

If we look closely at what Pritchard says against Klein's proposal, we can decipher, I think, what the argument is supposed to be. First, it is clear that Pritchard thinks that the original perceptual evidence for any everyday proposition does not constitute evidence against the skeptical hypothesis. The reason for such a conclusion is presumably the underdetermination principle, according to which one has good evidence for  $p$  only if one's evidence for  $p$  is evidence which "favors"  $p$  over claims known to be incompatible with  $p$ .

But the notion of favoring here is ambiguous in a way related to the New Evil Demon Problem cited earlier. Suppose that  $R$  is a reason for believing  $p$ , but not a reason concerning  $q$ . Then  $R$  favors  $p$  over  $q$ . So if  $q$  is a skeptical hypothesis known to be incompatible  $p$ , and  $p$  is an everyday proposition,  $R$  constitutes evidence that favors  $p$  over  $q$ . It favors  $p$  over  $q$  because it is a reason for believing  $p$ , and isn't a reason, one way or the other, about  $q$ . This is the account of favoring that internalists can employ when defending the claim that we and our evil demon compatriots are equally justified in what we believe (even if we are likely to be correct and they are overwhelmingly likely to be mistaken).

In order to claim that  $R$  doesn't favor  $p$  over  $q$ , Pritchard needs a stronger reading of favoring. In particular, he must hold that  $R$  doesn't favor  $p$  over  $q$  unless  $R$  is also a reason against  $q$ , i.e., a reason in favor of  $\sim q$ . Such a reading of favoring, however, is precisely that encoded in the too-strong Reasons Closure principle. Because Reasons Closure is too strong, no internalist need adopt the stronger reading of favoring, and on the weaker reading of favoring, the two-stage model offered by McDowell and Klein remains untouched by Pritchard's objections.

## Conclusion

I have focused here on various complaints about the book, but it would be a mistake to conclude from this fact that the book is not a piece of stellar epistemology. It is such a piece, and the stimulation to disagreement that it provides is part of the reason why it is such a good book. It is required reading for anyone working in the theory of knowledge or epistemology more broadly construed.

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**The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche On Overcoming Nihilism.** BERNARD REGINSTER.  
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## I

At the center of Nietzsche's thought is a sweeping historical thesis, a diagnostic claim with purported philosophical implications. The claim is that the

Greek rationalist, Judeo-Christian moral tradition, “the West,” was undergoing a crisis of “nihilism.” Such a crisis was often described in Nietzsche’s typically telegraphic prose: “Nothing is true; everything is allowed”; “everything that happens is meaningless” (*sinnlos*); “existence (*Dasein*) has no meaning (*Sinn*)”; “Nihilism: the goal is lacking; ‘why?’ finds no answer”; and “the highest values devalue themselves.” Nietzsche clearly thinks that living a life is not like occupying a seat on a vessel; one has to steer; lives have to be led, sustained. This requires commitment to values; these values are shared and inherited across a tradition, and something about the social and psychological means for legitimating and so sustaining such values has failed, or, or he often puts it, “died.” For the first time in Western history the possibility of sustaining such commitments has failed not in the light of some new, alternative commitment. The whole process has broken down catastrophically at all levels: social, political, religious, psychological. Paradoxically (and perhaps question-beggingly) the surest sign of such a crisis is that it is mostly unacknowledged, that lives are led in profound self-deceit and business is carried on as usual. (p. 38)

While it has always been clear that Nietzsche believed that there is such a crisis, and clear that he believed he could show us a way to overcome it and so, in his terms, could show us a way to “affirm life,” there is a great deal of dispute about both issues, about the nature of the crisis and what it would be to overcome it. Bernard Reginster has written a careful, clear, detailed analysis of how Nietzsche understands this crisis and what overcoming it, or “affirming life” would amount to, and about whether Nietzsche is entitled to the claims attributed to him.

Reginster calls his treatment “systematic,” by which he says that he does not mean trying to relate all aspects of Nietzsche’s writings to a central philosophic idea or set of ideas (like “perspectivism” or a metaphysics of “the will to power” or “naturalism”) but that he will show that Nietzsche’s thought can be organized in response to this problem or crisis. At the heart of Reginster’s Nietzsche is a proposal for a “rich substantive ethics” (p. 7) (this is a phrase to flag; we will return to it), based on an “ethics of the will to power,” one committed to a new and highly unusual “positive” evaluation of suffering, especially the suffering caused by the resistance one encounters in attempting to realize one’s highest ideals. A good deal of what he is doing is what has come to be called “rational reconstruction” of a historical text, and that means that Reginster wants to find in Nietzsche what would count by contemporary standards as “a coherent and compelling philosophical project, in which all the distinctive themes of his thought are assigned a place and a significance in keeping with his own assessment of them.” (p. 7) It also means that Reginster feels free to make use of Nietzsche’s unpublished notes, the *Nachlass*, whenever they help support an interpretation, and that he self-consciously concentrates on what he calls the “content” of Nietzsche’s works rather than on their often esoteric form.

This is all highly controversial, especially since there are some influential interpreters (like Bernard Williams) who believe that one of Nietzsche’s main goals in writing was to find a way to prevent conventional philosophical summaries and analyses of his “positions,” that the point of his books was different from and much more complicated than that of straight argumentative prose, and that it had something to do with abandoning rather than extending the philosophical

enterprise.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is *prima facie* difficult to believe that Nietzsche thought that what was now needed was something like a philosophical case, an argument of some sort, that could show that life was worth living, or that suffering could be affirmed, that we had reason to affirm existence. (More on this below.) And, as with any historical text, it will always be controversial to treat unpublished work the same as published, and to cite quotations purely thematically, from all the different periods and different books and different stages of Nietzsche's thought as if all written at the same time in the same context.

But it is also true that even to the most hermeneutically scrupulous reader it is obvious that in some sense Nietzsche is ferociously, contemptuously opposed to something (the "life-denying" values of the Christian humanist tradition) and that he is "for" some "life affirming" or, as he says, "yes-saying" alternative, sometimes called a "tragic" or here, with Reginster, a "Dionysean" wisdom. I count myself among those much more perplexed by the form and even the point of Nietzsche's published works than Reginster is, and considerably more hesitant to rely on the *Nachlass*, but excessive fussiness about that issue can lead to endless dithering in the vestibule of Nietzsche's edifice, and there is no doubt much in Nietzsche in the way of substantive claims about how people should live in the shadow of nihilism, and much about the nature of values, and a good deal of effort is expended by Nietzsche defending such claims. There is plenty of material for someone with interests like Reginster's to work with, as long one is also mindful of the extraordinary rhetorical complexity of Nietzsche's works, and so the unavoidably provisional nature of any interpretation, especially a "systematic" one.

## II

Does life, as such, need to be "affirmed"? Wouldn't the affirmability of life depend on what sort of life one had been dealt by fate? And if it could be shown that life must be affirmed as such in order for one to lead a life, is the one thing needed in order to do so a reason or justification for doing so? A good deal of Nietzsche's answer to such a question will depend on exactly what his diagnostic claim amounts to, since that claim has it that whatever resources there had been either for taking such affirmability for granted or for actually affirming, have broken down. So it is appropriate for Reginster to separate out carefully what Nietzsche might have meant by the crisis of nihilism. He notes first that the problem at issue is the problem of value, especially the particular, distinct value of "meaningfulness." This value gets its grip from the goals one sets, given the particular determinate values one subscribes to, given

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<sup>1</sup> Williams also noted that the case of Nietzsche was even more difficult than that of Wittgenstein, however similar with regard to "avoiding" philosophy.

With Nietzsche, by contrast, the resistance to the continuation of philosophy by ordinary means is built into the text, which is booby-trapped, not only against recovering theory from it, but, in many cases, against any systematic exegesis that assimilates it to theory.

Bernard Williams, "Nietzsche's Minimalist Moral Psychology" in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 238.

that one believes that there *are* values and that they are realizable. Nihilism can result either if these values (in effect, all of them, or value as such) lose their grip in some way, are no longer regarded as values, or if one becomes convinced that the most important life-orienting values are completely unrealizable in the world we happen to live in. In the former case, the realization that there are no *objective* values or moral facts, coupled of course with the assumption that values would not be sustainable if they were not objective, produces what Reginster calls the nihilism of “disorientation.” One is left “lost,” with no confidence that “esteeming” (*schätzen*), which Nietzsche called life itself, is possible.<sup>2</sup> In the latter case, such a view about unrealizability produces what Reginster calls “despair.” That is, a commitment to some “highest value” persists, but the realization of its permanent unrealizability in the world produces not skepticism or resignation or pessimism<sup>3</sup>, but “despair,” a view more about the world than our values. The view is that nothing of any significance can be achieved, and so living cannot be said to be “worth more” than not living.

There is an extraordinary amount of classification and tagging in Reginster’s discussion of these issues (we have to make our way through “normative objectivism,” “skepticism,” “anti-realism,” “disorientation nihilism,” “despair nihilism”; there are labels everywhere here and all throughout the book)<sup>4</sup>, and Reginster freely admits that the notion of nihilism that he sees as the most important to Nietzsche (“despair”) is analyzed as such only in the unpublished writings, that the published works seem to favor the other form (“disorientation”), but it is clear enough why he wants to set things out this way, and at least the implications for the schema do seem to correspond to Nietzsche’s basic concerns.<sup>5</sup> That is, Nietzsche clearly thinks that the nihilistic conclusions drawn from the realization that the status of all values must be understood anti-realistically rests on the mistaken assumption that without objectivism, evaluation and commitment to value would be impossible. Nietzsche does not share this assumption, so the devaluation of values in *this* sense does not mean we end up disoriented, unable to value.<sup>6</sup> However, even if we can keep faith

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<sup>2</sup> See *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin, transl. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), “On a Thousand and One Goals,” pp. 42-44.

<sup>3</sup> Reginster claims that for Nietzsche, nihilism is a “development” of pessimism. (p. 31)

<sup>4</sup> Every chapter evinces the hyper-classification passion and it can get to be cumbersome: “objectivism,” “agent-external sanction,” “descriptive objectivism,” “the argument from disagreement,” “normative subjectivism,” “normative fictionalism,” “enabling conditions vs. limiting conditions,” the “argument of origin” and the “argument of affective dissonance,” “object based desires” vs. “need based desires,” “ethical voluntarism,” “motivational internalism,” “intrinsic, pertinent and essential resistance” vs. “extrinsic, non-essential but persistent resistance,” “metaphysical” vs. “normative” necessity, “normative contextualism,” and “radical contextualism.”

<sup>5</sup> There are some rather forced interpretations, as Reginster tries to fit everything of importance in Nietzsche on nihilism into his “unrealizability-despair” box. For example, he must treat the “God is dead” announcement as leading to nihilistic conclusions because the death of God brings with it the death of the afterlife. (p. 44) But that is never at issue in the *loci classici* of the announcement.

<sup>6</sup> As Reginster shows in a useful discussion of Schopenhauer, a parallel and similar argument can be made against Kantian prescriptivism and the attempt to establish unconditional obligation as the necessary condition of agency itself. (pp. 66-7)

with some sort of new, no longer objective “highest value,” we still must acknowledge the hostility and contingency of the world in which values must be realized. In particular, the attempt to realize values, for Reginster’s Nietzsche, brings with it unavoidable and profound suffering, and even more importantly, no final satisfaction, only continual frustration and suffering. The inference from this latter fact to “despair” is what Reginster’s Nietzsche is most out to combat.

Stated in a summary fashion, though, the basic inference is already crude and implausible on the face of it. As Reginster summarizes it: “the nihilist infers from the claim that his highest values are unrealizable to the claim that ‘the world is something that rationally should not exist.’”(37) That seems a bit hasty, and so stated would not merit serious attention. It seems on the rather childish order of, “If I can’t have everything, perfection, complete success, then I want nothing.” And in any case it is not clear that Nietzsche thinks that the appropriate response to such a nihilist is an argument that can show that this inference is not, in fact, rational. As we shall see shortly, Nietzsche is indeed far more interested in the question of justification, practical reasons for action, than is apparent in many interpretations, and Reginster is right to emphasize this dimension. But Nietzsche is willing to count a great deal as possible justification, from “aesthetic justification” to Zarathustra’s elliptical speeches, to forces like “fate” and “love of fate,” and so what he says leaves the question of what counts as justification a complicated and open question. Finding a way to point out to our “despair nihilist” that unrealizability has a “positive side” that he may have overlooked, that resistance and suffering brought about by our attempts to realize values enhance the value of the attempt in a number of ways, will not convince him that the “affirmation of life” is reasonable unless he shares a large number of assumptions about adequate justification that we have no right to assume.

Moreover, as Reginster himself often points out (without noting it as such), the core problem of nihilism is whether there are now possible “goals” that can “inspire” allegiance. (Cf. p. 25)<sup>7</sup> The “philosophical” response suggested by Reginster would only matter to a nihilist for whom rational inferences and logical clarity already matter, inspire allegiance. It is true that Nietzsche speaks of nihilism as the “logical” or “necessary” consequence of our Christian ideals, but the scope of that claim is broader than the problem of logical consistency in an inference, and does not invite a primarily philosophical response. Christianity, for example, proclaims a kind of “imperative” logic, demanding that one be scrupulously honest about one’s true motivations in assessing the worth of an action, and Nietzsche frequently claims that Christianity thereby ultimately “undermined itself,” successfully revealing the low origins of

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<sup>7</sup> That is, the conditions for possibly *inspiring* values are not addressed as such. Reginster limits himself to the questions of the relation between reasons and possible “inspiration.”

the high.<sup>8</sup> And the problem of “*inspiration* worthy goals” seems much broader in Nietzsche’s account than what could be addressed by an argument. (Socrates and Socraticism—a faith in the consoling function of reason - remain just as much a target as Christianity.) Nihilism seems rather a deep failure of desire (“mattering,” as in Reginster’s invocation of “despair”) than the result of a faulty inference or missing argument.

Moreover, the inference itself is opaque. One might simply say that there is dignity and nobility in the attempt at the realization of highest values; that worrying beforehand about the extent of possible success is the shopkeeper’s logic for which Nietzsche has such contempt.<sup>9</sup> Such indifference to success at least sounds more like Nietzsche. And some partial, even very minimal realization might count as consolation enough.

### III

In the second paragraph of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche accepts—contrary to many romantic and materialist interpretations of him—that any serious person in our age is burdened with a severe “intellectual conscience” and he clearly bemoans the fact that

...the great majority of people does not consider it contemptible to believe this or that and to live accordingly, *without* first having given themselves an account of the final and most certain reasons pro and con, and without even troubling themselves about such reasons afterward.<sup>10</sup>

So, as noted above, Nietzsche troubles himself with the question of justifiable “reasons for action,” and this has to count as one of the most under-reported dimensions of Nietzsche’s project. It is a great virtue of Reginster’s account that he pursues this question comprehensively, with a lot of useful help, again, from Schopenhauer. In effect what Reginster shows is that Nietzsche does treat actions and agency as important, distinct categories (distinct from mere events), that for him actions as such are intentional under some description, or always stand under a determinate evaluation that reflects an inescapably partial perspective. In my view this fact, coupled with

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<sup>8</sup> Reginster himself notes that for Nietzsche, nihilism is the result of “truthfulness.” (p. 39) The relation between truthfulness and “inspiration” understood as caring about a value and the goals it requires, is a much broader topic than is addressed by Reginster’s search for an argument to confront the inference he thinks at issue. As he presents it, if we can show the nihilist that the inevitability of suffering in any attempt to realize some important goal, and the impossibility of any final success, are not objections to a pursuit but actually intensifying reasons to pursue the goal, we will have shown him that his nihilism is “unjustified.” This sounds a little like contemporary “cognitive psychologists,” whose therapy consists in persistently asking their patients, “Well, do you have any evidence that anyone thinks you’re worthless? No? So don’t feel that way.” Reginster is right that nihilism is not like an illness of physiological condition, but it remains a profoundly complex psychological problem for Nietzsche.

<sup>9</sup> And worrying about achieving the ends *too easily*, which will begin to occupy Reginster’s attention soon, at first glance seems simply neurotic.

<sup>10</sup> *The Gay Science*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), §2, p. 76.

that claim about intellectual conscience, coupled with the inherent psychological instability (even absurdity) of self-consciously posited fictional or “make believe” values, renders wholly implausible the “fictionalist” account that Reginster spends some considerable time (compellingly) refuting. (I.e. the view that we create values and pretend to ourselves in some way that they have a source of authority outside ourselves.) His discussion ultimately, happily, leads him beyond that issue to the questions at the heart of the matter—“What does it mean to evaluate? And what sort of things are values?” (p. 98) Here again Reginster follows a Schopenhauerian path to Nietzsche’s views and that path leads him to his most important claim—that Nietzsche’s remarks about the “will to power” are where one should look for answers to these fundamental questions.<sup>11</sup>

The core of Reginster’s interpretation is an original, imaginative and bold (if also deeply implausible) claim: that for Nietzsche the will to power is the striving to overcome some resistance, indeed, that “the will to power is the *will to overcoming* resistance.” (p. 126, my emphasis) He accepts and himself points to the paradoxical implication that this would involve: that we actually seek out displeasure and difficulty (this is the basis for the re-evaluation of suffering), and he emphasizes something that he claims Nietzsche stresses but that other commentators, to whom he is otherwise congenial (like Clark), have missed—that this striving is *indefinite* and *perpetual*. (p. 128) He also claims that other congenial interpretations (like Richardson’s) which emphasize that the will to power ultimately refers to the “development” of specific ends, which development “consists essentially of its *mastery* over other drives” (p. 130) where mastery does not mean domination and exclusion but integration, are in effect too irenic, that Nietzsche claims that the will to power is the active *seeking* of resistance to overcome. Again, Reginster concedes that this is a paradox, that the will to power is expressed when, in the pursuit of the satisfaction of a first-order desire, this second-order desire is activated, the desire not just *that* one overcome all resistance to the satisfaction of the first-order desire, but that one *not succeed* in that satisfaction *without* resistance—preferably great and painful resistance—to overcome.

Moreover, in many passages where Nietzsche discusses affirmative and negative attitudes towards “life,” his interest does not appear to lie in the question of whether an argument can be constructed establishing the value of suffering. He is interested in something that does not get much air time in Reginster’s story—the psychological state, presumably some sort of achievement, in which both the pain of suffering and the inevitability of failure can be borne *together* with an affirmation. This, he often suggests, is *extremely hard*, much harder than being convinced by an argument about the positive values of suffering would suggest. A typical formulation is this one from the account in *Ecce Homo* of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

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<sup>11</sup> It was not always clear to me why such extensive summaries of Schopenhauer’s positions were necessary, except as clear contrasts with what Nietzsche eventually formulated. Reginster says that the notion of the will to power “took form against the backdrop of Schopenhauer’s philosophy” (105) and that the will to power is a “substitute” for Schopenhauer’s “the will to live.” If that is so, it is a complete and radical substitute, ~p for p, as Reginster himself shows in great detail, both with respect to Nietzsche’s objections to the value of life itself, in favor of “the expansion of power” (124) and on the evaluation of the meaning of suffering.

The psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how he that says No and *does* No to an unheard of degree, to everything to which one has so far said Yes, can nevertheless be the opposite of a No-saying spirit...how he that has the hardest, most terrible insight into reality, that has thought the 'most abysmal idea', nevertheless does not consider it an objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence—but rather one reason more for being himself the eternal yes to all things.<sup>12</sup>

Two milder ways of putting the problem of resistance would be, first, that one simply must concede that the pursuit of any truly worthy goal, pursued in the service of some higher order desire, will inevitably confront great, difficult obstacles, and that therefore one shouldn't whine about this. It comes with the territory.<sup>13</sup> Second, one might start out such a pursuit unsure of the degree of commitment with which it was pursued, unsure even to oneself of its importance in the economy of one's soul despite one's avowals, and the occasion of great resistance and so suffering are to be welcomed as "tests" of a sort. When things go too smoothly, one remains unsure of oneself, untested with regard to the degree or even the nature of one's commitments. For Reginster, though, the expression of the will to power must be an *active seeking of resistance*, and he states the paradox inherent in such a claim very clearly. Since it is second order, the will to power depends on there being some first-order desire for a goal or end; only if there is such a desire will resistance or an obstacle to its attainment count as resistance and unpleasant. "Yet, in willing power, he must also desire resistance to their [the ends'] realization." (134) According to what practical logic could I be said to desire the end and also desire that I not achieve the end too easily?

The textual support for such an interpretation is sparse and far from clear. Reginster cites *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 12.

That I must be a struggle and a becoming and an end and an opposition to ends...Whatever I create and however much I love it, soon I must oppose it and my love; thus my will wills it.<sup>14</sup>

Here the opposition to "becoming an end" could simply express a sensitivity to complacency, a resistance to the delusion that one had become all that one could be. The most important virtue defended in TSZ is, arguably, the virtue of "self-overcoming" (that is the theme of the passage just cited above), and that can be read as some sort of perfectionist project that can

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<sup>12</sup> *Ecce Homo*, transl Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967) p. 306.

<sup>13</sup> Sometimes Reginster himself suggests this milder reading. Since there "cannot be greatness without suffering" the attempt to eliminate suffering "undermines the prospects of greatness." (p. 186) That is a different issue though than the pursuit of suffering that Reginster emphasizes.

<sup>14</sup> The relevant claim in the original is "Was ich auch schaffe und wie ich's auch liebe, - bald muss ich Gegner ihm sein und meiner Liebe: so will es mein Wille." *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Kritische Studienausgabe, Bd.4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), p. 148. (my emphasis)

never be completed.<sup>15</sup> And he does not say that whenever I love something like an end or goal, I also *at the same time* oppose it (and so myself). He says “soon” (that is, soon afterwards) I must oppose it, presumably for the sake of yet more, future “self-overcoming” and that is consistent with the anti-complacency, constant self-overcoming, perfectionist view.

Reginster also cites a *Nachlass* passage, WP §696 and *The Gay Science*, §56, but §56 is mildly *mocking* those young people who are so bored that they would even crave suffering as a relief from boredom; it would be a sign that something was at stake for them.<sup>16</sup> And he *mocks* their desire to create monsters just so they would have monsters to fight (which seems close to the position Reginster assigns to Nietzsche). By contrast, Nietzsche recommends an “internal” creation of one’s own distress, which again sounds like an exhortation to a constant self-dissatisfaction in the service of a constant “self-overcoming.” (Reginster himself suggests this self-overcoming reading at one point. (p. 137; p. 138)) The reference to the need for opponents and resistance in the WP passage and elsewhere, as with the game analogy that Reginster invokes (we want to win the game but we want to win over difficult and worthy opponents) all are more naturally read as welcomed tests of one’s resolve and ability and not as injunctions to find as much resistance and suffering as possible, as if such a search were a project one undertook simultaneously with the attempt to realize first-order desires.

These alternative readings would avoid a paradox so extreme as to court parody. Some of Reginster’s formulations can occasionally call to mind Gordon Liddy of Watergate fame sticking his hand in flames to prove he could do it, that he was “up to” such suffering (and because it feels so good when it stops). Reginster’s account of asceticism actually sounds a bit like this. (p. 145-6)<sup>17</sup> And stretching this reading to cover cases of cruelty (and Nietzsche’s apparent endorsement of cruelty) sound bizarre. According to Reginster’s interpretation, the man of power is cruel to others because the greater the suffering one can cause in others, the greater the likelihood of their resistance and so the greater the feeling of power in the cruel agent in overcoming such resistance. (p. 143)

#### IV

Why, though, do we value the will to power in this sense? Reginster proposes what I would describe (he does not) as a neo-Hegelian or historically “internalist” case. That is, he takes himself to be able to show that in all honesty the superordinate value of the will to power (understood as the will to seek out and confront as much resistance to the realization of one’s ends as possible) is in fact what we *do* value (have valued) in affirming the Christian-humanist

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<sup>15</sup> See note 14, p. 299, where Reginster notes that for Nietzsche “overcoming...is what makes life worth living.” This seems to me right, but this is not a case of encountering failure and finding a way to value such failure. Nietzsche always means *self-overcoming*, the ability to foster in oneself a constant dissatisfaction with one’s own achievements. That would take Reginster’s interpretation in a different direction if pursued.

<sup>16</sup> Reginster quotes the passage in full on p. 234, and discusses it again there, briefly.

<sup>17</sup> Suffering is “not just something that...individuals have to go through to be happy; it is rather part of what their very happiness consists in.” (p. 231)

system of values, or at least that we could not have cultivated such values without also cultivating the dispositions and sentiments Nietzsche is trying to appeal to. The will to power in this sense is something like both the logical and phenomenological and historical outcome of the very attempt to realize the values of pity, equality, universal brotherhood, the avoidance of suffering and the like. That is, Nietzsche proposes to invoke the Christian-humanist metaphysicians' "own conception of what is good as a ground for challenging their conception of what is evil." (p. 157) Reginster then tries to show how this works for issues like suffering and happiness, and values like compassion (or "pity" in most translations).

In his analysis though, Reginster concentrates less on the "internalism" connection between past values and their new counterparts and, apart from another long contrast with Schopenhauer, more on the Nietzschean position itself.<sup>18</sup> And again the issue is how to interpret Nietzsche's apparent and controversial praise of conflict, war, suffering, and here too Reginster argues that Nietzsche is trying to show how and why such difficulties could be said to enhance the pursuit of any first-order desired goal. This leads him into interesting discussions of creativity (as an expression of the will to power), greatness of soul and happiness, but given the underlying thesis about the value of suffering, it is odd that there is no deep confrontation between our common and still (despite Nietzsche) powerful moral intuitions about these issues. It is quite possible to concede both the "inevitability of suffering in any pursuit of greatness" and the "test of resolve" versions of the pro-suffering brief, but still to argue that one ought to do all one can to avoid causing suffering in others, consistent with both achieving the goal and the actual importance of the goal. The idea that I could accomplish a goal with minimum suffering to you, but that I choose to pursue the goal in a way that maximizes your suffering, so as to increase your resistance and so the challenge to me would, for all that Reginster has said, remain offensive if one could even begin to imagine and take seriously the position and motives of such an agent. I confess that I cannot.

Moreover it becomes clearer that these considerations have remained quite formal. Reginster is certainly aware that "Nazi expansionism" might count as an expression of the will to power in Reginster's Nietzsche's sense; or at least, it would count as such an expression given some first-order desire (say, a desire for expansion and self-glorification). He notes that any Nietzschean objection to such a goal would have to be made at this first-order level, but "(a)s I conceded earlier, Nietzsche does nothing of the sort." (p. 181) According to Reginster, Nietzsche's basic concern has a narrow focus, a revaluation of suffering in the light of the "value of power." (Ibid.) The question of *which* ends might be worth the effort, struggle, and suffering that any worthwhile end must bring with it is one, we are told, in which Nietzsche shows "little interest." But if this

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<sup>18</sup> There are a number of questions that such an approach would raise, starting with whether such alternate values would still be held hostage by what they oppose, would still be framed in terms of deeply Christian assumptions. I think this *is* true of Nietzsche's odd inability to break free from the "perspective of eternity," his need to propose a kind of divine perspective on "the whole," as in his account of the Eternal Return of the Same. And a scheme of values always creates tensions, problems, inconsistencies, even contradictions. The mere existence of such in no way entails, or even plausibly prepares the ground for, a receptivity to an alternative.

is so, what has happened to the “rich, substantive ethics” we were promised? What we are left with seems neither rich, nor substantive. (The same formality and abstractness characterize the results of Reginster’s interesting discussion of the Eternal Return of the Same, and the “value of becoming” that he defends there.) And how can the two questions (values in the light of the “death of God” and of objectivity, and realizability) be so sharply separated, as Reginster has from the beginning of his study? He admits that the value of suffering must be linked to the value of the end for which sacrifices are being made. Undergoing great discomfort for the sake of eating more pies than anyone else does not gain in worth by virtue of the suffering endured. If anything, the triviality of the end renders the suffering ridiculous. But if this is so, then we shall hardly have “overcome nihilism” and “affirmed life” by simply opening up the possibility that resistance, suffering and unattainability might not count in some cases just in themselves as causes of despair.

## V

Reginster argues that Nietzsche cannot simply be counseling either mere resignation to the ultimate unrealizability of our highest values, nor a mere willingness to endure suffering for the sake of such realization. According to his account, neither of these attitudes, much less any attempt to conceal or evade the fact of such suffering, could count as a genuine and full, unqualified affirmation of life, a “love” of life. Such an attitude would be a mere concession to something that must be endured, not the whole-hearted embrace of existence Nietzsche purportedly requires. Nietzsche’s frequent and rather opaque remarks embracing “amor fati” are cited in support of such a claim. But just as I cannot console myself, in the face of continual failure to realize any of my highest values, by saying to myself that at least I know what is truly valuable, however utopian the aspiration, it would seem just as necessary to say that I cannot console myself (“overcome nihilism” and love my fate) by saying that at least I have suffered and struggled and have refused to give in to a recalcitrant reality. Unless we know what is *worth* such suffering, *as well as* knowing that our goals are neither relics of an objectivist past nor mere utopian fantasies, life will not have been affirmed.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Reginster often slips into the milder readings of the significance of suffering. Claiming that, “from the standpoint of the ethics of power, suffering cannot be coherently deplored...” (p. 233) is not to say we love or welcome suffering; claiming that suffering is an “essential contribution to intrinsic goods, like creativity” (Ibid) is also not to love or welcome or prize suffering. To “debunk the wholesale condemnation of suffering” (p. 235) is also not equivalent to welcoming or prizing suffering. An “*acceptance* of ultimate personal failure” (p. 248, my emphasis) is not valuing such failure.