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# **Perspectives of Chaos:**

**Determining Meaning Through Interpretation**

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## **Perspectives of Chaos:** Determining Meaning Through Interpretation

In an attempt to grasp, at least in part, a Nietzschean notion of chaos, we will initially be looking at an essay by French Philosopher Jean Granier entitled “Nietzsche's Conception of Chaos.” In this piece, Granier attempts to clarify the Nietzschean understanding of chaos through the dynamics of interpretation. This connection will become clearer throughout the development of this paper as I summarize Granier’s interpretation of the Nietzschean perspective, and then offer my own interpretive perspective on the material and the issues Granier raises. For Granier, the chaotic cannot be understood separate from interpretation, and in fact, cannot be separated from anything, for it is the chaotic that underscores the nature of existence. For Nietzsche, the world of appearances constitutes the world of reality. There is no separation between the two, and as such, there is no reality behind or beyond that of appearance. This, of course, is an interpretation of reality, and as such is open to criticism. Although, on its face, this may seem like a major problem with the philosophy, it is precisely the point. What I hope to show throughout this work is how this philosophy of interpretation can provide us with insight into the way we create and use the language through which we understand the world around us. It must be understood from the beginning that what follows is an interpretation of an interpretation of a philosophy of interpretation, which in itself is an interpretation of “reality.” Therefore, our path through this web of interpretations must proceed with deliberate footsteps so as not to get tangled, twisted, and turned about.

It is with this basic understanding that we can move forward in our interpretation of Granier's piece, and attempt to come to terms with his interpretation of Nietzsche's positions. This task may prove difficult,

for the Nietzschean perspective is one presented to us through the deployment of Nietzsche's own language, a language considered by many to be strange and ambiguous while at the same time placing itself at odds with traditional philosophical discourse. As Michel Haar says, "Nietzsche develops, in direct opposition to the tradition and its language, a language of his own, a form particularly insinuating, insidious, complex – and designed for the purpose of *subversion*" (NN pg. 5-6). Through the development and employment of a language and style truly his own, Nietzsche's writings seem to demonstrate an interpretive approach, while at the same time demanding it from the reader.

However, it is not only Nietzsche's enigmatic language and confrontational style that gives rise to the difficulty in interpreting his writings, it is also his employment of a vast array of colorful metaphors that make any exactness in the reading and understanding near impossible. This, of course, is not to say that "exactness" should be a concern when reading Nietzsche. It is my understanding that this mode of discourse, this cryptology of meaning, was employed intentionally as a means of actively demonstrating just how fluid interpretation is. If one is to write about something that is not static, constantly in motion, and continually developing, changing, and morphing based on the interconnectedness of the things surrounding it, it must be written in such a way that invites a multitude of interpretations. It is this indefinite characteristic that makes an attempt at interpretation appealing and worthwhile, especially as an exemplar for working with the difficulties of understanding interpretation as a whole.

In the introduction to "Ecce Homo," Nietzsche's final published book before his mental collapse, he describes who his writing is for by using the metaphor of height and solitude to demonstrate that it is no easy task to come to grips with the ideas he champions, and that to wrestle with them one must possess a certain strength as well as a certain sense of independence. "Those who can breathe the air of

my writing know that it is an air of the heights, a strong air. One must be made for it. Otherwise there is no small danger that one may catch cold in it” (EH Intro s.3 p674). This strength, this desire to achieve new heights, to look down on those unable, or unwilling, to question what has been handed to them is an idea that forms that core of Nietzschean philosophy. Nietzsche exalts those who strive for the unknown, the hidden, the “forbidden,” for that is what he means when he speaks of philosophy as “seeking out everything strange and questionable in existence, everything so far placed under a ban by morality” (ibid). I take these passages to be a warning to those attempting to interpret the writings of Nietzsche, a warning telling readers to blaze their own trail to the exalted heights, to take a risk and develop an individual interpretation. Therefore, Nietzsche’s writing, as I understand it, is not to be read “scientifically,” or with exactness.

The phenomenon that is Nietzschean thought is to be experienced, and interpreted from one’s own perspective, for it presents itself differently, depending on the responsiveness of the individual who reads it. Nietzsche’s writing demonstrates that the text itself exhibits a force on the subject who reads it. The reader and the text engage in a conversation of sorts where the line between subject and object blur. Therefore, Nietzsche’s philosophical position is not to be adopted as doctrine, for that would be to see it as ridged and static, as something to be read and adopted as a completed project. Nietzsche’s writing, as I understand it, was written from his own perspective, as his own interpretation of the world, and therefore, is uninhibited in the presentation through his own language. “Catching a cold,” is something that comes to those who are not strong enough to create their own world. The sick are those who rely on others to interpret the world for them and spoon feed that interpretation to them as “the truth”. Interpretation, as we shall see throughout the course of this essay, is an expression of the Will to Power, and when individuals interpret through their own creative faculty they take charge of their own becoming and embrace a world of change.

These metaphors of sickness verses health, weakness verses strength, or even peace verses war play an important role in Nietzschean thought, and an understanding of how and why they are used could prove to be quite useful in our conceptualization of the Nietzschean perspective on chaos and interpretation. The use of the metaphor, for Nietzsche, is closely tied with his position concerning language as a whole. Very generally, this position consists of the opinion that the value of language consists in its pragmatic function and not in the level of “Truth” it contains. In fact, Nietzsche even goes so far as to claim that there is no truth within the confines of language, and that the primary pragmatic function of language is the creation of a lie used for the preservation of the species, and to protect it from confronting the real, the abyss, the chaotic..

Now it is easy to misconstrue these statements by interpreting them to mean that our language has no value at all because it is based on a lie. On the contrary, it is only when we are able to see that our language is based on a lie that we are able to see its “true” value. For Nietzsche, The lie is all that matters, for once we realize that our language is nothing more than a fabrication of the human intellect, a self-creation of reality, then we essentially free ourselves from inherited conceptual understandings, and we are no longer limited to the historical uses of the language of our forefathers. Nietzsche urges us to break free from the obligation of truth imposed on us through society, for “to be truthful means using the customary metaphors – in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to fixed convention, to lie herd-like in a style obligatory for all” (PN 47). The prodigious use of the metaphor is Nietzsche’s way of resisting the overbearing structure of language while at the same time demonstrating that our understanding of the world, the understanding separate from language, is not fixed and rigid but fluid. Language, as it pertains to “fixed” meaning, has a tendency to limit our perspective and hinder the possibility of an expansion of understanding.

Coming back to the specific metaphors mentioned above (sickness, health, strength, weakness, war, and peace) we can now see that the terms themselves have a life of their own, with meaning coming both from Nietzsche's perspective, the historical context, the reader's perspective, and the present context. It would be a fatal mistake to hold the metaphors Nietzsche employs throughout his writing to have any static value attached to them. The metaphors above are employed in different ways at different times in order to express a different thought, feeling, or emotion. Illness, for Nietzsche, is both despised and necessary, good health both exalted and condemned. For example, turning back to *Ecce Homo* – specifically the section entitled “Why I Am So Wise,” Nietzsche expresses his position in the form of a riddle. “I am...already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and becoming old” (EH 678). He goes on to explain this riddle as a means of expressing what he sees to be his unique perspective on life, which allows him the dual vantage point of the decadent as well as the destitute. It is this occupation of dual, sometimes multiple perspectives, that gives Nietzsche's writing a feeling of inconsistency. The words, as metaphors, refer to something and extend beyond the referent, and that something is never the same. Nietzsche's philosophy is commonly understood to be filled with inconsistencies, but the inconsistencies are what drive the point home. Truth established through logical convention is one that is fooling itself, blinded by preconceived notions and deceived by its own lie and fixity.

I bring up these concepts of strength, independence/isolation, and the Will to Power in an attempt to create a vantage point through which to view the main issues we will be discussing throughout the course of this paper. These concepts are “chaos” and “interpretation,” And through these two concepts we will touch also upon the aesthetic. Due to the complex nature of these ideas within the Nietzschean framework, I will be pulling in a number of peripheral concepts and ideas necessary to provide a more

thorough understanding of the concepts I wish to explore. In doing so, I intend to demonstrate an underlying theme that permeates my understanding of Nietzschean metaphysics, and that is the idea of the interconnectedness of all things through the constant flux of temporal space (i.e. becoming). Of course by all things I do not merely mean all physical things. The understanding goes much deeper than that. By all things, I mean to say all things within the realm of interpretation, both on the side of the interpreted and the interpreter. This includes physical manifestations of phenomena which impose themselves on our senses, rational and/or irrational mental articulations which we impose on said phenomena, as well as subconscious thoughts, feeling and ideas over which we have no control. All of these “things,” the ones we have control over, as well as the ones we do not, have an influence on who interprets, and are influenced, in turn, by that which is interpreted. Because of the influential nature of these “things” I will refer to them as forces. This give and take between forces will come out more fully as we move farther into the Nietzschean philosophy, then into the secondary interpretation given by Granier, and finally into my own interpretation. If nothing else, the distance from the original material should demonstrate the impossibility of fixing ideas and concepts, of how the re-presentation creates space for better understanding from a particular perspective

Understandably, this is a topic of enormous scope, and it is easy to get turned around and upside down when talking of things removed from direct experience, or at least direct objectification. This is one of the main problems I shall face throughout the course of writing this essay. Explicitly stated, the concepts I am attempting to explore within the Nietzschean framework rebel against the traditional rules of objectification, and structure of language in general. The “rules” by which we use grammar to express thoughts and feelings to one another limit our understanding of phenomena to a dominating subject over a subjugated predicate. For example if I were to say, “The dog ran into the fence,” I place a predominance on the dog while the role of the fence is secondary, not to mention the role the



peripheral factors played in the event. By periphery, I mean everything that was happening around the event of the dog running into the fence; the sun shining, birds chirping, grass growing under the feet of the dog, right down to the boy teasing the dog on the other side of the fence. The point I am trying to make is that inevitably something is always left out when communicated within the grammatical structures of language. Even within direct experience, attention and focus limit our grasp of the “whole.”

Therefore, a picture of the whole is not something Nietzsche was interested in painting, although at first glance it may seem that way with such grand concepts as “The Will to Power,” “The Eternal Recurrence” and the “Overman.” Nietzsche states, “the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these” (GS 374). What we shall see is that a picture of the “whole” is an impossible one to paint because that picture is constantly moving, shifting and transforming.

Nietzsche’s world view detaches itself from logical, systematic constructs motivated by a quest for absolute identity. As Michel Haar puts it, Nietzsche’s world is “a world scattered in pieces, covered with explosions; a world freed from the ties of gravity (i.e., from relationship with foundation); a world made of moving and light surfaces where the incessant shifting of masks is named laughter, dance, game” (NN 7). In essence it is chaotic, and therefore without a fixed definition. These concepts, as I understand them, should be interpreted with the same leniency as the rest of Nietzschean language, and be viewed metaphorically, as masks, whose “meaning” continually morphs depending on surrounding conditions, as well as the reader’s engagement. It is on this fluidity in the creation and comprehension of concepts that I intend to focus the remainder of this paper. As I stated above, I would like to begin my investigation with a look at Jean Grainer’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s notion of chaos. Through his use of the metaphor of “text,” he provides some useful insight into the realm of interpretation.

There are four primary points that Granier makes throughout his piece in describing the chaotic in the Nietzschean sense. I have sectioned these main points into the sub categories of ‘Appearance,’ ‘Chaos,’ ‘Nature and Mask,’ and ‘Masking as Art.’ After a brief outline of what these main points consist of, I will go more deeply into the ideas and concepts contained with each, identify what I think the perspective offers, and provide my own interpretation of the concepts under investigation. It is in this analysis that the peripheral themes of Nietzschean thought will begin to present themselves, and where I will begin to wrestle with the more complex issues contained within Grainer’s interpretation. In conjunction with this, my own interpretation of the concepts involved will manifest themselves, and as they do I will be able to show more clearly how no one position can contain the whole picture, or be entirely consistent with another’s interpretation even when that which is being interpreted is another interpretation. Together with this, I will be able to show how the interpretive process is also one of self-creation.

## **Appearance**

Grainer begins by attempting to show what is needed in order to understand a Nietzschean view of interpretation. This is necessary because an understanding of interpretation is crucial to an understanding of chaos, and to gain an understanding of interpretation we must gain perspective on the meaning of appearance, at least in the Nietzschean sense. Therefore, Granier’s piece is as much about interpretation as it is chaos. Interpretation comes in when we attempt to make sense of what is essentially indecipherable, and what is indecipherable is the phenomena of being.

A multiplicity of perspectives results in a multiplicity of interpretations, which results in a multiplicity of realities of being. As we shall see, appearance manifests itself in what Granier describes as “text.” What is understood as “text” becomes closely related to the ideas of phenomena, events, and being in

general. In fact, Granier even goes so far as to say, “being *is* text” (original emphasis) (NN, 135). In order to make this claim, he gives a brief outline of the importance of appearance within the Nietzschean framework, and shows how appearance, for Nietzsche, constitutes reality itself. Not only does appearance constitute reality itself, but reality is also hidden behind a mask of appearances. Therefore, as text, being is both present and concealed at the instant of its own manifestation. This manifestation of being is what then becomes apparent, and what is apparent is understood by Granier to be a text of reality. It is through an apparent reality, a reading of the text, that we are able to come to grips with the inconsistencies, forces, and apparent contradictions within natural phenomenal events - our own lives included.

An apparent reality is one that is co-creational, or has a multi-creational existence. It is not, nor can it possibly be, a thing removed from anything else, interpretation included. Granier states, “Interpretation... comprises the act of interpretation and the text interpreted, the reading and the book, the deciphering and the enigma” (NN, 135). The role of interpretation must be understood as an interconnected experience viewed from all perspectives. It is necessary then for Granier, in order to elaborate on this idea of “being as text,” to take a step back and identify and explain the ideas/terms/concepts bound up within the term “appearance.” The ones he chooses to focus on are manifestation, phenomena, and dissimulation.

According to Grainer’s interpretation of Nietzsche, phenomena manifest themselves in dissimilar ways over a period of time, thus making them distinguishable from previous manifestations. Dissimulation is what makes change identifiable, and is necessary to an understanding of the temporal quality of an apparent reality. Interpretation is itself a form of manifestation in the sense that through one’s own interpretation of the environment we are able to use what is available in the development of our own

growth, and as Nietzsche would say, express our will to power. However, it must be noted that the direction of dissimulation, or change, is not one way and is as much destruction and decay as it is development and growth. As I will demonstrate later on, it is this temporal quality bound up in the concept of dissimulation that makes it indispensable as we move forward. The role of dissimulation is an important one that will eventually lead us to a clearer understanding of not only Nietzsche's concept of chaos, but Granier's interpretation of it. However, for the time being, let us continue with the reconstruction of Granier's interpretation.

## **Chaos**

The second aspect of Granier's essay that I wish to highlight is the notion of chaos in general. First and foremost, it must be understood that the concept of chaos is one that, by its very nature, is one of 'incomprehensibility.' Chaos is a term used to describe that which we cannot describe. There is a tendency to generalize, categorize and "box up" concepts into neat little packages to be brought out when we need them, but this is a concept of concepts that Nietzsche is adamantly opposed to. For Nietzsche, concepts themselves have a (metaphorical) life of their own and change and develop over time as much as the phenomena surrounding them. This is why the analogy of "text" is useful for understanding the idea of chaos, and through chaos, interpretation. Chaos is not something that allows itself to be subjected to logical systemization, although this does not keep us from trying.

As we have seen, appearance refers to the state of things as they manifest themselves - the appearing of an apparent reality, so to speak. This, however, refers in a way to the impression of a specific phenomenon at a given point in time. The general understanding of appearance leads to a conception of something that is fixed - a form of matter, or an object occupying space. Traditionally speaking, something appears and makes sense by imposing itself on our senses, and from that sense we attempt to

discover the essence of the thing. This understanding of the concept of appearance should be resisted, according to the Nietzschean perspective, for it does not incorporate the temporal, fluid, or changeable quality of phenomena. It is at this point that Granier makes the connection, although briefly, between the dissimulation of appearances and how Nietzsche understands chaos.

Through chaos we are able to come closer to an understanding of the appearance of phenomena which emphasizes their manifestation as an interaction between “things” as they move forward in temporal space apart from the human intellect. It is the interaction between the multitude of forces, as this movement of forces constantly shifts and changes what is apparent for the interpreter, interpreted and the relation between the two. Chaos is therefore the act of becoming apparent.

For Granier, these manifestations of phenomena and events, or that which appears, within the realm of existence is referred to as the “significant manifestations of chaos,” and as such they must be taken from the perspective of “interpreted” being, for if we did not assume some perspective there would obviously be no means for discussion. What is significant is what is distinguished, what is paid attention to, and therefore must be different from every perspective. Through a selection process, and determination of significance, we give value to events and phenomena, therefore making them worthy of interpretation. In other words, the human intellect picks and chooses what it deems significant out of the chaos that is the “primitive text of nature,” and formulates an interpretation based on those factors, variables, or qualia. These significant manifestations refer to a conglomeration of appearances which are gathered and selected by an interpretive being over the course of a lifetime.

### **Nature and Mask**

Thirdly, Granier attempts to show that through an understanding of the chaotic, by incorporating

interpreted being as the combination of nature and mask, we can open up “epistemological space” that includes the interpreter as a part of that which is interpreted. But, what does he mean when he refers to these concepts of “nature” and “mask?” Equally as important, what does he mean by “epistemological space?”

There is, according to Granier, a paradoxical relationship between the two ideas of nature and mask. They are distinct in their own right, and yet they are inherently linked to one another. “Nature and mask determine phenomenal being, the phenomenon in its being, as chaos” (NN 137). The relation between the two is commonly misunderstood as a cosmological doctrine, or transcendental metaphysics. There is nothing in common with this idea and the idea of the “thing in itself,” or an intelligible reality. The relation between the two terms “nature” and “mask” are used to highlight the unintelligibility of an apparent reality rather than continue assuming that there is a structured, logical, intelligible order of things that we, with our powers of intellect and reason, are able to decipher.

Granier, in his interpretation, used the concept of nature as a posited ground, or base. In other words, nature is used as a touchstone in order to keep us from falling into a discussion about nothing, or nothingness. By positing nature as the ground Granier is able to more easily discuss these rather abstract concepts in a more tangible form. The necessity of positing a word or phrase loaded with variable meanings and connotations, such as “nature,” demonstrates the limitations, as well as the room for multiple interpretations, within purportedly rigorous concepts, as well as within language more generally. Granier, as stated above, even goes so far as to put forth the idea of the “primitive text of nature,” which he likens to Nietzsche’s conception of chaos. This idea of the “primitive text of nature” also hints at an origin of the interpretive process, but Granier cautions against falling into the metaphysical illusion that leads back to “the thing itself.” What I think Granier is trying to convey in

the use of the term “nature” is a state of events which takes place pre-intellect. That is, there are competing forces interacting within their own realm of existence, removed from human experience. Whether or not they are perceived by a rational being such as ourselves is irrelevant.

The concept of “mask” is where the intellect comes to the forefront. The mask or veil, is what mankind has used to shield itself from the terribleness of nature, but, in the same stroke, it has allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the depth of nature. Granier states, “it is essentially ambiguous: it withholds as much as it shows, it is an opaque revelation, a blurred sense – in short, an enigma” (NN 135). The mask we create is our interpretation of the raw, “primitive,” manifestations of apparent phenomenal existence, and as such, the enigma is different for every interpreter. Therefore, we see that there can be no understanding of “nature” without the creation of a “mask,” and even that is blurred, for “the phenomenon itself is a mask; it turns its own appearing into an appearance – i.e. it appears as pretense” (NN 136).

This close relationship between nature and mask is how Granier comes to interpret Nietzsche’s concept of the “Same” that comes back in the “eternal recurrence.” The Same that returns is the connection between nature and masks and denotes phenomenal being within the chaotic. It is what “renders nature and mask co-present in the equivocal unity of the text” (NN 139). The sameness of chaos is what makes possible the idea that being can be understood as text. This is done through the essential relation between being, appearance and time. As Granier points out, “because nature is subject to time, chaotic being constitutes itself as text out of the confusion of appearance – i.e., across the perpetual ‘scrawl’ of interpretations” (NN 138). Mask, then, becomes the “perpetual scrawl” of the text (a writing of the text), and as such loses its attachment to a subject or an object, and in doing so, fuses with the concept of nature, or rather, “the primitive text of nature.” The origin is lost in the movement through time, and

the concepts become cyclical. The object becomes the subject, and nature becomes mask, but what remains the “same” is the dissimulation that makes identification possible, that makes interpretation possible.

### **Masking as Art**

The final move that Granier makes in his attempt to synthesize Nietzsche’s perspective on the nature of chaos, and interpretation thereof, is one involving the creative expression present in the interpretive process. This creative expression, the interpretive act, is the masking of nature, a masking that Nietzsche calls ‘art.’ As art, we see that the interpretive process is a process of creating what we understand as ‘Truth.’ As something created by the human intellect and imagination, we see that Truth is nothing more than an imaginary concept whose nature it is to change over time. Therefore, we are able to see that as an imaginary concept, Truth itself is a lie we tell ourselves in order to cope with the frightening reality. Truth is merely another mask.

In order to reach this conclusion, Granier outlines what he calls the “antagonism” between nature (chaotic being) and phenomena, through which nature simultaneously reveals and conceals itself. This antagonism presents itself in Nietzsche’s understanding of the Ancient Greeks and their interpretation of reality. “For the Greeks, phenomena dissimulated what they showed, because what they showed was the most terrible. The name of this most terrible is chaos” (NN 138). This understanding of the Greeks has been forgotten over time and what was initially used as a mask to hide the truth has been transformed into Truth itself. Beauty is the interpretation of its antagonist, the real.

It is this tension between the hidden and exposed elements of phenomena that account for the differences, within the Same, between nature and interpretation. As we showed above in Granier’s



interpretation, nature and mask are so bound up within on another that to separate them would be to remove an essential element from both. This essential element is the reiteration of the same, which is always different from what was before, but not so different as to become indistinguishable. In other words, this reiteration is Grainier's attempt at a description of becoming, which is a significant manifestation of a phenomenon re-presenting itself through the flow of time. This concept of the reiteration of the same, which is closely tied to that of dissimulation, will be drawn out in greater detail in the analysis, as Grainier does not provide an adequate explanation how these concepts operate within the Nietzschean framework.

As we are wrapped up in the becoming of existence our very interpretations act as one of the many chaotic forces working within the world. This interpretive act is a "masking" of the chaotic, and this "masking" is what Nietzsche calls "art." It is the act of giving sense, of creating meaning, out of the multitude of phenomena that present themselves. As art the act of interpretation takes on the role of concealing the very thing it alludes to. It is a manifestation as much as it is a concealment, and therefore, hides as much (if not more) than it shows. As such, art is equated with the very concepts it is used to describe, i.e. life, nature, and chaos, and thus we return full circle to the place where we began, with the interaction of phenomena, the interplay of forces and events, and the interpretive act as such.

This artistic masking of the natural, "primitive text" is directly related to the metaphorical nature of Nietzsche's writing brought up earlier. It is through masking of nature that we come to comprehend our reality. We mask through the creation of the language we use to describe our surroundings and communicate that understanding to others. The mask is always incomplete and always open to alternate interpretations, and although the desire to be precise and to communicate thoughts, feelings, and emotions with unwavering certainty persists, our language falls drastically short. It seems then that

our only form of truth is a lie. For Granier, “Lies, then, designate precisely the order of appearance – i.e., the texture of the text, the chaotic conglomeration of meanings” (NN p139). Therefore, through the creation of the beautiful mask, which hides the terribleness of reality, we create meaning out of chaos and order that which appears. In conjunction with this, it is important to reiterate that the interpretation cannot be separated from that which interprets. Therefore, the act of interpretation and that which is interpreted are two sides to the same coin. As Granier puts it, “ Life and art are two words that characterize a single creative act: namely, the act of ordering chaos, stabilizing becoming, and inventing categories by which the abyss of truth can be organized into various forms and constellations” (NN139). Life is art, and as such, each individual is a creator.

## **Analysis**

Thus far we have been discussing, and outlining, Granier's interpretation of Nietzsche's conception of chaos; essentially reconstructing a reconstruction of the Nietzschean problem of interpretation. The purpose for doing this has been to present one particular interpretation and use it as a baseline for furthering my own interpretation of the Nietzschean project concerning the role of chaos, interpretation, and the creative/artistic element that manifests itself through the interpretive process. As we have seen thus far in Granier's interpretation, chaos is the frightening reality behind the world of appearance that manifests itself while at the same time concealing itself. Through the interpretive process, which includes the interpreted as much as the interpreter, we are able to make sense of the chaotic by creating masks that hide its incomprehensible nature. This interpretive process, however has been focused on the general realm of existence, which, for the scope of this paper is too large of a subject. What I had hoped to establish through focusing on Grainer's interpretation is the

understanding that the interpretive process is a creative process, and as such, it manifests itself individualistically. This sense of individuation, of perspectivism, demonstrates how any attempt at creating an overarching unifying principle is nothing but wishful thinking. It is on this point that we see how the ambiguous/enigmatic nature of Nietzsche's writing exemplifies, internally, the indefinite, nonlinear characteristics of the world in which we live.

The analysis and interpretation of Nietzsche's work, offered by Granier, has been helpful thus far for providing a brief overview of the various factors of importance within the Nietzschean conception of chaos, the role interpretation plays in our coming to "know" the world, and the creative process determining, or articulating, a perspectival truth. In other words, it supplied us with a perspective with which to view the material, giving us an entry point into the labyrinth of Nietzschean thought. As we explore the realm of interpretation as it applies to the individual, we will be using Granier's interpretation as a sort of tether in order to prevent us from drifting off into nothingness.

As stated above, the central theme throughout Granier's interpretation is the idea that "Being is Text." By associating these two terms he makes a clear analogy that emulates the metaphorical style present in Nietzsche's writing, and in doing so makes a clear connection between the concept of being and the act of communication. Through the employment of the metaphor of text, and its association to that of being, Granier alludes to the importance of language and meaning that permeates Nietzsche's philosophical works. Therefore, I think it is important to take the ideas presented in Granier's interpretation of Nietzsche's conception of chaos and pursue them further into the wider themes of language and communication more generally.

Not only does this analogy refer to communication as a whole, but it also brings to the forefront the

ambiguity of language and the constant need for an interpretive approach, an approach founded on the reiteration of the “same,” and the perpetual becoming of existence. In other words, Granier's interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy is rooted in the act of creating and destroying meaning. I do not think, however, that this theme comes out as clearly as it could. For this reason I will be expanding on the concepts and ideas presented by Granier, and attempt to fill out his interpretation in order to provide it with greater breadth and clarity. This, I think, will provide us with a deeper understanding of Nietzsche's perspective regarding the concepts of chaos and interpretation.

By associating the metaphor of “Text” with the concept of “Being,” Granier makes a connection that highlights the enigmatic nature of “Being,” while at the same time inviting us to interpret the concept of reality as something to be read and deciphered. Because a text is something that can only be understood through a deciphering process, one founded on a familiarity with the “language” of the text, it makes sense to associate the two terms in a way that orients the reader and provides a clear reference point in which to refer back to. Although this metaphor opens and makes accessible the idea that reality (being in general) is something to be interpreted, I think it falls short of expressing the scope of the Nietzschean perspective it intends to describe. There are three main areas which I think Granier could have expanded upon, and, in doing so, been more successful in his reconstruction of Nietzsche's perspective regarding chaos and interpretation.

First and foremost is the concept of the “Will to Power.” As may have been apparent in my overview of Granier's piece, he mentions, but does not explain, the nature and role of the Nietzschean concept of the Will to Power. He goes so far as to say that text and interpretation are united as the Will to Power, but never explains what this concept means. This concept is crucial to the understanding of chaos, interpretation and the creation of meaning, and warrants considerably more focus and attention than

Granier gives it. Because of this I will provide my understanding of the concept, and show how necessary it is to the entirety of Nietzsche's philosophical position.

Secondly, I would like to expand on the concept of "becoming," as it applies to the Nietzschean framework. This concept ties directly into the Will to Power and emphasizes the fluid nature of reality. Granier touches briefly on this point, however, he does not retain its importance throughout his interpretation, which results in a devaluation of the concept. Therefore, I will be expanding the concept of becoming (over that of being) in order to highlight the temporal nature of the Nietzschean perspective. It is in this section that I will draw out the intricate role dissimulation plays within the manifestation of phenomena.

The final area I would like to expand upon will hopefully provide greater clarity to the final move in Granier's piece: the relation between masking and art. This is the concept of the metaphor, and the role it plays in Nietzsche's discourse. Through a greater focus on the idea of metaphor we will be able to see the truly ambiguous nature of our language, and therefore, more clearly understand the freedom to establish meaning through the interpretive process.

## **The Will to Power**

The idea of the appearance of reality is a fundamental piece of the Nietzschean perspective. For Nietzsche there is no distinction between the "real" world and the "apparent" one. "The 'apparent' world is the only one: the 'true' world is merely added by a lie" (Twilight, "Reason" in Philosophy; 2). Granier attempts to explain this perspective by showing the relational complex among the terms manifestation, phenomena, and dissimulation. Through these three terms he provides a basic

understanding of the Nietzschean perspective of the apparent world, its function as the 'real' world, and how any formation of a world outside of the apparent (transcendental reality) can be nothing other than the products of the imagination. This imaginary “reality,” for Nietzsche, has caused more harm throughout the history of mankind than any other idea, for it is a denial of what actually presents itself, and is therefore opposed to life itself.

Instead of the traditional philosophical approach to the reading of appearances which searches for intelligent meaning behind the apparent, Nietzsche’s metaphysical reading of the world is one of a “world-hermeneutics” (NN p.37). This is a perspective that denies any form of rigid, eternal, truth, and instead holds that there exists a multiplicity of truths. Therefore, for Nietzsche, there is no essential nature behind apparent reality. “Insofar as the word ‘knowledge’ has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. – ‘Perspectivism’” (WP Sec. 481). This “perspective” understanding of the world shifts the focus away from a philosophical interrogation of objects and a search for their essences, and, instead, draws attention to the subject that interprets.

With this shift in focus to the interpreter, rather than the interpreted, it is easy to assume that Nietzsche is positing a ground within that of the subject. This is not the case. As stated above, Nietzsche’s reading of the world is not one in search of the essences of things that account for the various phenomena of the world. Nietzsche’s perspective looks beyond those “essences” and finds the Will to Power that accounts for them. The Will to Power is not a substance however. It is instead an instance. As Alphonso Lingis puts it, “it is the force behind all the forms...It is not an essence; it is neither structure, telos, nor meaning, but continual sublation of all telos, transgression of all ends, production of all concordant and contradictory meanings, interpretations, valuations. It is chaos, the primal fund

of the unformed – not matter, but force beneath the cosmos, which precedes the forms and makes them possible as well as transitory” (NN 38). The Will to Power then is not a ground, but the lack there of; it is the abyss (Abgrund). It is this groundless nature that opens the possibilities of interpretation, and gives rise to a multiplicity of truths. “Whatever is real, whatever is true, is neither one nor reducible to one” (WP sec. 536).

## **Becoming**

Phenomena manifest themselves in a dissimilar fashion, making them discernible and describable in a way that is unique to the phenomena themselves. Each manifestation, Granier posits, is “a great rumbling and agitation of sense” (NN 135). This means, in a way, that they impose themselves on our senses, exerting a force that is outside themselves, and although we are able to perceive this manifestation as an agitation of the senses, it is not entirely decipherable because what we perceive is only a portion of the whole as it relates to our individual senses at a particular moment. As Karl Jaspers puts it, “We are within the world, and the whole of the world is, *as a whole*, not accessible to us” (N 293). This relational aspect makes phenomena essentially multi-valiant, thus warranting and necessitating interpretation. It is through sense that we are able to make sense of the world. A Nietzschean perspective is one that glorifies the immediacy of our sense perception, and embraces a primitive connection with the world in which we live.

“No event exists in itself” (NN 135). This central theme in Nietzschean thought provides insight into what is meant when we refer to the interpretive process. The interpretive process, the act of interpreting, cannot be removed from that which it interprets. Therefore the interpretive process is being as much as it is text. As Granier states, “interpretation...comprises the act of interpretation and the text, the reading and the book, the deciphering and the enigma” (NN 135). If we understand this

correctly, the process of interpreting, in the Nietzschean sense, is a participation in the chaos of existence, and therefore, an incorporation into the chaotic. This participation refers to our perception of the manifestation of phenomena through the force they exert on our senses as well as the reactive force exerted by the very act of interpretation. Our interpretation of this sense, this feeling, this sentiment, is what we put into text - is our creation of the text - which then gets interpreted over again through other perspectives, thus continually growing, building, reducing, and decaying, but always moving forward through temporal reality, in a state of perpetual becoming. This perpetual becoming of "text" is what Nietzsche calls the "scrawl," and what Granier calls "texture." Both of these terms refer to the act of describing phenomena "as they are," for the purpose of "understanding their organization and to disengage their subtle articulations" (NN 136).

It is on this point that I think Granier alludes to, but doesn't explicitly make the jump to, what I think is of primary importance within the Nietzschean perspective of interpretation and the chaotic. This factor is the primacy of becoming over the concept of "being." It is my understanding of Nietzsche's work that "being" itself does not exist. The only being that can even be considered would be one of becoming, for nothing exists removed from everything else, and nothing can be removed from the perpetual flow of time. Therefore, to "be" is to "become," and to "become" is to "be." Granier, in his description/interpretation of the Nietzschean conception of chaos, makes note of this but does not ascribe to it the proper level of importance within his interpretation, for he still asserts throughout the text that "being is text," and if text is being, then Granier's discussion of "text" should focus more heavily on process and movement through temporal space.

The "scrawl," as I understand it, is the reality we create through various interpretations over time. It is the temporal quality of the participatory aspect of chaos in both the interpreter and the interpreted, as



well as the various phenomena surrounding the event of interpretation. It is the writing of the story we tell ourselves, the fabrication of the lie based on our own perception and interpretation, the creation of the text. As Granier points out in reference to the concept of the scrawl, “the phenomenon masks because it manifests a sense that is not only multiple but subjected to a multitude of shiftings, transfers, superimpositions, overlappings, and sedimentations that produce the disconcerting impression of a rebus” (NN 136). By associating the “texture of the text” to a rebus, Granier attempts to show how the text is not something that can be read in a linear fashion. In order to make sense of the sense that is forced upon our senses by the manifestation of the appearance of specific phenomena, we must be able to draw upon the various, seemingly dissociated conglomeration of phenomenal forces within any specific event.

The differentiation of phenomena through time and space constitute the idea of dissimulation. Within flux there is movement, and with movement comes differentiation from one moment to the next. However, as Lingis puts it, “To see difference is not to see absolute opposition, contradiction; it is to see gradations of divergence” (NN 39). It is these gradations of divergence that make change perceptible and accounts for the manifestation of phenomena. Lingis calls it a “reiteration of the present.” As time moves forward everything in existence re-presents itself in a way that is similar but always different, as it becomes an interpretation of the past expression of itself. Therefore, it can be said that everything in existence is in a perpetual state of becoming, and that becoming is an interpretation of that which presents itself in the present.

## **The Art of Meaning**

In his final move, Granier identifies the antagonism that accounts for the difference between nature and its interpretations, between chaotic being and phenomena. This difference within the Same accounts for the manifestational quality, as well as the concealment quality, of nature, interpreted being, or chaos. In other words, every act of interpretation, every attempt to identify being as such, is an act of concealment of the very thing attempting to be identified. In answer to this problem of mask, Nietzsche appeals to the ancient Greeks. For the Greeks, every act of interpretation what intended, and understood, to conceal the terrible nature of reality. Chaos was that which was unbearable to look upon, so the act of concealment was taken advantage of in order to mask the terribleness of nature. This masking for the Greeks, and for Nietzsche, is called art. As Granier states, “art is the veil of beautiful appearance thrown over the horrors of chaos,” and, he continues, “beauty is the illusion that makes us forget that appearing is the manifestation of unfathomable depth; it is the interpretation of its antagonist, the real” (NN 138).

If, then, interpreted being is the mask, or veil, that we throw over the terrible reality of appearance in an act of concealing the horrible depth of existence and chaos, then the whole of life, as a mask, is equal to that of a lie, of a negation, and a lack of acceptance of the reality of appearance. Life, under Granier's interpretation of Nietzsche's thought, is art, and characterize a single creative act. Life and art represent “the act of ordering chaos, stabilizing becoming, and inventing categories by which the abyss of truth can be organized into various forms and constellations” (NN 139). Through this understanding, life and art, as the expression of the interpretive process, become the means by which we create the lie of existence. I understand this to be the language we use to describe our world, its many manifestations and events. Through the creative process that generates our language and means of communication, we give sense and meaning to words, to “text.” This sense-giving is the necessary outcome of the interpretive process outlined in Granier's reconstruction of Nietzsche's conception of chaos. By

attempting to understand the chaotic it may become possible to peek behind the veil that we have created out of necessity to hide the terrors of nature.

### **Conclusion: Interpretation**

For Nietzsche, chaos is that which is behind, or beyond, everything in existence. It is the stage on which the Will To Power plays itself out, the arena in which the multitude of forces act on one another, and react to one another. It is impossible to point directly to it because by discussing it in any terms outside its relationally amalgamated, fluid existence is to place a mask in front of it, to make it appear as something other than what it is, as something static and identifiable. This, for Nietzsche is a major problem we face with regard to our language: the temptation to make rigid what is inherently fluid. This is why I chose to begin the discussion in the realm of the chaotic, to demonstrate the unpredictable and fluid nature of the forces that express themselves in the realm of existence. Although language presents many difficulties in the communication of meaning, its fluid nature combined with the interpretive quality provides us with the freedom to create masks conducive to our own becoming.

The mask, or veil, Nietzsche refers to in his writing is anything we use to signify something else. It is the re-presentation of the “primitive text of nature.” For Nietzsche, any form of description, any use of the language, is a way of masking what is or was. The only things that can truly exist are those things, the various phenomena that manifest themselves in the present. Language is a way of referring back to something that had happened in the past, a way of coming to terms with the events happening in the present, and a way of postulating or projecting into the future. Language is a tool that serves a pragmatic function, and that function changes depending on the time, place, and the circumstances of

its use. Truth does not exist within the language, only outside of it or as the result of its co-constructive force. Even the development of language as a whole is something that draws from its own origin and background. From past experiences, usages, refinements, and even past constructs of new works in our language, we are able to pull meaning out of a combination of shapes and sounds. This process is continually evolving, growing and shaping, and as the language grows so does our understanding of the “things” we share this world with.

“This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things are called is incomparably more important than what they are. The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for – originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and altogether foreign to their nature and even to their skin – all this grows from generation unto generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such. How foolish it would be to suppose that one only need to point out this origin and the misty shroud of disillusion order to destroy the world that counts for real, so-called 'reality.' We can destroy only as creators. - But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new 'things'” (GS s. 58).

We are then trapped within the confines of our language, but it is language as well that is the means to liberation. Our interpretation of the world is established through the use of language, as we translate our experience into “text”, our interpretations change and develop as our use and understanding of the language grows and develops. Therefore, it is important to challenge conventional language that has

established itself as a constant. It is when the pragmatic function of language is lost that we must rebel against our own creations and form new ones.

If we understand anything it is through the lens that our language allows us to see through. We cannot even think of the world, anything within it, and much less anything outside of it removed from the confines of our language. The lyrical constructs we create as a means of communication are the masks placed on things in order to make them understandable within the confines of our linguistic system. The masks (names) we give to things, as a mode of creation, allow us to make sense of our surroundings, and to communicate that sense to our fellow human beings. Nietzsche understood this arbitrary nature of language and used it as a means to subvert the dominant language of traditional philosophical discourse. His example proves valuable in understanding the importance of creating meaning for oneself through the interpretive act.

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