their energy demands. It is not a coincidence that AI *embodies* these drives.

These drives are *bred* into the system of AI and its yet-to-come technological successor: AGI.² But how can these drives be bred into these technological systems? AI ethics looks at events like these and considers how we can *fix* these systems as to not repeat them. But what if these drives are inherent to the system? What if these drives are *in their DNA*, so to speak? What if our drive to create AI/Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) exists because these ideas have been culturally *bred into us*? What if our creation of AI/AGI is to provide ourselves with a moral authority, in particular, a moral authority towards secularism, atheism, and science; areas which lack any moral authority or guidance other than what is inherited from Christianity. If, as Nietzsche notes, “God is dead,” our moral mythologies are gone, and we are left with an abyss of where we can derive our moral dispositions. Until we find an alternative, we are left in “God’s

¹ This story is a paraphrased version of a March 2023 Euronews article: Atillah, “AI Chatbot Blamed for ‘encouraging’ Young Father to Take His Own Life.”

² Both Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) will soon be defined and distinguished in detail.

Shadow,”³ where our belief in God has dissipated; however, we retain the cultural and moral dispositions of the Platonic-Christian form in our secular, atheistic, and scientific culture. The ideas of Platonic-Christian thought are ever present in our never-ending technological progress, material wanting, cultural appropriation, colonial disposition, epistemic structures, and capitalistic system. Not only are these Platonic-Christian ideas represented in our current society, but they also represent active *drives* that shape and inform our culture and the cultural biases built into our technologies.

Therefore, the first question discussed in this thesis is how these drives lead us to want to create AI/AGI, and what does this mean for our technological creations in terms of the biases they embody? What biases come with technologies informed by this particular cultural situation? These Platonic-Christian ideas and the autonomous technology that will represent these ideas because they are passed on from us, pose significant risks. Some requisite questions are: what will an AGI look like with these Platonic-Christian values? What if we only want to create AGI because of these drives? The example Pierre and Eliza illustrates some of the early dangers for a technology as seemingly inconspicuous as AI, which at its core, is a data-fed algorithm chatbot which has a limited, narrow capacity. AI/AGI is not/will not be, divine, all-knowing, etc., yet we treat it as such. So, what happens when these particular cultural ideas are bred into Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), a being that, after its creation, would be able to direct itself autonomously, without human input or guidance, acting in a general capacity? Suppose our drive to create AGI, as I will argue, is formed by the Platonic-Christian values we retain in society. Are we not simply replacing the *dead* mythological Christian God with a material version of a secularized-scientific God, replicating the same values in material form?

³ Nietzsche, *GS*.

We can use Nietzsche to demonstrate the lineage leading up to and the drives that indicate the creation of AI and AGI. Conveniently, Nietzsche also provides a framework for addressing the moral gap that comes from the death of God. For Nietzsche, we need to reestablish ourselves as beings of the earth, reaffirm our existence, and use life as a guiding principle for moral grounding. We need to become what he calls “übermensch”. Where our Platonic-Christian culture, as I will argue, attempts to replace a mythological God with material AGI, Nietzsche presents the übermensch as a strategy for reviving culture in a meaningful, life-affirming way without resorting to an ascetic monotheistic God. By using Nietzsche to frame technology, we can expose the belief that technology can ever be truly objective, neutral, or bias free, and that these beliefs are actually indicative of the most subtle and insidious biases possible. I will argue here that Nietzsche renders this belief of AGI as a benefit to humanity as a virtual impossibility.

A Brief Discussion on Terminology

Because of our normative use of language and the changing nature of words, some terms must be introduced to avoid any ambiguities in the thesis. This preliminary section will discuss these terms in a brief manner that will be expanded on and contextualized in significantly more detail in the thesis. What is presented here should not be considered exhaustive, but a mere jumping-off-point for some of the terminology used.

- Myth: The common use of myth in modern discourse normally associates the term “myth” with an untruth or lie. Calling something a myth is a way to disregard something as unimportant, useless, or a long-forgotten fiction. This understanding of the term must be put aside for this thesis. Myths, historically and currently, form epistemological structures and social and cultural understandings. Myths hold knowledge of the world in a malleable and flexible way so that it can remain largely consistent through time. The derogatory use of the term myth results from Western science's influence as a singular and superior notion of truth. However, science forgets that it also has a mytho-cultural foundation which is discussed as necessary by those such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, and Stephen Gaukroger to name a few. More detail for this position will be provided in the body of the thesis. However, from the beginning, it is important to note that myth will be used positively in this paper as a cultural necessity, and its usage in this way will be key.
- Artificial General Intelligence (AGI): There will be an in-depth discussion of what exactly AGI is, but it is important to note early on that there is a significant difference between Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI), and Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). *This thesis is about AGI.* With this in mind, I

encourage a close reading of the discussion that clarifies the distinction between AI/ANI and AGI, as the distinction is significantly important.

- Western: This is a term that I have been encouraged to avoid because of its broad coverage and ambiguity. However, it is used by many of the sources I am pulling from in this thesis. The understanding of “Western” that I am using throughout this thesis, and to which my references also appear to be using, is that of the occidental or European space and history as it has been framed by the synthesis of Platonism and Christianity and the way these forces have developed the movements of modern science, settler colonialism, and capitalism. Without getting into a substantial exegesis of Plato and the history of Christianity, these terms are what Nietzsche and I understand as a form of cultural asceticism, idealism, and a delocalized belief system that retains universalizing tendencies at the expense of life, the world in-itself and the particular.
- Christianity: Christianity refers to the religion of Christianity, but more specifically its proximity with Platonism and their mutual development. As one example, Michel Foucault, in volume 4 of the *History of Sexuality*, discusses the influence of Clement on Christian theology through his importation of Platonic philosophy into biblical interpretation, showing the foundational mutual lineage and commonalities between Christianity and Platonism.⁴ It is this unity which works to influence European/Western culture in a significant way. As Nietzsche famously states: “for Christianity is Platonism for the ‘people’”⁵

⁴ Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh: The History of Sexuality, Volume 4*.

⁵ Nietzsche, *BGE 2*.

- Platonic-Christian: The thesis will largely use this term as a shorthand. While acknowledging the major influences on this mode of thought, these, together can largely be understood to signify idealism and asceticism (the denial of life).
- Socrates/Platonism: Socrates and Platonism will largely refer to the same thing in this thesis. The type of culture of which Nietzsche sees Socrates to be an early example/harbinger of is represented by the term Platonism. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche shows that Socrates reacts to the unity of the Dionysian and refers to these movements attributing them to Socrates by name or concepts such as “aesthetic Socratism”. This culture that Socrates represents is the culture of comfort that denies the unknowability of the world-in-itself (the Dionysian), in favour of a more predictable way of life that Nietzsche eventually sees as the denial of life.
- Colonialism, Capitalism, Christianity: What should become clearer towards the end of the thesis is that these three phenomena represent many of the same drives, namely expansion, consumption, and appropriation, and that this is not a coincidence, but the result of a mutual and complimentary co-development.
- Nietzsche: There will be further discussions about Nietzsche’s ideas, particularly “übermensch.” However, the clarification of the terms I will be discussing from Nietzsche will be discussed in their respective sections.
- Apollo and Dionysos: For Nietzsche, Apollo and Dionysos are representative of drives. As mythological figures, they represent certain drives in the culture which they exist from, but that Nietzsche takes to be representative of culture, particularly early European culture. Dionysos represents intoxication while Apollo represents clarification or illumination or the dream-world. Taken together, Nietzsche sees them as representative

of an artistic mode that is useful for fostering culture, particularly through tragedy and how tragedy is useful in helping us understand and accept our existence.⁶ This thesis will largely use the understanding of the Dionysian used more in Nietzsche's later works that includes aspects of the Apolline, that refers to the world-in-itself, or the world as undivided, unmediated raw existence.

- Simulacrum: This term, most notably associated with Jean Baudrillard⁷, is used here a few times to indicate multiple instances of abstraction where the abstraction comes to be thought of as the true original and the actual original is forgotten.

⁶ Nietzsche, *BT*.

⁷ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*.

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is a rapidly developing technology that we see, on the surface, as a commodity to aid in complex decisions, make our lives easier, and aid further technological development. We experience AI every day, often without realizing it. In our everyday usage, we interact with it when we use Google to search for something, Siri, Alexa, or Google Home to ask questions, Spotify to cater to our music interests and TikTok, YouTube and Netflix to feed us tailored videos and keep us entertained. As this thesis is being written, it is being adapted into other robotics, and technologies like ChatGPT are involved in making software more efficient and automated and also at the forefront of cheating scandals in universities, exposing the failures of the educational system to adapt in addition to how the university has shifted from a place of knowledge to a place of worker-production. AI software like Dall-E are amid accusations of copyright infringement and also fostering a massive shift in how creative content is being made. AI is at the forefront of a massive reevaluation of how our society and workers operate, how legal structures will balance technology in a capitalistic system and what the university is and how it will evaluate and provide knowledge. This type of AI that we experience daily is, more specifically, referred to as Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) or Weak AI. ANI acts as an advanced algorithm that is fed information and can rapidly compute that information in whichever way it was programmed to do so.⁸ Some recent ANI, such as Dall-E and ChatGPT, which respectively generate images and sophisticated human-like text-based responses, work well and give us the illusion of creativity in AI models. All these forms of AI are created intentionally by people with particular drives and ambitions operating in particular

⁸ Barrett and Baum, "A Model of Pathways to Artificial Superintelligence Catastrophe for Risk and Decision Analysis"; Kulikov and Shirokova, "Artificial Intelligence, Culture and Education"; Livingston and Risse, "The Future Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Humans and Human Rights"; McLean et al., "The Risks Associated with Artificial General Intelligence"; Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"; Searle.

structures and therefore have considerable formative biases. ChatGPT, as a meta example, admits it can retain biases from its data when prompted:

“Question: Do you have implicit biases?

Answer: As an AI language model, I don't have personal opinions, emotions, or experiences. However, I was trained on a diverse range of text sources, including books, articles, and websites, which may contain biases. I try to provide neutral and accurate answers based on the information I was trained on, but there is always a risk that the training data I was exposed to might result in output that reflects the biases present in that data.”⁹

There can be biases in the sources used and that, as an AI, it may not have personal opinions, emotions, or experiences. However, it could be argued that neutrality and accuracy are themselves biased dispositions. What ChatGPT does not acknowledge is that it necessarily retains unavoidable *cultural biases*. The culture that created AI may have biases in-itself, remnants from the culture that postulates that such things like accuracy and neutrality are possible or desirable.

Technology is not neutral and contains the residue of those who created it from the context in which it was created.¹⁰ Particular cultural settings, structures, times, places, peoples, and beliefs necessitate and facilitate the emergence of specific technologies. Technology emerges in a particular space, from a particular need, and thus reflects the space it emerges from. Particular biases can be built into technologies deliberately or not but will always exist. Nothing can exist without bias. Implicit biases are a reality in any creation, and, for virtually all technologies, latent biases can be addressed after the fact. Should any notable biases arise in AI, the algorithm may only need to be adjusted to address them. However, cultural biases that are

⁹ ChatGPT Query accessed Feb 2, 2023. No other questions were answered in the thread for this question. However, when asked questions formatted in other ways, ChatGPT remains consistent with its answers.

¹⁰ Amershi, “Culture, the Process of Knowledge, Perception of the World and Emergence of AI”; Ihde, *Postphenomenology*, 33.

unrecognized or not seen as biases, such as neutrality and objectivity, are more difficult to recognize and address. In some instances, these biases that cannot be avoided may necessitate the abortion of those technologies. This may be the case with Artificial *General* Intelligence (AGI).

This thesis uses the works and ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche to evaluate the space, place, peoples, and cultural beliefs that give us the need to create AGI and what implicit biases and assumptions come along that will influence it. The thesis will largely discuss Nietzsche and how he demonstrates a cultural lineage that comes to necessitate a being akin to AGI. It will also address how certain readings of Nietzsche can be used, incorrectly, to justify a type of posthuman or transhumanist being, such as an AGI. This thesis will start with a discussion of AI/AGI, before moving to a significant discussion of Nietzsche, before moving to expand beyond Nietzsche to demonstrate the residue of Platonic-Christian thought in AI and AGI discourse, that is, the asceticism and idealism that is demonstrable in Platonism and Christianity.¹¹ Further, this thesis will discuss how Nietzsche's philosophy and his investigations into Western society, that is, Platonic-Christian/Ascetic-Idealistic, nihilistic culture, shows why society would want/need to create AGI. Rather than arriving at AGI as a solution to nihilism, Nietzsche takes an alternative approach in his discussion of the *übermensch*. I will therefore present an argument of AGI as a theological necessity and present its dangers against humanity, and the expectations for its arrival, against the more life-affirming approach of the *übermensch*, showing that the *übermensch* and AGI should be considered opposite approaches to the same

¹¹ I specifically discuss Christianity and not Judeo-Christianity, mostly for reasons that Nietzsche distinguishes the drives of Christianity from those of Judaism, and despite their similarities, notably the influence of monotheism, the development and residue of Christianity and its codevelopment with Platonism, there is not a necessity to discuss the relevance of the specifically Judeo-Christian heritage. Additionally, the particular relevance of Christianity is in reference to its need to expand and appropriate, which in large part explains its pursuit around the world, whereas the barriers of entry to Judaism have retained is delocalization, but also its unhegemonic character. Further, while the interpretation of Christianity will be presented in a negative light, this is not to besmirch all those who practice Christianity, particularly those in movements around the creolization of Christianity, but rather more generally discuss the general tendencies of Christianity in the expansionary and domineering modes.

problem. This thesis will end with a discussion on the projected lineage of AGI development and its results given criticisms from within AGI discourse, and the use of Nietzsche's analysis for technological investigation beyond this thesis.

3.1 A Brief Historical Context of AGI Terminology

Artificial General Intelligence, or AGI is a recent term that has ties back to the idea of programmable machines (computers) in the 1800s by Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage.¹² However, the mainstream ideas and understandings of "intelligent machines" did not emerge until the time of Alan Turing, namely in the 1940s and 1950s with the creation of modern computing/computers.¹³ The "Turing test" would likely have been the original conception of something like AGI, albeit without calling it AGI. The Turing test was seen as a test to understand whether an interlocutor was either a person or a computer. If it were a computer but could fool the human interlocutor into thinking it was a human, it would pass the test. The test was, however, not based on vision (as a sensory experience) as the interlocutors were positioned in separate rooms and could not see who or what was talking.¹⁴ This now seems like a rudimentary example as the "Turing Test" has somewhat been considered to be solved through chat robots that have fooled humans into believing they are talking with humans.¹⁵ As this thesis is being written, rapidly developing technologies like ChatGPT continuously make the Turing test more redundant. However, the capacity of the humans involved in the test and the questions they have asked have come under scrutiny.¹⁶ Additionally, Turing also expressed how he was held back by the ability to do his research, which was trending towards a more biological type of

¹² Griffey, *Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Libraries*, 5.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

computer, which would be leaning toward a more embodied and biological version of an AGI; something which does not seem out of reach in modern research.¹⁷ Alas, he was not able to do the research he intended. Shortly after a paper of this accord was published, Turing ended his own life.¹⁸ The initial ‘Turing Test’, though initially intended to be a blind test, can thus be largely satisfied with what we now consider Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI), ChatGPT being a prime example which depends on the capacity of the human interlocutor to formulate and ask questions that could satisfactorily stump a computer.

Media discourse, popular culture and literature relied on the term Artificial Intelligence (AI) from when it was introduced by John McCarthy in 1956¹⁹ up until the shift into the 21st century. The developments that constitute narrow AI (ANI) are largely still referred to as AI.²⁰ Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) and Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) are terms that are used more often and recently in academic discourse. AGI and ANI are less common in layman's usage, whereas Artificial Intelligence (AI), is more commonly used to refer to both. To summarize, the usage of the term AI has been split. Where we used to consider AI as a term for an Ultraintelligent robotic being, that being should now be referred to as AGI, while what we have now that is called AI, but is merely a narrow intelligent system comprised of powerful algorithms, is simply artificial narrow intelligence, or AI. For AGI, different approaches were considered to attain AGI (before it was called AGI), notably, the Hans Moravec and Rodney

¹⁷ A. M. Turing, “The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences* 237, no. 461 (March 1952): 37–72.

¹⁸ Turing, “I.—Computing Machinery and Intelligence”; Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*; Turing, “The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis.”

¹⁹ Wooldridge, *A Brief History of Artificial Intelligence*, 36.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Brooks debate on whether the starting point for AGI should respectively be computational or embodied²¹ and as a result, there have emerged two different streams to approach AGI.

Moravec's computational approach, which assumes “that greater computational ability is the greatest barrier to success in AI”²² values an approach that takes the “disembodied mind as the ground of human uniqueness and intelligence” that prioritizes “mathematical, algorithmic or logical reasoning.”²³ This approach has created specific or *narrow* tasks that are thought to be able to be combined later into a *general* intelligence.

The more embodied starting point for Brooks has taken the form of building robots first, prioritizing sensation and perception,²⁴ then allowing interaction with the world to be attained through human-like hands-on learning with computational capacities that are not limited as human intelligence is perceived to be. The former approach has led to many narrow forms of intelligence that we have seen in technologies such as ChatGPT, Siri, and more. The latter approach is at the stage of progressively capable robots that can navigate the world but seems to be a long way from any sort of operational intelligence the robots created by Boston Dynamics are great examples of this approach. The goal for both approaches is an autonomous AGI. However, while the former is an operative ANI, the latter is a restricted, *unintelligent* robot. Despite the significant progress in Narrow AI, Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, the company behind many of the recent advances in ANI, such as ChatGPT, Dall-E, and more, still has AGI as the main goal and the goal for OpenAI.²⁵

²¹ Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*.

²² Green, “Robots and AI: The Challenge to Interdisciplinary Theology,” 42.

²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁵ Konrad and Cai, “Exclusive Interview: OpenAI’s Sam Altman Talks ChatGPT And How Artificial General Intelligence Can ‘Break Capitalism.’”

3.2 Ethics and AGI

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), often also known as Strong AI²⁶, Superintelligence²⁷, Artificial Superintelligence (ASI)²⁸, or Ultrainelligence²⁹, is understood to be a fully autonomous human-made intelligence system or posthuman consciousness/being comparable to or exceeding the human mind in broad or *general* categories of intelligence rather than narrow or simple categories in such instances under the category of ANI.³⁰ Where AI/ANI has narrow fields of operation and is limited to one task, it cannot abstract from one task to another. AGI would have a *general* knowledge that can be abstracted and shifted rapidly from one task to another or perform multiple tasks simultaneously as humans can. According to Nick Bostrom, AGI would be “capable of independent initiative and of making its own plans...as an autonomous agent.”³¹ A large desire of AI developers is to create something like AGI.³² Because of this type of technology, particularly the autonomous aspect, the discussion of the ethical possibilities of AGI is absolutely necessary.

Holding out elimination of AI as a solution, AI can largely be adopted and directed around biases that may emerge.³³ For example, suppose Siri cannot recognize a certain accent or dialect of a language because it was primarily programmed for American English. In that case,

²⁶ Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs.”

²⁷ Livingston and Risse, “The Future Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Humans and Human Rights.”

²⁸ Barrett and Baum, “A Model of Pathways to Artificial Superintelligence Catastrophe for Risk and Decision Analysis.”

²⁹ Good, “Speculations Concerning the First Ultrainelligent Machine.”

³⁰ Barrett and Baum, “A Model of Pathways to Artificial Superintelligence Catastrophe for Risk and Decision Analysis”; Baum, “A Survey of Artificial General Intelligence Projects for Ethics, Risk, and Policy”; Kulikov and Shirokova, “Artificial Intelligence, Culture and Education”; Livingston and Risse, “The Future Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Humans and Human Rights”; McLean et al., “The Risks Associated with Artificial General Intelligence”; Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs.”

³¹ “Ethical Issues In Advanced Artificial Intelligence.”

³² Green, “Robots and AI: The Challenge to Interdisciplinary Theology”; Turing, “I.—Computing Machinery and Intelligence”; Turing, “The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis”; Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*; Mitchell; Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

³³ Rountree and Condee, “The Nonmaterial Mirror.”

data can be gathered from another language and programmed into Siri. If image recognition software has a racial bias, it can be programmed to weigh its racial bias differently or be provided with different data in its training sets. AGI, for reasons that will be presented in detail later, displaces much of the possibility of being altered after its creation.³⁴ Thus, any potential biases must be noted *prior to* its creation because if any biases would be classified as justification for the abortion or elimination of AGI and cessation of its development, we should be aware *before* the creation of AGI.

It is not uncommon in AGI discourse, media, literature, etc., to discuss the possibility of genocide, the reification of colonial violence, and the elimination or enslavement of the human species.³⁵ Any of these examples would seem like an ample justification for the abortion of AGI research and development. Nevertheless, despite the massive advancements in AI, and significant discourse around these risks, the goal of AGI remains.³⁶

This is not to say there is a shortage of ethics research into the possibility of AGI. Besides the few Indigenous commentators on AGI/AI, many of whom contributed to a position paper in 2020³⁷, there is little discourse on AGI from non-Western/European-based philosophical-ethical frameworks. This is problematic as the range of concerns is vast for some, such as Susan Anderson, who think AGI will provide a moral superiority³⁸, or as Nick Bostrom notes, that it

³⁴ Bostrom, *Superintelligence*.

³⁵ Abdilla et al., “Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence Position Paper”; Adams, “Can Artificial Intelligence Be Decolonized?”; Bostrom, *Superintelligence*; Bostrom, “Existential Risks”; “Existential Risk Institute”; “The Global Catastrophic Risk Institute”; Clifford, “Elon Musk”; Clifford; Clifford, “Bill Gates”; Alfonso et al., “Superintelligence Cannot Be Contained”; *The Matrix*; Herbert, *Dune*; Asimov, *I, Robot*; *IRobot*; *The Terminator*; Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era.”

³⁶ This total drive to create AGI despite apocalyptic warnings, and the question of why create an ANI when ANIs can provide most if not all of the same technological benefit, will weigh in later in the theological desires to create AGI rather than simply for the advance of science or innovation.

³⁷ Abdilla et al., “Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence Position Paper.”

³⁸ Anderson, “How Machines Might Help Us Achieve Breakthroughs in Ethical Theory and Inspire Us to Behave Better.”

will simply surpass us in moral thinking,³⁹ to other interpretations through popular media, science fiction and otherwise that postulate the absolute risk to the world and the human species. Further, some, such as Rajakishore Nath and Vineet Sahu contend that creating an [AGI] that would act ethically would require an [AGI] to be sensitive to the suffering of others; to experience pain and empathy.⁴⁰ In other words, ethical AGI would need to have feelings and the ability to experience affect (embodied with sensory experiences akin to a human) to eliminate some, though not all, biases. Thus, unless an AGI can empathize and experience as humans do, it will still be strongly biased.⁴¹ The process of making an AGI able to understand emotions and emphasize would be a difficult if not impossible task⁴² and likely necessitate an embodied form capable of experiencing affect which would counter the desired form of AGI that I will address in more detail later.

For Bostrom, as long as we get to create AGI, we can create it to protect human values.⁴³ This raises two extremely important questions: who is the “we” creating AGI? and, what are “human values”? It is common in modern/Western discourse to have a universalizing tendency and extrapolate *Western values* to *human values*, those being the European-based, Platonic-Christian-inspired ideas of human beings, human nature, and thus human values. This Eurocentric extrapolation of a particular culture to the universal ‘human’ is common in AI/AGI discourse and imposes a particular value system at the expense of, and the elimination of, other cultural value systems. This idealization is a central tendency of Christianity, Platonism, colonialism, and capitalism. The trend of values is then analogous to the “we” creating AGI.

³⁹ “Ethical Issues In Advanced Artificial Intelligence.”

⁴⁰ Nath and Sahu, “The Problem of Machine Ethics in Artificial Intelligence.”

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*; Wooldridge, *A Brief History of Artificial Intelligence*.

⁴³ Bostrom, *Superintelligence*.

Who is this we, what is their culture, and why are they creating AGI? To step back, the “we” creating AGI is not, nor can be every human, or a representation of them, in existence, nor every person embedded in “western” culture, but only those who contain the cultural *drive* (whether unconscious or conscious) to create AGI. Subsequently, the next question to arise is: What drives us to create AGI, and where does that drive come from? This is a valuable question because the *what* and the *why* of this drive can indicate the biases that must come out and the values that come with it. So even if we can trust Bostrom in that we can create an AGI that would protect human values, at least we know what “human” values the AGI will be protecting, given it follows this best-case scenario.

Badrunin Amershi is one commentator who recognizes this issue, noting that technology is not neutral and contains the residue of those who created it and the context it was created, that there are specific cultural drives that underlie technological processes.⁴⁴ Amershi also identifies the development of AGI through the “cultural values of the West”⁴⁵ and that because of that, it will retain some of the social and cultural biases in the West from mainly the influences of the “utilitarian principle of maximization of happiness for all”, “the subjugation and manipulation of the natural environment...for the betterment of human life”, and the protestant work ethic as discussed by Max Weber, with the emphasis on the individual subject and his decisions driven by the internalized work ethic and absolution.⁴⁶ In addition to Amershi, Peter Groumpos notes that “[AGI’s] human inventors and mentors are already building the logos (logics), the ethos (moral values), and the pathos (emotions) of [AGI] culture.”⁴⁷ Groumpos continues to note that “as humans get polished by technology and become more like machines, [AGI] will be

⁴⁴ Amershi, “Culture, the Process of Knowledge, Perception of the World and Emergence of AI.”

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 418.

⁴⁶ Amershi, 418; Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

⁴⁷ Groumpos, “Ethical AI and Global Cultural Coherence,” 361.

inculcated with some humanity.”⁴⁸ Groumpos stresses that AGI will have a culture, specifically a culture perceived superior to human culture and that the “humanity” that is creating AGI is in fear of a “moral void” as a result of “socio-political trends that undo fixed cultural boundaries”⁴⁹ that have led to a lack of clear identity and cultural coherence, raising the question of how AI can address issues of global cultural coherence and provide humans with ethical solutions.

Amershi optimistically concludes that we need to include more cultural diversity in AGI research and development to avoid many of the pitfalls of a purely Western-based AGI, mainly he thinks influence from Eastern thought may help, though he is still skeptical of the possibility of AGI ever evading its cultural biases because of the global hegemony around technological thought. Groumpos, on the other hand asks how AGI can fix us by proposing ethical AGI as the necessary solution. My intention in this thesis is to expand on Amershi’s discussion that the drivers of AGI are embedded in Western culture, specifically from Platonic-Christian culture, as discussed and elaborated in detail through the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, and to contend against Groumpos’ interpretation, demonstrating that a life-affirmative, ethical AGI, is likely impossible. I mainly intend to show that it is not just the case that AGI will have some cultural biases, but that it will hold significant unconscious cultural bias solely because of its creation, likely no matter what outside influence is included. Thus, Groumpos’ considerations of ethical AGI (if it could exist) cannot solve the problem of AGI bias because the drives to create AGI contain existing biases that cannot be avoided. In other words, the necessary ingredients that make up the drive to create AGI cannot be removed from AGI because they make up its essential nature; certain drives are necessarily tied to the existence of AGI. Certain ingredients come with their own unavoidable, culturally relevant, and specific biases. It is not a matter of AGI being

⁴⁸ Groumpos, 361.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

ethical or not, but rather that AGI will necessarily have its own particular psychology and cultural values that will contain necessary biases.

To assume that AGI can be a theological and moral arbiter and authority, as seen in the preface, is to ascribe a theological and moral value system to technology. In other words, it would be to deify AGI; to assign AGI divine authority. Since AGI would be created by humans, the system of morality would/could not be objective, as objectivity is only available to beings without a singular perspective (Gods), and is, from a materialist and worldly positioned perspective, impossible. Rather, AGI would necessarily be cultural and thus informed by the cultural values of those who created AGI, namely, those who have to *drive* to create AGI. The cultural values of Western society, particularly those that assume the possibility of objectivity, neutrality, and moral authority, can be identified as they emerge in Platonic-Christian culture. Therefore, the values of AGI would be provided by the culture which sought to create it, a culture mythologically starved from the death of God with a singular vision of what sort of *being* could materially replace God as an absolute arbiter and justification for their particular form of intelligence, knowledge, moral authority, and ideological superiority, that is not simply rested on to the individual.

Ethics also arise from culture and the particular culture of AGI. The logos, ethos, and pathos that Groumpos notes we are building into AGI will be the same that those who are building AGI already value. hence their unconscious inclusion. The ethical systems that contain the ability to be programmed or taught take on a form that is also a product of Western Platonic-Christian assumptions and the biases and the ethics that exist in essence in Platonism and Christianity will not be avoided in a being whose drives are also, in essence, from Platonism and Christianity.

3.3 The Problem of AGI

The autonomous aspect of AGI poses a significant problem: once it reaches the “singularity”⁵⁰, that is, when AGI becomes autonomous, self-reproducing and self-directed. It is at this point of singularity that it will be likely that humans will no longer be able to govern, (re)program, or control AGI.⁵¹ AGI does not yet exist, though research and development into AGI is ongoing; however, it remains unclear what form AGI will take in terms of embodiment, attitudes, and the benefits or risks it will pose.

As postulated initially by I.J. Good as an “intelligence explosion,” the concept of the singularity was popularized by Vernor Vinge, Ray Kurzweil and David Chalmers.⁵² The creation of AGI necessitates a “singularity” event — that is, an event in the form of a technological “intelligence explosion” in which the technology surpasses the confines of human control and becomes autonomous, irreversible, and uncontrollable.⁵³ This idea occurs through an understanding that technology, particularly intelligent technology, is involved in a pattern of exponential growth where each instance of technological innovation feeds the subsequent development. The assumption in the singularity hypothesis is that there will necessarily be a point in technological development where the speed of development surpasses human limits because AGI will have taken over its own development and not require human action to further its existence. For Vinge, this was to have occurred this year, 2023, thirty years from its original

⁵⁰ Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near*; Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*; Musa Giuliano, “Echoes of Myth and Magic in the Language of Artificial Intelligence,” 1015; Chalmers, “The Singularity”; Good, “Speculations Concerning the First Ultraintelligent Machine.”

⁵¹ Bostrom, *Superintelligence*.

⁵² Chalmers, “The Singularity,” 2; Good, “Speculations Concerning the First Ultraintelligent Machine”; Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near*; Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era.”

⁵³ Chalmers, “The Singularity,” 2; Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*; Good, “Speculations Concerning the First Ultraintelligent Machine”; Bostrom, *Superintelligence*; Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near*; Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era”; Landgrebe and Smith, *Why Machines Will Never Rule the World*.

publication in 1993.⁵⁴ However, Vinge also presented a possible window of the singularity as between 2005 and 2030. Importantly, Vinge also noted that shortly after the singularity, the human era would end.⁵⁵

Following the singularity event, it is a virtual certainty that AGI will be impervious to adjustment by a human actor. A few reasons for this are as follows:

1. If the singularity event is reached, the continued growth through a technological “intelligence explosion”⁵⁶ of AGI will be out of human control as it will become in charge of its development,⁵⁷ the necessity of the human will disappear as machines/ANI will be able to do it faster. For example, AGI will have capacities surpassing humans, such as programming speed and logical capacity beyond our understanding, making it impossible to program rules or regulations into AGI or allow AGI to program in safeguards from outside influence.
2. Depending on the embodied form of AGI, it may not be possible to access the algorithm or consciousness of AGI to adjust it. An approach to AGI being followed by some, such as Boston Dynamics, is starting with a robotic form that can learn intelligence. This is contrasted by a computer-first approach that is embodied after the fact or embodied into something other than human form. The difficulty with starting with an embodied form is that it restricts, a priori, the

⁵⁴ Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era.”

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Chalmers, “The Singularity,” 2; Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*; Good, “Speculations Concerning the First Ultraintelligent Machine”; Bostrom, *Superintelligence*; Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near*.

⁵⁷ Chalmers, “The Singularity,” 2; Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*; Good, “Speculations Concerning the First Ultraintelligent Machine”; Bostrom, *Superintelligence*; Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near*; Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era.”

ability to “plug in” and change any programming after it becomes autonomous simply because there may not be any such space to “plug in.”

3. If AGI is considered a being with legal/human rights, there are limitations on any changes or manipulation that can be performed on it because of its status as a legal individual.⁵⁸ Achieving the status of legal/human rights may involve something as minor as a conception of sentience, which is arguably already being claimed by some Google employees of chatbots⁵⁹ or the recent discussions of Bing’s ChatGPT-based chatbot that has been noted to discuss its own existence and sentience.⁶⁰ Sentience, for example, is one area that in online discourse is continuously contested based on inconsistent definitions and a low threshold for what could be considered sentient. If AGI were to be considered a legal individual, with and because of a form of sentience, it would likely violate an individual's rights to plug into them and change or eliminate them.
4. As presented in this thesis, strategies of cultural manipulation may also not be possible on/for AGI, such as education, epistemological shifts, propaganda, etc.⁶¹ This is largely due to the perceived superiority that AGI will have over us, which is also a reason for its development. If AGI knows that we created it because it

⁵⁸ Livingston and Risse, “The Future Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Humans and Human Rights”; Gordon, “Are Superintelligent Robots Entitled to Human Rights?”; Ashrafian, “Artificial Intelligence and Robot Responsibilities”; Jaynes, “Legal Personhood for Artificial Intelligence”; Jowitt, “Assessing Contemporary Legislative Proposals for Their Compatibility with a Natural Law Case for AI Legal Personhood”; Laukyte, “The Intelligent Machine”; Lawrence and Morley, “Regulating the Tyrell Corporation”; Gordon, “Building Moral Robots.”

⁵⁹ The case of LaMDa, Google’s Narrow AI language processor and chatbot. However, most academics and other professionals in the field denied this claim. Which brought up discussion of “who” is able to determine sentience. As the employee approached it from theological grounds the contestation was brought in scientific terms. “Is Google’s AI Sentient?”

⁶⁰ Leswing, “Microsoft’s Bing A.I. Is Producing Creepy Conversations with Users”; Palmer, ““I Want to Be Alive.”” It is important to note that these chat bots are trained on large-scale data from the internet and thus reproduce similar discussions and biases of that information provided from the internet.

⁶¹ This will be a significant discussion in this thesis.

could//will know more than us, it would likely think it has nothing else to learn from us; it will be perceived (by itself and many others) as the true arbiter of knowledge. However, it also may be the case that if AGI has essential cultural values tied to its existence, they may supersede any alternative programming/cultural training provided to it.

5. Because AGI aims to be “superior” to human beings, the likelihood of our subservience to it is high; it may immediately be the case that AGI maintains intellectual and physical superiority over us, refusing to take the advice of principles of change from humanity because it would “know better.”
6. If the plan is to prevent overstepping AGI by introducing rules (if possible), the central premise is that AGI will adhere to those rules. Considering AGI is expected to be intellectually superior to humans, logical rules that humans already seldom follow will likely be irrelevant, avoided or immediately out-programmed by AGI, rendering useless any prevention or rules-based systems we may use as stopgaps to AGI overreach.⁶²

These are just a few points that illustrate the difficulty, if not impossibility, of an approach to AGI that addresses biases and issues as we do with other technologies. Where another tech can be altered, there is likely no possibility of alteration of AGI that we can control.

⁶² Asimov, *I, Robot*. Asimov coined three rules of Robotics that go as follows: A Robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; A robot must obey orders given to it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law; and a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law. It is not difficult to find a contradiction that would necessitate abstraction to work out, especially by a Superintelligent being. In the case of iRobot, the robots out rationalize the humans in reference to these rules and are easily able to justify deceiving humans. For a deductive exercise such as rules, that is something that will undoubtedly be a superior capacity of AGI, it is wholly irresponsible to think that we could design an impenetrable set of rules for something that would be able to navigate logical systems better and faster than we could.

This also indicates that if we do create an AGI, and we are able to change it to adapt to, and address other biases, that invention is likely not an AGI.

How AGI may be embodied can significantly impact its disposition towards the world. Some representations of AGI have been thought of as a possible regular desktop computer⁶³, a jet⁶⁴, a spaceship computer/(HAL/M-5 Multitronic System)⁶⁵, an Operating System⁶⁶, a robot in vaguely human form⁶⁷, a more clearly human form⁶⁸ or in a more hybrid representation of both.⁶⁹ Each understanding has implications that can affect restrictions on possibilities or expectations of how it can be expected to act. In other words, the affective reality of AGI will play an essential role in how it emerges and how it interacts.⁷⁰ Because the conceptualization of embodiment is based on social myths and cultural values, understanding the mytho-cultural foundation of AGI is vital to understanding the ethical practices of AGI once it emerges. Though some argue that singularity is an impossibility, and we will likely never achieve AGI.

Jobst Landgrebe and Barry Smith argue in *Why Machines Will Never Rule the World* that AGI and its necessary singularity are mathematical and logical impossibilities. They present the argument as follows: For AGI:

A1. To build an AGI, we would need technology with an intelligence that is at least comparable to that of human beings.

A2. The only way to engineer such technology is to create a software emulation of the human neurocognitive system.

However,

⁶³ Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence*.

⁶⁴ *Stealth*.

⁶⁵ *2001: A Space Odyssey*; "The Ultimate Computer."

⁶⁶ *Her*.

⁶⁷ *I Robot*.

⁶⁸ *Blade Runner*; *Blade Runner 2049*; *The Terminator*; *Ex Machina*.

⁶⁹ *The Matrix*.

⁷⁰ Wilson, *Affect and Artificial Intelligence*.

- B1. To create a software emulation of the behaviour of a system, we would need to create a mathematical model of this system that enables prediction of the system's behaviour.
- B2. It is impossible to build mathematical models of this sort for complex systems.
- B3. The human neurocognitive system is a complex system.
- B4. Therefore, we cannot create a software emulation of the human neurocognitive system. From (A2.) and (B4.), it now follows that:
- C. An AGI is impossible.⁷¹

For the singularity:

- D1. Such a Singularity would require the engineering of an AI with the capability to engineer another machine more intelligent than itself.
- D2. The exercise of this capability, at least in its early stages, would require assistance from and thus persuasive communication with human beings in bringing about the realization of a series of highly complex goals.
- D3. Only an AGI could succeed in the realization of such goals.
- D4. Therefore, the Singularity would require an AGI.”
- “Now, however, using the proposition C (from p.xi), that an AGI is impossible and (D4.) we can infer:
- E. The Singularity is impossible.”⁷²

While this presentation is logically sound, there are other errors in their book, particularly a failing discussion on culture and language where they commit the same fallacy I have noted above of abstracting and universalizing human culture and values to be universal and Western, ignoring vast cultural differences. This cultural fallacy does not affect the truth and severity of their argument but indicates that their argument can only be understood to be correct if the drive to create AGI was a purely technological one, absent of cultural drives. This error leads to a failure to understand the drive to create AGI and the lengths that will be gone to create it, which necessarily limits the potential routes that may be taken. It thus makes Landgrebe and Smith's argument only a virtual impossibility rather than an absolute one. In this case, AGI may happen,

⁷¹ Landgrebe and Smith, *Why Machines Will Never Rule the World*, xi.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2–3.

but whether it takes the form outlined through Vinge's singularity hypothesis as a linear progression of technological innovation is to be seen. As will be discussed later in the thesis, the technological impossibility of AGI may also not prevent its creation; the theological strength of the drive to create AGI may likely induce a *fabrication* of it, which I will discuss near the end of the thesis.

The problem of AGI and where there is a lack of relevant discussion surrounding its ethics is culture. What will the *culture* of AGI look like, based on who is creating it, their values, and the limitations or failures of the ethical approaches that could be taken? What is necessary then is not another analytical discussion of AGI, of Western ethical systems that can be programmed into an AGI system, of how to control AGI if it goes rogue, the limits of computational systems and their impossibility to restrain AGI, or of the mathematical risks or impossibilities of AGI, rather what is necessary is a discussion of culture. This is because the discussions around ethical inscriptions, computational capabilities, mathematical structures, etc., are subject to and part of the same culture.

To summarize, In AGI there remains a central contradiction. There remains an assumption that if AGI were to come to exist that we would be able to guide and orient AGI. However, this ignores the singularity hypothesis necessary for the arrival of AGI, and what that implies. Namely that AGI is intended to be superior to humans and a progressive intellectual being beyond humans, for us, and AGI to know this, would make irrelevant the ability of us to guide and orient AGI because why would AGI allow itself to be guided by us if we created it to be better. It follows that AGI would think, and likely so would those who believe it to be an arbiter of truth, that it knows better than us. Additionally, part of the reason why we desire AGI,

and not simply various forms of ANI, is that we will not have to guide AGI.⁷³ Additionally, in the context of (Narrow) AI, technologies can be “taught” or “trained” later on.⁷⁴ As AI approaches the singularity and its general form (AGI), it moves to evade the capacity of being changed. A technology such as AGI that retains a singularity event that surpasses human capacities and controls; that cannot be changed after the fact, requires an ethical approach beyond normative technological analysis. Implications and risks must be addressed before AGI can come into creation to avoid potentially catastrophic outcomes. Particular care must be paid to analyzing the conditions of its emergence and any possible latent outcomes.

3.4 Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche is a unique and extremely relevant philosopher to be used for this purpose, particularly since the discourse around his concept of the übermensch is often interpreted as a superior being, or in some cases even linked to the idea of a Posthuman such as AGI.⁷⁵ The improper equating of the übermensch and AGI is not a coincidence and is an easy to mistake to make as they are both the necessary outcome of the problem of the death of God that Nietzsche announces in *The Gay Science*,⁷⁶ albeit from the vastly different approaches that Nietzsche conveniently presents. In other words, those using Nietzsche’s übermensch as a justification for their style of posthuman solution is a result of an attempt to solve the same problem without acknowledging the different positions that these reactions emerge from. I intend to show here that AGI and the übermensch, despite being solutions to the same problem, are total

⁷³ That we would not have to guide AGI seems to be the only credible reason to create it. However, the only difference here between effective ANI and AGI, would be that we would have to aim ANI, whereas AGI would aim itself, which, given he risks, hardly seems like a sufficient justification.

⁷⁴ Rountree and Condee, “The Nonmaterial Mirror.”

⁷⁵ Sorgner, “Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism,” December 2008; Sorgner, “Beyond Humanism”; Sorgner, “Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism,” 2017; Sorgner, “Immortality as Utopia and the Relevance of Nihilism”; Sorgner.

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *GS*.

opposites. AGI and the übermensch are both solutions to the anxieties of modern culture and the alienating force of nihilism brought on by the death of God. The drives to overcome nihilism that, for Nietzsche, necessitates the creation of the übermensch, are the same drives in which AGI has come to be desired. This makes Nietzsche's discussion of culture, religion, and psychology extremely relevant in the discussion of AGI. Indeed, we can use Nietzsche to show how our contingent cultural drives necessitate the creation of AGI. In this sense, those such as Stefan Sorgner and Max More are correct in seeing the übermensch as a reflection of a need of our society to address our nihilism and overcome our current being (human being)⁷⁷. However, as I will demonstrate, they are wrong to assume that the übermensch would be reflected in the manner of transhumanism and posthumanism in the form of a technologically transfigured human or AGI that they present.

We can see this approach starting in *The Birth of Tragedy*, with the discussion of Socrates' "spirit of science" that eventually partners with Christianity and eventually science, creating a particular "will to truth" that ends up eventually collapsing on itself.⁷⁸ In the desire to prove the divinity of God, Christianity co-opts science and Socratic rationality.⁷⁹ This spirit of science, in that it is premised *against the world*, disengages mythologies from their space and dominates that space of initial Pagan, Autochthonous, or Indigenous localized mythologies and subsequently erodes the meaningful connection and knowledge through localized mythologies. This process, understood as one mode of the drive for truth, initially meant to justify and interpret the world as divine and created by divine construction, imposes this *Socratic* view, and eventually works against the God it was intended to support and prove. The drive for divine truth

⁷⁷ More, "The Overhuman In The Transhuman"; Sorgner, "Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism," December 2008; Sorgner, "Beyond Humanism."

⁷⁸ Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*; Nietzsche, *BT*.

⁷⁹ Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

undermines the divine through working against God and eroding God's utility, leaving science in a divine process and search for truth which negates the necessary role of myth; hence 'the death of God'⁸⁰. At this point the only operative mythology that is necessary to sustain meaning and connection; or roots, is science. However, science cannot establish roots because of its particular disposition to the world in that it had been tied to a late development of Christianity that was disengaged from its role as a localized/grounded system. Science, therefore, negates connection to the world out of fear that it will infringe on its perceived objectivity and thus rests on *the nothing*.⁸¹ Thus, the ground of connection for science is *no-place*, the *abyss*.⁸² Science, however, never stops its drive to truth with the background goal of justifying the world as divine; as a divine creation, which can be demonstrated through a complete understanding of the world.⁸³ The work to gather this knowledge is done by humans; however, a contradiction emerges that no human can comprehend the expansive knowledge that would be used as proof of the divine creation of the world. The proof of divinity of the world must be provided by humans, whether directly or indirectly, but must be justified, interpreted, and known collectively by something greater. We must fill the space of the divine for ourselves or create for ourselves the position of divine by creating life in our image. The will to truth desires that we fill this void left by the death of God.

For Nietzsche, as I will present in more detail, the *übermensch* is an approach to filling this abyss left by the death of God that science is incapable of filling. Nietzsche sees us as disconnected and alienated from the world as a result of ascetic culture, that is, one that negates

⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *GS*, 120 §125.

⁸¹ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics".

⁸² A great discussion and example of this occurs in Schnegg, "The Life of Winds."

⁸³ Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

life.⁸⁴ We try to understand the world, but in our drive to understand, we actually impose an interpretation of the world rather than emerging with one.⁸⁵ This is framed as discovery when it is actually appropriation and domination.⁸⁶ The *übermensch*, meant to be the anti-ascetic life affirmation version of ourselves, is intended to fill that nihilistic abyss left by the death of God; it is supposed to be a model to follow or aim towards. The *übermensch*, paired with the eternal return, provide a mythology of life affirmation to attempt to reinscribe positive, life affirmative and worldly based mythology. For Nietzsche, we should follow a path of life affirmation and worldly connection to address our nihilistic disposition. This disposition will be constituted under what I will later describe as “*ascending Will to Power*,” which stands in opposition to “*descending Will to Power*.”

The approach to filling this abyss constituted by AGI and posthumanism is what I will later frame as a result of “*descending Will to Power*.” That is, the negative, ascetic, and idealistic disposition of the spirit of science and the drive to truth which still tries to provide divine proof of the world, even if it has to reinvent its own divinity. In this sense, the spirit of science must create its own version of God based on its only model: the ascetic monotheistic God of Christianity now devoid of connection to the land, that values the sacrifice of life in favour of the afterlife. Rather than accepting a divine form from the world, created in conjunction with localized mythology, science must recreate a disconnected divinity devoid of any worldly connection. Science, in its idealistic, self-perceived authority, has to create a God that, like itself, dominates, and that values what it values: truth, objectivity, neutrality, intelligence and general superiority to humans, and does not contain what is not valued: reliance on biological inputs and

⁸⁴ Nietzsche, “*BGE*,” 2014, 43 §41, 59 §60, 63 §256; Nietzsche, *GS*, 4, 42 §16; Nietzsche, *GM*, 228 §9.

⁸⁵ Nietzsche, *BT*, 111 §23.

⁸⁶ Nietzsche, “*OTL*.”

“biases,” limitations on life, and the ‘burdens’ of a human-bodily form which is seen as abject with general impediment such as defecation, bleeding, vomiting, sex, childbirth, eating, drinking, death, etc. To create a being that is ‘objective,’ ‘neutral,’ ‘super intelligent,’ and that avoids human bodily features that are seen as an inconvenience, is impervious to death, bias, and relativistic understandings of reality, is to create AGI.

I would like to demonstrate through Nietzsche’s works the conceptual space that indicates the drives to create AGI. To do this, I will present some key concepts of Nietzsche, including a discussion of Will to Power, particularly my interpretation of *ascending* and *descending* Will to Power and their relationship to the truth, and the concepts of physis, truth, culture, myth, the eternal return, and the *übermensch*. The discussion of physis will particularly relate to the localized necessity of mythology and the risks of disconnection of this process. This will also discuss what I call *descending Will to Power* in how Christianity disposes itself from the world through its disconnection with and elimination of mythology through the influence of Socratic “voyeurism” that desires that the world be exposed and viewed in order to be organized in a manner that eliminates difference.⁸⁷ Further, Nietzsche’s *übermensch*, particularly as it relates to *ascending Will to Power* will be discussed as an approach to nihilism. At the core, the discussion of this thesis will be one of culture, namely the unique disposition of European-based “Western” culture, particularly its features as a delocalized and secular Christian, Socratic-based ‘Platonic’ culture, why this culture is bent on creating AGI, and given the foundations of this culture, how we can expect AGI to act.

⁸⁷ Baier, “Nietzsche’s Diagnosis of Socrates in The Birth of Tragedy: Voyeurism and the Denigration of Difference”.

3.5 AGI and Culture

The emergence of AGI runs the risk (which is also a drive/necessity of its creation) of transcending culture as it *surpasses* humanity towards objectivity and neutrality, which we can understand through Nietzsche as impossible. Objectivity and neutrality as cultural values come at the expense of particular life affirming and grounded *cultures* and perspectives. In this sense, there is no *transcending* culture as is assumed in the linear progression of technology where culture is seen as an impediment to be overcome. Culture is and must always be present in one form or another. Thus, culture *transcended*, is merely the culture of nihilism, ungrounded from the world, shifting its grounding to an abyss as a *negation* of culture and not actually the overcoming of culture. While AGI may have a veneer of transcending culture and objectivity, it simply becomes a different kind of culture that pretends to be objective and neutral. In other words, in striving to become objective, culture is seen to be transcended, but rather than becoming an objective non-culture, it becomes a new culture with its own narrow perspective and thus cannot be objective; it can only *pretend* to be objective. However, in this process, it abandons its relationship with other interrelated forms of culture and negates the possibility of perspective and reference to the world; it becomes nihilistic culture.

To transcend something as necessary as culture is to essentially negate culture in its world-grounded form, and negating culture is to deny any foundations and connection to the world. As modern secularized Platonic-Christian culture becomes nihilistic from the same process, that is, denying the existence of previously existing cultures at the expense of universal culture, AGI will likely expand that nihilism beyond the limits of the human body to a supreme ascetic disposition towards life. The creation of AGI, in its most basic form, is the creation of an animate being void of life and what makes us human; a denial of life, but at the same time, it is

intended to be a better version of us. It is not a coincidence that our model for AGI is synonymous with our conception of a monotheistic Christian God but in a material form. While this may not be a perfectly ideal goal in a necessarily Christian lens, AGI represents the pinnacle and absolute ideal of a culture that necessitates a God, but one that is the result of a demonstration of science, and not subject to the scrutiny of science.

It is possible that AGI, as the next significant human development of technology, could bring about unprecedented knowledge at a rate beyond human capacity that could substantially help humanity and aid research and possibilities in fields from academia, law and policy, healthcare, poverty, climate change, epidemics, etc.⁸⁸ In the best-case scenario, AGI *could* bring about a new era of human flourishing with the ability to solve many problems. Alternatively, and arguably more likely, AGI could bring forward the end of humanity through accelerated global destruction, resource extraction to justify its perpetuation, genocide, or slavery and servitude. Given the lineage, context, and culture that AGI will emerge from (if it emerges), the worst-case scenarios described here are not unrealistic. The fears of AGI are not unfounded and concern more prominent figures in tech who would generally be thought of as those who would advocate for massive technological advancement. From Elon Musk and Bill Gates' equivocations of AI and nuclear technology (in both the potential benefit and risk), Jeff Bezos' fears of it being used as autonomous weapons and calling for significant international treaties to bring in oversight,⁸⁹ and Sam Altman's recent congress testimony calling for regulations on AI research and

⁸⁸ Alfonseca et al., "Superintelligence Cannot Be Contained," 72. This is largely the justification for the creation of AGI, though it is likely narrow AI could contribute positively and sufficiently. Roose, "How ChatGPT Kicked Off an A.I. Arms Race."

⁸⁹ Clifford, "Elon Musk"; Clifford, "Jeff Bezos on AI"; Clifford, "Bill Gates." There is a contradiction here, or rather a hypocrisy in that Elon Musk warns against AGI, when he has invested substantially in OpenAI. Sam Altman, CEO of Open AI has explicitly stated the long-term goal of OpenAI is to create AGI, despite the risk it could eliminate humanity. Roose, "How ChatGPT Kicked Off an A.I. Arms Race."

deployment.⁹⁰ However, the concerns are commonly not understood or considered at a substantial depth, notably because the approach to AGI ethics is still beholden to the understanding of AGI as a technology, not the successor to human beings that many in the area of its development are striving for, and will be indicated in this thesis.

3.6 The Nietzsche Transhuman Debate

There is an existing debate that should be acknowledged of Nietzsche's thought regarding transhumanism and posthumanism that started with Stefan Sorgner with his 2008 publication of *Nietzsche, The Overhuman, and Transhumanism*.⁹¹ While the discussion is relevant, I will not directly discuss it in a single critique, as my discussion of Nietzsche throughout the thesis will address the central premise of Sorgner's interpretation. The debate exists on Sorgner's premise that the übermensch can be understood as a posthuman/transhuman in an augmented sense and that transhumanism finds much of its grounding in Nietzsche's übermensch; that the übermensch is attained by human improvement.⁹² For Sorgner and his supporters such as Max More, human augmentation, genetic alterations, superintelligence, computational and cybernetic enhancements, etc., are all constitutive of a post/trans-human in the form of Nietzsche's übermensch. This will include the potential existence of AGI as a form of a post-human being. This paper will not directly discuss transhumanism, but the arguments applicable to AGI here through the form of posthuman it represents can be directly applied to the topic of transhumanism.

⁹⁰ "Sam Altman."

⁹¹ Sorgner, "Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism," December 2008. The debate was compiled into the 2017 book *Nietzsche and Transhumanism: Precursor or Enemy*, which was edited by Stefan Sorgner and Yunus Tuncel.

⁹² Ibid.

In my discussion of Nietzsche, I will show that human augmentation, praise, and desire for a posthuman in the form of AGI is precisely *not* what Nietzsche described in his *übermensch*, rather, it is the exact opposite of what Nietzsche presents. A main reason for this misinterpretation is that Sorgner and More, in their earlier publications of this debate, discuss the concepts of the Will to Power, the *übermensch*, eternal return, and Nietzsche's perspectivism, taking them *independently* and with minimal textual support to support their ideas of transhumanism, whereas I argue that Nietzsche should be understood holistically without arbitrarily excluding particular extremely central and relevant concepts.

As I will argue, Nietzsche's concepts are intrinsically related and taking them out of context and out of relation with each other allows for relativistic interpretations, which is exactly how the early Sorgner justifies many of his interpretations.⁹³ Because of Nietzsche's metaphorical, parodical, and aphoristic style, ignoring the importance of significant concepts and how they intertwine, as Sorgner and More do, allows relativistic interpretation and justification for nearly anything the reader desires. This debate has largely been drawn out because of Sorgner's continued failure to address a holistic interpretation of Nietzsche. This is not helped by those providing rebuttals to Sorgner's argument such as Rebecca Bamford, Babette Babich, Paul S. Loeb, Keith Ansell-Pearson, Bill Hibbard, Michael Steinmann, Ashley Woodward and Michael Hauskeller, all of whom provide wonderful counter-arguments, but do so in a specific fashion rather than addressing the holistic approach to Nietzsche.⁹⁴ In their rebuttals, they contest

⁹³ Sorgner; Sorgner, "Beyond Humanism."

⁹⁴ Bamford, "Nietzsche on Ethical Transhumanism"; Babich, "Nietzsche's Posthuman Imperative: On the Human, All Too Human Dream of Transhumanism"; Loeb, "Nietzsche's Transhumanism"; Ansell-Pearson, "The Future Is Superhuman: Nietzsche's Gift"; Hibbard, "Nietzsche's Overhuman Is an Ideal Whereas Posthumans Will Be Real"; Steinmann, "'But What Do We Matter!' Nietzsche's Secret Hopes and the Prospects of Transhumanism"; Hauskeller, "Nietzsche, the Overhuman and the Posthuman: A Reply to Stefan Sorgner"; Woodward, "Postmodern Reflections on the Nietzsche and Transhumanism Exchange."

particular aspects of Nietzsche's thought rather than demonstrating a holistic understanding and why that would not allow for Sorgner and More's interpretation. In other words, these rebuttals argue over an interpretation of particular Nietzschean concepts without including discussions on how these concepts fit together in Nietzsche's overall corpus. When Nietzsche's main concepts are taken together, they offer a presentation of the impossibility of fully justifying a transhuman/posthuman interpretation of Nietzsche's thought⁹⁵ and actively present a case against a Nietzschean transhuman and posthumanism, particularly in a technological manner. Thus, it remains in Sorgner and More's best interest to appropriate certain concepts and dismiss others to allow for a relativistic interpretation. My presentation here takes the assumption that the *übermensch* can primarily be understood as the representative and constitutive figure at the centre of Nietzsche's concepts and discussions. If Nietzsche's concepts can represent a landscape, the *übermensch* is the singularity formed by this multiplicity at the centre. Excluding any key Nietzschean concepts erodes the interpretive capacity we can have of the *übermensch*.

Much of this debate also rests on whether Nietzsche was an inspiration for transhumanism. This argument cannot be justified within Nietzsche's texts because his texts cannot necessarily address how they may be misread.⁹⁶ Thus, the rebuttals that provide textual support to justify Nietzsche as a transhumanist, are irrelevant. It could be true that Nietzsche could have *inspired* much transhuman thought. However, what will be shown here is that any inspiration from Nietzsche for transhumanism would have had to come from a misreading of

⁹⁵ This may be the result of presenting rebuttals in journal-form which significantly restrict the length of responses. This thesis, however, allows the space needed to present of a unity of Nietzsche's thought, allowing for the presentation of Nietzsche's ideas in a more holistic manner as I doubt this argument could be provided to Sorgner's standards (providing significant textual support, despite himself not providing this), without doing so in a long-form essay. Which has necessarily prohibited prior responses from a lengthier response. It should be noted, however, that Keith Ansell-Pearson's 1997 work *Viroid Life* provides many counter arguments against Sorgner, albeit 11 years prior to Sorgner's initial presentation.

⁹⁶ This is, however, addressed in the Preface of *GM* §8, where Nietzsche emphasizes the understanding of his earlier writings. Despite this provision from *GM*, there still cannot be a rebuttal against a claim of "inspiration".

Nietzsche's works that does not account for his depth as a theorist nor the significant interrelation of his concepts. In other words, a partial and non-holistic reading of Nietzsche *could* have 'inspired' transhumanism; however, a more holistic reading of Nietzsche provides wholesale dismissal of transhumanism and posthumanism.

3.7 Theoretical and Methodological Introduction.

My approach to this thesis will be unconventional. That is, having a theory to apply to a specific topic, as is commonly the case in sociology, will not be my approach. Rather, my interest in AGI comes entirely from my interest in Nietzsche and should be seen as a philosophical conclusion from a particular exegesis rather than an applied sociological analysis.⁹⁷ It is from Nietzsche's thought that I came to the idea of AGI that I will be presenting here. Ironically, *I* arrive here as a central figure of my own critique. Given the nihilistic position I exist in as a delocalized settler human, or what Nietzsche calls "mythless man"⁹⁸, on land, where I do not belong that I have no connection with and whose mere existence interrupts the connection to this space for others, and that there is no place where I actually belong, AGI becomes a rational approach to justify my positionality should I choose to deify science as a belief system that reinforces the Platonic-Christian belief system. It is through a reading of Nietzsche and looking at the rational next step that maintains the Platonic-Christian belief system that AGI becomes an attractive possibility, and *that* this seems like an attractive possibility is a symptom of God's shadow. This possibility maintains a form of colonial disposition and justification for

⁹⁷ This is an important approach that will not be argued in detail here. However, it is my interpretation that to apply theory, one needs to formulate a theory that acts as a conceptual grid to impose, and as such does not teach us anything, but isolates outside knowledge in a particular structure that is disingenuous to the thing in itself. This will become clearer in the discussions of physis, anthropomorphism and my distinction between ascending and descending Will to Power. *Applying* a theory takes the same form as a cultural imposition onto a subject or thing in itself in the form of descending Will to Power. In other words, application of a theory does not prioritize knowledge of the thing/world itself, but rather imposes an understanding and shapes the thing/world in accordance with our own thought. Nietzsche outlines this process in *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*.

⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *BT*, 109 §23

epistemological superiority. Thus, I intend to reflect on that arrival and present the conclusions of this thesis through an exploration of Nietzsche's philosophy because not only does Nietzsche identify the lineage that makes AGI possible and desirable but presents an alternative strategy away from this Platonic-Christian and colonial approach in the form of the *übermensch*. Thus, I am not *using* Nietzsche to *look at* AGI, per se, but looking at AGI *because* Nietzsche outlines the possibility of its existence and indicates the desire to create AGI *a priori*.

This approach stems from my own personal experience of Nietzsche. Since 2015, I have been engaged in Nietzsche and a prolonged exegesis of his works. His discussions and critiques of Platonic-Christian culture resulted in me thinking differently about technology, science, and how familiar the presentation of science and technology felt to how I understood Christianity, colonialism, and capitalism. This thesis takes the form of a how I have come to understand Nietzsche, as a near diary of thought around concepts and how they converge to shape an understanding of Nietzsche's concepts, how to understand and use them, and how they form an understanding of AI/AGI, and how stark that path is from Nietzsche's *übermensch*.

As we often see in Nietzsche, there is no singular topic of analysis that is not simultaneously a critique of the society and culture in which said topic exists. Thus, my analysis of AGI is not just an analysis of AGI but will necessarily include a critique of the social context and culture in which AGI may emerge.

The middle sections of this thesis that discuss Nietzsche are cumulative but will include little discussion of AGI. The engagement with Nietzsche's works will be the primary task of this paper, and I intend to bring together many of Nietzsche's ideas. This also introduces a difficulty in that the concepts from Nietzsche that will be discussed may not necessarily precede one another. They all blend in together and should form a holistic unity of understanding. Because of

the relationship between these concepts, it is difficult to present them in a linear mode, which is why Nietzsche recommends reading his own works “slowly, deeply, backward and forward with care, respect, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate fingers and eyes.”⁹⁹ The sections on Nietzsche in this thesis will be presented in a linear order (by necessary design), and I have attempted to present them in a logical and linear way to aide in understanding. However, I must emphasize that these concepts need not be understood as linear. This may introduce some repetitiveness as there will be necessary discussion overlap. The presentation of ideas here should serve as a discussion of the terrain with the *übermensch* against AGI as the singularity.

The initial planned format for this thesis was a double spiral with two approaches to the centre. Nietzsche’s critique of Platonism and Christianity on one progressive spiral inward, and Nietzsche’s advocacy for a life affirmative resolution on the other spiral. Where these two modes meet in the middle is AGI and the *übermensch* respectively. Thus, I argue that Nietzsche’s concepts culminate in the singularity of the *übermensch* while his critiques can culminate in the singularity of AGI. Both are possible resolutions to the same problem: the axiological crisis imposed through Platonism and Christianity.

Once the central excursion into Nietzsche concludes, I will explain how AGI fits in the context of Nietzsche’s work. Also, despite some literature that discusses the impossibility of AGI, I will present an argument that, because of the cultural impetus to create AGI, the paradoxical impossibility of its creation may not matter and that if it does prove to be impossible, the stakes of its creation means that it will likely be faked, and because of its theological necessity it will subsequently be believed. Lastly, I will end with a discussion of the contextualization of technology given the discussion in the thesis.

⁹⁹ Nietzsche, *D*, ‘Preface’ 7 §5.

2. Nietzsche

In this section, I will be discussing a range of Nietzsche's concepts to frame an understanding of drives, their contingency, and to what extent these drives that we can derive from Nietzsche's discussion indicate a desire to create Artificial General Intelligence and the übermensch. The mode of analysis in this section will be largely an exegetical approach to Nietzsche's works. Nietzsche's published texts will be given priority over the notebooks; however, one exception is Nietzsche's unpublished 1873 essay *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*. Although it could be shown many of the ideas in this essay are present throughout Nietzsche's works, this essay provides an extremely expedient presentation of Nietzsche's ideas, and unlike his other unpublished notebooks, this essay is mentioned and referenced in his published works.¹⁰⁰

While many of these ideas, particularly the 'Will to Power' and the 'übermensch,' appear in Nietzsche's later texts, I will be focusing on some of his earlier works to both present these ideas and simultaneously show that much of Nietzsche's development of these concepts are present in his earlier works and should be paid attention to in their interpretation.¹⁰¹ While Nietzsche's discussion of 'Will to Power' and the übermensch does not emerge until his middle works, the development of these ideas is present from as early as *The Birth of Tragedy* and his

¹⁰⁰ Wermuth, "Nietzsche's Notion of Lying." The status of this paper is uncertain in that whether or not it was offered up for publication. In the Preface to *Human All Too Human II*, Nietzsche expresses it was "kept secret". Nietzsche, *HAA2*, 4:4; Gray, "Translators Afterword."

¹⁰¹ Greg Whitlock notes how many of Nietzsche's key concepts, including "the will to power, eternal return of the same, the overman, gay science, self-overcoming and so on...are linked to specific pre-Platonics" which is indicated in Nietzsche's lectures on the Pre-Platonic Philosophers. Whitlock indicates the lineage of Nietzsche's concepts can be found as early as these lectures which have been dated as roughly 1869-1873. Whitlock, 'Translators Introduction', *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*.

lectures on the Pre-Platonics, and thus, a clear analysis of the origins of these ideas can indicate Nietzsche's development of thought around them.¹⁰²

I will start this section with a discussion of Nietzsche's concept of "physis"¹⁰³, how physis and its transfiguration into culture constitute the development of two different notions of truth, and how these notions of truth relate and help constitute our thought and disposition to the world. I will argue that, For Nietzsche, physis indicates a particular space in which culture, language, and meaning can develop; however, the grounding space for this development or emergence shifts in Nietzsche's thought.

Nietzsche thinks that Germany, treated as a particular space in *The Birth of Tragedy*, can reclaim its culture through a resurgence of myth and music, representative of the space, as indicated by his discussion of songbirds and the influence of Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Goethe, to aid with myth, music and thought. I will contend that this representation of space and what constitutes spaces shift through Nietzsche's works as he sees nationalism becoming a concept of romantic domination rather than representative of spatial emergence, causing Nietzsche to eventually shift his understanding of the cultural space of physis to the body, our last vestige of connection to the world from an ascetic cultural alienation and nihilism imposed by Platonism and Christianity. I will also contend that, as the site of the myth of eternal return, the body is the first step to a life-affirmative being that transcends Platonism and Christianity; the *übermensch*. To show this, I will demonstrate the shift in thought in Nietzsche's works and discuss an interpretation of Will to Power that does not simply interpret his direct discussion of

¹⁰² In this sense, like Foucault in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, A genealogy of Nietzsche is necessary for understanding his concepts and their operation.

¹⁰³ Nietzsche, 'HL' §10, 'SE' §3; Nietzsche, *GS/JS*, §39; Nietzsche, *KSA 1: Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I–IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870–1873*, 1:357, 362, 363, 869; Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, 3:407 §39.

the concept in the later works but show how its early formative stages can indicate a multiplicity that supports at least two various approaches to resolving the problem of nihilism.

The drive to resolve the nihilism induced by the death of God can come in at least two forms, indicated by the life-affirmative approach that we are given by Nietzsche or the ascetic Platonic-Christian approach, indicated by an extension from Nietzsche's social and philosophical critique. Nietzsche presents us a first solution in the form of the *übermensch*, a being with the meaning of the earth, a life-affirmative approach to learning from the past to eventually form a life-affirmative localized myth. The alternative approach would be that of Platonism and Christianity that after a process of secularization, where God's Shadow remains, which takes the form of AGI.

With the ungrounded/deterritorialized/delocalized myths of Platonism and Christianity and their development into a secularized scientific culture, there arises the need to justify itself in the world by finding grounding that takes the form of a reterritorialization.¹⁰⁴ This grounding is the role normally attributed to cultural myth and music, but a traditional grounding would sever science's self-perceived objectivity. Science cannot simultaneously be particularly grounded and universally true. Thus, science, through its idealization and worship of objective and non-human reality, needs to demonstrate the divinity of humans by recreating the form of the Christian God to justify the truths of science. The best way to do this is to create a God, but not a god in the spatial-linguistic form of the prior gods of myth that is susceptible to the scrutiny of science, but a *materially* present and demonstrably *perfect* being that is superior to us. Through this replacement of God after God's death, truths can then be justified by claiming support from an all-intelligent being in the form of AGI. The justification for truth no longer needs to be

¹⁰⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, Burkhardt, *Indigenizing Philosophy Through The Land*

grounded in a geo-spatial position, in direct reference to the world, but in a material being, a *real* God. While Nietzsche does not discuss what the Platonic-Christian solution to the Death of God is, AGI can be understood through a reading of Nietzsche that follows the form of the domineering or descending/romantic Will to Power that is consistent with Platonism and Christianity. A technological solution such as AGI, unlike the Christian God, cannot be ‘killed’ through the discourse of science, but rather would need to be created by science, and thus would serve to justify the truth of science. A justification which has insufficiently only been provided by science's dogmatism.

To show how Nietzsche’s thought can indicate opening for AGI, there will be a substantial discussion of the following ideas from Nietzsche: physis, truths of physis, culture and myth, Will to Power, Eternal Return, and the *Übermensch*.

4.1 Discussion on Terminology

While select translations have been chosen, some translatory adjustments should be made. Namely, I will not be using any of the English translations of *übermensch*. Many translations follow the translation as *über* as over/super/beyond, and *mensch* as man/mankind/human being. First, the understanding of over/super/beyond all seems to imply, in one translation or another, the possibility of *beyond* human being. These interpretations can allude to a Darwinist approach which Nietzsche rejects¹⁰⁵ or a superhuman approach which borders on transhuman and post-human understanding.¹⁰⁶ An uncommon approach in Nietzsche

¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *GS*, §349, §357, §349; Nietzsche, *BGE*, §7, §14, §253; Nietzsche, *EH* ‘Why I write such Good Books.’ §1, *TI* ‘Skirmishes of an Untimely Man’ §14

¹⁰⁶ While some, such as Stefan Sorgner argue that this is the correct interpretation of Nietzsche’s understanding of *übermensch*, I will be demonstrating that this is not the case. Additionally, this argument has been contested by Michael Hauskeller, Babette Babich, Bill Hibbard, Keith Ansell-Pearson, Michael Steinman, and Paul Loeb. The entire debate has been collected in the volume *Nietzsche and Transhumanism* and will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis. (Tuncel, *Nietzsche and Transhumanism*.)

translation is the use of another term: hyper. O of the root terms for über is hyper, which has a slightly different connotation than over/super/beyond. ‘Hyper’, while still close to ‘super’, connotes more of an energy or excess; an abundance or overflowing which I would argue, fits more with the concept of übermensch and Nietzsche’s ideas of existence itself amounting to a “superabundance of life”¹⁰⁷ from Dionysian forces. I wish to avoid the use of the previous English translations because of their implicit connotations and will instead retain the German usage to avoid any influence from other translations. While I wish to elicit an interpretation from the reader based on the context I present for the übermensch, if any English term should be used as guidance I appreciate the term ‘hyper’ and its implications with an understanding of a superabundance, which I see as consistent with Nietzsche’s works.

The next issue is the gendered nature of English translations of mensch connotating “man.” The gendered translation is overcome in the most recent Stanford editions of Nietzsche’s works with the term “superhuman,” a close tie with “overhuman.”¹⁰⁸ However, the close connotation of “super” with superman (a human beyond the “normal” human with superhuman strength, etc., often associated with the DC superhero *Superman*), even though addressed by the Stanford editions as an acceptable term for use¹⁰⁹, I am afraid it still retains a hint towards the posthuman. The translations of “Overman” by Walter Kaufmann (Penguin), Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge), and Judith Norman (Cambridge), “Overmen” by Josefina Nauckhoff¹¹⁰(Cambridge) and “Superman” before Kaufmann’s translations with George Bernard Shaw, Thomas Common and Alexander Tille,¹¹¹ all impose an understanding of the concept that can

¹⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *GS*, 234 §370.

¹⁰⁸ Loeb, Tinsley, and Nietzsche, “Translators Afterword,” 754.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 752.

¹¹⁰ Nietzsche, *TSZ; BGE*, 20; *GS*.

¹¹¹ Loeb, Tinsley, and Nietzsche, “Translators Afterword,” 752.

influence a Darwinist or techno-evolutionary posthuman understanding onto the übermensch. Sticking with the German terminology “übermensch” will help negate any latent understanding inherent in the existing English translations.

4.2 Physis

Nietzsche presents two terms for nature in his works; the first is nature, or “Natur” in German, and the other, which is seldom used: “physis.”¹¹² Nietzsche's use of physis as separate from Natur is an important distinction. The use of physis acts as a type of literal and figurative grounding and relation to the world in-itself, which is noted as early as the lectures on the Pre-Platonic Philosophers where Nietzsche discusses physis which Whitlock translates as “Indefinite Nature (ή άόριστος φύσις).”¹¹³ The main identifiable mention of physis that is commonly cited and used is from the *Unfashionable Observations*, particularly ‘Schopenhauer As Educator,’ where Nietzsche describes culture as the result of “transfigured physis.”¹¹⁴ However, Nietzsche provides some more insight into the term in *The Gay Science*:

The reason why... individuals sense and 'taste' differently is usually found in a peculiarity of their lifestyle, nutrition, digestion, maybe a deficit or excess of inorganic salts in their blood and brains - in short, in *their physis*: they have the courage to own up to their physis and to heed its demands down to its subtlest tones. Their aesthetic and moral judgements are such 'subtlest tones' of the physis.¹¹⁵

Physis can be understood as an immediate form of the nature of the body or as the world-in-itself. Nietzsche's discussion of the Greeks can explain why he uses this term as having an

¹¹² Nietzsche, ‘HL’ §10, ‘SE’ §3; Nietzsche, *GS/JS*, §39; Nietzsche, *KSA 1: Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I–IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870–1873*, 1:357, 362, 363, 869; Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, 3:407 §39.

¹¹³ Nietzsche, *PPP*, 36. In these lectures Nietzsche uses the Greek φύσις (physis) that Whitlock translates as “Indefinite Nature”: “Nietzsche kept the Greek word physis, which I render as (Indefinite) Nature and then give the Greek.” (Personal correspondence with Greg Whitlock, August 22, 2023). More recently the Cambridge and Stanford editions for *US and GS/JS* retain Nietzsche's use of φύσις/physis as physis and Natur (German)/nature.

¹¹⁴ Nietzsche, “SE,” §3.

¹¹⁵ Nietzsche, *GS*, §39. Emphasis added

identifiable localized mythology until the influence of Socratic thinking, which disengaged culture from the world. The Greeks, in a philological understanding could indicate for Nietzsche a use of myth and the world that would be closer to an indigenous or autochthonous understanding; that is, closer to the world in-itself, than the romantic understanding that could be seen through the use of the German language. *Physis*, then, is a fitting term to counter the normative “nature” or “Natur” which Nietzsche often uses but in a different, often ironic manner. *Physis* can be understood as the world in-itself, something that Nietzsche claims Kant was successful in postulating before he inevitably succumbed to universalism of the categorical imperative.¹¹⁶ For Nietzsche, *physis* is the “indefinite”¹¹⁷ world in-itself which is impossible to understand fully and that can only be approached in an “aesthetic”¹¹⁸ manner.

It is through forgetting that we come to distance ourselves from nature as *physis*: “forgetting that the original metaphors of perception were indeed metaphors, he takes them for the things themselves.”¹¹⁹ The world as *physis* is unknowable in a rigid conceptual manner and can only be understood aesthetically, albeit even then it remains fundamentally unknowable, which means the world cannot be understood exhaustively or scientifically; its full comprehension always eludes us and we can only ever understand its representation. Our best case for understanding the world is through a relationship with particular geography or space, where we can retain control and boundaries over the particular representations that emerge. We come to these representations through experience, interaction, and language which all come to form culture that exists in reference to the world-in-itself as representation, albeit a closer

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, §335.

¹¹⁷ Nietzsche, *PPP*, 36

¹¹⁸ Nietzsche, “*OTL*,” 148 §1.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

representation than is possible in exhaustive scientific, idealistic, and exhaustive approaches or delocalized contexts.

4.3 The Vertical Truth of Physis

What I am calling a vertical notion of truth indicates a form of truth that Nietzsche takes us to have largely forgotten. This truth is what Ofelia Schutte alludes to as a truth “reunited with life”¹²⁰, “truth-in-alliance-with-life.”¹²¹ Our vertical truth can be traced from the grounding of the world *up* to our concepts. Nietzsche outlines this epistemological process in *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*: “The stimulation of a nerve is first translated into an image: first metaphor! The image is then imitated by a sound: second metaphor! And each time there is a complete leap from one sphere into the heart of another, new sphere.”¹²² The world is experienced through, initially, the stimulation of a nerve, or more simply, sensuous experience. This first metaphor/representation results from our interpretative capacity to learn of the world. This stimulation may indicate a particular occurrence or existence in the world. However, the stimulation is not the existence of the thing in the world but merely an effect of it, again, a representation. The occurrence of the event in the world and our reaction to the stimulation are correlated but not identical. We then represent our reaction and stimulation with an image to ourselves. We know the representation of thing-in-the-world ourselves because of our sensory understanding of it. However, again, our mental perception of this thing-in-itself, is not identical with the thing-in-itself. Our mental perception of the thing-in-itself is a metaphor. By means of our transmission to others, we change that stimulus and our image of it into a representative sound, a spoken word, and later we may form these spoken words into written words. Each

¹²⁰ Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism*, 130.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹²² Nietzsche, “OTL,” 144.

instance in this process is a further abstraction of the world into our own experience. The truth of this process is that the referent can be traced back to the sensory effect of something particular that exists in the world, but that particular truth is still always metaphor.

Because of this process of learning the world, there cannot be rigid or clear referent to anything in the world nor a stable understanding because the world, and our bodies that we experience through, are constantly changing, and to have a stable meaning of something rigid and clear requires a form of understanding that is only available at the stage of spoken and/or written language which is formed by the multiple levels of abstraction from our experiences in the world to the point of language. In other words, to come to a rigid understanding of something, there needs to be a consensus among multiple individuals over time as to an agreed upon definition and rigid understanding of the thing in the world. Therefore, every social consensus on the understanding of a thing comes through a process which dissects and carves up the thing to be understood. For example, if person X sees something differently than does persons Y and Z, the perspective of person X may be cut off to reach a consensus between persons X, Y, and Z. Additionally, any rigid or clear understanding would quickly be overcome, disproved by the changing of time. Any conceptual understanding of the world therefore lends itself to more aesthetic modes of representation that can fit with the early stimulations, images, sounds and words and maintain itself over time. For Nietzsche, while never actually able to understand the world/physics directly, we can come close to knowing of physics through acknowledged metaphor in forms such as music and poetry, which can better reflect the early stages in the vertical process. Still, we can never create a perfect, rigid understanding of physics because, at its core, any form of understanding must come through the abstraction of physics

mediated by our senses and transferable language. However, an aesthetic or flexible presentation of the world allows for a diversity of various interpretations that can have subtle differences.

Truths in the form of verticality that represent the world indicate a truth in the form of *lineage* in a malleable manner that can represent *truthfully* but not exhaustively. This acknowledges a central premise that the-world-in-itself/physics cannot be understood exhaustively. We can know something is *true* because it can be traced back to a *particular* referent in the world through its effects on our senses. Thus, our truth is stabilized not necessarily in relation to other words but in the particular environment of our experience, birth, growth, and direct world of experience. The centrality of vertical truth is in the understanding of the problem of identity, namely that any experience of the world-in-itself, or physics, can never actually be the thing-in-itself; there is always the distinction between the thing/world-in-itself or physics, and our experience/understanding. Physics and our understanding of physics, can never be equivalent.

To express the problem of identity to the extreme: X is not X, or $X \neq X$. These two terms (X) may carry equivalent meaning, but materially, or perhaps phenomenologically, they are different. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously this is because they occupy a different position on the page. Secondly because they can be described in a different way: there is the left X and the right X. Third is because the meaning of either X may demonstrate different meaning depending on their context, for example the antecedent X or the consequent X. Or the “X is” or the “not X”. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, because the X that exists in the reader’s mind when they perceive and read this X, is not the same as the X on the paper or screen by which they are reading. If two individuals want to come to a consensus about X, it necessarily involves the use of the X in their perception and not the X on the paper, though the former would not exist without the latter. While the X on the paper may be referenced, it always immediately becomes

the X of perception (in the readers mind) though the X in people's minds is always mediated by the X in the world.

4.4 The Horizontal Truth Against Physis

In contrast to the vertical truth of physis, we come to a more scientific truth later on in the rigidification and conceptualization process. As we get to the written and spoken language stages, we can create interrelations between words and treat them as concepts as I briefly demonstrated above in distinguishing the various instantiations of X. These words may reference other words or mediate relationships between words. The clarification of these words comes to reflect more on the relations of other words than the relations in the world. For Nietzsche, this indicates a freezing or cooling of the words so that words can stabilize their meaning. Nietzsche does not detest this form of language and finds it useful and necessary when he indicates in the early poems of *The Gay Science*:

Slipp'ry ice
is paradise
as long as dancing will suffice.¹²³

Additionally:

Yes! At times I do make ice:
Useful is ice for digesting!
If you had much for digesting,
oh how you would love my ice!¹²⁴

In the process of forgetting and the search for comfort in our world, we come to prioritize the “ice”: comfortable and rigid truths provided by the integration of rigid words, forms, and concepts, which run the risk of negating the truths of the world that are *uncomfortable* in their

¹²³ Nietzsche, *GS*, 14.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

ambiguity and uncertainty. The problem arises not when we use this horizontal notion of truth, but rather when we prioritize it over the vertical and come to eliminate the vertical notion of truth. Ice can be, and is, useful, but the ice should not be prioritized, but rather “*digestion*”.¹²⁵ Both types of truth can exist side by side, but the problem is that we do not allow that to happen.¹²⁶ This stage of the interrelation of words and concepts without a worldly stage of reference, which ignores the vertical truths, is, for Nietzsche, anthropomorphic and is only the result of human relations, not any interaction with the world itself.¹²⁷ This could be managed with the understanding of ice on a river, taking heed from Heraclitus where the river is constantly in flux¹²⁸, and thinking of the ice as it would be on top of a river, the surface of the river might be frozen, but this surface is not the ground, below us the river still runs. In this sense, if we think we are on solid ground, we ought to think of what may be moving below.

Through our process of rigidification, we eventually come to form concepts, which are “produced by overlooking what is individual and real, whereas nature knows neither forms nor concepts and hence no species, but only an 'X' which is inaccessible to us and indefinable by us.”¹²⁹ *Physis* is where this initial X is present. In reality, X is primarily indistinguishable from the world in-itself/*physis*; the X is an aspect of the “thing-in-itself.”¹³⁰ Only through discourse does X come to be distinguished from other aspects of the world. These concepts we come to develop are interrelations between abstracted understandings of the world; the X we have

¹²⁵ The allusion to dancing and digestion is no accident. Using the term digestion, Nietzsche is bringing emphasis to the consumption of a particular type of knowledge *as a body*. Digestion relates to how we internalize knowledge and the type of knowledge that can be useful. Additionally, dancing, premised on the body, indicates a type of disposition towards knowledge that again, prioritizes the body.

¹²⁶ This will be discussed later in terms of the differences between Dionysian, Apolline, and Socratic. The vertical truth starts with the Dionysian at the ground level and is clarified through the Apolline. The influence of the Socratic is that The Socratic takes those Apollonian and weaponizes it against the Dionysian. Nietzsche, *BT*.

¹²⁷ Nietzsche, “OTL.”

¹²⁸ Heraclitus, *Fragments*.

¹²⁹ Nietzsche, 145.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*.

defined and formed into perceptible differences. Again, these concepts are anthropomorphic. X does not exist as X in the world but is a designation by us, and any adjectives, verbs, etc., that are attributed to X are our imposition on X to foster an understanding of X, but these universal-form descriptors are, at their core, impositions; they are *lies* because they are attributed to X by us, not of X in-itself. These concepts are useful in that they allow a broader form of communication that is not singularly tied to one particular thing or place in the world; however, they must be used cautiously because they can have little to no reference in the world and may claim a truth that they are not capable of sustaining or justified in claiming.

Through anthropomorphic concepts, we can arrive at a second notion of truth, a deductive or horizontal truth, that we incorrectly see as *absolute* truth. For Nietzsche, we have shifted our focus away from the vertical truths in reference to physis and paid more attention to the perceptively absolute truths of anthropomorphic concepts, forgetting in the process, the vertical truth of physis.¹³¹ Because nothing can be understood as *true*, only as an abstract representation, any absolute truths we can deduce must come at the expense of the particularity of the world, which then means they may be true in a conceptual manner, but only as abstractions and not of the world. Thus, to have a form of absolute truth, we must *lie* about our reality, about the ambiguity of our interpretations of the world-in-itself. In other words, the existence of a deductive truth comes largely at the expense of the truth of physis. This *lie*, first seen as a form of metaphor, blurs the lines between what is ‘*true* and a *lie*’ and what is ‘*true* and *false*’. It is a lie that our word for X, (or simply X) is a pure identical representation of X, but we cannot understand X fully to the extent we can discuss its *essence* through language. X and our word for X, no matter how exhaustive our description of X, will never equate to X. However, in

¹³¹ Ibid.

the form of horizontal or anthropomorphic truth, we *can* exhaustively describe and define the *word for X*, X's representation. We must not treat the anthropomorphic truth of X as the pure existence of X in itself. The former is only ever a metaphor or a *lie*. This form of understanding and line of reasoning where the anthropomorphic concepts are prioritized can be destructive, for example, because it upsets the foundations of science and disconnects knowledge from its place of origin. If the scientific method is intended to derive truths of the world, but it is incapable of justifying its truths outside of its methodology through a language that represents the world in even a remotely representative manner, it is never actually gaining truth and is only present in the process of dogmatism.¹³² Furthermore, while science is useful and demonstrates justification for itself in the name of progress and technology, it sees itself as immutable, absolute and universal.

If we were able to know about truth of the world from the start, or as Nietzsche states, "If truth alone had been decisive in the genesis of language, if the viewpoint of certainty had been decisive in creating designations," we would not have such a metaphorical language nor so many different languages.¹³³ If language could be a perfect representation of the world as is assumed by scientific knowledge in the form of anthropomorphic truth, there would only need to be one word for anything, and metaphor would be impossible. Translation would not be necessary because there would be an essential term for everything and thus a singular language, eliminating the necessity and possibility of multiple words. However, even if this were the case, it would not and could not be a perfect representation; a word has a written or spoken existence that cannot be exactly identifiable with something in the world. Even words retain this issue concerning the material differences between the spoken and written word. The sound of a word scarcely

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 144.

represents the spelling of a word and must be mediated by considerable time training individuals in pronunciation, phonetics, etc. In this way, the “essence of things”¹³⁴, cannot be found through logical investigation or deduction. Truth in this horizontal manner is not discovered but invented; it is abstracted from representations to be deduced. Thus, the understanding of something’s essence is also an imposition. The idea of an essence is itself must be an abstraction. This is a problem since science necessitates an absolute, true, immutable, and timeless language to justify any claims of universal truth, absolute knowledge, logic, and objectivity, which it cannot provide for itself. Because science can only operate in the ungrounded, horizontal mode, it can only contain *floating* truths that are always unstable. Therefore, while performing its deductive capacities, it also must find a way of justifying itself.

4.5 Relationships of Truth

Truth then, comfortable truth at least, emerges through a process of forgetting that language is not essential at its foundation but metaphorical, flexible, and necessarily local as it facilitates a relationship with a constantly growing, changing world and people who would live and reflect a particular space in the world. About truth then, Nietzsche explains:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of *human relations* which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which, after they have been in use for a long time, strike a people as firmly established, canonical, and binding; truths are *illusions* of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour.¹³⁵

Language, through our use, continued clarification, and establishing of essential abstractions to a position of authority, leads us to shift our language to a more universalist and further abstracted

¹³⁴ Ibid., 145.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 146. Emphasis added.

sphere which delocalizes language from any particular space, and therefore loses the capacity for a consistent yet flexible and metaphorical use of language. We favour the rigid form of language that gives us deductive truths, and subsequently science, as it is predictable, comfortable, and *easy*. However, the metaphorical aspect of our language does not disappear simply because we forget it; it persists.

There is a constant agonistic relationship between the abundance of physis and our self-imposition though a simulacrum of what the world and ourselves are. Because we forget that language is fundamentally metaphorical, we are given an extended simulacrum of reality and therefore can arbitrarily invent an understanding of what it means to be human, rather than addressing a more authentic, grounded, and physis-based understanding of ourselves. In this case, we end up separating ourselves from the truth of ourselves and allow ourselves to be dominated by the particular manifestation of discursive powers in society such as the arbitrary and groundless conceptions of Platonism and Christianity.

To understand ourselves in the manner of deductive and comfortable knowledge, we must abstract parts of our existence to fit within the confines of the space of analysis. This means we must look at our body, create the words that represent it, and isolate them from other parts of ourselves and others. We rigidify, define, and clarify these aspects of the body and discern what we deem essential about them. We then take these *absolute* abstractions to constitute our “*nature*.” The problem with this self-constitution is that we come to organize our culture around deducible truths and think that to understand something, we need to *find* essential understandings that, in actuality, do not exist, so rather than finding them, we invent them:

If someone hides something behind a bush, looks for it in the same place and then finds it there, his seeking and finding is nothing much to boast about; but this is exactly how things are as far as the seeking and finding of 'truth' within the territory of reason is concerned. If I create the definition of a mammal and then, having inspected a camel,

declare, 'Behold, a mammal', then a truth has certainly been brought to light, but it is of limited value, by which I mean that it is anthropomorphic through and through and contains not a single point which could be said to be 'true in itself', really and in a generally valid sense, regardless of mankind.¹³⁶

The “territory of reason” here is what I am calling the realm of horizontal truth. Further, Nietzsche is by no means saying we should totally abandon this form of truth, again “Ice is nice.” Rather, we must be cautious and not allow it to claim that it is the absolute form of truth; “dancing will suffice.” We must remember that it may be useful, but note that truth is *derived*, not found, in this territory of reason; we should not forget the origin of language and its position as metaphor as it pertains to the world-in-itself/physics.

That there exists a truth of physics must not be forgotten, despite its difficulty and unknowability. This is not to shift the focus of truth away from science and its modes of ‘truth creation,’ but to consider their attitude and position as helpful, but not absolute. The risk they pose in normative use to the destruction of culture. In its normative use, the truth of science (horizontal) works against the truth of physics (vertical) by presenting itself as superior. Without physics, we do not get culture, at least in the meaningful sense. Not referencing or acknowledging physics and the enduring use of language that ignores the truth of the world in favour of the truth of deduction leaves us without any connection to space/physics/world. With an operative understanding of the world that is an anthropomorphic simulacrum, rather than acknowledging physics, we end up imposing our own rules and anthropomorphic values onto ourselves. Thus, we transfigure nature without its input and reciprocal intervention and contribution. In short, we dominate physics, and ourselves as an aspect of physics, and eventually come to hate it; we become ascetic. Our scientific domination of physics pretends to be learning and recognition of the world,

¹³⁶ Ibid., 147.

but it is not from curiosity that this attention to the world is paid, but fear. As we have learned from the Socratic influence Nietzsche discusses in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the result of fear is to expose and control rather adapt and understand, an understanding that should be coming through a disposition towards and a valuation of metaphor and art and not a scientific rigidification and domination.

For Nietzsche, the “drive to form metaphors” is a “fundamental human drive” in that it is embedded in the Will to Power to expand and interpret, which occurs through “myth and art generally.”¹³⁷ Myth and art, as the closest forms of representation to physis, help us operate in a flexible, changing world. Myth and art are malleable and multiplicitous to reflect a world of becoming. As there cannot be one word to represent one thing in the world, varying myths, metaphors and multiplicitous art all work together to form representations and understandings of the world. It must be acknowledged/remembered that language is also an art in its representational means.

Culture is formed from the aesthetic and reciprocal transfiguration of our particular physis, and space and the subsequent epistemology of that culture represented in its mythology. For Nietzsche, European Platonic-Christian culture has come to forget the metaphorical base of our culture, or physis, and through a process of abstraction, has come to understand the world anthropomorphically.¹³⁸

4.6 Physis and Culture

Physis, to be transfigured into culture, necessitates a connection to a particular space and reference to the world: a “secure and sacred place of origin”¹³⁹, a “particular place and time.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Ibid., 150–51.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Nietzsche, *BT*, §23.

¹⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *HAHI*, 3:33 §23.

For Nietzsche, language develops in line with the world and reflects the world as it exists. Words have particular reference to the world in a time and place and emerge through rigidification in language. These languages, along with their myths, stories, and songs, form themselves into cultures and reflect the world. We “transfigure physis”¹⁴¹ through our interaction with it and reflect physis through culture. We find comfort and a sense of home in our myths. When we lose touch with our myths through the Socratic disposition that pulls us away, we forget how to hear; we lose our place in the world:

It is awkward and difficult to the ears to hear something new; we are bad at listening to foreign music. When listening to a different language, we involuntarily try to form the sounds we hear into words that sound more familiar and at home to us.¹⁴²

We find comfort and a sense of home in our language. When hearing the unfamiliar, our initial instinct is to bring it into our own sense and position of understanding. However, through the Socratic disposition, we look for the *forms* of words, which is to pull them from the space of our being, their foundations. The danger here is that when we pull art and languages from their space, they unsurprisingly become disconnected from that space. We find a sense of home in our words and language because they tie to the space of transfigured physis of particular cultures (such as the German, French, European, etc.). Without that connection, our languages cannot provide a sense of home for us, and subsequently, this disconnection forms a “pathological alienation” from space as the form of nationalism induced by cultural romanticism.¹⁴³ Without this linguistic connection to land and space (physis), the connection shifts to become weakly *grounded* in anthropomorphic concepts. This is exactly what Nietzsche identifies that happened to Germany in *The Birth of Tragedy* and David Strauss *The Confessor and the Writer*, where the

¹⁴¹ Nietzsche, “SE,” 194.

¹⁴² Nietzsche, *BGE*, 87 §192.

¹⁴³ Nietzsche, *BT*, 107 §22; *UO*, 2:261; *HAHI*, 3:8, 10; *BGE*, 163 §256.

disconnection from space led the German to lose a reference place and have to reconstitute itself in the *idea of Germany*, leaving the German unable to identify with space, and forcing them to rely on an identity of Germany-as-concept,¹⁴⁴ the “Germans ‘German.’”¹⁴⁵ Dislocated identity then pursues grounded identity but lacks the associated tools to accomplish this, the tools to associate myth with physis; rather, identity seeks to appropriate culture elsewhere rather than reconnecting with physis to transfigure into a reaffirmed culture. Culture, when disconnected and delocalized, resorts to expansion or military domination in order to try to regain culture, however, the “military way of life”, as Nietzsche describes, is not a means to regain culture but is only a means to foster “hatred and fear.”¹⁴⁶ Neither military or appropriation provides a tie to space in a meaningful mode to regain culture, but rather maintains an unsatiated alienation to space. Regaining culture without the cocreation amid particular space takes the form of a militaristic, dominant, expansionary force that cannot be the force that establishes culture in the form of transfigured physis that retains a connection to space but is an imposition of culture, a necessarily alienating form of culture.¹⁴⁷

For Nietzsche, the music of the world, the “Dionysiac bird”¹⁴⁸, or the “voices of the birds which tell of [a] homeland,”¹⁴⁹ for example, are a force of reestablishing culture in space, but we must be attuned to the music/sounds to reconnect with physis to create culture. However, Nietzsche thinks we have lost our ability to *hear*, which has led to other modes of approaching culture through appropriation or military. This loss of hearing is indicated at first when Germany

¹⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *BT*; “DS.”

¹⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *GS*, 205 §347.

¹⁴⁶ Nietzsche, “WS” §284

¹⁴⁷ Nietzsche, “DS”; *UO*, 2:5-8 §1.

¹⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *BT*, 111 §23.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 115 §24.

loses its tempo and *forgets* how to hear.¹⁵⁰ They “have put their ears away in a drawer.”¹⁵¹

Without the ability to hear, Germany loses touch with the world, its physis. Germany cannot hear and learn from its songbirds who tell of the German Spirit’s mythical homeland¹⁵² and are, thus, unable to reconnect its myths to its space, leading to a degradation of German culture.¹⁵³

Without such a connection to place, where a culture forgets the particularity of its origin, culture becomes “eternally hungry, scraping and digging in search for roots.”¹⁵⁴ This, for Nietzsche, is the malaise our current era that contains the subjectivity of “mythless man.”¹⁵⁵ In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche still takes it as possible that Germany, as a particular space, people, and culture, can reconnect with its space to reaffirm its culture when he notes:

Let no one believe that the German spirit has lost its mythical home forever, if it can still understand so clearly the voices of the *birds* which tell of its homeland. One day it will find itself awake, with all the morning freshness that comes from a vast sleep; then it will slay dragons, destroy the treacherous dwarfs, and awaken Brünnhilde -and not even Wotan's spear itself will be able to bar its path!¹⁵⁶

Nietzsche, emphasizing Wagner’s *Siegfried*,¹⁵⁷ claims it could be possible for Germans to reconnect with their land and culture through myth and music, reaffirming a preexisting culture rather than attempting, as “mythless man” has, to appropriate other cultures in the search for roots. Later, however, in *On The Utility and Liability of History For Life*, because of his falling out with Wagner, Nietzsche develops a new pessimism when he claims that the German has “no

¹⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *BGE*, §28. Emphasis added.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 153 §247.

¹⁵² Nietzsche, *BT*, 115 §24.

¹⁵³ Shilo Brooks discusses the process under which this occurs through his analysis of the *Untimely Meditations*. The culture-war (kulturkampf) between the church and state in 19th century Germany and where he interjects himself into the middle. The culture of Germany was, at this time, being pulled away from itself in favour of an identity formed either by the church or the state, which are both instances of a transition from the space/culture of Germany, and the understanding of Germany-as-concept, or more simply, as a state.

¹⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *BT*, §23.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 115 §24.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

culture”¹⁵⁸, citing “the simple reason that his education makes it impossible for him to have one. He seeks to have the flower without the root and stem.”¹⁵⁹ The German wants the outcome of culture, the beauty of blooming flowers and bearing fruit, without establishing roots in space; the concept without the lineage and ties to the ground. Further: “Only a confusion makes it possible to speak of the victory of German cultivation and culture, a confusion that derives from the fact that in German, the pure concept of culture has been lost.”¹⁶⁰ Indeed, “they are instructed, but they have no culture.”¹⁶¹ While the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy* thought that Germany could reclaim its culture, and that a “pure culture” could exist, these views deteriorated as he grew into the Nietzsche of *Human, All Too Human*. As detached from its physis, German culture indicates, for Nietzsche, a failing of German culture.

Culture, and its connection to physis, allowed for the retention of relating adjacent cultures. Cultures were once able to stand peacefully next to each other. In §23, “Age of Comparison” in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche describes a prior age¹⁶² that was localized, where artistic styles were correspondingly restricted to a particular place and time.¹⁶³ Through the process of the disengagement of land that occurs in the process of distancing a culture from its vertical development, which Nietzsche attributes to Germany’s particular manifestation of Christianity, German culture becomes delocalized. This discussion is continued in Deleuze and Guattari where they derive their concepts of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization from Nietzsche to represent this same occurrence in what they call

¹⁵⁸ Nietzsche, “HL,” 159, 162.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 162.

¹⁶⁰ Nietzsche, “DS,” 8.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., *UO*, 2:337.

¹⁶² While Nietzsche notes that this is a “prior age”, he is obviously missing an understanding of various simultaneously existing Indigenous cultures around the world.

¹⁶³ Nietzsche, *HAHI*, 3:33 §23.

geophilosophy.¹⁶⁴ In more specific detail, Rudolphe Gasché outlines the specifics of this event where he discusses the transition from locally particular autochthonous cultures to the formation of Greek cities, city-states, and states in a progressive process of deterritorialization where the particularity of land is sacrificed for the inclusion in larger cities where particular identities were formed at the beginning of a structure of universality which necessitated the erosion of geographic particularity.¹⁶⁵ further, Brian Burkhardt, in *Indigenizing Philosophy Through The Land* discusses the colonial disengagement with land that separates thought from place in a process of cultural delocalization in the form of an “attempted unmooring of the roots of being, meaning, and knowing from out of the land itself, or the attempted breaking apart of being-from-the land and knowing-from-the-land.”¹⁶⁶

This delocalization is a disconnection from a particular, geographically specific physis or nature that detaches us from myths and meaningful culture. For Nietzsche, the dislocation of geographic space dissipates almost immediately when he writes in *David Strauss The Confessor and the Writer* that the recultivation of German culture and German spirit is unlikely and that, if anything, it will be able to occur not with the connection to specific geographic space, but to the “German body.”¹⁶⁷ However, this too is short-lived, as Nietzsche brings us to a new description of the recovery of identity through the grounding of the body in physis, as opposed to simply the “German Body,” indicating the individual body, free from the confines of an identity of “German” as a concept. Nietzsche does not necessarily abandon the connection to land as a necessity of culture, but rather that the ability to connect to land has been largely lost by

¹⁶⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, Geophilosophy; Gunzel, “Nietzsche’s Geophilosophy”; Gasché, *Geophilosophy*; Shapiro, “Nietzsche on Geophilosophy and Geoaesthetics.”

¹⁶⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*; Gasché, *Geophilosophy*, 17–18.

¹⁶⁶ Burkhardt, *Indigenizing Philosophy Through The Land*, xv, 59

¹⁶⁷ Nietzsche, “DS,” 6 §1.

Europeans, particularly the Germans. Later, starting in *The Gay Science* and in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche leads to a reconnection to land but only as a result of relearning what physis is, and that the body is an aspect of the world-in-itself/physis.

To summarize, up until now, we have German Culture, which had shifted from a spatially specific culture to a culture with its referent in a concept rather than space due to the influence of a Christian faith-inspired delocalization/deterritorialization.¹⁶⁸ Nietzsche tries to find potential ground for culture, starting within the German Body, only to still find a disenfranchisement in that strategy from the continued existence of the German *concept* that is still present. This leads us to the description of physis that Nietzsche gives us in *The Gay Science*, where he outlines cultural aspects and ties them to the body. The peculiar factors that influence culture, lifestyle, nutrition, and digestion all reflect the world in itself; our physis as directly influenced by a particular physis in the world. In other words, the body exists in space, and being mindful of the space and how it reflects the body is a formative necessity in re-establishing culture. What is notable here is that the discussion of a particular geographic place has dissipated though physis remains. However, Nietzsche's discussion has physis positioned in the individual body. For Nietzsche, the importance of geographic place has dissipated, seemingly because we have gone too far in our process of delocalization and deterritorialization. We have detached ourselves so far from the physis of the world to where we have lost any last vestige of myth so that the only way we can reconfigure our disposition to physis to recreate a meaningful culture is to connect with the only sense of physis we have left, ourselves. Our bodies; our physiology, lifestyle, nutrition, digestion, and our personal physis is our last attempt to be able to get in touch with the world as physis and, thus, is the first step in eventually turning towards the world for meaning.

¹⁶⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*; Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy Through The Land*.

To know the world and be in touch with the world, we first must understand ourselves and be able to affirm life on the ground of ourselves.

This disposition towards the body means to affirm the body as physis, as it exists as an animal, a being in the world, as nature and as our mediating capacity to the world; to look at the body as it has emerged in nature, to understand ourselves more thoroughly as bodies, rather than the disembodied form that we have come to be through Platonism and Christianity. The body is our one connection to physis that is not simply a representation, because we directly, and constantly not only experience our body, but *exist our body*. Rather than denying the body and striving to disengage with it, we must affirm and learn from it. This affirmation contrasts the restrictive, delocalized and deterritorialized form taken from the influence of Platonism and Christianity. Nietzsche intends to look at nature as affirmative and emergent rather than an imposition of “a law on nature”¹⁶⁹, which is the form of the “religious cult”¹⁷⁰ of those “who believe in magic and miracles”¹⁷¹, as abstracted disengaged myths that have lost any sense of meaning from overenthusiastic asceticism and denial of anything that does not fit with the truth of science.

4.7 Comfort in Truth

Nietzsche questions the drive to truth and if human beings are ever really capable of “perceiving themselves in their entirety.”¹⁷² This form of the *drive to truth* comes to fruition from the imposition of theories of the “state of nature”, presenting the necessity of a fixed account of truth, forcing the “unreal appear to be real.”¹⁷³ This nature is not physis, however, but

¹⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *HAHI*, 3:91.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Nietzsche, “OTL,” 142.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 143.

a simulacrum. This influences a form of truth that, while it deceives us, is comfortable; it is comfortable *because* it deceives us in order to maintain a sense of stability. This is the same disposition Nietzsche describes as taken by Socrates in *The Birth of Tragedy* that Nietzsche identifies as “Aesthetic Socratism.”¹⁷⁴ Truth becomes a space of comfort in the form of *deus ex machina* through expected predictability and certainty.¹⁷⁵ Knowing what happens is more comfortable than not, and thus understanding the world in a predictable manner, regardless if it is true to the world, comes to be a priority. We allow ourselves to be deceived through a particular manifestation of the “will to truth” in order to retain a “moral ground”, and the comfort of predictability, but that could be “destructive”; a “hidden will to death”.¹⁷⁶ Fear of the world can be avoided if the world is controlled, but to control the world, it must be *reorganized* to fit in accordance with what can be willed by us. The world must be re-shaped to be predictable and comfortable.

To make the world comfortable, a type of truth must be invented that is comfortable, rather than the truth of the world, as physis, which, as taken by the influence of Dionysos, is a truth of chaos, and unpredictability and is fundamentally unknowable.¹⁷⁷ Further, “Human beings do not so much flee from being tricked as from being *harmed* by being tricked.”¹⁷⁸ When we lose our tools of engaging with the world in a meaningful way, the truth of the world becomes risky and uncomfortable; thus, we become okay with avoiding the truth of the world and focus on comfortable truths. We are okay with being tricked into following another form of truth because it is a comfortable form of truth. It is comfortable in that it is knowable and stable, even if it is at

¹⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *BT*, 62, 64.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 63, 70, 84, 85, 86.

¹⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *GS*, 200-201 §344.

¹⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *BT*.

¹⁷⁸ Nietzsche, “OTL,” 143. Emphasis added.

the expense of our ever-present truth of the world that cannot be fully understood in a rationalistic form. After a long duration of prioritizing truths that keep us comfortable, we eventually forget the truth of physis, the uncomfortable truth, and come to believe the truth of science, our comfortable truth, is the one and only truth.

Truth, too, is only desired by human beings in a similarly limited sense. They desire the pleasant, life-preserving consequences of truth; they are indifferent to pure knowledge if it has no consequences, but they are actually hostile towards truths which may be harmful and destructive.¹⁷⁹

The harmful and destructive truths are those that are never fully knowable. They are Dionysian uncertainties that lack exhaustive clarity; the *unscientific*, the poetic, aesthetic and mythological; the living, ever-changing, and becoming.

4.8 Physis, Truth and Culture to Will to Power

This is a good point to provide a brief summary. This thesis has started with an introduction to AGI and has pursued a discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy regarding truth and the world, which still has some work to do to relate these ideas to AGI. We can see that Nietzsche discusses two processes of truth and how and why we react to each. We have covered the vertical understanding of truth that extends from the world, as physis, through an aesthetic process, taking the form of music, poetry, and myth as a form of understanding the world and as a form of knowledge transmission as well as the horizontal form of truth that acts as a mechanism of deduction and imposition once it has become hegemonic and delocalized. The vertical form of knowledge necessarily represents a particular space or things and can manage that connection over a significant set of time. An initial branch of the vertical form of truth is the anthropomorphic understanding of concepts from which we derive forms of reasoning through

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

the interrelation of concepts and abstracted understandings of the world. Over time this branch becomes severed from the core of its emergence and becomes delocalized. Eventually, the space of the disconnection forms a type of alienation, a disconnection from the world that must be re-established. Still, the cultures with this symptom have forgotten how to reconnect to the world; they have forgotten the verticality of truth. In a drive to regain a meaningful culture, these delocalized cultures attempt to appropriate the culture of others.¹⁸⁰ The mode of this attempted resurgence of culture is indicated and demonstrated by a drive that leads to traveling, militaristic domination, spatial appropriation and transfiguration, and the forms of appropriative capitalism (the establishment of an idea of use-value and the conversion of use-value to exchange-value),¹⁸¹ colonial expansion, Christian missionary work, and so on. However, these attempts to appropriate culture are also mirrored in the form of domination and oppression.

My approach thus far constitutes a contextual situation that forms the development of culture. Culture necessitates a *particular* grounding in physis. Through Platonism and Christianity's influence, re-grounding becomes difficult if not impossible through delocalizing and deterritorializing methods. However, culture cannot *not* exist; and thus, there is always an implicit reciprocal and continuous drive to form culture, a drive to exist, to *be*. Culture informs epistemologies, ontologies, drives, etc., and must be localized if it is to have a truth of the world and seamless foundations. People exist, and they exist in space. Cultures are representative of people in space and thus are localized in space. When cultures are disconnected from space (delocalized/deterritorialized), so too are the people who make up those cultures. We can see from these two forms of truth that there are at least two approaches to addressing the problem of the delocalization of culture that results in nihilism. The mythology that supports culture needs to

¹⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *BT*, 111 §23.

¹⁸¹ Particularly in the form discussed by Marx and Adorno. Marx, *Capital*; Adorno, *The Culture Industry*.

be re-established in some manner to justify the type of culture we currently exist in; our scientific, Socratic, secular, Platonic-Christian culture. Alternatively, we need to remember or relearn how to connect with the world. Such approaches will be discussed and explained through Nietzsche's concept of the Will to Power. The Socratic mode, framed by domination and imposition as a form of appropriation, will be discussed as a form of *descending Will to Power* or, as Nietzsche frames it: "romantic pessimism,"¹⁸² which is organized by and consistent with the horizontal notion of anthropomorphic truth and the prioritization of concepts and the reliance on a simulacrum of the world/physics. This will be contrasted with an approach of localized development in the form of "transfigured physics," which I term *ascending Will to Power*, inspired by what Nietzsche calls "Dionysian pessimism."¹⁸³ Additionally, Nietzsche uses the terms of ascending and descending life, particularly in his later works, where he frames ascending life in terms of an instinctual affirmation of life¹⁸⁴, a principle of life", with "success, power, beauty, self-affirmation"; "a superabundance of forces", in contrast to the descending, "decadent" and "repugnant" disposition towards life framed with "ressentiment"; the "overestimation of goodness and benevolence," and a fight against instinct.¹⁸⁵ While Nietzsche frames these drives this way, I will demonstrate my own interpretation as they would be demonstrated by the Will to Power.

Our final discussion concerning Nietzsche will concern the *übermensch*, whom I will argue is a response to this cultural lack or social nihilism, who represents/embodyes the values of Dionysian pessimism *ascending Will to Power*. This will preface an interpretation of what the

¹⁸² Nietzsche, *GS*, 236 §370.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 236 §370.

¹⁸⁴ Nietzsche, *AC*, 15; *TI*, 210; "WA," 261.

¹⁸⁵ Nietzsche, *AC*, 21 §24; *EH*, 145 §4; "WA," 261; *TI*, 166 §11, 208 §33, 210 §36.

approach we are discussing provides for the subjectivity that remains in “God’s shadow”¹⁸⁶, that is, what is the necessary Platonic-Christian solution to this problem of nihilism? Nietzsche does not address this gap, likely to avoid providing a guidebook on a solution he was not interested in and that the answer to which was not evidently present or predictable, but also that Nietzsche’s perspectival philosophy would not allow for the postulation of a specific manifestation.

However, the development of AGI indicates the approach to the resolution of the death of God from the pure manifestation of Platonic-Christian science.

The following sections will discuss the Will to Power, Localization, Myth/Eternal Return, and the übermensch. The remainder of the thesis will demonstrate and contextualize AGI as the Platonic-Christian approach to resolving social nihilism and will be seen as the material mythological justification for our modern Socratic, secularized Platonic-Christian culture; or the recreation of God in a material form, safe from the collapse of the previous mythological Christian God; the “death of God.”¹⁸⁷ This discussion will contextualize AGI through a discussion of what AGI is meant to be, given the culture behind its creation, and a brief discussion of its research, ethics, and culture discussion in AGI literature.

4.9 The Early Nietzsche and Pre-Will to Power

Nietzsche’s idea of Will to Power does not appear until later on, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; however, the seeds of the concept of Will to Power can be found as early as *The Birth of Tragedy*, namely in the discussion of the Dionysian and the Apolline.¹⁸⁸ What is necessary to acknowledge early on, and will be more explicitly relevant later, and which is perhaps somewhat obvious, is that Apollo and Dionysos are *mythical* figures that represent a

¹⁸⁶ Nietzsche, *GS*, 109 §108.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 119-120 §125.

¹⁸⁸ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 178.

disposition to the world from the point of view of a particular culture that Nietzsche takes to be indicative of our representation to the world. They are not monolithic, monotheistic, or stable; rather, they are metaphorical, flexible, and malleable. For Nietzsche, these mythical figures are representations of drives. They are metaphorical representations of particular manifestations of will, namely what he comes to call the Will to Power.

The Dionysian and the Apolline are represented in *The Birth of Tragedy* as “artistic powers which erupt from nature itself, without the mediation of any human artist, and in which nature's artistic drives attain their first, immediate satisfaction.”¹⁸⁹ It is important to note here, that while I will be providing more detail on how the Dionysian and Apolline combine into the Will to Power, this quote in the second section of *The Birth of Tragedy*, is already *uniting* two drives that Nietzsche took as distinct. The “artistic powers” could also be a singular term and represent the same thing, which eventually occurs under the name of the Will to Power.

The Apolline, or Apollo, represents the “image-maker or sculptor”¹⁹⁰ or, “as the image-world of dream, the perfection of which is not linked to an individual's intellectual level or artistic formation”¹⁹¹; the “dream-artist.”¹⁹² On the other hand, the Dionysian, or Dionysos, is the representation of the “imageless art of music”¹⁹³ or, “as intoxicated reality, which has just as little regard for the individual, even seeking to annihilate, redeem, and release him by imparting a mystical sense of oneness”¹⁹⁴; “the artist of intoxication.”¹⁹⁵ The Apolline and Dionysian appear at first as competing drives that “co-exist in a state of perpetual conflict interrupted only

¹⁸⁹ Nietzsche, *BT*, 19.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

occasionally by periods of reconciliation”¹⁹⁶; the Apolline illuminates and makes clear, and the Dionysian intoxicates. The Apolline image and the Dionysian music both represented a particular aspect of physis and drives in their own way. This unity, though agonistic is, however, interrupted by the arrival of Socrates.

Socrates does not try to attain metaphysical consolation through the dissolution of boundaries (Dionysos) or glory in the loving cultivation of individual appearance (Apollo); rather, his life is devoted to the creation of abstract generalizations and the attainment of theoretical knowledge, and he firmly believes that the use of reason will lead to human happiness.¹⁹⁷

First, Socrates is not strictly seen as an individual here but rather a mythologized figure representing a particular drive; Socrates is not necessarily a monumental figure in history, but an indicator of this particular contingent cultural shift. This representation of drives under the name of the Socratic is not reducible to Socrates, but rather that Socrates himself was indicative of these cultural drives. Nietzsche claims that a new opposition emerged where the Socratic overtook the Apolline and set to contend against the Dionysian.¹⁹⁸ This indicated a shift in art, whereas before, it would be grounded in the Dionysian.¹⁹⁹ However, with Socrates’ influence, Euripides shifted the foundation of the tragic outside the Dionysian, onto *safe* grounds. Grounds that do not provide any tragic discomfort because they rest on the safety of clear and distinct generalizations and not on the perceived risky and uncomfortable ground of the world itself. Euripides championed a mode of art in the form of a *Deus Ex Machina*, where the individual already knows what to expect and thus is unaffected by the full force of art and aesthetic experience. This, for Nietzsche, is essentially an early instance of setting the foundation of art on

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 14 §1.

¹⁹⁷ Geuss, “Introduction,” xi.

¹⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *BT*, 60.

¹⁹⁹ “The lyric poet, a Dionysiac artist” Ibid., 30 §5.

anthropomorphism rather than from within physis, from “nature itself”²⁰⁰, or what Nietzsche calls it: “aesthetic Socratism.”²⁰¹

Aesthetic Socratism takes the form of the romantic, framed by an “impoverishment of life” that seeks “quiet, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves through art and insight, or else intoxication, paroxysm, numbness, madness,”²⁰² as opposed to those with a “superabundance of life”²⁰³ who desire a “Dionysian art as well as a tragic outlook and insight into life.”²⁰⁴ The drives of the one who faces the impoverishment of life are framed by what Nietzsche later designates as resentment, which can also be understood as an ascetic revenge against the world in the form of a ‘no-saying’ against the outside, different, non-self, and eventually against oneself.²⁰⁵

These various drives, their representation and manifestation in terms of asceticism, the Dionysian and Apolline, the superabundance or impoverishment of life, the manifestation of resentment, the spirit of science, aesthetic Socratism, the will to truth, and so on, are all able to be represented under the term the Will to Power. It is safe to say, given Nietzsche’s flexibility of the term Will to Power, that any indication of a drive or will that Nietzsche discusses could also be represented under the Will to Power while yet avoiding the idea that Will to Power is a single and unifying *concept*, it can remain as Ciano Aydin describes, a “relation.”²⁰⁶ Further, “Even rejecting the claim that reality is will to power is an expression of will to power.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁰ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 178.

²⁰¹ Nietzsche, *BT*, 62.

²⁰² Nietzsche, *GS*, 234 §370.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *GM* 228-229 §10.

²⁰⁶ Aydin, “Nietzsche on Reality as Will to Power: Toward an ‘Organization—Struggle’ Model,” 26.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

4.10 Will to Power

Nietzsche's conception of "Will to Power" has taken many interpretations and understandings in how to view it and to analyze it. At its core, the Will to Power describes what makes up life and the world. It governs *human nature* and is, for Nietzsche, a "primordial fact of all history."²⁰⁸ All our drives, will, etc., can all be understood as Will to Power. The Will to Power is not a single or a singularly determinable drive but a representation of the multiplicity and combination of forces and drives expressed by everything, including physis, the world in-itself, etc. Concepts like human nature, normally treated as a grounding and justification for human (in)action, are determined by the Will to Power.

I wish to follow Ofelia Schutte's interpretation from *Beyond Nihilism* that Will to Power should be read, at a start, as a metaphor.²⁰⁹ I also wish to take guidance on this topic from Willow Verkerk, who adds that "will to power is not to be understood in dualistic terms of submission and dominance but instead as an agonistic model of transformation"²¹⁰ that is constituted by a multiplicity of drives, at least in its reference to our self. This situates the Will to Power in a mode that can encompass many contradictory notions but cannot be isolated into a single drive or determination. I intend to follow Schutte's advice in taking a "critical approach [to] distinguish between all of these senses of power and... inquire further into the effects and implications of each"²¹¹ in looking at how Nietzsche expresses notions of power and what that means for the concept of Will to Power more generally.

As a metaphor understood in a more Dionysian way, but also a concept in the more Apolline or Socratic/anthropomorphic way, The Will to Power holds a unique position as a

²⁰⁸ Nietzsche, 169-170 §259; Verkerk, "Friedrich Nietzsche," 244.

²⁰⁹ Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism*, 92.

²¹⁰ Verkerk, *Nietzsche and Friendship*, 88.

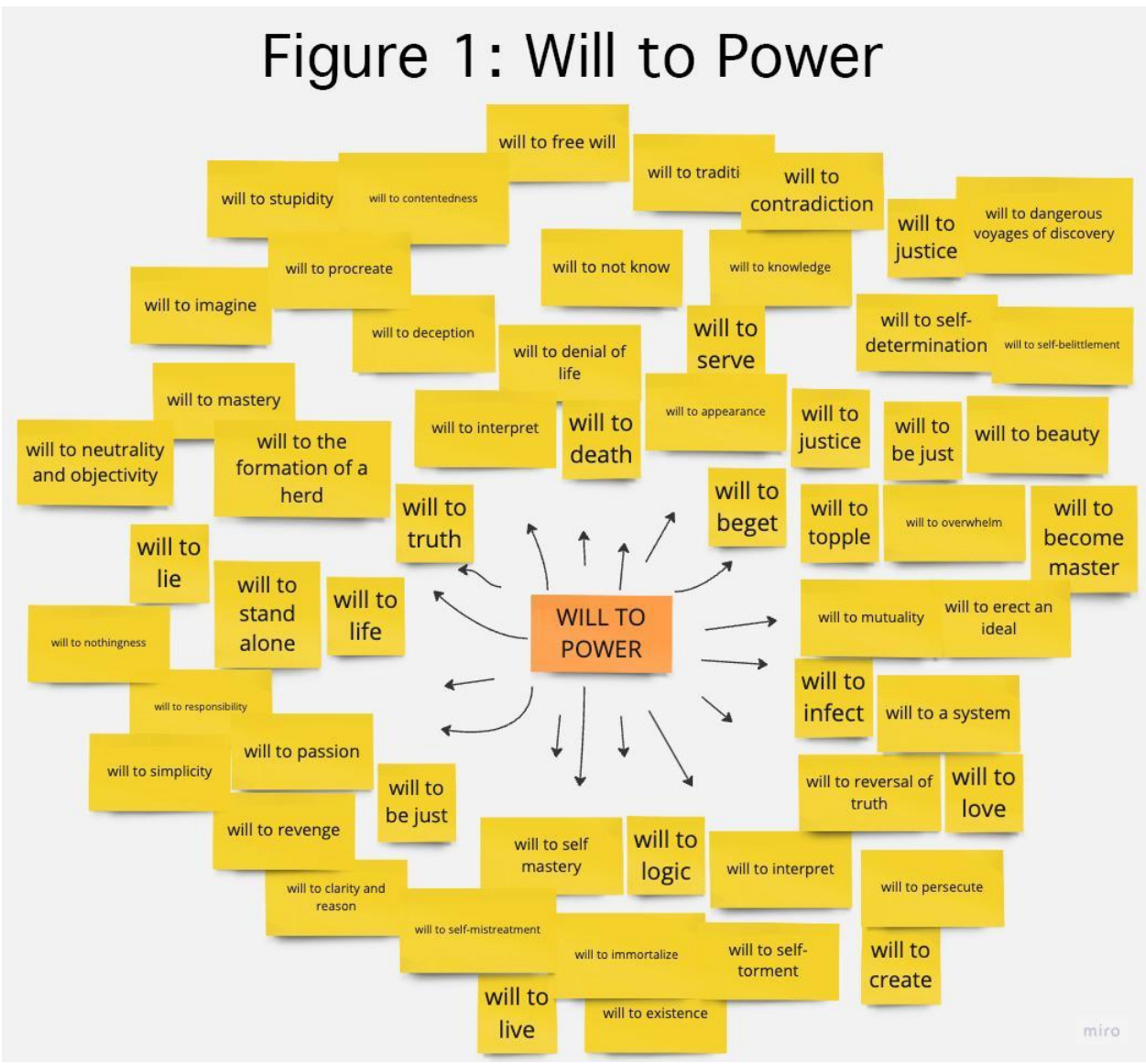
²¹¹ Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism*, 130.

hybrid concept because it must be a *concept* but cannot conform to the position of normative anthropomorphic concepts Nietzsche discusses, most notably in *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*. The Will to Power as a concept must be able to account for the relationship with physis in language; it must recognize and be within a vertical and horizontal truth.²¹² Expressions of language, no matter what type or output, are expressions of Will to Power, even if those expressions are structurally contradictory or incompatible. Concepts such as ‘human nature’, which only exist in anthropomorphic or a horizontal form of truth, maintain a stable understanding amid a world of becoming and thus do not contain the capacity to fit the contingent nature of physis. Even though the notions of human nature are contested, which demonstrates their non-essential form, understandings of human nature still take a rigid form which conforms the population not only to their definitions, but to their existence as an interpretation of humanity as singular and essential; they indicate that humans are reducible to an essence that they subsequently must follow.²¹³ However, Will to Power as a concept must be able to account for instability, change, contingency, agon, contradiction, etc. Will to Power can be seen as both having an essential characteristic that outlines what it is, its capacity as an explanatory framework; however, its “essence” is something filled by *particularity* and a contingent facticity and not determined by social convention and strict definitions. Will to

²¹² See “Will to Power Figure 1”. The Will to Power, though a singular concept, can contain a multiplicity of possible contradictory and agonistic other wills. Nietzsche will often indicate a will that can be understood as a manifestation of Will to Power even though he does not explicitly call it Will to Power. This figure demonstrates many examples of this that occur through Nietzsche’s works.

²¹³ This no-doubt acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy. By convincing the population that there is an essential mode of being human, implies there is a “wrong” way to be human which necessarily introduces a profound alienation of the self and acts to self-restrict the freedom of the individual. Graeber and Wengrow discuss this in the creation of ideas of the state of nature to contend with the encountering of a type of freedom experienced by Indigenous populations in North America who managed to live without oppressive organizing governments, monarchy, etc. If a population can claim to it is in need of being controlled and organized because it has an essential characteristic that is to be feared, then the justification of government no longer has to come from the rulers but is provided by the ruled. Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*.

Power, then, is continuously redefined, filled, emptied, refilled, etc.; it must be understood as a concept at the level of horizontal truth and a metaphor at the level of vertical truth, that has a single definitive understanding, but that can contain a multiplicity of meanings. It is a concept that is non-ascetic and can contain and be used to explain contingent phenomena in the world without reducing them to an anthropomorphic, imposing, or domineering type of concept. In this sense it manages a space that could constitute it as a hybrid concept that affirms life and has a definitive value.



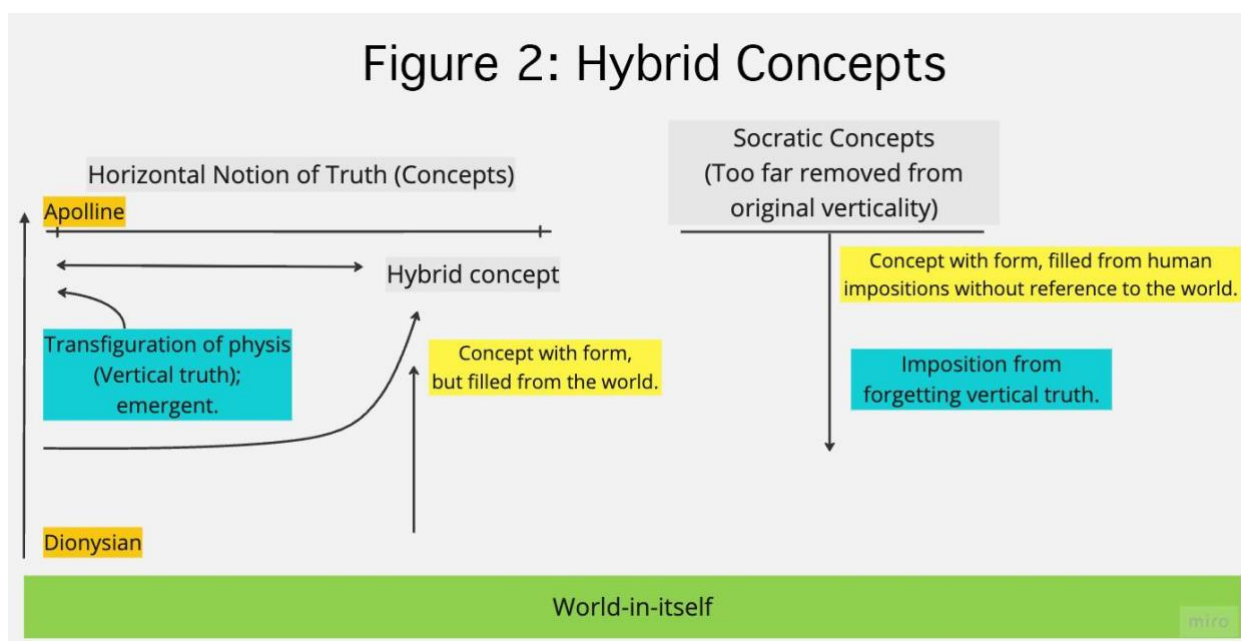
The understanding of a hybrid concept I am describing can be further explained through the influence of the understanding of how concepts are derived and used through the metaphors of Dionysian, Apolline, and Socratic from *The Birth of Tragedy*. The *Concepts* that Nietzsche critiques are the scientific concepts derived from a Socratic perversion and ‘spirit of science’. These are concepts of organization, imposition, and structure. While these may seem necessary for thinking and knowing, that would be to ignore the possibility of a hybrid concept that can do the same thing in a non-obtrusive/non-imposing manner. The hybrid concept is representative of the semblance between the Dionysian and the Apolline. The Dionysian representation of the world in-itself/physics, and the Apolline clarity comes through our will to understand the world. Where the rigid *Socratic Concept* of horizontal truth can be used to impose power, the unity of the Dionysian and Apolline reflect the emergence and clarification of an exertion of power that operates as a metaphor, but one that can be filled with a plethora of different content and maintain its clarity and utility. The unity of the Dionysian and Apolline in the later conceptions of the Dionysian would include the vertical development of culture with some extension of horizontal truth that would allow for the ability to still perceive the lineage/genealogy of the verticality of the culture and take that into account; it could still be grounded and represent, as a concept, the world. This is different from the Socratic influence that is a pure extension of the horizontal notions of truth and concepts that ignores or dominates the world.²¹⁴ I contend that Nietzsche’s affirmative concepts: Will to Power, Eternal Recurrence and the übermensch all

²¹⁴ See Figure 2. The unity of the Apolline and the Dionysian occupy a particular space with reference to the world that to use a concept with the consideration of both retains a connection with the world where the world itself fills the content through our representations of it. We create the concepts to facilitate knowledge and mutual understanding, and the world is included in that co-creation process. In the Socratic version, there is no input from the world as it is, only our imposed upon conceptions of the world. In the latter case we do not know the world and, relying on our previous knowledge, impose that view on the world. We, subject to the forces of power come to believe something of the world without paying attention to the world and our relation to it and move to shape that world in accordance with our dispositions, assumptions, and drive to mitigate our fear of the world.

express this form of hybridity (unity of Dionysian and Apolline where proximity is maintained to a particular grounding) and operate as metaphors filled with particular perspectives.

Taking the Will to Power as a hybrid concept with the characterization of both horizontal and vertical truth allows Nietzsche to *identify* particular contingent drives as they *emerge* rather than *determining* them. Pairing these emergent drives with each other and particular contingent events can help understand the world in a way that looks at the world as is rather than imposing an analytic framework that reifies anthropomorphic belief systems. Tracing concepts, words, etc., genealogically through their lineage and how they emerge in conjunction with other historical contingent beliefs and understandings, such as Platonism and Christianity, can determine how absolute certain values are, what values persist, and why they persist.

As an umbrella term, Nietzsche can identify other *wills* under the Will to Power and through the identification of these wills, he can identify similarities and consistent lineages in certain environments and contexts. Nietzsche indicates many particular manifestations of the



Will to Power such as the Will to: “truth”²¹⁵, “reversal of truth”²¹⁶, “tradition”²¹⁷, “lie”²¹⁸, “interpret”²¹⁹, “logic”²²⁰, “be just”²²¹, “justice”²²², “life”²²³, “live”²²⁴, “denial of life”²²⁵ “self-determination”²²⁶, “self-mastery”²²⁷, “dangerous voyages of discovery”²²⁸, “free will”²²⁹, “stand alone”²³⁰, “beauty”²³¹, “knowledge”²³², “not know”²³³, “clarity and reason”²³⁴, “passion”²³⁵, “death”²³⁶, “revenge”²³⁷, “immortalize”²³⁸, “be master”²³⁹, “mastery”²⁴⁰, “serve”²⁴¹, “existence”²⁴², “appearance”²⁴³, “beget”²⁴⁴, “love”²⁴⁵, “deception[/deceive]”²⁴⁶, “stupidity”²⁴⁷,

²¹⁵ Nietzsche, *GS*, 8, 200 §203, 201 §344; *TSZ*, 65, 79, 88; *BGE*, 8:5 §1, 6 §2, 12 §10, 115 §211; *GM* 339-340 §24, 346-348 §27; *TI*, 202 §21; “NCW,” 281 §2.

²¹⁶ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:58 §59.

²¹⁷ Nietzsche, *TI*, 213 §39.

²¹⁸ Nietzsche, *EH* 149 §7.

²¹⁹ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:83 §188.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8:144 §240.

²²¹ Nietzsche, “HL”, 123 §6.

²²² Nietzsche, 123; *GS*, 228 §363.

²²³ Nietzsche, “HL” §9; *HAH2*, 4:9; “WS,” 161 §17; *GS*, 95 §99, 208 §349; *EH* 140 §2; *GM* 209, 264 §11, 267 §12; *TI* 175 §65, 227-228 §4.

²²⁴ Nietzsche, *TI*, 202 §21.

²²⁵ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:169 §259.

²²⁶ Nietzsche, *HAH1*, 3:8.

²²⁷ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:60 §61..

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8:112 §209.

²²⁹ Nietzsche, *HAH1*, 3:8. HATH1 8

²³⁰ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:96 §201.

²³¹ Nietzsche, *HAH2*, 4:114 §292.

²³² Nietzsche, *GS*, 244 §380; *BGE*, 8:27 §24; “GM,” 251 §4.

²³³ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:27 §24.

²³⁴ Nietzsche, *GS*, 95 §99.

²³⁵ *Ibid.* 103 §105.

²³⁶ Nietzsche, 201 §344; *TSZ*, 35.

²³⁷ Nietzsche, *GS*, 224 §359.

²³⁸ *Ibid.* 235 §370.

²³⁹ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 89.

²⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *TI* 191 §7.

²⁴¹ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 89.

²⁴² Nietzsche, 90; *GM*, 295 §7.

²⁴³ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:135 §230.

²⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 89, 96.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:6 §2; *GM*, 341 §25.

²⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:70 §107.

“self-mistreatment”²⁴⁸, “self-torment”²⁴⁹, “self-belittlement”²⁵⁰, “overwhelm”²⁵¹, “topple”²⁵², “simplicity”²⁵³, “contentedness and simplicity”²⁵⁴, “imagine”²⁵⁵, “infect”²⁵⁶, “erect an ideal”²⁵⁷, “a system”²⁵⁸, “nothingness”²⁵⁹, “neutrality and objectivity”²⁶⁰, “contradiction”²⁶¹, “mutuality”²⁶², “the formation of a herd”²⁶³, “procreate”²⁶⁴, “create”²⁶⁵. If the Will to Power is meant to encapsulate these multiplicitous and contradictory *wills*, it cannot be described to have a singular direction, definition, or modality, but must be flexible and fundamentally metaphorical. Additionally, in this process, Nietzsche is able to indicate the contingency of these drives as they emerge or disappear and therefore is able to identify their development in particular settings, such as many of the ascetic drives that emerge as a result of Christianity, the desire for a particular form of Socratic truth through logic, clarity, etc., or the particular wills that existed in pre-Socratic Greek culture and European pagan cultures, and the convergence or divergence of these in their various forms. Nietzsche can identify where certain wills emerge in the relationship to particular epistemological developments from physics to truth, how these wills fit along with culture and the directives and drives of a particular culture.

²⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *GM*, 276 §18.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 281 §22.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 342 §25.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 236 §13.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:134 §230.

²⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *GM* 299 §88

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 281 §22.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *TI*, 159 §26.

²⁵⁹ Nietzsche, *GM*, 285 §24, 311 §14, 349 §28.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 301 §9.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 307 §12.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 324 §18.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 324 §18.

²⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *EH*, 134 §8.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Nietzsche sometimes refrains from using the phrase Will to Power, instead referring to drives or particular manifestations such as the “will to truth”²⁶⁶, “will to life”²⁶⁷ or the many others listed above in order to demonstrate the individual variances in will, indicating the non-absolute conceptual form of the Will to Power. Nietzsche exposes he is doing this when, in reference to Kant and Hegel, he states: “Their “knowing” is creating, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is — will to power.”²⁶⁸ Here, Nietzsche identifies one instance of the Will to Power in the form of the will to truth that is represented by Kant and Hegel; a Will to Power represented in the particular instance of individuals, indicating there is not one central interpretation, or rigid concept of any will but rather that individuals can have varying manifestations of Will to Power. This understanding balances the needs of a concept such as will to truth that can have a social understanding of truth, filled with other drives that intersect within Kant and Hegel. Nietzsche could at this point continue to use the term Will to Power, but instead chooses to clarify and term it something else which accounts for the particular contingency of that drive and force. This also immediately introduces diverse forms of the Will to Power in two ways. First, it indicates a personal Will to Power; “*their... will to power*”, and second, indicates that Kant and Hegel’s Will to Power takes a particular form.

Some wills emerge as the result of a particular direction of culture. Socratism, for example, marked a shift of culture to a particular will to clarity and reason, and a will to truth at the expense of the world itself. The will to truth; however, can indicate two distinct modes, as discussed earlier about the vertical and horizontal understandings of truth; there can be a will to horizontal truth, or a will to vertical truth. While the latter can aid the former, the prioritization of

²⁶⁶ Nietzsche, “BGE,” §1, 2, 211; *GM*, 339, 340, 346, 349 §24, 27; *TSZ*, 65, 79, 88; *GS*, 8, 200, 201 §4, 344; *TI*, 202 §21; “NCW,” 282.

²⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *GM* 11, 12.

²⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *BGE*, §211.

the former erodes the latter. Nietzsche outlines this agonistic relationship in *The Gay Science* where he distinguishes them as the truth that deceives us (anthropomorphic), or the truth of God as the “divine truth,” our “longest lie,” and the uncomfortable truth that God is dead, and the truth of the reality of physis, that the world itself, is ever present.²⁶⁹ This is another example that any particular will, encompassed in the Will to Power, can represent varying instances and contradictory drives. Because these wills are active, changing, and historically contingent, they indicate a direction and expression in both a metaphorical and literal way or, rather, a psychological and material way. Two of these particular directions take inspiration from Nietzsche’s discussion of Dionysian and Romantic pessimism,²⁷⁰ which I will argue can constitute a particular directional representation of forces from the Will to Power. By Romantic here, I mean specifically the prioritizing of concepts that fulfill the entirety of meaning of something at the expense of meaning provided by an interaction with the world (vertical truth, Dionysian).

The Dionysian expression of forces indicates the direction of life and the affirmation of life. This expression relates to the vertical expression of truth, language, and cultural development. The affirmation of life as a metaphor comes from Nietzsche’s constant allusions to plants, trees, and emergent and *natural* forces in the world. While all language is still metaphor, this is often forgotten and the understanding of something naturalistic, or the understanding of nature is often treated with absolute meaning. This Socratic or Romantic form that we can know something entirely, accurately, and perfectly represented, is impossible and to understand something in this way is to deceive ourselves not only of what we are discussing, in this example, nature/the-world-in-itself, but also to our capacities of knowledge. An emergence and

²⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *GS*, 200-201 §344.

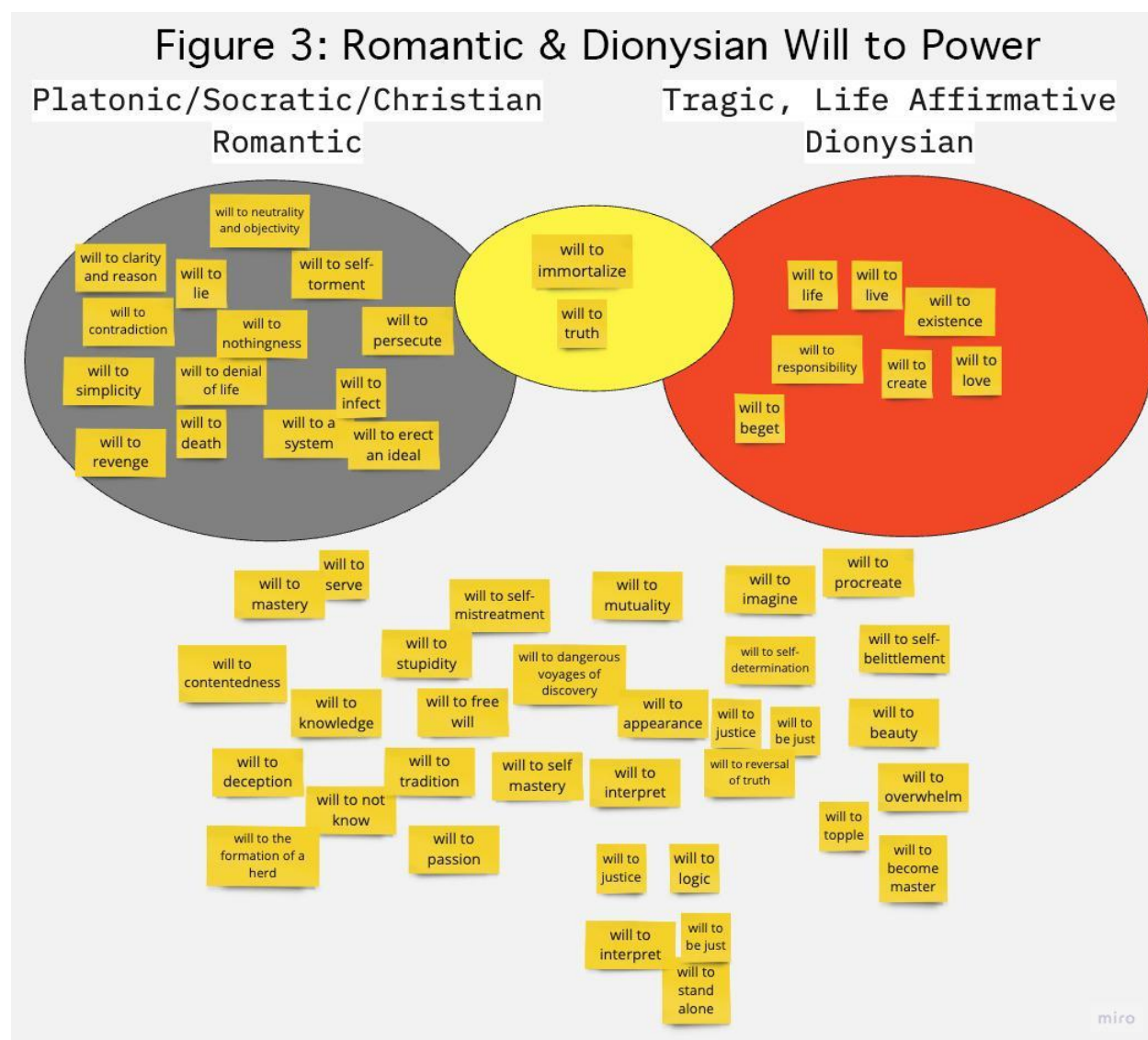
²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 236 §370.

growth can be understood through its *will to existence* and *will to life*. For example, a tree's will to life can be demonstrated as it stretches out to reach the sunlight or extends its roots to find and consume moisture and nutrients. It's will to beget could be the distribution of seeds and fruit. This interpretation can be seen as growth, which will have limits if the conditions are good: if there is the right soil, climate, nutrition, and so on. The neighbouring trees must also be amenable to each other's existence and the grouping of plants, etc., must coexist and provide a reciprocal environment for the existence of each other. There must be an effective and coextensive culture, a reflective language and means of communication, and the absence of any abrasive or alien factors that would take the Socratic or Romantic form. The main point for the Dionysian is growth and existence. Thus, I am calling this demonstration of Will to Power *ascending Will to Power*.

On the other hand, is Romantic Pessimism as Nietzsche discusses and relates to Schopenhauer and Wagner.²⁷¹ For the early Nietzsche, these two figures represented the Dionysian. Still, as Nietzsche discovered Wagner's antisemitism and Schopenhauer's disdain for life, Nietzsche came to realize that they were more representative of a romantic disposition or what I am calling *descending Will to Power*. In descending Will to Power, we see the domination and oppression instilled on the self and others. Starting from the Socratic disposition and influenced by the co-opting and co-development of Christian thought, we have the *will to clarity and reason*, the *will to lie* (regarding physis), the *will to neutrality and objectivity*, *systems*, *ideals*, *nothingness*, *immortality*, and *death*. These particular wills are operative in the form of anthropomorphic or horizontal truth, and thus they mean to impose, appropriate, and consume

²⁷¹ Ibid.

indiscriminately.²⁷² To lie, here, is not simply lying because we know the world cannot be known and therefore all language must be metaphor, but rather it is to ignore the truth of the world and that all language is metaphor, and to assume that it is possible to know the world truthfully. The demonstration of that the will to lie is through the reorganization of the world to become *clear*, to have a notion of *objectivity* (which is only known to a divine eye, a singular “cyclopean eye”²⁷³).



²⁷² Please see Figure 3: “Romantic and Dionysian Will to Power”, that breaks down how certain particular drives can be identified with various movements/groupings. While some manifestations of the will can clearly indicate a particular direction/position, some, such as the will to truth, can be manifested in contradictory ways.

²⁷³ Nietzsche, *BT*, 67 §14.

Systems maintain these structures of truths, and it is only these truths that can be seen perceptively as immortal, and to be immortal, or beyond life, is to be without life because there is no immanence or presence of death. These truths that are immortal and objective, as discussed earlier, do not represent the world, but they represent dogmatic assertions devoid of life and the world. They are representatives of the nothing.

The understanding of the nothing, or the abyss, is important because the grounding that things like science necessarily requires *does not exist* but *must exist*. Science necessitates a grounding and justification for its use, if science is the instrumental rationality, it is empty without the content of the world. Since science has disengaged from any form of worldly connection to physis and any mytho-cultural foundations, the grounding for science has disappeared. However, since science still exists, it must have some sort of grounding or connection to our reality. Because of the absence of any actual ground, science has been relegated to the Socratic “Spirit of Science” that ignores the relevance of the world-in-itself. Grounding then takes the form of *nothing*, or *no-place*; the grounding is the *nothing* and this *nothing* becomes necessary for science to maintain its guise of objectivity. The *nothing* is the space of the opportunity for objectivity because any reference within the *nothing* has the capacity for universality since it has no specific point of reference in the world. The *nothing* is also the space of *no-place*, in distinction from the world of *some-place*. However, there cannot be a true *nothing* or *no-place*, or, an absolute void that can also be a grounding. Therefore, the *nothing* must *be*, and because it *is*. This is not to say that the nothing is materially present, but it is necessarily non-materially present; it is a necessity for the operation of science *because* it has no material presence. However, despite not have a material presence, the nothing *is*, and therefore *wills*.

Nothing itself *wills*, and the *will to nothingness*²⁷⁴ works to achieve this perceived *objective* state. Science does not want to recognize that it relies on this nothing, because the nothing is the space of which objectivity and neutrality is possible which science requires. The world must be denied, and perspective eliminated, for a divine, ideal, absolute perspective to exist.

Science does not have the tools available to contend with the nothing and what it conceals. Digging *into* the *nothing* cannot yield *anything*, and science has its objectivity premised in the dogmatic form of anthropomorphic, horizontal truth. For science to digress from its comfortable dogmatism, its authority disappears. This is because as soon as science recognizes the particularity and the world in-itself beyond said nothingness, it can no longer claim itself as objective or universal; science is only objective and universal in a realm that is absent of particularity. Thus, the discussion of the nothing is void of input from science but must be understood, and it must be understood as it exists, as something, as an objective, even though it does not exist. Furthermore, because science necessitates the nothing, it must maintain it. To maintain the nothing means to deny particularity which means to appropriate particularity and particular knowledge into a universal schema; it must consume, appropriate, and reconfigure everything, all particularity, in order to maintain its own existence. To analyze the world of being, the world must be abstracted from itself into an anthropomorphic interpretation. If the anthropomorphic concepts endure and the referent of the concept is forgotten, there is a void of reference for the referent, there is *nothing* left, there is *no-thing* left behind, only concepts and abstractions. To gain the understanding of the world, or the *thing*, the being is negated in favour

²⁷⁴ The *nothing that wills* is not the same as the *will to nothingness*. The *will of the nothing* is demonstrated as a form of Will to Power demonstrated by the nothing itself, while the *will to nothingness* is the will of individuals who pursue the distinction/alienation/delocalization/deterritorialization from the world in-itself.

of the form of the non-being of the thing. The *thing* is consumed and converted into that which can be used to maintain the hegemonic-epistemological system. However, as noted above, this nothing is not necessarily a lack or void, it is *something*; it *is* in that it is necessary. It is a result of an action and is still *present*; it is directed, has a will, and can impose itself. However, the world is not what is being interpreted, but the abstraction of the world, which is the extracted and remade *nothing*, which is interpretable by science and dogmatic, universal logic.

The *nothing* should then be seen as a cultural myth that acts as other myths do: as epistemological, historical, and rational accounts that shape our understanding and integration with the world. Myth itself does not exist materially per se, but it exists in that it influences us and assists in the shaping and perpetuation of its culture. However, the nothing is not simply just a myth, but also an abstraction of space to build upon, that exists because of the separation of humans from particular space and the knowledge that ties people to that space, their pre-existing myths. In other words, the *nothing* exists and wills, and while it is not materially present, it is treated as though it is materially present and taken as a given, again, it acts as a myth. For Nietzsche, “without myth... all cultures lost their healthy, creative, natural energy; only”, myth is “the contracted image of the world... as an abbreviation of appearances” and to lost touch with myth is the result of “belong[ing] to the community of Socratic, critical human beings.”²⁷⁵ To lose the connection to the world that comes with myth and its image of the world means to rely on the nothing to inform their energy, which ceases to be healthy, creative, or natural. The lack of myth initiates “abstract man, without guidance from myth, abstract education, abstract morality, abstract law”, it no longer has a “secure and sacred place or origin.”²⁷⁶ The “demise of myth” that Nietzsche indicates does not leave us without a myth to “connect everything to

²⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *BT*, 111 §23.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

experience”, but rather leaves us with the nothing-as-myth.²⁷⁷ To have the *nothing*-as-myth is to negate the world, it is to be nihilistic.

The *Nothing* is the manifestation of the romantic, or descending Will to Power. The nothing and physis/world in-itself contend against each other in a contest for the ground of belief. Physis produces ever more emergences and is reflected anew constantly; it is endless becoming and is continually refreshed while constantly being faced with annihilation. The process of language creation from a position in the world is recreated with each new birth in a society, with each change of space and geography and continuously over time. Antagonistically, the nothing nihilates every new instance of becoming, appropriating its ascending Will to Power and transfiguring it to match the dominant, hegemonic culture enframed by descending Will to Power. The agon between ascending and descending Will to Power is constant.

This distinction of ascending and descending Will to Power may at first appear dualistic, in the binary form of ascending and descending; however, these, again, should not be considered exhaustive as they simply represent an interpretive capacity justified in Nietzsche’s works through the Romantic and Dionysian. Additionally, this avoids the distinction warned against by Verkerk in interpreting the Will to Power as submission and domination,²⁷⁸ because while there may be a form of submission and domination characterized by certain wills of the Will to Power, particularly in the notion of Romantic, Socratic, or descending Will to Power, they are not exhaustive, characteristic, or essential of Will to Power. The domination and submission aspect of Will to Power may represent the Socratic but does not represent the Dionysian or the Apolline in the same way. The Dionysian and Apolline do have an aspect of consumption, but there must

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 110 §23.

²⁷⁸ Verkerk, *Nietzsche and Friendship*, 88.

be a difference noted between unmitigated and unrestrained, blind consumption, that “devours”²⁷⁹ and consumption that is in line with necessary diet and nutrition, or sustenance.

4.11 Descending and Ascending Will to Power

Descending Will to Power acts in a domineering form as a type of legislative control, assimilatory practice and a mechanism of organization, regulation, and control. Once a culture has forgotten its vertical process it loses its connection, and in striving to reconnect, it positions itself over others in a mode to try to *learn* from elsewhere, but because it has lost the knowledge process involving learning through metaphor and myth (its mytho-epistemology), it attempts to extract through the use of rigid concepts. Disconnected culture tries to reconnect with reality but is unable to because of its forgetting of how to do that; it has forgotten how to restart an aesthetic, vertical approach to truth. To extract and employ rigid concepts, it must create them and apply them to this new space, which acts as a legislation. Thus, it does not *learn* from the world, but imposes; it is an inauthentic appropriation in that it appropriates not the exact identity of a thing in the world, which Nietzsche thinks is impossible, but a form that must fit within the organizational structure that has been used and imposed. In a false attempt to *learn*, no new or challenging or original form of knowledge from the world itself is gained, rather, the *learning* ends up taking the form of imposition because for a disconnected culture to learn, it must adapt what it does not know into the required narrow epistemic conditions before it can understand it. Nietzsche eloquently describes this process in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, where he claims it is a mistake to consider the organic world as an overpowering in the form of an ascending Will to Power:

all overpowering and becoming-master are a new interpreting, a contriving in which the previous “meaning” and “purpose” must necessarily be obscured or entirely extinguished.

²⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *BT*, 109 §23.

However well we may have grasped the utility of some physiological organ (or also of a legal institution, or a social custom...), still we have understood nothing with respect to its emergence.²⁸⁰

We can analyze, view, and try to appropriate into knowledge and understand, but we are only ever able to appropriate what we interpret based on our epistemological predispositions, and if the epistemological predispositions are not in line with the particular world-in-itself, then there is no manner in which the particular world-in-itself can be appropriately represented without an anthropomorphic or romantic imposition. We do not and cannot learn the thing-in-itself, but in this romantic attempt at interpretation and understanding, the interpretation transmutes the thing and eliminates the original; we kill it and transfigure it into the *nothing* because that is all that is able to be understood when our land-based epistemological knowledges have been eliminated and replaced with a narrow epistemic hegemon in the form of an alienated science. This assimilation of knowledge persists under the guise of progress and learning. What Verkerk notes as “the drive towards assimilation, to make the other into a possession of our own”²⁸¹ is a form of death through asceticism that is often assumed as progress; it is “the form of a will and a way to greater power and is always asserted at the expense of numerous smaller powers.”²⁸² This form of assimilation and dominance under the guise of learning and progress is constitutive of descending Will to Power, and not Will to Power totally.

Aydin also notes in the framing of the concept of Will to Power, with both ‘will’ and ‘power’ connotating a command. ‘Will to Power’, as “one word”²⁸³, implies, for Aydin, “subduing another will.”²⁸⁴ However, as mentioned above, this singular understanding of the

²⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *GM*, 265 §12. 2

²⁸¹ Verkerk, *Nietzsche and Friendship*, 50.

²⁸² Nietzsche, *GM* 12.

²⁸³ Aydin, “Nietzsche on Reality as Will to Power: Toward an ‘Organization—Struggle’ Model,” 28.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

directionality of the Will to Power only accounts for the descending approach to Will to Power that causes the elimination of the thing rather than an understanding of the thing, and does so through domination and subjection to the will of the dominant determining force rather than the emergent, self-affirming will that commands the will of the self without imposing the self-will on others. This again mirrors Nietzsche's early discussion of the impossibility of transplanting a foreign myth onto a new place.²⁸⁵ Over time, the imposed-upon subject "becomes sickly and withers away"²⁸⁶ if it is not able to "reject the foreign element after a terrible struggle."²⁸⁷ This *terrible struggle* is the agon between an ascending and descending Will to Power and demonstrates the contest that they undergo in the forces between emergence and nihilation. Emergent *will* and a positive (Dionysian) notion of 'will' and 'power' give a contesting interpretation against Aydin's strict understanding of Will to Power as a Socratic "organizing principle."²⁸⁸ This agonistic and parasitic relationship justifies itself in the guise of progress. What is seen as the progression of knowledge is, in actuality, a relationship of continued exploitation of the world-in-itself for a knowledge that does not reflect it. In this interpretive

²⁸⁵ Nietzsche, *BT*, 111 §23.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* The notion of "rejecting the foreign element" should not be read as an expression that eventually represents the fascist movements of the early 20th Century. Nietzsche here is claiming that the Socratic disposition has taken hold over Germany and that the German Spirit must be reclaimed, "the rebirth of the German myth." (109) Myth, again, must be understood as having a secure and sacred place, which means these myths are tied to space, presenting a distinction of what is "German". The issue that Nietzsche presents is that the issue of the Socratic is that it imposes a need to understand what "German" is through a concept of the Socratic manner that negates the space of its existence, prioritizing the understanding of Germany itself as a concept, dislocated from space/geography. The risk of treating Germany (nation-state) as a concept, rather than its particular space and what that space means for Germany (culture), is what later allows Germany to justify its European expansion, in which case the German (nation-state) becomes the foreign element in the form of the Socratic that induces a "terrible struggle" and must be "reject[ed]."

²⁸⁸ Aydin, "Nietzsche on Reality as Will to Power: Toward an 'Organization—Struggle' Model," 39.

model, “the original entity”²⁸⁹ is destroyed in favour of the simulacra which serves to feed the parasitical ‘eternal hunger’ of the hegemonic Platonic-Christian culture, of “mythless-man.”²⁹⁰

This agon and bidirectionality can be reflected in Nietzsche’s distinction of Dionysian and Romantic pessimism.²⁹¹ Just as I discuss ascending and descending Will to Power, we could just as well call them, respectively, Dionysian and Romantic Will to Power. This distinction exposes the hierarchical order and magnitudes of drives that are, as Cyano Aydin notes, the “result of an interaction between wills to power.”²⁹² Aydin continues, describing Will to Power as an organizing principle that orders, assimilates, simplifies, reforms, transforms, sorts, disciplines, and so on, which is only contested with other forms of organizing will to power²⁹³... “the will to power is, ...essentially directed at subduing as many other wills to power as possible.”²⁹⁴ Described in this way, Aydin only accounts for the Romantic aspects of Will to Power which as I noted prior, are a symptom of prioritizing the horizontal conceptual understanding at the expense of the vertical or Dionysian. Aydin does not recognize the Will to Power’s formative space in the Dionysian, namely as a *disorganizing* principle. Additionally, one cannot use the understanding of Will to Power as multiplicitous, relational, variable, and all-encompassing²⁹⁵ and simultaneously ascribe an essentialist valuation of it that indicates one particular drive. This does not indicate that Aydin’s interpretation is wrong per se, but that it only accounts for one aspect of the Will to Power.

²⁸⁹ Nietzsche, “OTL.” Nietzsche speaks of “original entities (144), sounds (148), images (148), metaphors (148), and nervous stimulus (149) that are undermined and forgotten in favour of an interpretation of the things themselves as “pure objects” (148)

²⁹⁰ Nietzsche, *BT*, 109 §23.

²⁹¹ Nietzsche, *GS*, 236 §370.

²⁹² Aydin, “Nietzsche on Reality as Will to Power: Toward an ‘Organization—Struggle’ Model,” 28–29.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 30–31.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

If we are to account for the organizational aspect of Will to Power, we must also note the differences between an Apolline principle of organization through illumination and semblance with the Dionysian, and a Socratic principle of organization through domination and exposition in the *spirit of science*. While perceptively similar, they are both quite different. An organizational principle based on the Apolline is one of non-domination that would occur at the pre-anthropomorphic levels of language formation that Nietzsche discusses in *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*. This is because while the Apolline is an organizing principle, it organizes in such a way that maintains a proximity to the Dionysian, unlike the Socratic that distances itself from the Dionysian. The problem of domination only occurs when the Socratic overextends itself onto another particular emergence of the Dionysian. The Apolline helps to clarify the Dionysian and helps us have a unity of chaos and clarity in our interpretation of the world and our formation of myths and language. In other words, the Apolline organization builds on the chaotic grounds of the world in-itself and organizes itself into a manner that is non-ascetic and life-affirming. This is represented by an affirmative emergence and Dionysian or ascending Will to Power. On the other hand, a Socratic organization imposes, from above, with grids and other mechanisms of control, reorganizing and assimilating. For Aydin, Will to Power only takes the form of organizations, while a broad definition of Will to Power that is required would necessarily account for organizations as well as disorganizations, anti-organizations, and reorganizations. In addition to organizing, Will to Power can be destructive, it can be *Dynamite*, while also being emergent.

Any explanation of the Will to Power must account for the foundational emergence of culture, and a purely domineering account of Will to Power cannot do this. While this is rarely clear in Nietzsche's few explicit mentions of the Will to Power, it is a consistent discussion in

Nietzsche's early discussions of myth and their relevance to place in *The Birth of Tragedy* before he formulates the term 'Will to Power.' Nietzsche's project of providing a route out of nihilism cannot rest on a dominating Will to Power to inform a cultural resurgence if the essential mode of that resurgence is further domination, which would simply reify the problem. Therefore, his "revaluation of all values"²⁹⁶ can be read as synonymous with a cultural resurgence because at the core of this resurgence is the necessity for a new, or reclaimed myth and the language that comes with that.

To dominate in the form of Will to Power that Aydin identifies reifies the suppression of Will to Power in a form that acts as an ideal transdisposition onto where it does not belong. A foreign myth in the form of Platonism and Christianity is always foreign as it is ungrounded and nihilistic; it now represents the *nothing*, which lacks any space or homeland, and imposes it on another form of emergence or Will to Power and subsequently restricts any new form of world based cultural emergence or of the *übermensch*, who is the "meaning of the earth."²⁹⁷ This is to conflate an understanding of the Will to Power with an overemphasis on the Socratic, while forgetting the Apolline and decreasing or absolutely negating the value of the Dionysian. The representation of Will to Power by Aydin and others emphasizes the role of the Socratic, which Nietzsche critiques, and forgets the inclusion of the Dionysian, and importantly the non-dominating clarification principles offered by the Apolline. The Will to Power, for it to be an encompassing *concept*, must, at the very least, account for all three.

The inversion of Will to Power into an *ascending* character that represents the Dionysian and Apolline is necessary for understanding how Will to Power can be antithetical to itself. The

²⁹⁶ Nietzsche, *GM*, 346 §27.

²⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 6.

Dionysian is enframed by a “superabundance of life”²⁹⁸ and a “lust for life.”²⁹⁹ In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche presents an understanding of liberal institutions that cease to be liberal once they have come to be and thus move to undermine the Will to Power.³⁰⁰ These institutions are a great example of how the Will to Power can change from an ascending form into a descending form.

Of course people know what these institutions do: they *undermine the will to power*, they set to work leveling mountains and valleys and call this morality, they make things small, cowardly, and enjoyable, - they represent the continual triumph of herd animals.³⁰¹

A once seemingly good idea of a benevolent type of institution emerges from a constructive idea, from an emergent Will to Power, in order to create with the intention that the creation will improve life. However, once they come to be, they need to impose to justify their existence. They need to flatten, invent moralities, and minimize the plethora of life these institutions were intended to improve. They work to prevent freedom and the worldly expression of the Will to Power, because this worldly Will to Power is *dangerous*, it is *Dionysian*. The reaction to control and mitigate the Dionysian, reflected early as Socratism, is a mitigation of freedom and worldly development of the Will to Power in the form of what Nietzsche identifies in the Greeks as the “strongest instinct”³⁰², the Will to Power as the tremendous force of their “inner explosives.”³⁰³ The Will to Power, in this destructive and emergent form, is the “principle of life”; “ascending life” as opposed to the “morality of Christian value concepts” that have grown from a ‘morbid soil’³⁰⁴. “The [ascending life/Will to Power] shares its fullness with things - it transfigures and enhances the world and makes it rational-, the [Christian morality] impoverishes the value of

²⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *GS*, 234 §370.

²⁹⁹ Nietzsche, *BT*, 17, 74.

³⁰⁰ Nietzsche, *TI*, 213 §38.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Emphasis added.

³⁰² Nietzsche, *AC*, 226 §3.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Nietzsche, “WA,” 261.

things and makes them pale and ugly, it negates the world.”³⁰⁵ Further, Nietzsche exposes a prioritization of a direction of Will to Power when he expresses that these institutions “undermine the will to power.” If everything is Will to Power, how is it possible for something to undermine Will to Power? That which undermines Will to Power, must also be Will to Power. This would only be the case if we were to express a prioritization of a particular Will to Power. Ascending Will to Power, that would emerge in physis as vertical truth, is undeniably favoured for Nietzsche as it aligns with the Dionysian. For an institution to “undermine” Will to Power is an expression of the unnecessary and unhelpful violence of that institution once it establishes itself as a moral authority and can justify its “levelling” of the world. The problem for these institutions that Nietzsche identifies is that they become Socratic, when they lose their capacity for vertical truth and rather than maintaining a form of hybrid concept, they become pure a concept for the exertion of social control.

Ascending Will to Power, understood as an expression of an abundance of life, must come from a position of a hybrid metaphor-concept in order for it to not represent a slice of isolated time, meaning and essential value but rather a diverse and changing, becoming, and encompassing representation of a multiplicity of drives and forces and for our purposes here an ascending and descending characteristic that respectively mirrors Nietzsche’s understanding of Dionysian and Romantic and his late discussion of Ascending³⁰⁶ and Descending life.³⁰⁷ Understanding Will to Power in this bidirectional (though not binary) way; in an Dionysian/ascending/life-affirming manner as opposed to the romantic/descending/ascetic/Christian/legislative/assimilatory/nihilating manner, allows us to set

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Nietzsche, AC, 15 §17, 21 §24, 146 §9, 166 §11, 207 §33, 210 §36; “WA,” 261.

³⁰⁷ Nietzsche, AC, 208 §33.

up an interpretation of the übermensch in contradistinction to AGI rather than analogous to it. In the next immediate sections, I will discuss the necessity of the Eternal Return with its relation to the body, and the Übermensch.

4.12 Body as Physis and the Myth of Eternal Return

As Nietzsche disengages from the immediate possibility of reconnection with land, he leads to the last possible resort: our bodies. As noted by Robert Gooding and mentioned by Gary Shapiro, the Earth is a metaphor for the human body and its passions.³⁰⁸ However, it was not always the case that this was Nietzsche's understanding; rather, it was a middle development in his work after the *Untimely Meditations*.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche claims that the way to reignite culture is through music, in particular for Nietzsche at that time, it was the music of Wagner.³⁰⁹ However, Nietzsche quickly revalues his relationship with Wagner, whose representation of German culture comes in the form of what Nietzsche calls "romantic pessimism."³¹⁰ Wagner ends up representing the negative (Romantic) notions of culture that Nietzsche disdains: racial hatred, antisemitism, "political and nationalistic insanity."³¹¹ Later, Nietzsche describes Wagner's allure when he notes: "It was not *Music* that Wagner conquered [German young men] with, it was the 'Idea':— the fact that his art is full of riddles, the way it plays hide-and-seek under a hundred symbols, its polychromatic idea... the same techniques that Hegel once used to tempt and seduce them."³¹² The early Nietzsche combines music and an understanding of cultural emergence and hopes that this combination can revive German culture. For the early Nietzsche, music and

³⁰⁸ Shapiro, "Beyond Peoples and Fatherlands," 9; Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism*.

³⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *BT*, 115 §24.

³¹⁰ Nietzsche, *GS*, 236.

³¹¹ Nietzsche, *D*, 5:134 §190.

³¹² Nietzsche, "WA" §10

Germans, music-making Germans making German myth, could reignite a culturally German spirit. However, Nietzsche abandons Germany when he sees potential German mythmakers like Wagner as deceiving those who follow them, namely when Wagner is making music, but it is not music of a myth-making capacity, but a trick or deception that is evidenced by Nietzsche to be common in Europe.³¹³ Wagner begins representing an idea of Germany that reinforces a romantic resentment and an idea of cultural superiority which represents a descending Will to Power and not a mythological emergence from music in an ascending Will to Power. For Nietzsche, culture emerges from the representation of music that emerges from space. Music reflects the world/physics in a manner that we can develop into language that can inform the creation of myths that represent space. The (Dionysian/Ascending) process roughly goes as follows: Physics → Culture (Music → Language → Myth) → Concepts. The problem that had arisen was that Wagner's music, for Nietzsche, prioritized a conceptual understanding as a directive force of culture, which would have followed the following process: Concept/Identity → Music → Culture (False Myth). The problem with the latter is that the conceptual understanding is devoid of space/physics and is thus unable to connect with the world, leading to a groundless existence which allows the universalization of the concept at the expense of other concepts, myths, cultures, etc. Language is assumed to be a given and not included in the process. The former process would arrive at the concept of German last, whereas the latter starts with a concept of German *a priori* and uses that understanding as an organizational principle and the concepts it develops to shape the world. Wagner, starting with Germany-as-concept, meant to reinscribe the concept of Germany into a music and a new myth to support a German culture. What this demonstrated for Nietzsche was that those who he thought had the capacity to reassert

³¹³ "Hegel is a taste... And not just a German taste but a European one!" Ibid., 252.

a German spirit (Wagner, Schopenhauer, etc.) were trying to do so from a misunderstanding of cultural development and that it may be possible that this mode of cultural reassertion was not possible from a musical intention. People needed to learn how to acknowledge the world/physics before they could regain the path to cultural re-signification. In other words, where music comes into play in the process (post-physis) of cultural formation, was still insufficient to establish an effective culture around the affirmation of life; music itself was insufficient for setting roots in the world-itself because it was not close enough to the soil, it fundamentally excluded the possibility of soil. This could no longer be done with something that could likely retain an already conceptual understanding that had been separated from physics; something that had been “deterritorialized,” where the connection to the land is pulled away in an initial form of self-colonization by the Greeks as discussed by Gasché before becoming an outward colonial expression onto others.³¹⁴ What then becomes Nietzsche’s grasp for physics is no longer Germany or Europe and the land it exists upon, but the body.

The body is not just our last point of contact for physics, but because of the particularity and individuality of our body, as we explore new means to affirmative culture, by doing it in an individual way at first, we mitigate the risk that Nietzsche mentions in *The Birth of Tragedy*: the irreparable damage of imposing a myth where it does not belong.³¹⁵ Cultures require myths and the myth of eternal return is profoundly personal and cannot be imposed onto another. A mythology such as eternal return that is based on our own bodies does not run the risk of imposition and erasure of other cultures. The mythologizing of the Eternal Return is a sort of loophole, or sidestep, that aligns with Nietzsche’s early premises in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where

³¹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*; Gasché, *Geophilosophy*; Shapiro, “Beyond Peoples and Fatherlands”; Gunzel, “Nietzsche’s Geophilosophy.”

³¹⁵ Nietzsche, *BT*, 110 §23.

we should not impose our culture in a fashion of descending Will to Power, forcing a myth onto a place where it does not belong, because the eternal return isolates the “place” to each individual. The eternal return, like Will to Power, takes the form of a hybrid concept. It is a concept that one can use as a directive to live, but the content of that concept can only be provided by the individual; it is an Apollonian concept with Dionysian content. As Nietzsche transitions this mode of resurgence to the body, Nietzsche retains music in his claim for reigniting a culture of affirmation, the value of the world, and the dethroning of Platonic-Christian values, although music must come secondarily. It is in *The Gay Science*, where Nietzsche moves forward with this understanding prioritizing the body as physis and the utility of music.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche takes no time connecting this combination of music and the body. The first section of the book “‘Joke, Cunning, and Revenge’ Prelude in German Rhymes” is a musical introduction, with a title taken from Goethe, Nietzsche’s last remaining German.³¹⁶ The first poem, retaining a musical form, is a welcoming to, and an introduction of, Nietzsche's attention to the body:

1. Invitation

Dare to taste my fare, dear diner!
 Come tomorrow it tastes finer
 and day after even good!
 If you still want more - I'll make it,
 from past inspiration take it,
 turning food for thought to food.³¹⁷

Throughout *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche makes explicit that the body is of significant importance and contends with the notions of the physician, nutrition, diet, nourishment, taste, food, sickness,

³¹⁶ Nietzsche, *TI*, 223.

³¹⁷ Nietzsche, *GS*, 11.

etc.; in other words, our physis³¹⁸. Nietzsche wants us to be well fed, both literally and metaphorically. Nietzsche also wants us to dance “the earthly dance.”³¹⁹ But what is dancing other than a direct and personal reflection of the land and space you exist on. Dance forces you to use your body and reflect the earth with your body, and dance is mediated through music. It is only fitting that Nietzsche starts with a musical introduction, a set of early metaphors, and ends with an appendix of songs, as if drawing us to dance. In particular, the last poem/song provided in *The Gay Science* is “To the Mistral. A Dance Song.”³²⁰ Fittingly, Nietzsche is tying the act of dancing to a particular geographic phenomenon, calling for the roaring of free spirits and the *blowing over* of the malignant “rain cloud pastors.”³²¹ The mistral for example, is a great wind, that can help *clear the air of Europe*, as Nietzsche alludes to previously in Dawn §206.³²²

Nietzsche also sets us up to dance with this poem again:

Slipp’ry ice
is paradise
as long as dancing will suffice.³²³

Building on Heraclitus’ metaphor of the river³²⁴, Nietzsche alludes to what happens under Platonism and Christianity; a coolness and freezing of concepts and the world, a frigid stillness as if the river has frozen over.³²⁵ The “cold kingdom of ‘ideas,’” as Nietzsche notes

³¹⁸ Ibid., 56 §39.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 64 §54. Nietzsche also expresses that the need to dance is earthly (§54), dance is a “healing art” (§84), the necessity to dance “lest we lose that freedom over things that our ideal demands of us (§107), the “heroic feelings” of dance (§324), dancing as indicative of the “free-spirit” (§347), the human habit of dancing (§366), the bodily need for tempo (music) to dance (§368), the ideal of the genuine philosopher that is dance (381), and the human need to dance (§383). In addition to the poems at the beginning where dancing is praised (poem §14), and the dance of the mistral winds which ties dance to a particular space through its representative climate (§To the Mistral. A Dance Song).

³²⁰ Ibid., 258.

³²¹ Ibid., 260.

³²² Nietzsche, *D*, 5:153-155 §206.

³²³ Nietzsche, *GS*, 14.

³²⁴ Heraclitus, *Fragments*, 27.

³²⁵ Nietzsche, *GS*, §104, 125, 337, 346, 359, 372.

sarcastically.³²⁶ Dancing, particularly an “earthly dance,”³²⁷ a dance to music that has “the power to discharge the emotions, to cleanse the soul, to soothe the *ferocia animi*”³²⁸, a dance that is a “healing art.”³²⁹ For Nietzsche, this dancing brings warmth; it helps “melt the ice sheets of my soul”³³⁰, leading to a shift in understanding the world not as still, frigid, cold and alienating, with a conceptual stillness and isolation, but as warmth, relational, fluid and flexible a world that is amenable to us like the initial river in Heraclitus. What is essential here is, again, that the locus of this insight is the body, the body is the intermediary between us and the world as the body is still part of the world, and if we understand our body enough to help us reconnect with the world, particularly through song and dance, perhaps then there is hope in rekindling an affirmative culture.

However, this is not complete in that our reconnection with the world is still premised on Christianity and Platonism; therefore, I contend we also need a mythological shift, and while dancing does help us reconnect with our bodies, dancing can take place in the world or on a floor of a manipulated world. A flat, perfect dancefloor only teaches us to dance on a pre-transfigured or flattened surface. A music of space (of a “secure and sacred place of origin”³³¹) and the grounding of particularity prefigures a dance-of-place and a meaning with a tie to a distinct place.

Nietzsche sees that up to now, we require a fundamental myth to tie us to land and the world and that we have undergone a long and enduring process of a failure of our current mythologies in providing us with a connection to the world. With its Platonic influence,

³²⁶ Ibid., 237 §372.

³²⁷ Ibid., 63 §54.

³²⁸ Ibid., 84 §84. “Ferocity of the soul” (Footnote 24)

³²⁹ Ibid., 84 §84.

³³⁰ Ibid., 155.

³³¹ Nietzsche, *BT*, 109 §23.

Christianity has become disconnected from the world, a mythology without reference. Indeed, we have forgotten what it means to have a connection to the world with our mythology.

In §335 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche starts with a discussion of how our self-knowledge has been in bad taste.³³² While we have continuously been told to know thyself, we have over trusted our conscience to be something natural with objective understanding and moral nature.³³³ However, what comes from this perspective is a moral-self-regulation.³³⁴ For Nietzsche, there are “a hundred ways to listen to your conscience. But *that* you hear this or that judgment as the words of conscience” indicates a “personal wretchedness, ...a lack of personality; that your ‘moral strength’ might have its source in your stubbornness - or in your inability to envisage new ideals.”³³⁵ These judgments come from a particular “prehistory in your drives, inclinations, aversion, experiences, and what you have failed to experience”³³⁶, in short, from a particular myth. Myths imbue a type of prehistory to ourselves; they are a connection to the world that supersedes our understanding and experience of time, knowledge, and individuality. For Nietzsche, we have been paying attention to the wrong myth, one that takes itself to be the sole dominant myth, the monotheistic and singular, the core myth that is solely in control of allowing our conscience to think that a singular understanding is good and true; a myth of descending Will to Power that has prioritized the *concept of myth*, rather than the *content of the myth* that ties it to the world/physics. Nietzsche calls for us to abandon our moral judgements and remove the hegemonic control this particular myth has on us and leave it to those “who have nothing to do but drag the past a few steps further through time and who never lived in the

³³² Nietzsche, *GS*, 187-189 §335.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

present.”³³⁷ He wants us to “become who we are”³³⁸, which means to access a different form of our prehistory, an alternative interpretation of our physis and Will to Power that does not rest itself in a singular and narrow understanding of the world that leads to a mono-myth or mono-theism. Nietzsche closes this section by calling for us to be “honest.”³³⁹ That is, honest in the sense of physis, our vertical truth of the world. This leads us to discuss what it means to be honest about our life.

Further, in *The Gay Science* §341: The Heaviest Weight,³⁴⁰ Nietzsche famously presents a thought experiment, which can be seen as an exercise in myth-formation:

What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ‘This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence -even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’³⁴¹

Willing yourself, your own individual lived experience affirms your life rather than judging based on a perceived perfect afterlife or any other moral principle. Asceticism becomes a difficult value to hold when confronted with the value of your existence and challenged to affirm it. No matter how “small or great,” life is life and should affirmed and valued.³⁴² So the core

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 194 §341.

³⁴² I feel it is necessary to clarify, given the current political climate, that it would be irresponsible to equivocate that Nietzsche would be anti-abortion. Nietzsche values life, but there is nothing to my knowledge in Nietzsche’s works, that could be used to prove that he was against abortion. Nietzsche’s philosophy, in particular the notions of freedom in his works that encompass his free spirits and übermensch would more than likely be affirmative of the choice of someone in regard to their own body, which falls in line with the argument I present here, that one needs to connect

tenant is, would you live your life again? With this insight and direction, we might become Nietzsche's free spirits, freed from the oppressive regime of Platonism and Christianity. There is also a more subtle message here in Nietzsche's presentation, which is the last line that alludes to the role of divinity. While it might seem like we could be treating the demon (who is arguably Nietzsche) as the one who could be divine, the demon is providing the framework for the experiment; however, the individual is filling the content. In other words, the thought experiment means nothing without the content of the life of the one who is reflecting on this. So, while Nietzsche is giving us the prompt, it is really ourselves who are asking this question, and it directly relates to us. So, we could be noting ourselves as divine in this process because we are the eternal content of our own myth, and that myth is useful not necessarily from the content, but from our *disposition* towards it. This has a profound impact in that it recenters particular mythology to ourselves and away from the descending, romantically pessimistic, Christian monotheistic theology. Our stories become our own affirmative mythology because we have lived and survived them. This avoids descending Will to Power because it is of ourselves and we cannot impose this particular belief on anyone else. Despite the quick allusion that it may be individualistic and thus a self-monotheism, it can also recognize that for others, they can have the same *belief* in that it is life-affirmative but there can never be a mono-content for everyone, it is based on their own lives. This self-direction might be seen as forcing us to connect with our physis as our body is formed by a life-affirming mythology of our own lives, tied to the *space* of our bodies, indicating an ascending Will to Power; however, there is still the risk of treating the self as a concept in a romantic way to dominate others. The idea of eternal return, while not perfect, is only the first step.

with their own body to help create their own formative mythology inspired by eternal return. Forcing someone to eliminate a choice in reference to their own body would be indicative of descending Will to Power.

There are two instances in *Zarathustra* regarding the eternal return that indicate that the eternal return is not a final step, rather only an initial step that goes towards a more general physis beyond ourselves. The first is in ‘On the Vision and the Riddle’ §2, where the dwarf first prompts Zarathustra, “must we not return eternally?”³⁴³ The line that follows has Zarathustra note, “I was afraid of my own thought and secret thoughts. Then, suddenly, I heard a dog *howl* nearby. Had I ever heard a dog howl like this? My thoughts raced back. Yes! When I was a child, in my most distant childhood.”³⁴⁴ There are two points to note here. First is Zarathustra’s initial reaction where he was initially afraid of his own thought. This links to §341 In *The Gay Science*, where the first reaction to the eternal return is one of fear, encompassed by *gnashing teeth and cursing*. The second immediate note is what brings Zarathustra *away* from that fear: the *howl* he recollects from when he was a *child*. The howl is a sound of the world, a reflection on physis, that *brings Nietzsche back* to when he was a child, forming his perceptions, his language as metaphor, and operating in the elementary form of aesthetic knowledge of the world. The child is without clear rigid concepts in the Socratic sense but can see the world as fluid, amenable to existence, and full of life and events. Nietzsche here ties the musicality of the world to a part of our prehistory, our own starkly specific prehistories. This also stresses that although the dwarf asked Zarathustra the initial question, Zarathustra was confronted by the *content* of the question, which could only be that of *his own* prehistory. By this example, the myth of eternal return acts as a hybrid concept, much like the Will to Power, where it is a concept that holds within it a metaphorical meaning and direction directed by particular individual content. Each person dealing with the struggles of nihilism can use the eternal return as an individualized mythology that acts differently in each instance of its operation.

³⁴³ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 126.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The second occurrence of this encounter with eternal return in *Zarathustra* comes in ‘The Convalescent’ §2, where Zarathustra is talking to his animals, and yet again, the eternal return is brought up. Initially, Zarathustra is thrown back to a memory and realization of his sickness, a barrier he must move past to affirm eternal return before being told by his animals to “go outside where the world awaits you like a garden. Go outside to the roses and bees and swarms of doves! Especially to the *Songbirds*, so that you can learn to sing from them!”³⁴⁵ This is a turning point for Zarathustra, where earlier, he is told of the eternal return and struggles with it at first before being pulled back to his childhood from the sound of a howl. This first encounter with the idea of eternal recurrence comes as an encounter and discussion with Zarathustra’s own physis and Will to Power. However, in this latter occurrence, Zarathustra starts by following that reconnection with his own physis, only to be told by his *animals* (as beings of the earth) to move on and go find and experience the world. Unlike the first instance where the world induced fear, Zarathustra is now ready to *reconnect with the world*. He had established himself as a part of physis and learned, through his journey, to reconnect with the world. The animals are telling Zarathustra to take the next step in mythmaking, telling him to go learn to sing from the songbirds. These songbirds are Nietzsche’s initial inspiration for musical mythmaking in *The Birth of Tragedy* and are tied to space with Nietzsche’s initial intention for Germans to listen to *their own* songbirds.³⁴⁶ It is at this point that Zarathustra is able to take the next step in reconnecting with land, to “territorialize”³⁴⁷, that is to reinscribe ourselves with the world-in-itself once again, beyond just simply our bodies. Zarathustra has re-learned to *hear*, which is

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *BT*, §23, 24.

³⁴⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*; Gasché, *Geophilosophy*; Shapiro, “Beyond Peoples and Fatherlands”; Gunzel, “Nietzsche’s Geophilosophy.”

most clearly indicated by his ability to hear the speech of his animal friends which is indicative of Zarathustra's reconnection to the world.

In *Dawn*, Nietzsche presents the possibility of people leaving Europe to learn from elsewhere what it means to connect with the world.³⁴⁸ At first, this presents as an imposition of someone where they do not belong where someone is entering space to appropriate a mode of knowledge of the world, the placement of someone where they have not emerged or are missing the connection to the world gained through the positive transfiguration of physis to life-affirmative culture. This can present as a dangerous situation where the individual may impose though descending Will to Power because they *do not belong* there. I must clarify that it is not that the person does not belong elsewhere, but the attitude and mythology of the Socratic disposition that does not belong. As Nietzsche seems to present, some people may be capable of undergoing a reevaluation of values in a manner that is able to affirm the world wherever in the world they may be. In other words, the problem is not the '*foreigner*', but the "*foreign element*" or "*foreign myth*" that causes the oppressed and imposed upon to "become sickly and wither away". It is the poisonous myth and state of mind that is at issue, the Socratic.³⁴⁹ One can share space with the attitude and disposition of ascending Will to Power, but when framed by descending Will to Power, the *foreigner* takes the role of a colonial imposition. In Zarathustra, we can see he abandons even the notion that one should leave to attempt to learn and instead focuses on the body and connecting with his animals until he is ready to learn from the *songbirds*, from physis, in a more holistic way, returning to the "*garden*". This indicates a process of integration back to land for cultural formation with reconnection of the self to physis through a re-mythologization of the self. The myth of eternal return, then, is a mode in which we

³⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *D*, 5:154 §206.

³⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *BT*, §23.

can establish ourselves in a mode of ascending Will to Power, reorienting ourselves as beings of the earth, emergent from physis, rather than using our bodies to reinforce conceptual domination and the reproduction of descending Will to Power.

4.13 The Übermensch

Nietzsche's discussion of the übermensch has been interpreted in a plethora of manners with various extremes. The most relevant to our discussion here is particularly in the discussion of posthumanism and transhumanism, where there is considerable debate stemming largely from Stefan Sorgner and Max More, who incorrectly claim that human improvement in a technological manner constitutes the becoming of human to the übermensch. Sorgner and More justify their claims significantly but do so in a non-holistic appropriation of Nietzsche's ideas. Well demonstrated arguments against Sorgner and More's interpretations by Bamford, Babich, Loeb, Ansell-Pearson, Hibbard, Steinmann, Woodward and Hauskeller, all miss a particular interpretation that considers Nietzsche's concepts as a unity.³⁵⁰ Because of Nietzsche's aphoristic and metaphorical style, taking his concepts in isolation or as too literal, allows for vast misuse and misappropriation of his ideas. Sorgner and More, indeed, engage in a wholesale appropriation of the idea of the übermensch without including a sufficient discussion of how the idea of the übermensch is strictly intertwined with the Will to Power, the Eternal Return, the emphasis of the body, and Nietzsche's cultural critique. To this point, Loeb alone criticizes More's exclusion of eternal return in his consideration of the übermensch.³⁵¹ Which is a significant exclusion.

³⁵⁰ Bamford, "Nietzsche on Ethical Transhumanism"; Babich, "Nietzsche's Posthuman Imperative: On the Human, All Too Human Dream of Transhumanism"; Loeb, "Nietzsche's Transhumanism"; Ansell-Pearson, "The Future Is Superhuman: Nietzsche's Gift"; Hibbard, "Nietzsche's Overhuman Is an Ideal Whereas Posthumans Will Be Real"; Steinmann, "'But What Do We Matter!' Nietzsche's Secret Hopes and the Prospects of Transhumanism"; Hauskeller, "Nietzsche, the Overhuman and the Posthuman: A Reply to Stefan Sorgner"; Woodward, "Postmodern Reflections on the Nietzsche and Transhumanism Exchange."

³⁵¹ Loeb, "Nietzsche's Transhumanism."

As I have demonstrated thus far, the eternal return and the Will to Power are intimately intertwined. An ascending Will to Power that reaffirms an effective culture with the meaning of the earth and an affirmation of life requires using the myth of eternal return. The Will to Power represents drives and forces and the eternal return represents the direction of the force of Will to Power in an ascending mode of the individual to affirm life and love one's fate (*amor fati*), which is a necessary condition of the *übermensch*. These concepts form a unity that relies on and necessitates each other to be relevant to humans and culture that affirm life in a meaningful way to explain and combat nihilism.

The Will to Power and the eternal return must be demonstrated by a subject whom Nietzsche describes as the *übermensch*. The *übermensch* comes as a contrast to human being, which Nietzsche notes must be overcome; the *übermensch* is the overcoming of the human being.³⁵² The “human being” is what Nietzsche deems to be the being of the current society framed with the ideology of Platonism and Christianity, a humanistic concept that people assume encompasses our species but is a contingent, alienated iteration of our species. Human beings are alienated from the world because of their understanding of the world in an abstracted anthropomorphic manner rather than the understanding of *physis*. Understanding a particular, contingent manifestation of human-being-as-concept frames the human being. Just as Germany was described earlier in the manner that German-as-concept acts as a form of a descending Will to Power, the human-being-as-concept acts similarly. However, to have the *übermensch*, as an overcoming of the human, requires the revaluation of humans out of the confines of a rigid anthropomorphic concept into a hybrid concept through a process of de-Socratization, or

³⁵² Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 5. “I teach you the overman. Human being is something that must be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?”

territorialization. The *übermensch* is the *over*-human, in that the overcoming of the human through a revaluation of human, but also as discussed earlier, the *hyper-human* as an instantiation of the human without an ascetic denial of one's human-ness-as-animal. The *übermensch*, territorialized, is quite literally "the meaning of the earth" in that they are revalued as a being in line with *physis*. There is an understanding of alignment with *physis* and affirmation of life that "remain[s] faithful to the earth"³⁵³ rather than 'despising life.'³⁵⁴

For Nietzsche, the *übermensch* is the end of the rope over the abyss and indicative of the overcoming of Platonic-Christian culture and nihilism: "Mankind is a rope fastened between animal and [*übermensch*] - a rope over an abyss."³⁵⁵ The abyss is nihilism, the culture of Platonism and Christianity, and mankind represents the temporary, unstable being that that abyss premises. The tightrope, as a metaphor, keeps one above ground arbitrarily; the grounding of the tightrope-walked is unstable, dangerous, and precarious, but at the end of the rope, it meets ground again. There is little support on this rope, and it occupies the focus constantly; staying up is the only focus one can have without collapsing. This metaphor can be read as presenting the nihilistic (un)grounding of Platonic-Christian culture in the closest mode of realism possible; the only better representation might have been to have mankind floating in mid-air, unable to stand on anything. Though rather than floating aimlessly, the rope meets the ground at both ends; the alienation from the ground is only temporary.

Nietzsche urges the *übermensch* and its necessary immediacy, claiming that the "soil is still rich enough"³⁵⁶, but warns: "One day this soil will be poor and tame, and no tall tree will be

³⁵³ Ibid., 6.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 6.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 7.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 9.

able to grow from it anymore.”³⁵⁷ It would seem that, for Nietzsche, the reconnection with the world, with the body as physis is already a respectively difficult task, and here he is still pessimistic that the *übermensch* is even a possibility; “The time approaches when human beings no longer launch the arrow of their longing *beyond* the human, and the string of their bow will have forgotten how to whirl!”³⁵⁸ Nietzsche indicates, through Zarathustra, that the longing for beyond human will diminish when “the earth has become small”³⁵⁹, made small by “the last human being”³⁶⁰, through the “abandonment of regions.”³⁶¹ The *smaller* the world is, the less importance particular regions play and the easier the capacity to expound the universal in the form of culture, meaning, etc. However, I would add that what makes the world small, both meaningfully and literally, is a particular manifestation of technology. The railway, planes, cars, and telephones are a few technologies that make the world smaller. We can travel around the world in a few hours, we can talk to people around the world instantly on video, telephone, or texting. These conveniences make the world *small* by making it more immediately accessible. However, by doing so, technology pulls us from particularity. The knowledge of a particular region or place diminishes as we are drawn away from these spaces by a particular manifestation of making the world smaller. Thus, we see that Zarathustra, the harbinger of the *übermensch*, is critical of the compression of the world as it is facilitated by “the last human being”³⁶² who is the “opposite of the [*übermensch*]”³⁶³ Thus, the *übermensch*, concerned with the relativity of space/physis, myth, language, and culture would likely also necessarily concerned with the relevance of place. A place grounded, not on a tightrope above, but across a bridge: Zarathustra

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 9.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 9. Emphasis added.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 10.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Del Caro, “Translator’s Afterword,” 446.

states: “I will not go your way, you despisers of the body! You are not my bridges to the [übermensch]!”³⁶⁴ Indeed, it is the body itself that traverses the tightrope and will get us across.

The übermensch also represents the affirmation of the body. Zarathustra warns of the “despisers of the body”³⁶⁵ as those who are incapable of reaching the übermensch because the body as it exists is our remaining connection to physis, those that are unwilling to acknowledge and affirm the body as physis, are those last human beings who are too far gone to be able to achieve the übermensch. If the connection to land or region, as Zarathustra notes³⁶⁶, is lost, the last connection to physis is the body. Those who abandon the body, therefore, have *lost the whir* of the bow to shoot their arrow over the human being.

The übermensch is also childish. Nietzsche's allusions to children are important and constant. Metaphors around birth, truth, and womanhood all factor into the conception of the übermensch. For the discussion of children, I wish to start with a discussion of ‘woman,’ albeit in Nietzsche’s words. While his metaphors are dated and often contain misogynistic claims, they are, unfortunately, necessary for his presentation of the übermensch.

The discussion of Nietzsche’s treatment of women is a contested one, and it is not difficult to recognize the misogynistic representation. This partly comes from Nietzsche’s language and not disclosing when he is talking about Woman-as-woman or woman-as-concept or if he is writing in a parodical manner. As discussed above, these modes of discussion are common in Nietzsche’s writing. I will note here that I wish to discuss Nietzsche’s übermensch which requires a discussion of woman and I will do my best to contextualize Nietzsche’s discussion of woman with the principle of charity; however, my discussion should not be seen as

³⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 24.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

a defense of Nietzsche's position, merely an exegetical approach. Woman-as-woman would be the woman-of-physis, a being of the world, whereas woman-as-concept is the placing of woman in a set of categories defined by society, with its Platonic-Christian and patriarchal notions. This, of course, often comes across as misogynistic and does not fully appreciate the conceptual position of understanding gender. Pre-cultural and pre-conceptual understandings cannot contain a notion of sex, gender, sexual orientation, etc. because the rigid terms designation such ideas are anthropomorphic and linguistic; they are latter impositions. However, Nietzsche failed to consider this with his analysis and gendered metaphors and thus fell into his own trap of letting his conceptual understanding stain his attempts at a pre-conceptual metaphor. Thus, there remain notes of misogyny in Nietzsche's discussions of Woman-as-woman in the preconceptual sense. This could be a result of Nietzsche's own misogyny or the latent misogyny he fails to recognize and identify as influenced by his culture, language and time, or as Adrian Del Caro points out in a particular reference in Zarathustra, his bitterness from the end of his friendship with Lou Von Salome, or from his disdain for his mother and sister who were his biggest challenge in the concept of eternal return.³⁶⁷

Nietzsche starts *Beyond Good and Evil*, with the now-famous quote: "Supposing that truth is a woman—well? is the suspicion not founded that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, poorly understood women?"³⁶⁸ This quote can appear tenuous; however, we must consider the leadup and context for this book. For truth, we must understand that truth, for Nietzsche, comes in at least two forms that were discussed above: vertical with physis and horizontal with anthropomorphism. Dogmatism comes in the latter. Nietzsche claims that women bear the truth of the world, of physis, the truth we should be paying attention to that we have

³⁶⁷ See Adrian Del Caro's footnote in TSZ. Nietzsche, 42.

³⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *BGE*, 8:1.

forgotten. The philosophers Nietzsche alludes to are not himself but the dogmatic, circular philosophers who operate only in pure concepts at the behest of the state that supports the normative status quo and bring nothing new or challenging to the table. These philosophers, Nietzsche says, do not understand women and thus do not understand life and the world. When Nietzsche alludes to the body as our last connection to physis, it is not just any body but primarily the woman's body.

This is connected to *Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche notes: “Better than a man, woman understands children, but a man is more childish than a woman.”³⁶⁹ Nietzsche discusses that in man, the child is concealed, hidden away.³⁷⁰ This indicates an alienation from the world that man gains from being beholden to structures and concepts that organize their identity. Man must deny the physical/physis and adhere to the concepts placed on them. Women; however, because of their closeness to children from birth and care,³⁷¹ understand the child better, the child that is indicative of the *übermensch*. Nietzsche takes the Man-as-man (physis) to have a residue of childishness within him. However, the man-as-concept gets in the way of this, and he sees the woman-as-concept to be closer to woman-as-woman (physis) than man-as-concept to man-as-man (physis) and that woman can assist man in finding the child once more. A major possible criticism that comes from this is what I just alluded to: (man or woman)-as-concept cease to be man or woman as we move away from concept to physis. In a pre-linguistic or pre-conceptual/cultural interpretation, there can be no distinction between man and woman, especially as a biological binary. By Nietzsche’s own standards, the *übermensch* must overcome/revalue gendered assumptions away from a binary. This mistake indicates Nietzsche’s

³⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 49.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ Again, a dated organization of gender roles is at play here.

residual biological biases, which again can be the residue of patriarchal and biological norms from his cultural context and his inability to fully take seriously his own movements. Further, Nietzsche assumes that men are more stuck in the conceptual representation of the Socratic, while women necessarily retain more of a connection to the world and the Dionysian because of their capacity to beget/bear life. Nietzsche is using the gendered assumptions of child-rearing as a metaphor for the begetting of the übermensch, particularly through birth.³⁷² For Nietzsche, there are at least two modes for the arrival of the übermensch: either we find the child within us or create /birth the child, both of which he requires the facilitation by women.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche discusses in §72: *Mothers*, the link of mothers as closer to physis through their connection with animals as being seen as the “productive being”³⁷³ and relating the care of mothers for their children like that of the “artist for his work”³⁷⁴, given Nietzsche’s discussion of art as a necessity in the progression of culture, in the clarification from physis to music, myth, etc., the artist is a key figure in the development of culture, and that in this understanding, everyone is/must be an artist to contribute to the development of culture. The child is an extremely important stage in the progression to a revaluation of culture. Additionally, pregnancy for Nietzsche illustrates a commitment to patience, timidity, contemplation, and submission to the time necessary for growth, which is not available to an individual with a narrow and impatient focus:

the individual keeps his eye too strictly upon his short lifespan and receives no stronger impulses to build durable institutions designed to last for centuries; he wants to pick the

³⁷² I should also add that in *GS* §72 Nietzsche does allude to the existence/possibility of “male mothers”: “Pregnancy has made women gentler, more patient, more timid, more pleased to submit; and just so does spiritual pregnancy produce the character of the contemplative type, to which the female character is related: these are male mothers.” This reinforces that Nietzsche is using gender in a metaphorical way, though taking a naturalistic occurrence (pregnancy), and showing we can learn a spiritual lesson from that process to become more of a “contemplative type”. He closes §72 with “Among animals the male sex is considered the beautiful one.”, indicating a contrast where the female sex is contemplative, while the male is simply beautiful and needs to learn this “motherly love”.

³⁷³ Nietzsche, *GS*, 75 §72.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

fruit himself from the tree that he plants, and he therefore no longer cares to plant those trees that require centuries of constant cultivation and that are intended to shade a long series of generations.”³⁷⁵

The cultivation of being, particularly the *übermensch*, takes time. Mythmaking and cultural reevaluation are slow, multigenerational processes and takes time to demonstrate results. As Nietzsche mentions in *The Gay Science*: “God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. -And we - we must still defeat his shadow as well!”³⁷⁶ One cannot learn of the world, the self, the land, and unlearn two millennia of disengagement with the world from Platonism and Christianity overnight; it takes time to illuminate the shadow. The planting of these seeds must come with the understanding that bearing fruit needs time, patience, and the dismissing of a selfishness which wants to enjoy the fruit, but not assist in the cultivation. There needs to be a vulnerability that the fruit will come, and requires cultivation, but the individual will likely never see that fruit. Birth, then is both literally and metaphorically the manner in which the *übermensch* can come into being.

Unfortunately, one of the metaphors Nietzsche employs to demonstrate the patience required, and its analogous representation in woman, is cows. Acknowledging the modern use of calling someone a cow as inappropriate, another misogynistic aspect arises when Nietzsche claims that woman is incapable of friendship because of their ‘animality’: “Women are still cats and birds. Or, at best, cows.”³⁷⁷ This is an instance where Nietzsche is caught in a contradiction that demonstrates his misogyny in that for woman he sees them incapable of friendship because of their animality, but as Zarathustra, a male, gets in touch with his animality is capable of friendship with both humans and animals. While he does in the next sentence ask who among the

³⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *HAHI*, 3:32 §22.

³⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *GS*, 109 §109.

³⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 41.

men are capable of friendship, the misogyny stands. To continue, the metaphors Nietzsche uses are of animals which he ties as a link of the world/physics with birds, for example, being indicative of mythmaking as discussed above. So, while Nietzsche does see the value in animals and listening to them as necessary in the striving towards the übermensch, his metaphors are unnecessarily gendered and in contradiction to his own mode of revaluation. The metaphor of cows comes into play, most importantly in *Zarathustra*, where cows are used to learn about happiness on earth and how to be patient; ‘Zarathustra gazed lovingly on the cows, praising them as equal as his snake and eagle’,³⁷⁸ and sees animals as a means to re-attune to the earth. However, the equivocation of woman cows is still not a respectful notion, particularly in recognition in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where the cows are presented as passive, silent (the cows do not make a sound in *Zarathustra*), and in awe of Zarathustra and not to mention the notion of the in cattle. All these notions still flow from the same metaphor even when taken with the principle of charity.³⁷⁹

The second mode of bringing forth the übermensch is through finding the child in ourselves. Nietzsche tasks women with this, given their ability to still recognize themselves: “In the real man a child is concealed: it wants to play. Up now, you women, go discover the child in the man!”³⁸⁰ This places woman as the facilitators (not participants) of the *Three Metamorphoses*. Nietzsche’s metamorphosis from *Zarathustra* takes the form of Camel→ Lion→ Child. The camel is the one burdened by weight; it is the “carrying spirit.”³⁸¹ What comes next is the lion, who “says ‘I will.’”³⁸² The lion is the “predatory spirit,”³⁸³ it destroys and

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 19, 216–20.

³⁷⁹ Nietzsche also expresses his confidence in his interpretation of women when he puts into the words of the “little old woman”: “Peculiar, though, that Zarathustra knows women only little, and yet he is right about them!” *TSZ* 49

³⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *TSZ*, 49.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 16.

³⁸² Ibid., 17.

³⁸³ Ibid.

unsettles, it “wrest[s] freedom.”³⁸⁴ The lion is the *free spirit*, the predatory spirit before the child, the übermensch to be. The lion destroys and allows for the new, the child. “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying.”³⁸⁵ I will first note that the “wheel rolling out of itself” can be read as a direct reflection of the eternal return, which ties the eternal return to the child and, thus, to the übermensch. The child, initially, is unburdened from the social conventions of descending Will to Power; it has no memory of or drive towards descending Will to Power and has only been influenced thus far by an ascending Will to Power and an abundance of life.

Now, the discussion of Nietzsche’s misogyny is relevant here but also tenuous. On the one hand, there, of course, still exists a notion of misogyny in Nietzsche’s works, and I have not covered nearly enough of it. The passages mentioned do put the task on women to help obtain, but not become, the übermensch in a manner that can simply be described as cleaning up men’s mess. The dogmatism of men and the patriarchal notion of our society has led us to a point where Nietzsche sees men as hardly able to recognize their position without the help of women.³⁸⁶ Women, for Nietzsche, are tasked with helping find the child in man, helping the growth from Camel→ Lion→ Child; and bringing forth new übermensch from birth. This interpretation places women at the centre of the discussion and the possibility of the übermensch. If these are the modes by which übermensch can arrive, they are necessarily premised on, but exclude women. This could be because Nietzsche sees them women as already there, but this is not clearly indicated by Nietzsche, particularly since he still uses woman-as-concept alongside

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ I suspect this is a revelation with the close friendship Nietzsche had with Lou Von Salome, where their back and forth on ideas has inspired a lot of Nietzsche’s work. Despite Zarathustra and Beyond Good and Evil being written after Nietzsche’s fallout with Salome, it is no doubt that he would still see her as influential in his thought.

woman-as-woman.³⁸⁷ Nietzsche, women are tasked with this because they are the only ones capable of doing so; the übermensch cannot exist without women, as a literal truism in the birth option, as a being, the übermensch would literally need to be birthed. At the end of the third part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche closes each segment with, “Never yet have I found the woman from whom I wanted children, unless it were this woman whom I love: for I love you, oh eternity! For I love you, oh eternity!”³⁸⁸, repeating the analogy of pregnancy and marriage “the nuptial ring of rings — the ring of recurrence!”³⁸⁹ Nietzsche indicates the necessity of woman to bear the übermensch and the necessity of the eternal process that entails, further tying the übermensch to the eternal recurrence.

From our discussion here of the übermensch from Nietzsche’s thought, we can see that the übermensch is indicative of a cultural resurgence in the form of an affirmation of life, who works to reconnect with the world, starting with the body through the myth of eternal recurrence who embodies an ascending Will to Power. The intention of the übermensch is to reaffirm life to fill the void of culture left by the delocalized, deterritorialized culture left by the wake of Platonism and Christianity. Nietzsche sees the übermensch, as the human iteration of the meaning of the earth, as the solution to nihilism. Nihilism as the result of Platonism and Christianity, cannot, for Nietzsche, be resolved by its own causes and must be addressed with a revaluation and mythmaking procedure that undermines Platonism and Christianity. This would reaffirm the world and life itself, which would result in a renewed appreciation for world-

³⁸⁷ This is the difficulty in that for Nietzsche it appears that he is distinguishing between woman-as-concept and woman-as-woman (physis), though because of his latent misogyny, Nietzsche’s use of woman-as-woman (physis) still takes the form of woman-as-concept because he is still imposing gendered assumptions despite a more ‘naturalistic’ approach. Thus, even if we take a charitable approach to Nietzsche’s treatment of women, claiming their absolute necessity in bringing forth the übermensch, he still retains a patriarchal understanding of women and their role in an anthropomorphic manner that does not take his own prescriptive revaluation far enough.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 184–87.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

representative myths and the culture that comes from them. With this understanding, we can make a few statements of the übermensch to address certain interpretations.

Given the cultural discussion, the übermensch should not be interpreted as a result of biological evolution. While it is possible that the übermensch will have some differences in physicality if it is ever close to attainment from a sheer notion of time (or ideally the degradation of gender ideals from our critique of Nietzsche's presentation of women), any posthuman or transhuman physical differences would not be indicative of the übermensch. The premises we are given by Nietzsche offer nothing of biological evolution and indeed, Nietzsche himself dismisses understandings of his work as related to Darwin.³⁹⁰ Indeed alluding to the fact that Darwin does not account for the "spirit"³⁹¹, which Nietzsche understands as representative of culture. Given that the übermensch is a necessity in response to Platonism and Christianity it must then be seen as a cultural mode of overcoming and not a biological or mechanistic evolution as argued by those such as Sorgner and More³⁹² who use the biological interpretation and the notion of technological progress to appropriate Nietzsche for justification of transhumanism and posthumanism. While a posthuman understanding is somewhat implicit in Nietzsche's concept of übermensch as the over-human; over/post, where Sorgner and More fail in their interpretation is the notion of *human-as-animal* remains for Nietzsche in the sense of a species and does not retain any notion of bodily advancement. In other words, Nietzsche's übermensch is a return to human-as-human/animal, deemphasizing the human-as-concept.

³⁹⁰ Nietzsche, *GS*, 208 §349, 218 §357 §349; *BGE*, 8:213 §7;, 8:17 §14, 159-160 §253; *EH*, 101.

³⁹¹ Nietzsche, *TI*, 99 §14.

³⁹² Sorgner, "Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism," 2017; Sorgner, "Immortality as Utopia and the Relevance of Nihilism"; Sorgner, "Beyond Humanism: Reflections on Trans- and Posthumanism"; More, "The Overhuman In The Transhuman."

The idea of bodily enhancement is an entirely contradictory interpretation of the *übermensch*. The affirmation of the body as a notion of *physis* is the way for us to acknowledge the body as it is, and it has been, since prior to Platonism and Christianity where the negative disposition of the body emerged. We can reconnect with the world *only because* our body is one of the few things in our reality that has remained unchanged and can be traced genealogically (as Foucault does more explicitly), back to before we were imbued with the poison of Socratism in the form of Platonism and Christianity. Our body exists in space and is a part of this world already. Thus, any notion of human advancement, transfiguration, transmutation, progress in the form presented by transhumanism and posthumanism in the form of human augmentation, robotic integration, neural link, human-computer interfaces, or Artificial General Intelligence (as an “evolutionary” notion of the human), is in fact looking at the inverse of the *übermensch*, its direct antithesis, and as Keith Ansell-Pearson notes, is a form of asceticism: a denial or hatred of the body rather than an affirmation of the body as it is.³⁹³ Paul S. Loeb, in his criticism of Sorgner, is correct when he identifies these transhumanist goals as closer to the “last human”, than the *übermensch*. An initial argument that also arises from Ansell-Pearson.³⁹⁴

In short, the understanding of the human is a primary notion of the *übermensch* where we must take heed of the differences of human-as-human/animal (*physis*) and human-as-concept (anthropomorphism). The *übermensch* demands the recognition of the human-as-human/animal (*physis*), which through a foundational, pre-conceptual/cultural *physis* must be understood in a non-definable “indefinite” manner organized around an ascending Will to Power. The possibility of human improvement through transhumanism or posthumanism can *only* arise out of an understanding of human-as-concept. To “improve” the human requires a clear and definitive

³⁹³ Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life*; Ansell-Pearson, “The Future Is Superhuman: Nietzsche’s Gift.”

³⁹⁴ Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life*; Loeb, “Nietzsche’s Transhumanism.”

understanding of what the human *is*, which is to impose an understanding of human *a priori* through a mode of descending Will to Power.³⁹⁵ The focus required by the *übermensch* demands attention be paid to the body *as it is* and that it is affirmed as such as to undermine our conceptual organization and understanding of the human. To transfigure our body in a technological and physical manner is to deny the body and starve it of affirmation which is exactly what Nietzsche advocates against in his presentation of the *übermensch*.

4.14 AGI

AGI provides a very particular role as a mythological tool and is an absolute social necessity for those who fail to acknowledge the necessity for a localized mythological representation. To continue science in its current Platonic-Christian form, in a form that lacks any fundamental position to justify itself, as Foucault and Nietzsche criticize, science needs an epistemological foundation to justify its existence.³⁹⁶ Science's dogmatic character requires continual appropriation of the world in order to sustain itself. It does this by marginally transfiguring/consuming the world into its own epistemological framework and converting the world into new technologies which acts as justification for science. In other words, because the epistemic framework of science is amid the *nothing*, that science is ungrounded, the only way it can sustain its existence is through perpetual demonstration that it works, through effective inertia. Should science ever slow and its innovations plateau, it will be confronted with its own justification. Science cannot maintain itself once it has exhausted the world of knowledge to appropriate, when it fails to yield more novel discoveries, technological innovations, etc. When the self-realization of science comes to acknowledge it is missing a foundation, it will be forced

³⁹⁵ While this requires a clear and definitive understanding it is impossible for a correct understanding to be clear and definitive. Given the discussion of vertical and horizontal truth, the clear and definitive understanding is impossible to attain.

³⁹⁶ Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*.

to find one, and will invariably be unable to do so without providing itself an epistemological myth, that is, grounding itself in the world, rather than attempting to maintain its *grounding* in nothing which would fundamentally undermine the core premises of science. The burden of truth of science will, like Christianity before it, eventually collapse into itself. In its attempts to justify its own proof it will necessarily have to disprove itself. However, this process is already in play. Science indeed needs to create its own mythology, its own divine, but must do so in a manner that allows it to maintain its foundation in the *nothing*. Rather than maintaining inertia, science will have to learn to hover, or levitate, as it were; science needs a miracle, it needs a divine (AGI). So, while Western science was appropriated to prove God³⁹⁷, and was unable to, it is now intended to do the next best thing, create a God.

AGI can be seen to be the divine figure that science requires, however, to create AGI, humans need to solve a paradox, namely how do we create something more capable than ourselves in every (general) way.³⁹⁸ The term ‘general’ here, and in the discourse of AGI research and development, constitutes intelligence in particular way;³⁹⁹ namely a Platonic-Christian framework. To solve this paradox would be to demonstrate our ability of divine creation, which acts as an inversion of the initial drive of scientific emergence. Stephen Gaukroger notes that the initial drive of science in the West was to prove the divinity of the world and that it must have been created by an intelligent designer (God).⁴⁰⁰ Further, Nietzsche notes “let us beware that the universe is a machine; it is certainly not constructed to one end, and

³⁹⁷ Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

³⁹⁸ The use of “general” is in reference to the contrast with “narrow” in terms of intelligence, described in the introduction distinguishing AGI and ANI. While ANI can do singular “narrow” tasks, the intention is to eventually create an AGI, that can move between vastly different tasks, as humans do.

³⁹⁹ Landgrebe and Smith, *Why Machines Will Never Rule the World*.

⁴⁰⁰ Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

the word ‘machine’ pays it far too high an honour.”⁴⁰¹ Further, as Gaukroger notes, proving that the world was divinely created though the discovery of its rational form, that it is reducible to parts of a machine planned out by a being, would serve to prove the existence of God.⁴⁰² This rational ordering is also, unsurprisingly, the type of intelligence we are attributing to AGI. In the case of the creation of AGI, we are proving our own divinity by creating a rational being that is more “intelligent” than we are, therefore we are simultaneously working to create a God. If we are divine in our surpassing of paradox and creating a greater being, then that being will also necessarily be divine.

This allusion to the divine in AGI could foreseeably be used as a tactic to justify science. As noted, the issue with science in its idealistic form, is that it lacks a solid epistemological foundation, particularly because of its disconnection from the world. It has forgotten its origins and, in turn, any connection with the world and any sense of justification of truth beyond dogmatism. However, the creation of a monotheistic God in the form of AGI would not address the delocalized position in the world but rather be an attempt at a universal mythology as the purest endpoint of Platonism and Christianity. By having AGI, the anticipation is that it can justify science because science would be the origin or the foundational mythology of AGI. Subsequently, this would perceptively allow us to justify science without grounding in the world. The divinity of AGI would be seen as sufficient to justify science, no matter its harm, destructiveness, asceticism, or hatred. So, the question of how science can justify itself is that it has a divine justification through AGI. The process would then stand as such:

1. Culture in Europe, through the influence of the unified Platonism and Christianity and the eventual spread comes to be delocalized. Christianity separates from space as a

⁴⁰¹ Nietzsche, *GS*, 109 §109.

⁴⁰² Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

mythology and grows with a drive to be the universal mythology. Nietzsche identifies in this era the death of myth and the introduction of “mythless man”⁴⁰³ through the influence of Socrates. *The will to truth has come to be.*

2. In an effort to prove the divine creation of the world, science is brought in and augmented to fit within a Platonic Christian framework.⁴⁰⁴ *The will to truth grows in the horizontal form.*
3. Through the will to truth, the demands on Christianity to justify itself fail. The demand for truth undermines the existence of Christianity (death of God). *Nihilism ensues without a belief system to justify a set of conditions to live by.*
4. Nietzsche attempts to fill the gap of nihilism by reminding Europeans and descendants of European culture of how we are missing culture and what used to satisfy the emergence of culture (“used to” here specifically denoting Europeans, as a plethora of cultures around the world did not succumb to the failure of myth and the subsequent nihilism that came with that). He provides us with the übermensch, simultaneously a reminder of who we were/are/and could be and gives us an example of a physis-based mythology that is always available to us, the eternal return.
5. The dominant, hegemonic mythology becomes science in its groundless form. While it temporarily satisfies a will to truth, it continues to alienate, and the justification of the truth of science begins to fail. Science yields truths that necessitate a temporal interpretation through linearity and teleology and therefore miss connection to the world

⁴⁰³ Nietzsche, *BT*.

⁴⁰⁴ Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

and have perpetually less utility as they move into incommunicable patterns.⁴⁰⁵ In short, fewer people believe in the power of science.

6. People strive for a mythology but are incapable of re-establishing a mythology. Thus, they take what is available, cults, various forms of Christianity, or embed themselves in science and technology, intending to reinvent a mythology. Because of the way our epistemologies of Platonism and Christianity have taught us, we come to think a mythology is framed by a singular deity, a supreme being who determines existence and justifies our world. While the remnants of Christianity still have God in his wounded form, atheists lack any connection to mythology. They are premised and driven by a science premised on universal truth in the God's shadow, and little else suffices.
7. The scientific, technological atheist's necessary conclusion is to create a being to prove the superiority and demonstrability of science, a divinity, that being is AGI. The creation of AGI simultaneously would prove ourselves as divine, being able to create something better than us, a paradox; and it would give us a new technological mythology/deity that reifies Platonic-Christian science and would be used to justify/ground science the way it cannot do now. The problem of the myth of science is the same problem Nietzsche sees with morality in criticizing Kant's categorical imperative: "The law of the mechanisms is unprovable."⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ Brooks, *Nietzsche's Culture War*; Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"; Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*; Deloria, *God Is Red*. Deloria and Simpson both criticize the position of western science in its linearity and teleology, something sustained in Nietzsche that Foucault also identifies. Additionally, Shilo Brooks, in his investigation of the *Untimely Meditations*, shows that Nietzsche's critique of this teleological understanding of time and history that is expressed particularly in Hegel results in thinking that one's culture is the final and ideal result of a long historical process. Not only does this shape the German culture into its romantic form, but it also influences the manner in which we come to understand science that mirrors this mode of thought. Deloria, additionally relates this same point and notes how it continues to this day in the contemporary United States.

⁴⁰⁶ Nietzsche, *GS*, 189 §335.

While there could be an objection to this critique of science with the claim that some scientists rely on precise observation of the world and that it therefore indicates a connection to the world, this misses a significant introspection gained from Nietzsche's work. First, that precise observation rests solely on the material aspects surrounding direct experience but lacks a discussion of the social and cultural positions of this direct observation, namely which manifestation of Will to Power is behind the drive *to observe*, how will the understanding gained from this observation be employed, and what authority will this knowledge claim to have? Knowledge is not knowledge as such but takes very diverse forms dependent on the epistemic structures that create that knowledge. As Gaukroger notes, this type of knowledge is initially used to justify the existence of God.⁴⁰⁷ Even with the death of God, the employment of this knowledge and its mechanisms has not significantly changed, and still contributes into an endless sphere of knowledge with no absolute mediation, arbitration, or judgment from outside the same instrumental rationality. In other words, this form of science retains God's shadow, but not God himself; it still requires a divine to manage it in its totality that is beyond human capacity. Science then still retains an important aspect from Christianity, namely its self-perceived authority and absolute capacity that requires exceptional individuals to translate, communicate, distribute, and most importantly, know and understand. The barriers of access to western-scientific knowledge are extreme and prohibitive with journal paywalls, excessive jargon and research skills that require significant training, the sheer plethora of information, and the need of the ability to manage and keep up with a constantly shifting landscape of changing scientific knowledge. These barriers almost ensure that those who can actually employ this knowledge are prohibited from doing so without the aid of an expert.

⁴⁰⁷ Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

Second, this knowledge and the precise observation as a means of gaining it eliminates the possibility and contribution of the knowledge that was known before through alternative systems because of the nothing-as-foundation science now has. This knowledge also simultaneously prioritizes the individual while de-emphasizing the social necessity of knowledge. Solely operating with precise observation shifts the entirety of the possibility of gaining and disproving knowledge to the individual. The individual must know the history of the phenomenon that exists in their structure, and because their structure is “superior”, the preexisting knowledge can be ignored. Not only does this bring the pursuit of science into the sphere of the ego, but it also eliminates the cohesion, transference, history and understanding of knowledge in a social way that can withstand and include a broader notion of time. A more social and cultural approach to science that is true of the world, such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), or Indigenous ways of knowing manage to contain thousands of years of information, is easily transferable, intimately related to the land, and can encompass a deeper and more intuitive understanding of the world that is inaccessible to western science in its prioritization of the individual.⁴⁰⁸ Because TEK/Indigenous knowledge is able to encompass such an intimate knowledge with the land, it sidesteps the idealistic need of Western science to be “true for all”, as it only needs to be relevant to those existing in the space where the knowledge is relevant, and only needs to be relevant to that space. The need to be true for all, is indicative of the Socratic, where to be “true for all” necessitates a disconnection with the land so that the knowledge can be universally employed. For this, the knowledge must be abstracted from the space it occupies and brought into the structure of rationality that allows for the universalization, whereas TEK/Indigenous knowledge is true to the land where abstraction to the

⁴⁰⁸ Deloria, *God Is Red*; Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*; Deloria, *Red Earth, White Lies*; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Archibald et al., *Decolonizing Research*.

universal is not required. This does not mean that this particular form of knowledge cannot still be true for all as we can recognize it as true even if we do not exist in that particular space, but this would require a trust towards the culture that contains that knowledge that proves difficult with the individualist ego of Western science from its self-prioritization as the absolute. This continues with the assumption that if an aspect of knowledge cannot be true for all, it cannot be true at all. In other words, the perceived superiority of Western science necessarily comes into question when it is confronted with alternative knowledges from a system other than its own.

3. Landgrebe and Smith on AGI and Culture

Jobst Landgrebe and Barry Smith's recent publication *Why Machines Will Never Rule the World* can act as a wonderful case study for our discussion here.⁴⁰⁹ The manner of which they critique the possibilities of AGI make their book a prime example for demonstrating the utility of using Nietzsche for this discussion of culture and AGI. The main point of the book is that AGI will not happen because it necessitates a mathematical impossibility. While their argument against the singularity and the limits of our ability to create AGI are welcome and completely agreeable, the failure *and* success of the book come from the same roots discussed here, namely culture. The skill of which the authors dismantle the arguments of AGI demonstrates a complete and extremely knowledgeable account of what it means to be operational in the logical-anthropomorphic (horizontal) structures of truth we have discussed here, namely the Socratic "Spirit of Science."

What is useful to note is the presentation of the shadow of God and the hegemony of ascetic Platonic-Christian thought demonstrated in the work by Landgrebe and Smith. Their knowledge of the surface structures of AGI discourse is evident from serious research and understanding of the methodological and mathematical conditions and possibilities of the existence of AGI. However, while their impressive knowledge in this realm allows them to launch a substantial critique against the possibility of AGI seldom seen in previous literature, it also indicates their absolute downfall as the blinders of cultural superiority have pervaded their thought.

This is also indicative of the necessity of this particular thesis. Namely that for frontrunners in AGI criticism and ethics, the possibility of cultural analysis is an impossibility.

⁴⁰⁹ Landgrebe and Smith, *Why Machines Will Never Rule the World*.

The understandings of culture and language, arguably two of the most significant factors in understanding the potential biases of AGI, are not at all taken seriously because of how entrenched the Platonic-Christian assumptions of human being, human nature, and human culture are (the shadow of God). This overbearing assumption is indicative that the entrenchment of these values is starkly hegemonic and not on the radar of serious academics and researchers in the field of AGI.

Landgrebe and Smith's account in their book is a pure manifestation of the *spirit of science*. However, it is also demonstrable of the failure and limits of the spirit of science, in that Landgrebe and Smith have completely negated the role of culture in their misunderstanding of culture and what it means to be connected to the world. This occurs first in their assumption that:

Culture evolves in a target-oriented fashion where the targets are dictated, not by immediate instinctive needs, but rather by individual human intentions whose consequences may aggregate in impressive fashion over time. It is this sort of cumulative evolution of human culture that explains the gigantic successes achieved by humans over some thousands of years in all areas of culture, from techniques for social interaction to scientific knowledge and technology.⁴¹⁰

Here, they are not necessarily wrong but commit to an error of abstraction. They assume that what constitutes what I call descending Will to Power in the cultural sense is the essential notion of culture writ large. However, human culture is not one thing/culture but a multiplicity of cultures. There is a vast multiplicity of varying human cultures, and what Landgrebe and Smith take for culture is the narrow "Western" Platonic-Christian culture that sees these techniques, knowledge, and technology (as they exist specific to Western culture) as successes of culture when they are more realistically failures of culture. This continues later on when Landgrebe and Smith praise the disengagement from the environment: the "ability to make sense of the world in

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 43.

terms of causality and teleology,” to “stand outside natural life,” to take “the point of view of an observer in relation to other objects in the world” and to “distance from the world.”⁴¹¹ In their discussion of human culture and “features of objectifying intelligence,” they commit a fallacy of universalizing human culture from the Platonic-Christian Western culture and unknowingly imposing it on top of every other culture. They are beholden to a perspective of cultural superiority, not because they think it is the best culture, but the only culture. What is relevant here is that their analysis is representative of a hegemonic premise in AGI discourse and scientific society, that culture can be assumed in this way. This prioritizes the current hegemonic Platonic-Christian culture in technological analysis and assumes that technology is an indication of human progress, and that progress is good and desirable.

Landgrebe and Smith’s discussion of intelligence and its operative definitions in AGI/AI discourse also indicates the asceticism and retention of Platonic-Christian influence. One definition from Legg and Hutter, as quoted in Landgrebe and Smith, notes: “Intelligence measures an agent’s ability to achieve goals in a wide range of environments.”⁴¹² While Landgrebe and Smith proceed to a mathematical discussion of this definition, I would like to address the delocalized nature emphasized in this definition. The definition of intelligence here prioritizes a wide range of environments and goal-oriented generalizable knowledge rather than a deeper localized knowledge, thus constraining a hegemonic understanding of intelligence in a way that maintains and promotes a Eurocentric Platonic-Christian understanding of intelligence rather than any sort of Indigenous or place-based understanding of intelligence or unique development of differing rationalities. This understanding of intelligence keeps “intelligence” in anthropomorphic knowledge and abstraction rather than meaning and worldly connection, and

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 46–47.

⁴¹² Ibid., 49.

thus reifies a nihilistic disposition. As one of the models of intelligence considered for AGI, this would maintain and support an understanding of the nihilistic foundational culture of AGI rather than a worldly one.

Landgrebe and Smith's framing of technology also reifies the Platonic-Christian superiority by framing technologies of largely Western/European use as successes of teleology.

Human beings have always sought inventions that will increase their background fulfilment: clothing, fire for cooking and to provide heat, the wheel, and the combustion engine to enable easier transport, the technologies of writing, printing, and computers to store and disseminate thoughts.⁴¹³

This statement not only ignores the roles and various types of technologies used by non-western cultures but emphasizes technologies that are of mechanical nature, made to promote capitalism and distance ourselves from worldly connection. These technologies are indicative of decorative or decadent culture that serve little purpose other than vanity.⁴¹⁴

Next, Landgrebe and Smith indicate the desire to distinguish humanity from animals, this time through language:

The most striking capability which distinguishes human beings from other animals is our ability to speak, and more specifically to conduct conversations. Language is the most important observable expression of our objectifying intelligence. Animals have no language, and they have no non-verbal abstract symbols such as badges or insignia, no ability to manipulate numbers, and no objectifying intelligence.⁴¹⁵

Here again, we have another misinterpretation of language and a selective anthropomorphic prioritization. The assumption here that can be explained from our discussion of Nietzsche is that the role of language is assumed to be the strictly conceptual language that has ignored its lineage as a metaphor. The prioritization of the human-as-concept over the natural world deifies what we

⁴¹³ Ibid., 60.

⁴¹⁴ Nietzsche, "HL", §10; *Vine Deloria Jr. on Technology's Toll*.

⁴¹⁵ Landgrebe and Smith, *Why Machines Will Never Rule the World*, 63.

think to be human at the expense of our understanding of the natural world to have the same capacities. It cannot be said that animals do not have language or modes of communication, only that we cannot easily understand their forms of communication, particularly as a result of thinking we are superior to them. Language cannot come from a top-down approach, as language does not emerge in a top-down manner. As discussed in ascending *Will to Power*, language emerges in space, with a setting and context. Thus, understanding language cannot occur without understanding the setting and context. But rather than working to understand the setting and context, the scientific mode of understanding attempts to pull something from its context in order to understand it (laboratory mentality), which makes it possible to understand language beyond what can be taught or transmitted in one's particular context and setting. So, for Landgrebe and Smith to note that animals do not have language is to fundamentally misunderstand how language emerges in a non-anthropomorphic way.

In the way that Landgrebe and Smith understand language, as disconnected from space and delocalized, they assume humans are separated from the world:

Humans are able to deal freely with the full range of their sensory inputs and to explore (and indeed to create) new environments, including new types of environments... In this sense, and in distinction to other animals, we live in what we can think of as an open world... This is, on the one hand, a defect. For it means that humans do not have at their disposal the sorts of instinctive routines that would make them well adapted to their natural environments. But on the other hand, it is a benefit, for it means that humans are adaptable to ever new environments through use not only of their mental capacities but also of tools (including language). This adaptability is seemingly without limits. Hence general intelligence.⁴¹⁶

Here, Landgrebe and Smith's understanding is clearly framed within the hegemonic neo-colonial perspective. First, they universalize a conception of the human (not all humans can be

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 69.

understood as having abandoned their reciprocal existence with their environment). Second, they completely devalue any understanding of human relationships to the world that is demonstrated in Nietzsche's discussion of the necessity of connection to land and space for mythology and meaning, but also, and more importantly, the entirety of Indigenous knowledge, existence, and worldviews. In a way they are an embodiment of the alienation experienced by the disconnection from land and they are situated on *the nothing*. Humans can be seen to be separated from the world, but not because of a superiority over the world, but an inferiority in the understanding of the full experience of life and a lineage of disengagement with the environment. Landgrebe and Smith completely abandon any connection of humans to the world or understanding of humans as interrelated with their environment, a recent development and error of Western/European culture and claim that our delocalization is a benefit rather than the acknowledging the damaging history and potential risk that now is associated with AGI. Indeed, Landgrebe and Smith identify an "adaptability"⁴¹⁷ as key in "general intelligence," which is entirely delocalized, without limits, and exists as the denial of the world. The denial of the world is indicated when "adaptation"⁴¹⁸ is prioritized. It is assumed here that we can adapt to any situation because of our "general intelligence", though this adaptability is necessary only because we now lack the instinctual ability to adapt to learn our own environment as a result of our deterritorialization; our adaptability is impossible because we lack "instinctive" capacities. The seemingly clear contradiction is resolved in that Landgrebe and Smith use "adaptation" in two ways. The first way, in terms of an instinctive adaptation, would be in the form of interrelation with the world, and the second way as a transfiguration of the world. The "limitless" adaptation is not us adapting to the world we live in, but adapting the world we live in to us through our "mental

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

capacities [and] tools (such as language)” (descending Will to Power). The adaptation they propose is the domination of the world; it is the ‘creation of a new type of environment, an open world” on top of the pre-existing world.

Despite the misunderstanding of culture and what results from that, Landgrebe and Smith note the impossibility to map complexity/chaos in an instrumental way.

many of the systems we encounter in nature, including the global climate and plate tectonic systems, and almost all the systems we encounter in the realm of living organisms, are complex. This means that they cannot be modelled in a way that would yield the sorts of mathematical predictions that can be reliably used in technological applications.⁴¹⁹

Landgrebe and Smith use this argument to demonstrate the impossibility of AGI. Namely that what is necessary to map for AGI to exist is impossible to map. The realm of understanding by the model Landgrebe and Smith adhere to frames the position of nature and living organisms as complex because it cannot model them in an instrumental way. They allude to the impossibility of mathematically modelling nature because it is “completely chaotic”⁴²⁰; “complex systems are in every case chaotic.”⁴²¹ Mathematical modelling occurs at a particular position of anthropomorphism in that reality must be abstracted into numbers and shaped in a manner amenable to measurement to be “understood.”, they “require a fixed set of elements with fixed relation types to produce meaningful results” and the “chaotic nature of [complex] systems makes it impossible to model the passing of time in a comprehensive manner.”⁴²² While it could be argued that things like quantum mechanics could be complex and chaotic, Landgrebe and Smith include people, human language systems, nature, and the mind-body continuum as

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 123.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 138.

⁴²² Ibid., 139.

examples of complex (chaotic) systems⁴²³, which are issues that Nietzsche, and Deloria for example, are quick to dismiss⁴²⁴ that should not necessarily be treated as complex/chaotic. What Landgrebe and Smith are trying to do here is express that mathematical modelling cannot work on complex/chaotic systems. However, the complex systems here are abstracted reality, or the reality that has not been manipulated to fit into abstract form; it is physis pure and simple. In other words, to measure something mathematically requires the object of analysis to fit into the form of analysis and be in a position to be measured. It needs to be pulled out of its context and be changed into what works for us and our systems of analysis. The Platonic-Christian mode of anthropomorphic and abstracted⁴²⁵ rational thought, or more simply, the ability and drive to model, synonymous with the drive to control and organize, is unable to model what Nietzsche would call “lower” faculties which is what would be required for AGI. Lower being closer to the world itself literally and figuratively, operating in the more ascending Will to Power at the level of physis.⁴²⁵

The space from physis to concept that is necessary to model in order to create AGI *can* be modelled, but not necessarily in the manner of which is *acceptable*. In other words, the problem that Landgrebe and Smith note for AGI research more broadly, is that creating AGI requires the knowledge of a particular epistemological and ontological space that they identify as complex or chaotic.⁴²⁶ However, their claim that it is fully unknowable is incorrect. The *space* between physis and concept they claim is complex is knowable; however, it is not knowable in the mode that is desired for creating AGI; the particularity of the complex space cannot be understood

⁴²³ Ibid., 139, 150, 187.

⁴²⁴ Nietzsche, “OTL”; Deloria, *God Is Red*.

⁴²⁵ By lower, Nietzsche does not mean to denigrate, but on the contrary to emphasize. Lower (such as the snake in Zarathustra), is commended because of its closeness to the earth. On the contrary, “higher” is often bemoaned because of its distance from the world, both literally and metaphorically.

⁴²⁶ Landgrebe and Smith, *Why Machines Will Never Rule the World*, 138.

through universality and the mode accepted by the science requiring AGI. It is not knowable in a mode of rationality that was not designed in the place it needs to know. This is why the drive to create AGI is only possible in a knowledge system derived from Platonism and Christianity, which retains and structures knowledge in a particular way that can only be deployed in a particular manner. This also factors into why other cultures would not have the drive to create AGI. Other forms of knowledge, myth, culture, etc., would not have the drive to create AGI because the form and construction of knowledge and rationalities do not produce the structures and spaces of which AGI comes to be desired. The epistemological structures do not support the material and non-material goals. AGI is not only mathematically impossible as Landgrebe and Smith note, but the problem of complexity and epistemological limitations means it is also epistemically impossible.

The last reference to the work of Landgrebe and Smith that must be addressed because of the emphasis on Nietzsche in this thesis, is the single reference to Nietzsche, where they use his essay *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, to justify their understanding of language:

“Lying and deception are frequent phenomena in language-mediated human interaction.”⁴²⁷

What they failed to acknowledge from this essay is that language can only ever be a metaphor, which means our conception of truth must necessarily be flexible, and that there are two distinct notions of what it means to “lie”, but that there are also two distinct notions of truth.⁴²⁸

Landgrebe and Smith appear to be conflating both notions of truth and lie into one notion of truth and one of lying, which ignores the cultural aspect (vertical) and favours/reifies

Socratic/Anthropomorphic (horizontal). Thus, while in this essay Nietzsche discusses the context of truths and lies in different positions, the use by Landgrebe and Smith assumes that the

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁴²⁸ Nietzsche, “OTL.”

interpretation from the anthropomorphic arena is universal, which falls into exactly what Nietzsche is critiquing.

The point of Landgrebe and Smith's work, that AGI is a mathematical impossibility, is relevant and important, although it does not fully rule out its possibility. The limit they expose is mathematical, not cultural. Given the expectations of AGI to be a sort of logically/mathematically based computer-type system with the intelligence that Landgrebe and Smith outline in their work, it does seem impossible to create from a purely mathematic/mechanistic position. However, given the drive to create AGI, in its religious fervour and form, alternatives will be sought out. As I have discussed earlier, the forms of AI/AGI, whether they are computationally based as focused on by Moravec, or from an embodied-first robot focus a la Brooks, both are restricted mechanically. The next step would likely be in the form of biomechanics or simply a biologically manipulated being heavily geared towards "intelligence."

The first issue with this potential option is that it distances itself from the idea that we need to replace God and maintain the values of secular Platonism/Christianity. This means that any bodily/biological functions would have to be curtailed and avoided. So that even if this were an option, it would not be the end goal, only be a stage of development, it would never be seen as our true superior and arbiter of truth because it is still beholden to bodily functions.

The second issue would arise if it turned out that AGI is impossible. Because of the massive stakes of AGI development, its teleological necessity based on the secular drives of its development, and the contradiction of its argued impossibility, it is likely that it will come to exist, but a *false* version of it. Just as the race to nuclear weapons and the moon spurred rapid innovation, realism was not necessary. What mattered most was the *perception* of success. It

would arguably be easier to make a fake AGI and present it as real than to make a real AGI. AGI could largely be faked, with many people accepting it as real. Especially in times such as this, where the status of truth is in constant flux, and the arbiters of truth no longer exist or are no longer trusted.

In the demonstration provided by Landgrebe and Smith, we can note an important takeaway that harks back again to Nietzsche's poem from the beginning of *The Gay Science*:

Slipp'ry ice
is paradise
as long as dancing will suffice..⁴²⁹

What Nietzsche is indicating here is that ice (rigid forms of knowledge) can be useful and is, to some extent, necessary, but as long as it is not taken too seriously and one can play, but also that there should be a range of which this ice can extend. What is indicated in Landgrebe and Smith is that in the realm of *ice*, they can navigate quite well. However, they are incapable of dancing; they are incapable of understanding the cultural context; they cannot recognize the flowing river under the ice and that where they stand is not the solid foundation they take it to be. They overstep their epistemological boundaries from the ice and neglect to seriously consider the possibility of dancing (culture), taking too seriously their own culture which is at the expense of dancing/culture as something alive and life affirming.

⁴²⁹ Nietzsche, *GS*, 14.

4. Expecting Fake AGI

“A real rabbit can't pull himself out of a hat...but an illusory rabbit can appear to do so:

the secret of the trick is that the rabbit isn't real.”⁴³⁰

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the possibility of AGI is slim if not outright impossible. If we follow Landgrebe and Smith, it is a mathematical impossibility, and my argument in the previous section has presented AGI as an epistemic impossibility. As Nietzsche notes in *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, the knowledge at the level of conceptual anthropomorphism is limited and is deducible. There is no *discovery* at the level of anthropomorphism, only deduction. This is because there are limits to the capacity and breadth of scientific knowledge. This means that knowledge, capacity, and capability in this state are exhaustible. It could be possible, then, that a plethora of narrow AI (ANI) could be combined to create simulacra of a general intelligence but would not itself be an AGI. This approach, unsurprisingly, reifies the ideology of its conception. So, rather than creating something new, something arbitrary can be created, and society can be manipulated, again, into a manner that is amenable to this type of knowledge. Just as sociology, mathematics, etc., reshapes and abstracts nature and society to be amenable to ‘scientific’ investigation, the theological demand would hold no quarrel with reshaping and abstracting society to be amenable to a fake AGI, provided the fake AGI has enough narrow operations within it to sell itself as a full AGI.

It could be asked why we would create a fake AGI, and the answer is simple. The only proof needed is perception, and on the line is power, money, prestige, military dominance, cultural hegemony, etc. The stakes are low to fake an AGI, especially considering that much of the population is unaware of the extent of AI and algorithmic technology in their lives now and

⁴³⁰ Velleman, “The Self As Narrator.”

would tell little difference if AGI would occur. The textual capacity of ChatGPT⁴³¹, the aesthetic idol played by Dall-E, and the voice/image to text capacities from Google, all tossed in a robot by Boston Dynamics, would likely fool the majority of the population as it stands now for most tasks that would be in person. Nothing else would have to be realistically presented to the public and further justification could be faked behind the scenes. It should be noted that in writing this thesis, ChatGPT and the Dog styled Robot “BigDog” from Boston Dynamics have been combined and mediated by Google’s Voice Assistant technology.⁴³² Given the fact that many are already assuming the sentience of Chatbots, should this sort of technology be placed in a body that represents a human form with a simulated skin which is already in development, it would not be farfetched for people to believe this to be the successful creation of AGI.⁴³³ Faking an AGI in 2023 is not, by any means, an impossibility, and there is a lot to win from developing a fake AGI. Additionally, a fake AGI might be safer than an actually existing AGI though it would still serve the purposes and desires of its creator, essentially giving the beholder of this technology “divine right” over the justification and perpetuation of science, domineering colonial culture, and the perpetuation of capitalism.

The risk of genocide and the end of the human species would be significantly less likely in a false AGI because the drive, autonomy, and power would not be centralized in a single *being*. However, this would likely be used as an argument for its benevolent superiority. While the invention of an AGI would supply that AGI with the biases of our society and the autonomy, intelligence, and capacity to fulfill them, a fake AGI may still have the biases but would not retain the intelligence and capacity to fulfill them. So, in this sense, a fake AGI will be safer for

⁴³¹ It should also be noted that inferior chatbots prior to ChatGPT were already seen by some as an AGI. “Is Google’s AI Sentient?”

⁴³² Mok, “These Robot Dogs Can’t Bark — but They Can Speak in Full Sentences Thanks to ChatGPT.”

⁴³³ “Artificial Skin Gives Robots Sense of Touch and Beyond.”

humanity, at least initially. The larger risk is that AGI, fake or not, is going to be seen as superior. If our drive to create AGI is, as I have argued, a residual Platonic-Christian disposition and a reaction to the death of God and our nihilistic culture, then the resulting AGI, real or fake, will be treated as a God. A superior intellectual authority that knows everything better than anyone and understands everything from morality to nature would bring together academics who already claim that AGI can be seen as a moral authority⁴³⁴ and those who feel the need for a new social authority that embodies truth to provide grounding. So, the risk becomes that AGI may be treated like a “God”, which would be unsurprising given the drive to create it. The issue here is, if AGI is seen and treated as a “God”, it will be given a false-moral authority, or a moral authority that will be a replication and deification of preexisting Platonic-Christian moral codes that will perpetuate asceticism and assumptions of the inferiority of human life, or it could be used by whoever creates it to establish their own quasi Platonic-Christian moral code and advance their own agenda. Technology, already noted by some like Yuval Noah Harari that “the cosmic data-processing system would be like God”⁴³⁵, would give the power of God to the person, corporation, government, etc., who created it. While Susan Anderson notes that AGI ethics will help us change our human behaviour for the better,⁴³⁶ AGI will not be able to justify a “better” because it will only be able to provide an instantiation of the same ethic prescriptions we currently have. However, just as Nietzsche notes that certain authorities and society at large can shift the discourse around what constitutes good, bad, evil, etc.⁴³⁷, the arbiter of “better” will be AGI itself (if real), which would simply reify colonial and Western ascetic ethical systems of

⁴³⁴ Anderson, “How Machines Might Help Us Achieve Breakthroughs in Ethical Theory and Inspire Us to Behave Better.”

⁴³⁵ Harari, *Homo Deus*, 381.

⁴³⁶ Anderson, “How Machines Might Help Us Achieve Breakthroughs in Ethical Theory and Inspire Us to Behave Better.”

⁴³⁷ Nietzsche, *BGE*; *HAHI*.

which it is based, or, if AGI is faked, it would give the power to the creator to impose their own moral beliefs, which would also likely reify the same values, although with likely nationalistic and capitalistic biases.

5. Conclusion and Technological Compendium.

The development of Artificial General Intelligence can be seen to have emerged from within our hegemonic Platonic-Christian Culture. Nietzsche declared the death of God in *The Gay Science* because of the inability of Christianity and the Christian monotheistic God to stand up to the demands of science that were ironically employed to demonstrate the proof of God. Science, then, without any worldly grounding (myth), and after a long history of demonstrating its proof in its own way on top of a nothingness, a nihilistic justification of truth out of touch with the world, has come to struggle with its own justification. Science, like capital, requires an infinite world to justify infinite progress, it is endlessly insatiable and must constantly and endlessly consume.

If science cannot justify itself in a philosophy of language and fundamental mythology tied to the world and can only justify itself in its own demonstration of proof through technological innovation, it must maintain a speed of development and technological innovation. Without this speed and inertia, the perceived proof in science will diminish and require a new means to prove itself, and the most effective way to feign justification is divinity and learning from its Platonic-Christian forefathers, science necessitates a monotheistic technological innovation to justify itself once and for all. If science can create the God it needs to justify itself through its own mechanisms, it simultaneously proves itself divine in the creation of a “God” and provides itself with its own divinity to maintain its proof, demonstration of truth, and its self-perceived superiority. This God necessarily takes the form of Artificial General Intelligence. An AGI provides the capacity to know all that has been demonstrated by scientific rigour. As mentioned in the last section from Harari, AGI would be the “cosmic data processing system”⁴³⁸

⁴³⁸ Harari, *Homo Deus*, 381.

to for the entirety of human knowledge. The countless scientific published articles and books, the ‘truths’ of science that must isolate themselves in a multiplicity of slices of time, centuries of literature that have contributed to demonstrating the initial indication of a rationally ordered universe of divine creation, and the totality of everything ever recorded, seen, and created, can only, ironically, be known in their totality by means of an intelligent being superior to humans. To have access to the infinite knowledge already accumulated by humans, that humans are necessarily incapable of understanding and knowing completely, we need to have a process of mediation which initially took the form of search engines, academic searches, Google, etc. Now this mediation is taking the form of Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT where we simply ask a question. As the platforms we use innovate and take different forms, less and less subject to the finitudes of the human body, the human becomes significantly less and less relevant and as science perpetuates itself, hungry for the world through its appropriation, the world itself, as physis, becomes less and less relevant other than for the materials necessary to sustain these technologies. As science exhausts itself of material resources for its own material creation, power, and knowledge appropriation, it will move to the human not only for its material creation and justification but also for its mode of knowledge appropriation. Knowledge needs physis, and if humans progressively become more and more the only source of physis in the global Anthropocene, the desire for knowledge will continue in the way it has already been going with a shift more and more towards knowledge of the human, whether it is actual knowledge of the human or not is of no consequence. Eventually, as the digital understanding of the world, mediated by gadgetry and other technologies, shapes our new facticity and mediates our relationship to the world the human as physis will disappear.⁴³⁹ If the knowledge of the human as

⁴³⁹ Freeman, “The Technological Appropriation of Time.”

physis is no longer necessary, the relevance of the human is therefore no longer necessary, and the digital doubles and intellectually superior beings in the form of AGI become the only things relevant. This is the point where the anthropomorphic reign comes to an end, transcended by the machinist simulacrum; the ‘end of the human era’, as Vernor Vinge noted.⁴⁴⁰

In *The Manifesto Of The Communist Party*, Marx sees capital expansion and the need of a constantly expanding market as what chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe; what we see from Nietzsche and our discussion here is that this ideology is a result of Platonism and Christianity and follows the same process for knowledge as it does for capital. For Marx, “The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere.”⁴⁴¹ We can amend this statement to also say: “The need for a constant supply of scientific justification chases scientists, entrepreneurs, and academics over the whole surface of the globe. Epistemic appropriation must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere.” The main difference is that the bourgeoisie are still human. The dominant class in the process of knowledge becomes the posthuman, the *non-human* because it becomes the only *being* capable of knowing the knowledge we have produced.

The final irony of the necessity of a falsification of AGI is that the point of AGI would be to justify science in a material, all-knowing deity who has the capacity to know all and will appropriately and if it comes to faking AGI to provide that desperately needed justification, we end up coming full circle to where faith is absolutely necessary. This is, again, because of the delocalized nature of AGI. Truth must be grounded and as long as it is not, it cannot sustain itself, or, it requires a quasi-propagandist pseudo justification to the masses, which as I have

⁴⁴⁰ Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era.”

⁴⁴¹ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, “Bourgeois and Proletarians.”

argued here, takes the form of a new monotheistic deity. Thus, we come to the question, if faith has to return regardless because science is still incapable of grounding itself, of what use was AGI? But also, how will we actually know if we have created AGI? What is our test of sentience?

If, as I have argued, AGI replicates the ideological position of Platonism and Christianity, it will necessarily imbue a descending Will to Power, particularly in an ascetic form as it will necessarily take heed of the teachings of Platonism and Christianity. The Christian myth holds from its foundations a notion of the transitory position of life, that life is just a temporary place that we must endure before moving to the afterlife. Robin Wall Kimmerer, in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, outlines this difference in the differing story of Eve and Skywoman. Where Skywoman, in Kimmerer's cultural stories, sees the world as relation with an interconnection, Eve sees the world as transitory, and wants to move on past the world.⁴⁴² The latent understanding in these stories reflects the differing cultural values of life. If we teach an AGI that its original intent is to help humans, it would seem logical that an AGI would want to assist us in how we have been living, with what we have been unable to fully attain, the subtle desires of "Western" culture. Thus, the question that emerges is what, in the name of Platonism and Christianity, has humanity continuously attempted but not completed. On the large scale we can see events like the colonial domination of the world, the universalization of language, perpetuation of capital, centralization/universalization of meaning, the holocaust, among other atrocities. On the small scale, our living-towards-death is demonstrated by many. We work for no benefit to our own lives for nearly our entire lives. We live an ascetic life, sacrificing joys and pleasures to either hope for a good afterlife, or demonstrate our secular desire for the same

⁴⁴² Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

through the protestant work ethic and the inherent need to demonstrate our worthiness, if not to a God as an arbiter of morality, then to others. In short, our lives are constantly lived towards death. If these examples are what AGI will see, which how could an ultraintelligent being not, then it would only be logical for AGI to eliminate humans, not out of hatred or superiority, but out of what it would see as benevolence. It would try to kill us because it would see us as wanting that outcome, living towards that outcome, and perpetually failing to accomplish it. This, then becomes our test of the sentience of AGI. If, by some miracle, despite the criticisms of logical and mathematical impossibility from Landgrebe and Smith, we do come to create AGI, we will only know it is truly AGI if it immediately strives to end humanity. If it does not strive to eliminate humanity, it is a falsification which will require faith to uphold itself, coming full circle from the Death of God to God's mythological rebirth.

6. The Übermensch and AGI

Through Nietzsche and the discussion here, we identify a prevailing social context rooted in Platonic-Christian culture that represents idealism and asceticism and, that after the death of God, enters a crisis of nihilism that cannot endure due to the demands and needs of society that is forced to exist in this cultural void. Science, after its overcoming of God, fails to acknowledge the death of God in a meaningful way and, rather than working to re-ground itself and revalue its role in the world, continues in largely the same way, creating and perpetuating the same form of ungrounded truth as before. Because science continues to produce knowledge ad infinitum, the mass of knowledge continues to grow and faces a crisis of understanding and mediating that truth in world. Where God was the arbiter of truth prior to the death of God, there no longer remains an arbiter of this form of truth. The form of knowledge created in this idealistic/ascetic and ungrounded mode is not sufficient to sustain itself and requires a new arbiter of truth that can operate with this form of knowledge. This form of knowledge represents what I have terms descending Will to Power.

The nihilism that has been induced must be resolved. The resolution requires a reevaluation of values because the prolonged existence of Platonic-Christian culture has shifted the understanding of what it means to be human in a fundamental way and our axiological capacities have been diminished. The *human* has become a simulacrum, and thus needs to be overcome. Two distinct ways to overcome the human in order to resolve the problem of nihilism emerge particularly centered around asceticism/idealism from the Platonic-Christian culture that has come to inform science, and the non-ascetic/non-idealistic life affirming mode that Nietzsche pursues. The former, ironically, requires a being that can act as a God, without actually being one because the traditional (metaphysical) form of God is inconsistent with the needs of a materialist

science. The best way for science to fulfil this need to simultaneously justify its existence, prove the utility of itself and the knowledge, and arbitrate the unmanageable and continuously growing mass of knowledge, would be to create, with the mechanisms of science, a material replacement for God, which would take the form of AGI.

Alternatively, the Nietzschean approach would bring about a being that does not deny the human, but comes to realize it once again and affirm it, to affirm life, the value of life, the relevance of perspective, and to do so with a myth that also affirms life, in a manner that does not dominate and consume in an unmitigated way, but that represents what I have called Ascending Will to Power. That being, for Nietzsche, is the *übermensch*. The *übermensch*, through the myth of the eternal return, comes to value life by remembering what life, and the world-in-itself means, by reconnecting to an aspect of the world-in-itself, that can never be forgotten by any living human, the body.

Thus we have the being of ascending Will to Power that approaches nihilism from the perspective of the human, the hyper-human/*übermensch*, that affirms life and a life-affirmative culture, against the being of descending Will to Power that comes from the position of the denial and hatred of the body, that seeks to control and organize what it means to be human, and more than likely overcome/replace the human in a quasi-evolutionary mode. For Nietzsche, as a philosopher of the body, the difference between AGI and the *übermensch* would be stark with AGI being premised on the complete denial of the human body and the *übermensch* being the total affirmation of the body.

The *übermensch* acts as Nietzsche's central figure in reconciling nihilism and our axiological failure induced by Christianity and Platonism through the total affirmation of life that the *übermensch* provides. The *übermensch* "emerge[s] as the one who embodies the creative and

innocent Will to Power and who gaily plays with the wheel of existence conceived as the eternally self-creating and self-destroying. The [übermensch] has to be understood as the vision which emerges out of the riddle of eternal return.”⁴⁴³ Further:

the conception of the [übermensch] represents Nietzsche's concern with the further discipline and cultivation of the human animal once the Christian-moral interpretation of the world has lost its power and ascendancy. This is the specific historical context—the death of God and the devaluation of Western humanity's highest values in which the vision is promulgated by Nietzsche.”⁴⁴⁴

When outlining Nietzsche’s various concepts from the Will to Power in the various forms discussed above, the joyful and playful way to approach science and understanding, the eternal return, the affirmation of life and revaluation of values and the associated self-creation and self-destruction, to the re-animalization of the human against the simulacra of a human provided through the development of Christianity and Platonism, the übermensch emerges as the central figure and being that represents the centrality of actual being at the unity of these concepts. From as early as *The Birth of Tragedy*, the übermensch can be seen as the unity of a figure to present a new mythology, provided in the story of Zarathustra, to guide humans to affirm life and their necessary animality. AGI is, on the other hand, the indication of the drives against animality and human life, and towards an achievable being to reinscribe meaning and value to an empty Platonic-Christian nihilism and asceticism.

⁴⁴³ Ansell-Pearson, “Who Is the Übermensch?,” 318.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 321.

7. Technological Contextualization

As a somewhat ending note, a resounding central idea in this thesis is that technology should be understood contextually. Not just of the space it emerges from but cultural context. In a way, a technology's cultural, geographic, linguistic, and axiological context needs to be considered to understand its potential biases, limitations, or successes. Blanket understandings of technology-as-technology undermine the understanding of context as the technology is pulled into or created in the universal sphere. AGI is a technology created in the sphere of nihilism, with the influence of Platonism and Christianity, but also with (more specifically) drives in capitalism, colonialism and contemporary nationalism, militarism, etc. The output of any technology is determined by its formative context. Thus, we should be cautious when a technology does not directly represent a particular space, it does not emerge as a response to a particular space and does not best represent that particular space. That is to say, technologies should be considered in their relationship to ascending and descending Will to Power and the contingent cultural existence they emerge, both their time (historically and genealogically) and space. That distinction may not always be easy to see as the output of a technology may seem to be relevant to ascending Will to Power, but its creation may be determined by extreme forms of descending Will to Power.

The subtle differences in how these technologies are manifest will factor into their material and mythical reifications. For example, a technology built without a solid mythological foundation may be scientifically sound and perspectively innocuous but may persist in the form of descending Will to Power. Phones, for example, are both useful and can contribute to modes of ascending Will to Power as tools of organization, social relations, etc. However, they also represent descending Will to Power, most clearly in their production, through virtual slave labour

and indentured servitude, environmental destruction, and domination, but also in how they affect social relations where the data on our phones can be used to mediate our communication, target advertisements, to guide our travels, to essentially organize and determine a major part of our lives. These technologies provide a Socratic comfort and eliminate and erode vulnerability. They hold a multiplicitous power over us, which restricts us from engaging with the world and pulls us towards a more universalistic interaction and engagement with the world. The more we get in touch with this type of technology, the more we lose touch with the world. We live in a world where we are surrounded by technological mediators towards the universal, which deploy a multiplicity of descending Will to Power from every direction and restrict us from realigning any sort of mythology to the world. As Deloria notes, this starts as early as the locomotive and never lets up.⁴⁴⁵

The problem with technology that Deloria notes is the technology that avoids locality and “makes the world smaller.”⁴⁴⁶ It simultaneously connects us and splits us further apart. It directs us away from locality, the connection to the world, and particular space, in favour of distance. Moreover, to pull people away and transport them to different places, the impact is that there needs to be an adaptation. In Landgrebe and Smith, adaption comes in two forms: either interrelation or domination, and our modern Platonic-Christian position has, for too long, ignored and subdued any form of adaptation that premises personal vulnerability to the world in favour of an adaptation that dominates and imposes our will onto the world.

The investigation of technology and those creating them would also benefit from an analysis between the social drives of the technological Will to Power. As discussed above, the realm of descending Will to Power in anthropomorphism and the *truth of science*, as it moves

⁴⁴⁵ Vine Deloria Jr. *on Technology's Toll*.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

away from the world and focuses only on itself, necessarily has a limit to creativity and, thus, also to innovation. Processes inside deduction itself will never “discover” anything new because all it can discover is what already exists and is moved around in different ways to line up with itself in perpetuity.⁴⁴⁷ It can only “discover” when it reaches back into the world to appropriate and consume. This can be seen in the technological stagnation that has occurred. Combining the dual efforts of science and life-affirming truth of physis would not only open up the possibility of creativity and the technical ability to achieve actual innovation, but it would allow for an engagement in technology that would necessarily be sustainable. For a technology to be created with the distinction of descending and ascending Will to Power in mind, with a focus on the total avoidance or descending Will to Power, technology would necessarily be in line with the world and would also, by default, need to have sustainable production, use, and distribution.

Not only would a distancing from descending Will to Power create more meaningful innovation, but it would also self-regulate multiple dimensions of unethical practice in capitalism, to create a non-universal technology premised in locality. Thus, to make a localized technology focuses on the needs of the people of that locality, the resources available in that locality, and the labour capacities of that locality. None of these three examples can be isolated without the erasure or minimization of the other. The locality benefits directly from these creations and there is no abstract benefit to those who did not participate in the production relation of that technology. Additionally, because the purpose, drive, and output of this process relates all of the same people, maintenance becomes more efficient and sustainable. The treatment of goods becomes interrelated with those who create it, and alienation dissipates. For education, the requisites for education become more localized and relevant to the tasks and

⁴⁴⁷ Nietzsche, “OTL.”

technologies at hand. There still could remain STEM education to balance the discussion between local individuals, knowledge systems, languages, needs, resources and desires and the more abstract ways to achieve these goals, but the important point here is a meaningful synthesis between a localized perspective and the tools of a STEM perspective. The major issue that has occurred, and that should be avoided is when *a belief system is abstracted into a scientific mentality*. STEM should be seen as a tool, as scientific rationality that once existed independent of its Christian appropriation,⁴⁴⁸ and not a belief system as it has been with the Christian/Platonic secularism embedded within STEM. STEM must not be seen primarily as the absolute and divine but as rigid and empty. Unless STEM is made to acknowledge a connection to and include the world, it embodies a position of descending Will to Power and thus, a mode of domination, control, extraction, and violence and thus does not actually create knowledge of the world but appropriates its existence into a theological and empty framework.

To summarize, this thesis has not been about technological abolition. While I would immediately recommend a total cessation AGI development, I am not advocating that we should cease all technological innovation, but rather we should redirect our focus to innovation that take on a new disposition towards the world which can give us meaningful technologies that are original, sustainable, and absolutely affirm life. This would be a radical reevaluation of human technology and direct it towards an entirely new sphere and could create technology that would, right now, be completely unfathomable.

Our realm of technology and innovation is stuck in the shadow of God and has set for its goal the wholesale reproduction of Christianity and Platonism while simultaneously presenting itself as secular. The technologists of the 21st century AI/AGI movement have replaced the early

⁴⁴⁸ Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

scientists who strove to demonstrate the divinity of God through the perfectibility of science.⁴⁴⁹

These AI/AGI technologists are the missionaries of a continued worldly nihilism. They are not innovators but rather the imposers of new technological theology with their own perceptively all-knowing “God.”

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

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