
THE ROLE OF PHAOS IN NIETZSCHE, HERACLITUS AND PLATO

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This essay delineates points of agreement and disagreement between Plato and Nietzsche with respect to the original Heraclitean argument that the underlying dynamic connective structure of the whole is 'strife'. Also discussed is the issue of how each philosopher understands life itself, as a general process, to be related to the wider processive whole. The paper analyses how the Heraclitean understanding of the natural whole influences each philosopher's interpretation of the political structures of man. The analysis attempts to demonstrate why for Nietzsche, on the one hand, the value forms of the traditional polis are more in accord with human nature and nature in toto than is philosophy and why for Plato, on the other hand, when the value forms of the polis are superseded by those of philosophy it is a natural process rather than contrary to nature.



Introduction:

The general purpose of this paper is to discuss various ways in which the contemporary philosophical issues of nihilism and relativism are related to pre-Socratic and Socratic and Platonic thought. Although Heidegger recontoured nihilism's horizons with his emphasis on man's dwelling and revealing functions, the nihilistic perspective continues to cast its shadow. Nihilism, being a position of deep political significance that is derived philosophically, demands a philosophical approach; yet even serious efforts to come to terms with relativism and nihilism, of the sort Max Weber attempted, for example, fail to analyse in sufficient depth their classical roots.

One might wonder if it is really germane to attempt to push this contemporary complex of issues - mankind's homelessness, subjectivism, the collapse of rationalism, crises of value - back towards its classical framework. Does it matter that Nietzsche typically derives the present, supposedly now decaying and doomed, Christian moral universe from Plato's systematic and

inventive employment of "all his strength - the greatest strength any philosopher so far has had at his disposal - to prove to himself that reason and instinct of themselves tend toward one goal, the good, "God"?' Does it make any difference that only a superficial rendition of Platonic "idealism" is presented by Nietzsche as the basis of his critique of Plato? Heidegger follows Nietzsche in this; he leaves Nietzsche's polemical critique of classical post-Heraclitean metaphysics intact. The combination of the vehemence of Nietzsche's attack on Platonic metaphysics and Heidegger's insistence that Western metaphysics is a stage of thought that has run its course, has militated against serious attention to the classical ground of nihilism.

The classical equivalent of nihilism is misologism, which comes with the advent of human contemplation of the instability inherent in being. In the *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates describe misologism and misanthropism as nurtured in the same way - through the overturning of belief in stability in human beings, in their arguments, and finally in anything at all. Trusting in *logos* "without the art concerning the *logoi*" many who are involved in inquiry come to believe that "of the things none are either healthy or sure nor any of the *logoi*, but all the beings without art just as in Euripos up and down are tossed and through time nothing in nothing remains." Knowledge of instability engenders placelessness, man's loosening from his traditional moorings. At all times this apparent betrayal by *logos* has been regarded with anxiety. That which we suppose to be a useful tool to help us make a place for ourselves in the world betrays us by unsheltering us instead.

The intent of this paper is not to look back at the classics through the lens of modernity but to look at modernity through the lens of the ancients. This will be done by considering how the earliest philosophers themselves interpreted man's placelessness as it first began to be extended beyond a mere wandering of the earth to the more interior wanderings of scientific and philosophic thought. The last philosopher to interrogate philosophy as a value, philosophy as ethos, philosophy as the home of homelessness, with the intensity of Nietzsche was Plato. Currently Nietzsche's philosophy is given much of the credit for the uprooting of the Western tradition's lengthily and tortuously derived tablet of goods and evils. In fact Nietzsche's philosophy is primarily an interrogation and a test of the ancient Socratic and Platonic thesis that the *aporia* of philosophy - the difficult wanderings that take place through rejection of historical values - is man's greatest resource.

We will begin with an analysis of Heraclitus' separation between human and divine *logos* - between the untrue *logos* generated within the *polis*, which belongs to mortal beings and the true, absolute *logos* of the natural whole, which belongs to immortal being, between the 'subjective' and 'objective' realms, in more modern terminology. (I will use the Greek *logos* untranslated in order to preserve the word's wider range of meaning in Greek - from spoken word or inward thought, to the fictionalising capacities of language, to reason, thought, calculation, reckoning, to proportionality and relationship in general.) I will also discuss certain of Plato's dialogues in their relationship to the Heraclitean division of *logos* into two types.

Nietzsche habitually considers primarily the 'idealistic' aspects of the Platonic dialogues, thereby obscuring the affinity at certain points between his own thought and that of Plato. One of my conclusions will be that there is no sharp disjunction between Socratic and Platonic and pre-Socratic thought, and that Socratic 'rationalism' and Platonic "idealism" never constituted a rejection of the philosophical discoveries of their predecessors. Another conclusion will be that although the ancients and moderns agree as to the general nature of human values, they are still able to disagree on the metaphysical implications of the existence of this human valuation or value creation.

An investigation into the *Phaos*

Heraclitus (who probably died at about the time of Socrates' birth) appears to have been the first to rigorously posit two forms of *logos*, belonging to two types of being, the human and the divine. He did not seem to have said much about the beneficial and harmful effects of attempting to approach the divine *logos*, an issue important in Nietzsche's writings. As crucial as his division between human *logos* and divine *logos* is, important also is Heraclitus' supplementary distinction within human *logos* between the one who understands divine *logos* (Heraclitus himself) and the many who do not. Heraclitus must assume that there is a capacity for human *logos* to approach the truth about divine *logos*, or else its existence would be undiscoverable by him or by anyone else. A human being must have the innate capacity to move through human *logos* towards knowledge of divine *logos*.

Heraclitus posited the supremacy of the divine *logos*, his own iconoclastic knowledge of the divine *logos* and a lack of comprehension of this divine *logos* on the part of others.

But from the *logos* that is ever thus human beings become disconnected both before they hear and once they have heard, for that all things happen according to this *logos* so, they seem inexperienced.... (Fr.1).

For *ethos* (meaning the accustomed way of things) does not have human purposes but has divine (purposes) (Fr.76).

Heraclitus' description of the nature of the divine *logos* as an interaction between forces at variance is well known. There are a number of surviving fragments describing poetically this engagement or strife' that stretches through the regenerating whole and holds it together as it undergoes constant change.

Things taken together are whole and not whole, being carried together carried apart, in tune out of tune; from all things one and out of one all things (Fr.10).

God is day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger; it undergoes alteration just as when (fire) mixes with spices it is named according to the pleasure of each (Fr.67).

This last fragment seems to come out of a larger discussion in which Heraclitus has utilised his favoured metaphor of fire as descriptive of the nature of the cosmic order.

It has been argued by Hans Gadamer that Heraclitus uses kindling into flame as a metaphor for the constant coming to be of life within the regenerative whole. Life is ever flaming up out of the smouldering whole, 'kindling in measures and dying out in measures' (*pyr aeizoon, aptomenon metra kai aposbennumenon metra*). In certain forms this life/*pyr* is also able to grasp itself: 'a human being in the kindly time is light fastening upon (or reaching for, or apprehending, or kindling) itself' (*anthropos en euphrone phaos aptetai eauto*). It is the nature of the whole to always be flaming, or coming into life, but just as fire is a complex of flames, not a single one, life is not continuous in any particular living being or group of living beings. The fire is consistently there, but the individual flames/lives flare and die out and they vary in strength and brightness. Only in particular individuals does the flaring life grasp its own nature through its grasp of the divine *logos*.

All separate things picked out from the whole by human beings - such as day and night; surfeit and famine; winter with the storms and suffering it may bring and summer with its promise of bountiful crops; war, beneficial to the victor who is glorified; peace, beneficial to the weaker - are causally akin. The philosopher, trying to view these opposite states from outside the human perspective, discovers these separations to be like the differences spices make when they are tossed into the fire as incense. Heraclitus' reference to spices in fire brings to mind the ancient Greek practice of burning offerings for the gods. The gods received these gifts as scented vapours of the burning offerings wafting up to Olympus - offerings made to secure the good things for those who sacrificed, through the favour of the propitiated god(s).

Our names for things are based on the pleasure, or pain, they cause us. The names of the gods change also, each name evokes a different response - Aphrodite, Ares, Persephone, Hades. But without the addition of the human experience of pleasure and pain - satiation versus starvation, victory versus defeat the names could not be given. The whole would **appear** as one in the same way fire is one elemental thing. The divine **logos**, or structure, itself does not differentiate between war and peace or the other opposites. Thus Heraclitus can say god is war peace, and that tensions within the whole create harmony. Thus *ethos* the overarching way of things, the all-embracing abode within which the human things are set - does not have human purposes or human judgements.

This Heraclitean schema radiated ethical implications, as the Nietzschean one does now. How does this divine ethos guide and direct the human ethos, which has been accustomed to look to less disinterested traditional gods, no matter how capricious they might have been? What, if anything, holds Heraclitus apart from the nihilism of those who find themselves estranged from their former gods and standing outside the ethos of any particular traditional society? What ethical implications does Heraclitus himself draw from his understanding of divine *logos*? When Heraclitus speaks of good and beauty, he does not mention their (supposed) opposites in regard to divine *logos*. He does say that human beings imagine there is both justice and injustice. Heraclitus' most dramatic statement, 'to the god beautiful are all things and good and just but human beings have taken up some things as unjust and others as just' (Fr.102) seems on the surface to be quite provocative. However, Heraclitus does not say, 'to the god all things are beautiful ugly, good bad, just unjust', his more typical format. Nor does he say

'to the god nothing is either just or unjust, good or bad, beautiful or ugly'.

What is Heraclitus saying when he asserts that to the god all things are beautiful and good and just? The god, the wholeness of things, is; it exists. To say it is unjust (Heraclitus defines justice as the continual modulated strife between things) would be to say this world does not exist, to say there is no continuing differentiation among things, differences which we perceive and to which we give names. Day and night, summer and winter, and all systems of balances, exist for us and for the god, though they exist differently for the god. For the god, justice exists in such a way that it excludes injustice - if imbalance truly ever occurred it would mean the end of measured kinesis.

The above quotation tells us that divine *logos* excludes ugliness and badness, that to the god everything equally is beautiful, good and just. Heraclitus' statement is meant to be tautological, a true and absolute explication of divine *logos* - and also a statement which discloses how divine *logos* is related to human *logos*. Let us compare a similar assertion concerning divine beauty which is made by Socrates as he explicates the teaching of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. Diotima tells Socrates that one is able finally to comprehend 'what is beauty' to perceive 'something wondrous the nature beautiful', only after completing a long course of study.' This beautiful nature is said to be wholly beautiful, ever-existent ('neither coming into being nor perishing') and of a unique form; it is partaken of by all the beautiful generated beings which come into being and perish.' The Diotimaic 'wondrous nature' allows no room for ugliness and evil as it is normally understood. These drop out at the peak of knowledge at which one comes to understand the relationship between fluctuating, generated beings and the natural whole of which they are a part. Although the sea of living generated beings partakes of the whole, the natural whole is independent of its living beings in the sense that it itself qua ungenerated being 'suffers nothing' and exists always with the same unique structure.

Of course this teaching about beauty presented in the *Symposium* is claimed to derive from Diotima rather than from Socrates directly. Diotima presents the position that is reflected in her name, an honouring or valuing (*time*) of the eternal divine being (*Dio*) from which all mortal things come. *Dio*, a form of Zeus - both *Dio* and *Zeus* deriving from the same root, *Dis* - implies some sort of duality at the foundation of the cosmic order. The Diotimaic position has an undeniable affinity with the Heraclitean one, although

Heraclitus is not mentioned by Socrates/Diotima. As Daniel Anderson puts it in his *Masks of Dionysos*, Diotima's description of the self and knowing is a 'radically Herakleitean' one; Plato presents a 'process view of the world' in the *Symposium*.

Living beings experience a constant flux of their bodies, perceptions, forms of knowledge, desires, according to Diotima. Although they seem to be unitary individual beings, like the natural whole they too each hold within a continuous flow of change.' Unlike the eternal, ungenerated whole (and despite the fact they naturally try to escape death), living beings are mortal. Their *eros* (even the special human forms of *eros* for immortality) is dependent upon the fact of their mortality. The Diotimaic arguments in the *Symposium* delineate a dynamic Heraclitean division - between eternal ungenerated natural whole and the life processes that take place constantly within the whole. In certain other dialogues this dynamic division remains hidden behind other Platonic separations. One of these static divisions is the myth of the separate existence of the good itself by itself, a brief critique of which Nietzsche uses to open *Beyond Good and Evil*.

The separating out of the good itself that takes place in the *Republic* is really a sort of stepping stone towards deeper knowledge of arch-principles. To halt at this level is to drain Plato's writings of their most valuable philosophic content. Although the commentary of James Hans is a particularly good, or bad, example of this, even Anderson's commentary participates in this difficulty. Although Anderson sees the *Symposium* as containing a 'dialectical clash' between 'two incompatible views of the world', i.e. the doctrine of process (difference) and the doctrine of forms (sameness), he does not acknowledge the dialogue's own Heraclitean-type resolution. Though Anderson understands the dialogue to say that knowledge itself is 'essentially processive' he does not explain why Plato 'introduced the discussion of the pure form of beauty' beyond the furtherance of the dialectical clash of the two incompatible world views. However, within this dialogue itself the two forms are implicitly brought together. Everything is held together by a tension between that which is always the same (in the sense that it is singular in its form and always existent and as a unitary whole experiences nothing) and that which is always varying and experiencing - the living beings which are always coining into being and perishing. The *Symposium* itself places incomplete, changeable, living beings into a Heraclitean relationship of both struggle against and integration into the all-encompassing, complete, necessary, eternal, unique natural whole.

This singular ever-existent being is by the end of Diotima's teaching seen as that which nourishes and accommodates the differentiation's of everything that comes into being and perishes. All these beautiful generated things partake of (*metechonta*, sometimes translated 'participate in') the one ungenerated unique beauty. Near the conclusion of Socrates' presentation of Diotima's teaching this unique being is finally referred to as 'the divine beauty'. The interrelationship between mortal generated beings and the immortal whole is able to be grasped as a comprehensive structure which permits life such as we live it to take place - though why it or anything should exist is ultimately mysterious; and the pursuit of this knowledge also partakes of mystery in that all attempts at communion with the divine attempt communion with what is naturally concealed from us (ta *telea*). The divine, the eternal, constitutes an end point for our search (*apoteo tou telous*), as well as being in itself an end point (*telos*), since it is all-encompassing and self-sufficient to itself and its enclosed or self-contained processes.²⁶ The search for the divine is an attempt to understand the completeness, and in this sense the perfection, of the whole; in the very process of carrying out this activity the living being participates in and partakes of the completion of the whole. The pursuer of the whole discovers that paradoxically only that which is self-contained and complete is able to contain within itself everything that is not self-contained and incomplete.

Nietzsche of course does not accept any such tautological identification of the divine with the whole. He insists on the most anthropomorphized of the Christian definitions of god as a being who cares for the good of each individual living being. Furthermore he often insists Plato himself is of this tradition. But this is possible only if one abstracts from Plato the most mythic and most prescriptive passages of the dialogues. Every philosopher, if not every human being, must agree that nature conceals itself, but only a few at the very deepest level insist as Nietzsche does on keeping the nature of the divine and the nature of the whole separate. Concealment and gap in nature imply their opposites. Concealment is able to be apprehended and implies its opposite processes and powers towards unconcealment

The apprehension of gap implies the powers of art; it is anti-Heraclitean and idealistic to say human art is separate from nature in the way in which Nietzsche says it is in *Twilight of the Idols*: 'Nature, estimated artistically, is no model. It exaggerates, it distorts, it leaves gaps. Nature is *chance*.' For the ancients, that which is the ruling structure of the whole is 'the divine beauty', or in traditional

terminology when they choose to use it, 'the god', even 'Zeus'. If the divine is unaffected by, disinterested in, the individual *per se* this is not an argument against it, or against us. Heraclitus and Plato retain the divine as a concept and assert that the god is implicated in beauty and good and justice. The divine commands struggle as a general rule; and life's struggle towards the divine *logos*, towards the whole itself, and life's struggles against its absorption into the whole, against death and disease, is an example of the tension which is always maintained in the whole.

Valuing, Beauty

Before turning to Nietzsche's version of human value formation as occurring against a blank cosmos that does not need man either as an individual or as the representative of a process of genesis, let us discuss a bit further the subtle but crucial distinction between seeing the individual and the cosmos to be related trivially versus nontrivially. After clarifying the distinction between these two, it will be more easy to see how Nietzsche differs from Heraclitus and Plato as to the relationship between human nature and the whole, and as to his analysis of the process of human value formation *within society*. It seems likely that a difference as to a trivial necessary relationship and a nontrivial necessary relationship in this regard would find some expression in a philosopher's analysis of human value-formation.

Divine beauty is said by Diotima to be unaffected by the affects of its perceivers. This 'something wondrous the nature beautiful' is not affected by any perception that it is beautiful. However, the causality - though not the conscious perception does go in two directions. Diotima asks the young Socrates about what he thinks about a life that is spent absorbed in study of all the knowledges which lead up finally to the one knowledge of 'what is beauty': 'Then is it thought, she said, a trivial (*phaulon*) life to come to that point of looking at a human being and seeing that to which it is necessary and being conversant with this?' At the same time that all the processes of life are seen to be necessary to the whole, the possibility is raised that to be conversant with the whole is to trivialise, to stunt and impoverish, life - the same possibility raised so often by Nietzsche. Much more than Heraclitus, Nietzsche and Plato are engaged with the question: is the glorious, bright and shining heroic life in any way still available to the philosopher?

In Heraclitus' vision of whole, brightness is built into his use of light/*phaos* as a metonym for life and its processes. In his version,

life's activity of grasping, reaching outward towards (*aptein*) - understood as a sort of kindling, a flaming, a consumption like that of fire itself (*aplein*) is a necessary aspect of the whole. *Aptein* is a necessary part in the inter-relationship of mortal part to immortal whole. It describes what life is. The cosmic order does not depend upon any individual's vision *per se* but it depends upon the life process of this reaching outward/kindling. If Hans Gadamer is correct in interpreting Heraclitus' kindling fire metaphor as expressing the coming to be of the living, Heraclitus attributes a high degree of causality to life. Heraclitus says of the whole, 'this cosmos here neither any of gods nor of human beings made, but it was ever and it is and it will be: a fire ever-living, kindling in measures and going out in measures'(Fr.30). 'But all things thunderbolt steers' (Fr.64). The thunderbolt is the power traditionally held by Zeus, but Heraclitus does not mention Zeus in these statements. Thunderbolt (*keranos*) describes the two-part, not quite simultaneous, occurrence of the forking flash of light and then the tearing sound of the thunder. Thunderbolt steers or manages all things. The steering - *oekizein* - has the connotation of the managing and settling of the place of dwelling (*oekia*; and *oekizein* may also refer to the steering of a vessel on water). Life is not only a flaring of light but also the distinct sound that comes to accompany it. The thunderbolt, if sudden light is the Heraclitean metaphor for the blossoming of life, signifies not only the innovative light of life but life's sounds, including its innovative form of *logos*. Its innate capacity for life informs the whole, 'steers' and inhabits the whole, in a causally significant way. Life's brightness and light and inventive form of *logos*, under the right circumstances, come to include the false human *logos* through which the *polis* is steered or ruled.

In Plato's *Republic* this false human *logos* is portrayed in the cave/*polis* image as being produced through complex machinations which distort the light in the cave/*polis*. The very well-known Platonic image of the cave/*polis* depends upon and is focused around light/*phaos*: *phaos* in the cave to convey how false *logos* is generated, *phaos* outside to convey what truth might be. Plato's image of the cave/*polis* extends Heraclitean metaphorical usage of fire and light. In the *Republic* Plato begins to expand Heraclitus' critique of *logos* with a much more systematic analysis of Heraclitus' two forms of *logos* false, human; true, divine and their animating principles. The *Republic* is not more than a beginning though, and it is of great importance to the interpretation of Platonic thought not to treat it as a definitive statement of the separation between true and false *logos*.

The above serves to argue the point that for both Plato and Heraclitus the whole and the human are causally related in a nontrivial way. For Nietzsche, on the other hand, they are related trivially. That is to say, the generative whole could exist whether or not any part of being ever 'kindled'/willed. Nietzsche's use of the concept of willing is very similar to Heraclitus' *aptein*, but for Nietzsche, life's power to stretch itself towards a future which varies from and is an expansion of the past, has no meaning beyond itself. Nietzsche forces life's *kinesis*, which he sometimes terms 'will-to-power', to grow out of a cosmos which is pure undifferentiated chance. Nietzsche's 'nature' hangs in the middle - characterised in a philosophically vague way by gap and chance and necessity a nature disconnected from the cosmos as well as from the groping, grasping living beings who inhabit nature's gap. In this, Nietzsche follows the direction of the Physics of his day. Thus human value judgements, when they value the whole as beautiful and divine, are anti-science and false. They are existential value feelings based solely in life's love of itself. To will towards knowledge of the unbeautiful whole, is itself an unbeautiful and unnatural thing.

Nietzsche denies absolutely that the whole is beautiful. Every aspect of the beautiful and thus the human pursuit of and desire for the beautiful is instinctual, and based on our love of the dynamism within life. It is human and only human; it is definitely not the point at which the human and the divine touch:

Nothing is more conditional or, let us say, narrower - than our feeling for beauty. Whoever would think of it apart from man's joy in man would immediately lose any foothold. 'Beautiful in itself' is a mere phrase, not even a concept. In the beautiful, man posits himself as the measure of perfection; in special cases he worships himself in it. A species cannot do otherwise but thus affirm itself alone (*Twilight of Idols*: p.525).

Plato, Socrates and Heraclitus, on the other hand, see value judgement as epistemological - as being at its most extreme and rarified point based in a vision of the whole. They understand human valuation not as being in conflict with science, with knowledge of nature, but as being rooted in pursuit of this knowledge. The common modern understanding of Socrates as a man who turns away from nature is wrong; he makes the turn back towards man and the *polis* after having reached a very vast understanding of nature.

How does the beautiful exist for man if he understands the whole as only trivially related to the human in the way of Nietzsche and many other modern philosophers? First, perhaps, it is important to be clear that from *neither* Nietzschean *nor* Heraclitean perspective can a human being to whom traditionally certain things have appeared rather narrowly in custom and law as evil and ugly and unjust, easily situate itself in regard to a ruling whole to which all things are beautiful, and good and just; and since, in both the Nietzschean and Heraclitean views, the divine is not situated in regard to man's more traditional justice (as it was to be found in the *polis*), it also must not be easy for man to re-situate himself in the world of the *polis* having discovered the nature of the order of the whole. All agree that the philosopher acquires distance from the *polis*. Insofar as the issue of distancing is concerned, Diotima's description of human knowing as ascending from concern with beauty in individuals to beauty in customs to various beautiful sciences or knowledges through to the final knowledge of what beauty is, is very similar to Nietzsche's description of the philosopher's passage 'through the whole range of human values and value feelings'.

However, this distance insofar as it is freedom from any particular human being or *polis* does not entail any absolute separation from them. This is far from true for either Plato or Socrates, although it is often argued to be so. To take a modern example, Roberto Calasso, while producing a magnificent description of antiquity, argues in *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* that Achilles can be seen as one who fights for the particular and individual over the abstract universal, that Achilles defends the glory of appearance, which is linked to the uniqueness of the individual. The glory and wonder of that which appears will be subverted by the coming 'Platonic tyranny' of the universal, the anti-appearance, by the new rule of the ideal; the old gods and heroes depart leaving an empty space to be filled up by *logos*. Although Calasso is incisive on many points, it is inaccurate to interpret Plato, as do so many others, as philosopher-king of 'the heaven of ideas', who aims to destroy everything alive and moving.

The philosopher's freedom can have an immense impact on the life of the *polis*. Many of the dialogues catalogue Socrates' most immediate and real influence in Athens, in addition to ensuring his more lasting influence on human history. Descriptions range from Socrates' rescue of Alcibiades in battle to his refusal when serving as prytane to participate in illegal activities - such as certain arrests and trials, punishments and deaths - either during the democracy or

during the rule of the thirty oligarchs. In his various refusals to abandon the laws of the *polis* that protected the lives of citizens, Socrates risked his own life and almost certainly hastened the downfall of the Thirty.

Of course it is possible to argue that this is not even a relevant issue today, that the realm of the good as it exists in the *polis* has in fact almost disappeared. This would parallel the way the *cave/polis* image in the *Republic* suggests the good within the *polis* might disappear if everyone turned away from it to pursue wisdom. In the modern scenario, scientific *logos* (diminishing the distances between groups) is able to breed socio-economic homogeneity. For example, E. Chowders argues - in a way that evokes Nietzsche's armchair-sitting, newspaper-reading (substitute television-watching) mass man - that the 'range of the "space of the good", the extent of the life-domains in which the individual's conception of the good is relevant' is shrinking: 'the socio-economic orders of modernity operate in the reverse direction, enlarging the domains of uniformity in each self's identity - despite the ever-increasing role of individual rights in contemporary discourse and practice'. Chowders' suggestion can be seen to fall within the general Nietzsche-diagnosed decline of modernity. But Chowders' suggestion, appearing in writing in 1994, and all similar ones, seems dated. At any rate it is questionable whether the exercise of choice in 'life-domains' is in any simple way related to the socio-economic order, or to the technology, of any given time.

What motivates the philosopher to go against the dictates of the strongest group in the *polis*, when to carry out those dictates is much easier? To argue from the particular case, how does a Socrates or a Plato actually relocate himself in regard to the *polis*? Is it simply a personal peculiarity that a Socrates stands against what looks like a depraved deformation of the community while another philosopher, such as a Heidegger for example, does not? Nietzsche says of the freedom of one who reaches what resembles a Heraclitean-Diotimaic attitude towards the whole:

Such a spirit who has become free stands amid the cosmos with a joyous and trusting fatalism, in the faith that only the particular is loathsome, and that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole - he does not negate any more. Such a faith, however, is the highest of all possible faiths: I have baptized it with the name of Dionysus.

In what does the freedom of the philosopher consist though? Nietzsche reaches a 'processive' understanding of the whole while very specifically denying it beauty and divinity. He holds religiously to an orthodox Christian strictness about these concepts - rather than handling them as a pre-Christian philosopher does as flexible philosophical concept-tools. The post-Christian philosopher loses himself in philosophy in a way that the pre-Christian philosopher does not. Nietzsche especially appears to be, as Leslie Thiele puts it, 'dangling over the abyss of nihilism, groping for a foothold in the future' According to Thiele, the rest of society seems to be stuck there with Nietzsche:

'Despite common use of the term, we are not actually living in postmodernity. Modernity is still in its twilight. Peering into its dusk we may only speculate on the gifts and dangers of the dawn.'

A primary difference between the pre-Christian and post-Christian philosopher is that the post-Christian one loses beauty when he expects to lose only the good itself. For Nietzsche, the fact that one of its generated beings 'has presented the world with beauty' has no metaphysical significance: 'the judgement "beautiful" is the *vanity* of [the human] *species*'. Far from being an important causal aspect of constant genesis in the whole, the one who has '*become free*' and '*does not negate any more*' goes against what nature has always commanded for us as living beings, as a species:

...[Nature] implants the need for limited horizons and the nearest tasks - teaching the *narrowing of our perspective*, and thus in a certain sense stupidity, as a condition of life and growth.

You shall obey someone and for a long time: *else* you will perish and lose the last respect for yourself - this appears to me to be the moral imperative of nature..

Nature focuses herself through her living beings. This means that nature forces living beings to value, to choose one path and not another at every physical and psychic level. To value, to take one particular path, is central to the being of a living being. 'When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with the way of looking at things, which is part of life: life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values.'

The life force (or whatever we choose to name it) insists on values, that is to say, on principles of discrimination and differentiation; and each thing (including the valuations of the living beings) is also necessary to the whole in which it is situated:

One is necessary, one is a piece of fatefulness, one belongs to the whole, one is in the whole; there is nothing which could judge, measure, compare, or sentence our being, for that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, or sentencing the whole. But there is nothing besides the whole.

While nature forces life to value, the whole in which the living are situated does not judge, measure, compare, sentence; thus nothing can judge, measure, compare or sentence us, for we are part of the whole. Nature and life within the whole, in demanding that living beings judge, measure, compare, that is, value, go in an opposite direction to the nature of the whole. The whole itself does not need life in order to exist; it merely happens to contain life.