

**The Will to Individuality:
Nietzsche's Self-Interpreting Perspective
on Life and Humanity**

This Dissertation is Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for a Ph.D. Degree in Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore Nietzsche's concept of individuality. Nietzsche, a radical and innovative thinker who attacks Christian morality and proclaims the death of God, provides us with a self-interpreting way to understand humanity and affirm life through self-overcoming and self-experimentation.

Nietzsche's concept of individuality is his main philosophical concern. I first compare his perspective on human nature in *Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak* and *Beyond Good and Evil* with Charles Darwin's, Sigmund Freud's and St Augustine's in order to examine how his thinking differs from theirs with regard to the concept of human nature. Second, I turn to his *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in comparison with the thought of John Stuart Mill, analysing their criticism of Christian morality and discussing their different conceptions of individuality and the development of the self. The last chapter compares Nietzsche's *The Anti-Christ*, *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo* with Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy of self-development, using this comparison to highlight the way in which Nietzsche expounds his concept of individuality and sets himself as a living example of an individual with autonomy and responsibility.

Nietzsche attacks Christianity and argues that humanity can potentially be developed not through Christian morality but reflective self-interpretation. We shall not forget that being a self-developing individual is Nietzsche's chief aim although his arguments are too circuitous and controversial to be easily comprehended. His aim is not to offer some final, authoritative solution to these issues of the self and morality. In contrast, he offers us a new, uneven and perhaps dangerous way to understand humanity and modern culture. In order to achieve this, we need to interpret what he says from our own standpoints and also to interpret ourselves through self-reflection. Nietzsche's radical but insightful perspective is a means for guiding us to open our minds and affirm our lives through interpretation and experimentation. Then we might potentially overcome nihilism and become what we are: self-reflective individuals with free spirits.

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LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

This list shows that Nietzsche's works have been selected and abbreviated in the thesis for analysis.

A	<i>The Anti-Christ</i>
BT	<i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>
BGE	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
D	<i>Daybreak</i>
EH	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
GM	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
GS	<i>The Gay Science</i>
HAH	<i>Human, All Too Human</i>
Letters	<i>Nietzsche: A Self-Portrait from His Letters</i>
Notebook	<i>Writings from the Late Notebooks</i>
P&T	<i>Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's</i>
TI	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
WP	<i>The Will to Power</i>
Z	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

Our ‘new world’: we have to realize to what degree we are the *creators* of our value feelings – and thus capable of projecting ‘meaning’ into history.

(Nietzsche: *The Will to Power* 1011)¹

This thesis explores the development of Nietzsche’s concept of individuality in relation to his notions of self-overcoming, self-experimentation and the affirmation of life. Since ancient times, philosophy has sought to play an enlightening role: the traditional role of philosophy has been seen as epitomised by the aim to find truth and to understand human nature and by the assumption that doing so is an intrinsic good. If philosophers are those who inspire us to reflect critically upon our beliefs and hence our identities by providing alternative conceptions of the nature of thought and knowledge, Nietzsche is pre-eminent in seeking to challenge our usual understanding of humanity and life by means of his innovative perspective. His aim is to emphasise that we are responsible for our history and we make life meaningful by creating our own values. Modern culture is fundamentally constructed according to the principles enshrined within Cartesian philosophy and Christian values.² The thinkers of the Enlightenment highlight the importance of reason and consider the use of reason as

¹ This quotation is from Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power* (1967), Ed. Walter Kaufmann. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books.

² Christianity inculcates in us the concept of the existence of God, separating man from God by raising the notions of subject and object. This conception of the absolute stresses that man is originally sinful and needs to be redeemed through Christian doctrine holding out another world of illusion. This conception, which focuses our unforgettable past, i.e. we were born with sin, and our unfulfilled future, makes us unable to live in the present and ignore the importance of the self and our earthly world. As Nietzsche in *Genealogy* argues that we “cease believing in one’s own self” and “deny one’s own ‘reality’” (GM III: 12). Likewise, the idea of the primacy of subjectivity also influences many thinkers, for example, Descartes, in his ideas of the self and God, argues that mind and body are separated from each other, proposing that the mind is the locus of authentic, self-validating selfhood. Regarding the misconceptions created by Christianity and Cartesian dualism, Nietzsche wants to proffer a conception of the embodied self, which contrasts with Christianity and Descartes’ mind-body dichotomy and claims that we become what we are not through a transcendent deity but through present self-overcoming and self-experimentation.

essential for scrutinising the progress of man and culture. But Nietzsche questions the progress of humanity in modernity, proclaims the death of God and tells us that we live in a nihilistic world in which the Christian God is dead³ and we need to create our own values. This cultural event, for Nietzsche, implies the demise of Christian precepts and initiates the problem of value-creation. In Nietzsche's view, the death of God brings with it the requirement that we must accept that constant questioning of values, rather than a divine source that lends morality authority. This initiates a crisis. This announcement of the death of God indicates the crisis that Nietzsche diagnoses in modern culture: we have lost our faith in God and Christian doctrine. This pronouncement of the death of God is the way that Nietzsche urges us to abandon our dependence on tradition and Christian values so as to create our values and live independently.

Why does Nietzsche assert the end of Christian doctrine and the consequent need to create our values? The first reason is because Nietzsche believes that the Christian Church and its doctrine inhibit us from being both concerned with and responsive to our mortal existence by providing a negative conception of humanity, one determined according to the concepts of sin and redemption. As Walter Kaufmann argues, "Nietzsche prophetically envisages himself as a madman to have lost God means madness and when mankind will discover that it has lost God, universal madness will break out. This apocalyptic sense of dreadful things to come hangs over Nietzsche's thinking like a thundercloud" (1974: 97). Nietzsche is aware that we, people in modernity, are incapable of living to the full extent of our human dignity and worth,

³ In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche invents a parable of the madman to pronounce the death of God: "Where is God?...God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers! The holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us?" (125)

but habitually restrain ourselves by obeying Christian concept of the existence of the Almighty God and its doctrine. With the impact of Cartesian philosophy and the Enlightenment, which stress the importance of reason in accordance with extreme Christian doctrine, we set out our views of humanity and knowledge by turning to the mind and following the notion of the omnipotent God, as Nietzsche claims, “Christianity...has made a great contribution to enlightenment: ‘it taught moral scepticism in an extremely trenchant and effective way – accusing, embittering, but with untiring patience and refinement; it annihilated in every single man the faith in his ‘virtues’” (GS 122). Adorno and Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, argue: “In the Enlightenment’s interpretation, thinking is the creation of unified, scientific order and the derivation of factual knowledge from principles, whether the latter are elucidated as arbitrarily postulated axioms, innate ideas, or higher abstractions” (81-82). This notion of the omnipotent God, however, not only creates an absolute being which differs from human beings, but also indicates that our inborn sinfulness and imperfection can only be redeemed through Christian doctrine. The conceptions of sinful humankind and redemption which cause our nihilistic modern culture, according to Nietzsche, make us deny ourselves and therefore we are unable to overcome nihilism and live autonomously at present. In this respect, as Kaufmann says, the parable of the madman is a tool that Nietzsche uses to suggest we question our values, i.e. Christian values, which we normally follow. Christianity harms our ability to “function and flourish”, as Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins comment: for Nietzsche, the Christian worldview “obstructs one’s view of the real world, addles one’s ability to see the real forces at work in one’s life, and destroys one’s ability to recognize how best to address them” (88). Thus Nietzsche advises that we be aware of this cultural predicament widespread in modernity and questions the notion of the absolute argued in Christianity.

Put simply, if enlightenment can be regarded “as a worldview, as a mind-set, as way of thinking” continuing to grow and develop in our society, as David Beran explains (87), Nietzsche’s thought brings us to let go the impact of Cartesian philosophy and the Enlightenment which is influenced by Christianity, but concentrate on enlightening ourselves through self-interpretation. With regard to the relation between Nietzsche and the Enlightenment, Kaufmann comments that Nietzsche’s argument is closer to the Enlightenment for leading us to development but different from the proposal of the Enlightenment. Nietzsche rejects the notion of the absolute and expects to give a new view of Enlightenment by way of questioning the moral values in tradition and Christianity and showing how to create values without divine sanction (1974: 361). For Nietzsche, we enlighten ourselves through self-critical understanding; this is the key to the progress of mankind. But Adorno and Horkheimer argues that Nietzsche’s relation to the Enlightenment is discordant (44) and associate him with the bourgeois world, saying that “despite all the twilight of the idols”, Nietzsche is unable to “abandon the idealistic convention which would accept the hanging of a petty thief and elevate imperialistic raids to the level of world-historical missions” (100). Georg Lukács likewise contends in *The Destruction of Reason* that Nietzsche opposes socialism but promotes irrationalism by intentionally offering a road “which avoided the need for any break, or indeed any serious conflict, with the bourgeoisie” (317). Lukács asserts that Nietzsche’s aim is to keep his position as “the reactionary bourgeoisie’s leading philosopher” (315); therefore, he regards the attempt that associates Nietzsche with the Enlightenment as “childish, or rather, as an expression of history-fudging in the service of American imperialism on the lowest level yet seen” (320). And Jürgen Habermas in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* argues that Nietzsche “renounces a renewed revision of the concept of reason and bids

farewell to the dialectic of enlightenment”, standing for the “entry into post-modernity” (1987: 85-86). Lukács and Habermas criticise Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God which inaugurates an approach away from the Enlightenment but to irrationalism.

There are two points that I wish to make here. First, Nietzsche’s standpoint on the Enlightenment is not what these critics argue. He is not an advocate for the bourgeoisie, nor does he think the Enlightenment should be thrown away. As he claims in *Daybreak*: “This Enlightenment we must now carry further forward: let us not worry about the ‘great revolution’ and the ‘great reaction’ against it which have taken place – they are no more than the sporting of waves in comparison with the truly great flood which bears *us* along!” (D 197)⁴ What Nietzsche rejects is the concept of the absolute, stemming from tradition and Christianity. The Enlightenment is a movement that deepens this concept, makes it widespread in modern culture, and inhibits our ability to create our values. Robert Pippin contends that it is mistaken to regard Nietzsche as an anti-Enlightenment thinker, “since ‘the Enlightenment’ or ‘modernity’ is not itself of central importance in Nietzsche’s treatment of major contemporary institutions” (255). Nietzsche promotes an alternative standpoint to interpret how Christianity undermines modern culture: “Christian self-subjection can be a brilliant strategy for mastery, and that, as in the classical account of tyranny, mastery can be a form of slavery” (Pippin 272).

Second, Nietzsche is unable to abandon convention but the reason is not what Adorno and Horkheimer indicate. We can say this is the way of living that Nietzsche chooses.

⁴ Nietzsche indicates how the Germans fight against the ideas of Newton and Voltaire bringing the great revolution to the medieval world, but intend to “restore the idea of a divine or diabolical nature suffused with ethical and symbolic significance”, like Goethe and Schopenhauer, as the great reaction.

He is concerned with convention but uses it as a self-reflexive motive to help him maintain his concept of individuality and perspectivism. As he claims, “only after we have corrected in such an essential point the historical way of thinking that the Enlightenment brought with it, may we once again carry onward the banner of the Enlightenment... Out of reaction, we have taken a step forward” (HAH 26). Nietzsche proposes an oscillating and perspectival attitude which challenges orthodox conceptions and rejects any claims to the absolute in the traditional Western philosophical or theological mode. This attitude might be controversial and questionable but splendid, as Karl Jasper says, Nietzsche stands “at the entrance door to modern thought” for not pointing out “the right way” but illuminating “in an incomparable manner” (quoted in Behler, 310).⁵

The second reason that Nietzsche proclaims the end of Christian doctrine and argues the need for recreating our values is in order to suggest we reject the Christian conception of the absolute but embrace an experimental attitude and turn our self-critical experimental abilities upon ourselves. As Nietzsche claims: “But we, we others, we reason-thirsty ones, want to face our experiences as sternly as we would a scientific experiment, hour by hour, day by day! We want to be our own experiments and guinea-pigs” (GS 319). This claim is linked most directly to his proclamation of the death of God. The Christian God has become “unbelievable” (GS 344) and with this cultural event comes a new demand. Nietzsche’s concern is not solely with the proclamation of “God’s non-existence”; he addresses himself to the question “which now emerges of how we are to reinterpret the world and ourselves and revalue our lives and our possibilities, given that we are no longer to think about them in relation

⁵ Ernst Behler, in “Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century”, argues how Jasper in his “On Nietzsche’s Importance in the History of Philosophy” views Nietzsche differently from Heidegger and promotes Nietzsche’s unique thought by comparing him with Marx and Kierkegaard.

to the existence of a transcendent deity” (Richard Schacht 1983: 122). Nietzsche shows us a way to reinterpret ourselves not according to traditional Christian values but our self-reflexive ability and then see how we possibly confront nihilism through self-overcoming and live affirmatively through self-experimentation. This is the notion of individual development that Nietzsche argues.⁶ This is also his aim: we enlighten ourselves not by any formula of morality and doctrines but by our self-reflexivity.

In terms of Nietzsche’s thought which rejects the absolute but promotes a perspectival point of view, we need to ask a crucial question. How can we create our values without the traditional constraints imposed by Christian morality? In this respect, ‘we moderns’ are for Nietzsche caught on the horns of a dilemma. We are on the one hand aware that we are in many key senses dominated by the fixed Christian doctrine. On the other hand, we perceive the potential to develop ourselves but there is no certain clue to reinforce us believing we enlighten ourselves with our own values. This question is important not only because it discloses how traditional Christian morality dominates humankind, but also because it offers us a new and self-reflexive means of understanding humanity, thereby allowing it to become independent and ‘better’. Being better, in Nietzsche’s view, does not mean being ‘more moral’ but ‘supra-moral’ (*On the Genealogy of Morals*, II: 2). It means that we live beyond the moral values

⁶ I take Zarathustra’s teaching to exemplify Nietzsche’s concept of the development of human nature. Zarathustra tells his disciples of the three metamorphosis of the spirit: the spirit needs to reflect upon itself and transforms itself by self-awareness firstly from a load-bearing camel to a creative lion with freedom, and then an innocent child who says yes to life (Z, I, “On the Three Metamorphoses”). Regarding the development of human nature, the first step is to encounter and experience the difficulties which happen in life, as a camel which bears a huge load endures. These difficulties stimulate us to reflect upon our lives, and we start to consider how we can overcome them. At this turning point, we are aware that we can change our plight and alter our lives by way of reflecting upon ourselves and adjusting our point of view. But this is not the end of the development. The final step is not only to understand that the self is complex, but also to be willing to see life as an innocent child who does not give any fixed and partial judgement but always welcomes new things. These stages epitomise Nietzsche’s understanding of the emergence and development of the self or spirit.

provided by tradition and Christianity and seek to live with “an inborn self-reliance and nobility” (Daybreak 191). In other words, we live, through the ability constantly to transform, reinterpret and overcome ourselves. In these texts Nietzsche sees ethics as a stage of cultural development, something that is necessary to the formation of the self but which needs to be gone beyond [overcome/sublimated] in order for its true potential to be realised.

Nietzsche’s philosophy unfolds the essential crisis in modern culture that, according to him, we all too rarely reflect upon. This is the fact that modernity is, to use his word, ‘decadent’ – an epoch of decline. Providing a perspectival understanding of man and morality, Nietzsche’s philosophy seeks to encourage us to understand life and ourselves in a different way. But this unconventional way is dangerous to us if we misunderstand what Nietzsche says and are unable to view life and ourselves in an open-minded and self-interpreting manner. As Richard Rorty argues, Nietzsche inverts Platonism and this radical Nietzschean view, “the impulse to think, to inquire, to reweave oneself ever more thoroughly”, brings us not a wonder of understanding humanity, not a wonder “in which Aristotle believed philosophy to begin was wonder at finding oneself in a world larger, stronger, nobler than oneself” but a terror that might frighten us in exploring humanity (1998: 309). But Rorty does not deny that Nietzsche shows us to unconventionally see self-knowledge as self-creation (307). Tracy Strong likewise tells us that Nietzsche’s thought which has been vastly misappropriated in politics “is not (really) political” but “provides material for developing a new progressive politics” (128). Strong however confronts the unresolved controversy remained in reading Nietzsche’s thought; he on the one hand does not want to argue that Nietzsche was or would have been a Nazi but on the other hand is unable to “exclude that possibility on the grounds that his texts ‘show’ us that

he wasn't (or would not have been)" (131). Nietzsche's thought might be read with confusion or misappropriated in many ways, but Strong maintains a key point: we shall not lose our own intellectual or moral bearings when interpreting Nietzsche's perspectivism which allows diversity and contains contradiction. Otherwise, we might be as confused as Strong argues: "Nietzsche's texts, therefore, are written in such a manner that if one seeks to find out what they 'really mean,' to appropriate them, one will only project one's own identity onto them" (140). In this respect, Strong does not agree that Nietzsche's perspectivism implies that "there are many 'positions' from which one can see an entity" but rather "an argument that who (or rather 'what') one is is the result, and not the source, of claims to knowledge or action" (139). In other words, the purpose of interpreting Nietzsche's perspectivism is not to judge whether his claim is correct but use it as a means for bringing our attention back to ourselves.

We need to investigate how we reflect on ourselves through Nietzsche's thought and see how we respond to the cultural crisis that Nietzsche leads us to ponder. As Strong concludes that we could stop politically appropriating Nietzsche when which "one can learn is to let uncertainty and ambiguity enter one's world, to let go the need to have the last word, to let go the need that there be a last word. In politics, Nietzsche can give us only the first word – but that may be more than we have now" (142). At this point, Rorty also mentions that Nietzsche who "abandons the traditional notion of truth" does not "abandon the idea of discovering the causes of our being what we are". In order to achieve this kind of self-understanding that Nietzsche proposes, according to Rorty, "we are not coming to know a truth which was out there (or in here) all the time" (1998: 307). For Nietzsche, in order to comprehend the development of modern culture, we need to reflect on ourselves by taking the two consecutive steps in relation to the development of humanity. The first step is to understand the self and its origins.

The reason for this is that we need to clarify the misconception of the self provided by Cartesianism, and elucidate the embodied self. Descartes argues the mind is the self and despises the body. This mind-body dichotomy inhibits us in our consciousness and unable to embody and experience the earthly life with affirmation.

Why is the concept of the embodied self important to Nietzsche? As he argues in *The Gay Science*, “one could conceive of a delight and power of self-determination, a freedom of the will, in which the spirit takes leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, practised as it is in maintaining itself on light ropes and possibilities and dancing even beside abysses” (GS 347), Nietzsche wants to tell us that human potential to be a self-mastery individual with a free spirit, which has been neglected by Christian morality. He suggests we release ourselves from our obedience to Christianity and live with responsibility. The second step is to analyse nihilism as the paradigmatic expression of modern culture in order to identify ourselves in its midst. We not only need to understand the embodied self, but also to seek why we live in a nihilistic era and how we can overcome nihilism and live with self-reliance. We have to liberate the self from the limitations of the absolute Christian morality by interpreting anew the relationship between humanity and religion, and then develop ourselves in our nihilistic era through self-overcoming and self-experimentation.

This introductory chapter will be divided into two sections corresponding to these two stages. First, I start it with a preliminary discussion of Nietzsche’s concept of the self and relate it to alternative philosophical viewpoints. I consider briefly the question of the self as it is raised by him in relation to his views on knowledge and the relationship between the self and philosophy. In contrast to the Cartesian conception which argues that we are a thinking thing, I relate Nietzsche’s conception of the self to

his understanding of the nature of knowledge within the philosophical tradition. My purpose is to explore Nietzsche's notion of consciousness which differs from the Cartesian conception in order to clarify the questions of the self and understand the importance of self-overcoming. Influenced by Christianity, Descartes brings us to believe that we are the mind and what we are conscious of is certain. But Nietzsche argues that consciousness is a means for our communication and our ideas are "superficial" (WP 476). We are not consciousness but we, the embodied self, master our consciousness.

Nietzsche's understanding of the nature of knowledge helps us to view consciousness in a new way. I also relate his conception of the self to his philosophical standpoint for the purpose of indicating why he is concerned with self-experimentation. Nietzsche tells us that the purpose of philosophy is not to provide us with moral knowledge but to offer us vivid pointers toward the experimental way of life, through the experience of encountering true philosophers.⁷ As Ansell-Pearson explains, for Nietzsche, "philosophy is 'material' in that it rests on a unity of body and soul" and a true philosopher is one who "recognises that his or her thoughts are born out of the pain of experience which, like the experience of giving birth, should be endowed with 'blood, heart, fire, pleasure, passion, agony, conscience, fate, and catastrophe'" (1994: 19). The first section explores Nietzsche's conception of the self, and the second section analyses how the embodied self potentially develops itself and overcomes nihilism. In the second section I elaborate Nietzsche's conception of the development of the self as it is linked to his concept of nihilism, and explore his understanding of the relationship between humankind and religion. What is the self? Can Nietzsche's

⁷ Nietzsche, for example, argues that we do not need an argument to tell us what happiness is. What we need is "philosophy of life" which enables us to realise our "greatest measure of happiness", even though our lives "can still be miserable and little to be envied" (D 345).

philosophy inspire us to achieve a deeper understanding of our identity? I argue that the answer to these questions is ‘Yes’.

1.1 Conceptions of the Self

Réne Descartes, who is considered to be the “father of modern philosophy” (Schacht 1984: 5), articulates a famous and highly influential argument that captures his concept of the self: ‘I think, therefore I am’ (*cogito ergo sum*). It is usually claimed that the rise of the modern idea of the self emerges from the Renaissance,⁸ but Descartes, seeking to overcome the philosophy of scepticism and break with the philosophical thought of the Middle Ages, is the crucial philosopher who identifies the self with the ‘I’, the ego or the unity of consciousness and separates mind from body in his mind-body dualism. In *Meditations*, Descartes argues, “*I am, I exist: this is certain*”, and then continues, “I am therefore, precisely speaking, only a thing which thinks, that is to say, a mind, understanding, or reason, terms whose significance was hitherto unknown to me. I am, however, a real thing, and really existing; but what thing? ...a thing which thinks” (*Meditations 2: 105*). As a person who desires knowledge and believes that it should be “clear and certain knowledge” (Schacht 1984: 7), Descartes attempts to convince the notion of the certainty of knowledge in his self-reflexive conceptions of the self⁹ and the existence of God.¹⁰ He identifies

⁸ Peter Burke elucidates that people in different periods have their own conceptions of the self. But the rise of concern with the self should go back to the Renaissance, from Petrarch in the early fourteenth century to Descartes in the early seventeenth (17).

⁹ Roger Smith argues that Descartes turns inwards to “examine his individual mind as a source of knowledge” and he regards it as “an individual act, not an act characteristic of life in a certain community of people” (51). But Descartes’ concept of the self through rational self-reflection is obviously questionable and different from what Nietzsche argues. Descartes’ conviction in believing knowledge is certain and the mind is the self limits himself and thus causes him be unable to explain the interaction between the mind and the body but uses the pineal gland to explain it, which is, as Schacht describes, a “ludicrous” solution (1984: 20).

¹⁰ Similarly, when Descartes argues that the idea of “this supremely perfect and infinite being”, God, is entirely true” (*Meditations 3: 124*), it is obvious that his argument which is mainly concerned with the

the mind with consciousness, and announces that the self is the mind, a thinking subject. This is the only certainty that Descartes knows. For Descartes, the essence of what it is to be a person lies in thought and consciousness. Descartes likewise holds that mind and body separate from each other as two different substances, which exist in “an intimate union” (Schacht 1984: 17). As he explains,

And although perhaps I have a body to which I am very closely united...because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and because, on the other hand I have a distinct idea of the body In so far as it is only an extended thing but which does not think, it is certain that I, that is to say my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it. (*Meditations* 6: 156)

On the one hand Descartes states that thought, a mental substance, constitutes the locus of our personhood, but on the other hand effectively denies the significance of the body in his account of personal identity. This is his mind-body dichotomy. In other words, he argues that consciousness is the only substance which exemplifies our existence; the self is the mind which identifies humanity. In Descartes’ view, there is nothing that can be attributed to thought that can be derived from the concept of the body. As Peter Sedgwick explicates, for Descartes mind is a substance that is essentially different from body (2001: 6). Descartes constructs “an account of human knowledge, and he is doing so by way of reflection on his own ability to *think*” (Sedgwick 2001: 7). In this respect, Descartes not only seeks to deny any connection between the mind and the body when it comes to defining selfhood - thus emphasising the concept of the self as a purely mental entity - but also considers the body as an extended substance which is irrelevant when it comes to considering this question. The body is only something that Descartes possesses, whereas the mind alone is what he is (Schacht 1984: 17). Descartes’ proposal that our reason makes us human and his

notion of subjectivity does not independent from the influence of traditional Christian values.

treatment of the body as a trivial and derivative substance had a significant effect on modern philosophy, as Dave Robinson describes: “European philosophy relied on the guaranteed authenticity of the existence of the self – the ‘Cogito’ – the only thing that Descartes claims to be indubitable” (23). Taking Kant as an example, Robinson argues that Kant uses “this faith in rational thought and autonomy to reinforce Christian ethical beliefs. Practical reason could produce universal and absolute moral laws that were eternally true and so compulsory for everyone” (14). Nietzsche rejects this dyadic Cartesian mind-body doctrine which argues the self is the absolute mental entity but despises the body. He in contrast claims his alternative point of view of the self.

Nietzsche’s notion of the self is epitomised by a speech of Zarathustra:

What the sense feels, what the spirit knows, never has its end in itself. But sense and spirit would persuade you that they are the end of all things: that is how vain they are. Instruments and toys are sense and spirit: behind them still lies the self. The self also seeks with the eyes of the senses; it also listens with the ears of the spirit. Always the self listens and seeks: it compares, overpowers, conquers, destroys. It controls, and it is in control of the ego too. Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage – whose name is self. (Z, I, “On the Despisers of the Body”)

Nietzsche elucidates a conception of the self that contrasts starkly with the Cartesian model. According to Zarathustra, we are habitually deceived when we assume that the conscious mind epitomises the self. Consciousness and selfhood, however, are different. Nietzsche argues that the mind, the sense and the spirit are the tools of the self. In Nietzsche’s view, the mind is not the self; on the contrary, the self is something greater: a commander that controls the mind. We exist not because of the mind but because of the embodied self. Nietzsche thereby suggests that we view the self in a different way from Descartes. According to Zarathustra, the self is epitomised

by embodiment: “In your body he dwells; he is your body” (Z, I, “On the Despisers of the Body”). Nietzsche thereby intends to overturn the mind-body dichotomy. First, he claims that the self is a powerful ruler of the mind, a being that dwells inside the body. The self, according to Nietzsche, not only controls the mind and the sense, but also commands the body, the indispensable vehicle of the self that sustains us. Against Descartes, Nietzsche holds that the body cannot be separated from the self because the body is the place where the self is located. When Nietzsche argues that the self dwells in the body, he does not regard the self and the body as two separate substances. Rather, he implies a concept of wholeness, that is, the self and the body are joined together as a unity. So when Nietzsche argues that the self “lives” inside the body, his intention is to explicate the existence of the self in terms of its essentially embodied nature. As a whole, the self commands the body, but the self is at the same time unthinkable as distinct from its embodied nature.

Nietzsche’s second claim is that the self is the body. The self is “a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general” (WP 490). We can say, according to Nietzsche, the mind, the sense and the spirit are individuated elements that make up the parts of the self. These elements function together in such a way as to constitute the specifically human body. Therefore, the body is also considered a multiplicity of these elements. It might be thought that these two conceptions of the self appear to be contradictory. We may ask how the self can dwell in the body and yet also be the body. Is Nietzsche not presupposing the very thing he purports to reject? But the question is raised because we are still viewing the self and the body in terms that follow the preconceptions that underlie Cartesian dualism. Descartes regards the mind and the body as two different substances and argues that they separate from each other. If we say the self is ‘inside’

the body, according to Cartesian dualism, we cannot claim that the self is also the body since the two have already been presupposed to be different in kind. This is why one might feel Nietzsche's two conceptions to be contradictory. Nietzsche proffers a different point of view.¹¹ If we hold that the self and the body join together and are each of them individually meaningful because they are part of a whole, we are able to understand what Nietzsche implies.

In accordance with Nietzsche's claim, that the self is 'inside' the body, we can explain that the self is like a king and the body is the kingdom which he commands. The body lives and operates by following the order of the self; the self manages the body. Likewise, Nietzsche's second conception tells us that the self is the body. The self is the body because they are joined together as an entity. The self, the commander of the body, is united with the body and cannot be thought without it. The two, it follows, are really one in so far as they cannot be separated in a manner that would allow them to function individually. Nietzsche emphasises the importance of the body and argues that it is wrong to despise it. We are simply unable to live if we lack embodiment. The reason why the body is important is thus not merely because we need it to sustain our lives, but also because the body is where the sense, the spirit and the mind come from and where they work together. As Zarathustra explains,

The body is a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd. An instrument of your body is also your little reason, my brother, which you call 'spirit' – a little instrument and toy of

¹¹ Nietzsche's idea can be compared with Spinoza's concept which he praises on a postcard to Franz Overbeck on July 30th, 1881: "I am utterly amazed, utterly enchanted! I have a *precursor*, and what a precursor! I hardly knew Spinoza: that I should have turned to him just *now*, was inspired by "instinct." Not only is his overtendency like mine—namely to make all knowledge the *most powerful affect*—but in five main points of his doctrine I recognize myself" (quoted in *The Nietzsche Channel*, 1999-2007, www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/nlett1881.htm). Different from Descartes who says that the mind and the body are distinct things, Spinoza argues that a human being is both a physical thing and a mental thing. Spinoza means that the mind and the body are the same thing under different attributes (quoted in the introduction of Spinoza in Peter J. King's *One Hundred Philosophers*, pp. 94-95.)

your great reason. 'I,' you say, and are proud of the word. But greater is that in which you do not wish to have faith – your body and its great reason: that does not say 'I,' but does 'I.' (Z, I, "On the Despisers of the Body")

The mind, of which traditionally we are proud and regard as a purely rational entity, is not the self but a tool that is commanded by the self. On the contrary, Nietzsche emphasises that the body, which the mind despises, is an important substance united with the self and is the self, the great commander.

In Nietzsche's view, the body is significant because it is united with the self: "What has been called 'body' and 'flesh' is unutterably more important: the remainder is just a minor accessory" (Notebook 1887-1888, 11:83). We are essentially embodied, according to Nietzsche. Without the embodied self, there would be no experience of life. We simply are embodied and it is this that endows us with all our abilities to be human. But I need to emphasise a crucial point, that is, the sense and the mind function together within the body as a whole. So it is incorrect to say the body, the sense and the mind are separate and operate individually; in contrast, they need to be together in order to function well for living. Descartes despises the body by arguing that the self is the conscious mind by which we exist; on the contrary, Nietzsche tells us that the body is the most important but the mind is only a tool, or a recorder, of the self. As he criticises that reason, the subject, the authority that Descartes grants, is only a tool (BGE 191). We do not regard the mind but the embodied self as the most important. But we should not misunderstand that Nietzsche attempts to say the mind is unimportant; his intention is to overturn the misconception of the self in order that we can view it in an alternative way. Body and mind are all necessary features to humanity, but the misconception that draws a categorical distinction between them should be abandoned. We assume the self is the mind, by following the Cartesian

conception, so we habitually despise the body and are concerned chiefly with consciousness.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological view of the embodied self can be compared here with Nietzsche's account of embodiment.¹² Richard Shusterman points out the difference between Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty: "In contrast to Nietzsche hyperbolic somaticism, Merleau-Ponty's argument for the body's philosophical centrality and value is more shrewdly cautious" (155). But Kristen Brown remarks their similarity: "The idea of a reified entity has traditionally presupposed a proper, conceptually articulable definition. For Nietzsche, as for Merleau-Ponty, the possibility of experiencing things as reified would have to begin with bodily perception. Perceptions as perceptions are in themselves, for Nietzsche, translations – designing the forces they interpret" (148). Regarding Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am', Merleau-Ponty, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, offers a view opposed to the Cartesian conception of the self. As he argues, "we must be clear about the meaning of this equivalence: it is not the 'I am' which is pre-eminently contained in the 'I think,' not my experience which is brought down to the consciousness which I have of it, but conversely the 'I think,' which is re-integrated into the transcending process of the 'I am', and consciousness into existence" (446). In contrast to Descartes who claims that we are a totally distinct mental entity and the body is an irrelevant substance, Merleau-Ponty contends that the mind and the body do not distinct from each other but function together.

¹² In the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty explains that phenomenology, "the study of essences", is "a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'" (vii). According to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is a method that leads us to view things themselves as they originally are: "The phenomenological world is not the bringing to explicit expression of a pre-existing being, but the laying down of being" (xxii). Merleau-Ponty suggests we see things from our own viewpoints. This is the fundamental argument in his philosophy, as he says: "We shall find in ourselves, and nowhere else, the unity and true meaning of phenomenology" (viii).

In Merleau-Ponty's view, as Eric Matthews remarks, we are not considered as the minds but as "unified persons who form intentions and act in the world, but can do so only because our bodies function mechanically in certain ways"(69). As Nietzsche does, Merleau-Ponty not only corrects the Cartesian misconception of the self: "All inner perception is inadequate because I am not an object that can be perceived, because I make my reality and find myself only in the act" (445), but also emphasises the importance of embodiment, as he says that the world is not "what I think" but "what I live through" (Preface: xviii). Merleau-Ponty emphasises that we experience and understand ourselves through our bodily movement, and this is also what Nietzsche emphasises in his thought. Our body, according to Merleau-Ponty, is "in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system" (235). For Merleau-Ponty, as also for Nietzsche, embodiment is essential and imperative for humanity to understand itself.

Nietzsche rejects the mind-body dichotomy which prevents us from mastering ourselves and experimenting with life. Whatever we observe in the world, according to Nietzsche, the limits of consciousness automatically restrict us from approaching the truth of things, including the self. As Nietzsche tells us: "We live only by means of illusions; our consciousness skims over the surface. Much is hidden from our view" (P&T, *The Philosopher*: 50). The question of the self is thus intimately connected with the limitations of consciousness. Therefore, Nietzsche indicates two levels of understanding in response to the question of the self. One is the kind of understanding that occurs as a consequence of adherence to the dominance of habit, culture and tradition. This knowledge is limited but essential in order for humanity to be fully

what it is. It is the level of conscious understanding that is characteristic of communal culture and which endows us with the ability for self-understanding and hence self-interpretation. The other higher level is the understanding attained by way of overcoming these necessary but limited.

Habitual understanding, in Nietzsche's view, is a useful means that leads to our self-interpretative nature. In ancient ages, "where pessimistic judgments as to the nature of man and world prevail", according to Nietzsche, people who are unable to act directly in response to pessimistic judgements use thinking as a way to express their weary and melancholy ideas.¹³ As Nietzsche continues, "whatever he may think about, all the products of his thinking are bound to reflect the condition he is in...the content of these products of his thinking must correspond to the content of these poetical, thoughtful, priestly moods" (D 42). Thinking aids people to reflect on their conditions of life and be able to respond to them. Nietzsche claims that knowing is a means that brings humanity to recognise human nature and the world, and consciousness, which comes after habits, is an expression that is used for the communal condition of primitive social life. As he argues, "at the outset, consciousness was necessary, was useful, only between persons (particularly between those who commanded and those who obeyed); and that it has developed only in proportion to that usefulness. Consciousness is really just a net connecting one person with another – only in this capacity did it have to develop" (GS 354). However, the conception of habitual understanding has been converted under the influence of traditional philosophy and Christianity. Habitual understanding is no longer viewed as

¹³ In *The Birth of Tragedy*, for example, Nietzsche uses the story of the wise Silenus, who told to King Midas that the best thing for human beings is something outside their grasp: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing, and the second best thing is to die soon (BT 3), to show us how the early Greeks created the imaginative Olympian world of gods as a way of thinking to bear their suffering in life and overcome their fear of death. Thereby the Greeks were able to keep on living.

a mere means for responding to the condition of life and interpreting human nature, but has been transformed into a powerful passion “which shrinks at no sacrifice and at bottom fears nothing but its own extinction” (D 429). As Nietzsche argues, “our actions, thoughts, feelings, and movements – at least some of them – even enter into consciousness is the result of a terrible ‘must’ which has ruled over man for a long time” (GS 354).

This passion for knowledge, which has been accumulated for a long time, still lies deep in the human brain “with such judgements and convictions; and ferment, struggle, and lust for power developed in this tangle” (GS 110). The problem is that we are accustomed to regarding the mind, the consciousness, as the most important aspect of humankind. Accepting the Cartesian conception of the self, we give high praise to the ego and see it as the essential part, our identity. Being influenced by the mind-body dichotomy, we assume what the mind provides is pure and absolute. Accordingly, we rely on the mind, believing that we could not live without it. We live and judge by following moral values and accumulated understanding, without being aware that we are restricted by consciousness. As Nietzsche argues that the ego’s desire for appropriation is ceaseless (D 286), our ego does not stop its desire to control us. Consciousness restrains us just as much as it endows us with abilities, especially our positive abilities. It is only because the human past is marked out by violent restraint and the yoke of custom that the kind of animal that came to be human was bred. The limitations of consciousness hinder us from approaching truth; therefore, we rarely perceive this as a problem and erroneously believe that our accumulated knowledge guides us to understand humanity. Nietzsche clarifies the misconception of consciousness, the main concern in traditional philosophy. Though habitual understanding is produced by humankind as a useful tool to interpret our

nature and be able to live in a world (WP 568), we need to change this erroneous mode of judging, which is built up by the first level of understanding, in order to free ourselves from the restrictions of consciousness. Nietzsche challenges our general attitude towards knowledge by providing the conception of the higher level of understanding, which is in accordance with his conception of the self.

This higher level of understanding is the key to the development of the self. When we are used to observing and judging from our accumulated knowledge, we only see the partial truth of things. In order to attain the higher level of understanding, Nietzsche suggests us view consciousness and knowledge in an unusual way. As he explicates, “man, like every living creature, is constantly thinking but does not know it; the thinking which becomes *conscious* is only the smallest part of it” (GS 354), consciousness, according to Nietzsche, is not a pure and essential substance because it does not belong to “man’s existence as an individual but rather to the community and herd-aspects of his nature” (GS 354). Our consciousness that we usually regard as “the highest stage of organic development and as the most astonishing of all earthly things”, in Nietzsche’s view, is just a tool we have (Notebook 1885, 37: 4). We “simply have no organ for knowing, for truth” (GS 354), and consciousness exists only when we need it to communicate for social and communal life. Likewise, Nietzsche claims that knowledge should not be considered as secure and guaranteed. As he argues that the world is knowable because we interpret it, knowledge is acquired by our interpretation. Knowledge is also interpretable (WP 481). Nietzsche claims that knowledge is not fixed and certain; on the contrary, it is a concept which is constantly evolving and changeable according to the way that we interpret it. As Schacht argues, Nietzsche wants to stress that knowledge is not “a non-perspectival, unconditioned apprehension of true being” (1983: 84). Nietzsche perceives that

traditional philosophy has produced a deep effect on humanity: people are unaware of being restricted by the Cartesian conception and Christian doctrine, and also reluctant to admit that a thought comes when 'it' wants to, and not when 'I' want it to (BGE 17). But Nietzsche's aim is not solely to elucidate the misconception of knowledge. He claims that the exceptional few can attain a higher level of understanding by overcoming habitual understanding and experimenting with life. As Nietzsche argues, "logic does not doubt its ability to assert something about the true-in-itself (namely, that it cannot have opposite attributes)" (WP 516), we are unable to stop the mind keeping its desire to dominate us because this is the way it acts. Nietzsche, on the other hand, claims that humanity can liberate itself from the limits of consciousness when it no longer considers the self as the rational mind. In other words, whether the higher level of understanding can be reached, for Nietzsche, is decided by how much the conception of the self can be understood.

Nietzsche also claims, "'*Life as a means to knowledge*' – with this principle in one's heart one can not only live bravely but also *live gaily and laugh gaily!*" (GS 324) Our experience of life, in Nietzsche's view, can help the self reflect and interpret itself, and develop understanding to a higher level. Being constantly aware that the self is not the mind but the commander of the mind and living with experimentation, humanity can prevent itself from being controlled by consciousness and overcome accumulated knowledge. According to Nietzsche, most people are unaware of the question of the self as it is raised and emphasised by him. Likewise, traditional philosophers do not perceive Nietzsche's concern with the development of the self as a matter of self-overcoming. The impact of the mind-body dichotomy on traditional philosophy highlights the difficulty of perceiving the importance of freeing the self from the limitations of Christian morality. But Nietzsche offers a different attitude to

knowledge. He attempts to point out that a higher level of understanding can be attained in virtue of self-awareness and self-overcoming. As Keith Ansell-Pearson comments,

Nietzsche designs in positive terms as the development of a new kind of understanding and knowledge concerning the conditions and circumstances under which particular values evolved and changed, and in which morality acts as a symptom and a sickness, but also as a stimulant poison. (1997: 16-17)

Nietzsche's striking critique of traditional philosophy and his conception of the self inspire us not to be restricted to the Cartesian conception, but on the contrary to develop the understanding of the self from a necessary and limited realm to a higher level. This stimulus is unusual, dangerous but powerful because it inspires us to perceive and interpret our nature.

Nietzsche is concerned with the development of self and the relationship between the self and philosophy. He perceives that there is something he can do in order to maintain the value of philosophy. Philosophy, for Nietzsche, is "an essentially *creative* affair, in a number of ways, pertaining not only to the interpretation of events but also to the direction they take" (Schacht 1983: 16). Nietzsche's intention is to reject traditional philosophy which is solely concerned with the mind; he emphasises the need for living down to earth and practising our present life through a process of perpetual experimentation. As he tells us: "Admitting untruth as a condition of life: that means to resist familiar values in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that dares this has already placed itself beyond good and evil" (BGE 4). The traditional notion of the self, which implies that the mind exists independently as the essence of humanity, has to be discarded. As Solomon and Higgins argue, Nietzsche is tired of traditional philosophy "without a point or any goal other than to enhance the

reputation of the philosopher”, “without any evident concern for the plight of modernity and the future of humanity” (211-212). This misconception of the self, for Nietzsche, does not help people to understand the self but impairs their positive abilities to create and affirm life. In contrast, Nietzsche gives his alternative view of philosophy.

In Nietzsche’s opinion, the role of philosophy is not to enhance our moral knowledge. Rather, it should enlighten humankind about itself. Nietzsche does not think there is ‘moral knowledge’, which should be inculcated by philosophy; on the contrary, he regards the understanding of the self as the most important philosophical concern. Nietzsche also argues that a philosopher should keep his mind open and be willing to conduct new experiments, even to declare himself opposed to his previous arguments (Kaufmann 1974: 85). A philosopher does not need to provide us with moral knowledge but shows us the way of life that he experiments and responds to his life. As Nietzsche comments of Kant: “When he does shine through his thoughts, Kant appears honest and honourable in the best sense, but insignificant: he lacks breadth and power, he has not experienced very much, and his manner of working deprives him of the *time* in which to experience things” (D 481), Nietzsche argues that Kant has an intelligent mind but lacks experience of life which inspires us to view the self and develop humanity. As he tells us: “The fairest virtue of the great thinker is the magnanimity with which, as a man of knowledge, he intrepidly, often with embarrassment, often with sublime mockery and smiling – offers himself and his life as a sacrifice” (D 459). A great thinker does not need to explain things in a dogmatic manner but is willing to contribute what he is able to provide, such as showing how he encounters challenge and experience. As Schacht argues that a philosopher, in Nietzsche’s view, should not be “committed methodologically to some requirement of

absolute certainty or presuppositionlessness in philosophical inquiry” but should rather be “convinced of the genuinely problematical character of any and all such assumptions” (1983: 14). We do not need a philosopher who comes to teach us about knowledge; on the contrary, we need philosophers who can reveal how to live through experiment.

Nietzsche’s approach is to stress a new view of philosophy, which leads humankind to self-awareness and self-development, as Kaufmann argues, “Experimenting involves testing an answer by trying to live according to it” (1974: 89). Nietzsche emphasises that philosophy does not solely concern epistemology but the way that we live. When Nietzsche observes that people in modernity seemingly lack the energy of affirming life, he shows us the way we might potentially live by the question of the self that he raises. His attempt of raising the question of the self expresses his deep concern with the future of humanity. But his concern does not imply that he could save and develop humanity, nor does he want to be an idol to others. We should not confuse Nietzsche’s personal life with his thought when we interpret them. André Gide points out that Nietzsche becomes “his own captive” when he is unable to depart completely from decayed modernity which he criticises but appears like a “lion in the cage of a squirrel” (quoted in Behler, 298). Thomas Mann also views Nietzsche, in an image of a ‘martyr of thought’, a ‘saint of immoralism’, who died the ‘martyr’s death of the cross of thought’ (quoted in Behler, 299). Gide and Mann both ignore the crucial point shown in Nietzsche’s perspectivism. When Nietzsche stresses human ability to confront our cultural crisis by overcoming the self and experimenting with life, he does not mean that the consequence can be expected and guaranteed, including his own. In other words, we should not misjudge him and deny all his controversial thought only because of his insanity; otherwise, we might lock ourselves again in the

traditional concept of the absolute that Nietzsche rejects.

We do not need to categorise Nietzsche as “a hero of thought, a conqueror of freedom, and advocate of life, and the pronouncer of new and daring doctrines” as Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche extraordinarily and pompously maintained for the purpose of promoting her own “thought” (quoted in Behler, 287). But neither are we required to regard him as a martyr as Gide and Mann insist. Both sides are so extreme that they inhibit us in an absolute manner and thereby distract our attention from viewing Nietzsche as an eccentric individualist and his thought as a means to reflect ourselves. Put it simply, Nietzsche’s thought mainly reveals that he loves humanity and that he is concerned with the development of the self. Nietzsche understands that human nature is complex and contradictory. However, his understanding of humanity does not cause him to promulgate his thoughts as doctrines that all of us have to follow but provides us an uncommon way to understand humanity, with his conception of the self. “Nietzsche envisages a program of cultural engineering which will bring about a new, sovereign species of human that is both intellectually strong and ethically independent” (Ansell-Pearson 2006: 246). Nietzsche stresses the importance of the development of humanity, letting us see how we can live bravely and independently in the midst of nihilism. In what follows, I will discuss Nietzsche’s concept of nihilism as the means to explicate his analysis of the development of the self.

1.2 Nietzsche’s Concept of Nihilism

In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche defines nihilism: “*the highest values devalue themselves*” (WP 2). Nietzsche’s concept of nihilism emerges from his proclamation of the death of God, aimed at rebuking and challenging traditional Christian morality.

Christian morality proffers an account of the meaning of life, especially endowing the necessity of redemption for releasing suffering, leads humans to a pessimistic attitude that rejects the embodied self and hence existence as it truly is. As Irena Makarushka comments: “The principle charge he [Nietzsche] made against Christianity is that it rejected this life in favour of an eternal life in the hereafter. This rejection had ideological and political implications particularly insofar as it informed the construction of values of Western culture” (29). Nietzsche argues that Christian moral values that we regard as the highest values have lost the ability to guide and develop humanity and the consequence is that we live amidst nihilism. Nihilism, in Nietzsche’s understanding, is a cultural phenomenon that leads us to face up to self-reflexive problems of humanity. The advent of nihilism for Nietzsche is crucial because it “represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals” (WP Preface: 4). As Nietzsche continues, we need to experience nihilism so as to understand why we discard traditional Christian morality and create our values (WP Preface: 4). When Nietzsche raises the question of the self, he not only invites us to acknowledge the limitations of the traditional mind-body dichotomy, but also encourages us to reflect upon the nature of our identity through self-examination.

Having explored Nietzsche’s conceptions of the self, we go to elucidate his view of nihilism in order to know how we overcome nihilism and move forward when we stay in a nihilistic culture: “God is dead; but given they way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. – And we – we must still defeat his shadow as well!” (GS 108) Nihilism is an unhealthy characteristic of modern culture, the origins of which are profoundly rooted in Christian morality and metaphysics. As Nietzsche contends, “it is an error to consider ‘social distress’ or ‘physiological degeneration’ or worse, corruption, as the *cause* of nihilism...Rather, it

is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted” (WP 1). Christian doctrine imbues us with a sense of the need for repentance for original sin and the idea of redemption that is fulfilled in an afterlife. Christianity has converted the origins of religion and morality and become a nihilistic religion which misleads humankind to embrace nothingness.¹⁴

As Nietzsche describes the origin of religion,

People in those times do not yet know anything of natural laws...There is no concept whatsoever of *natural* causality...To him nature – uncomprehended, frightful, mysterious nature – must seem to be the *realm of freedom*, of choice, of a higher power, a seemingly superhuman level of existence, a god. (HAH 111)

In prehistory, people did not have the conception of causality and the monotheistic conception of God. Religion, in this respect, represented their response to the power of nature, not an attempt at subordinating it. As Nietzsche explains: “The meaning of religious worship is to direct nature, and cast a spell on her to human advantage, that is, *to impose a lawfulness on her, which she does not have at the start*; whereas in present times, man wishes to understand the lawfulness of nature in order to submit to it” (HAH 111). People at that time had different ideas of religion and religious worship. Religion sought to render nature law-like, i.e. customary and amenable to supplication, like our prehistoric ancestors, and the purpose of religious worship was to gain power over nature. In contrast, modernity sees in nature something invariably inhuman and coercive, a realm of necessity that imposes its order upon us. This is a misinterpretation of religion and nature.

¹⁴ Nietzsche argues that Buddhism is also a nihilistic religion, a passive nihilism and symptomatic of weakness (WP 23). But he considers Buddhism better than Christianity because Buddhism does not give the concept of original sin (WP 342). For Nietzsche, Christianity is worse than Buddhism because it leads humanity to decadence by imposing the concept of original sin on us and imbuing us with the need for redemption and salvation through the Christian God:

On the other hand, the nature of morality has also been misunderstood. Nietzsche argues that morality was originally a set of customs enabling people to live in communities. Morality is the basic requirement for all social life; it is a human product. As Nietzsche explains,

Thus the concept of the ‘most moral man’ of the community came to include the virtue of the most frequent suffering, of privation, of the hard life, of cruel chastisement – *not*, to repeat it again and again, as a means of discipline, of self-control, of satisfying the desire for individual happiness – but as a virtue which will put the community in good odour with the evil gods and which steams up to them like a perpetual propitiatory sacrifice on the altar. (D 18)

Morality was initially not aimed toward developing human nature and regulating the way of life. People invented it, according to Nietzsche, for the purpose of living and experiencing when they were in communities; therefore, morality did not contain any transcendent origin of developing human nature and instructing a correct way of life. To put it simply, morality for prehistoric people was regarded as customs in daily lives. There was no connection between religion and morality. As Nietzsche argues: “In itself, a religion is nothing to do with morality, but the two offspring of the Jewish religion are both *essentially* moral religions, ones that prescribe how we *ought* to live and gain a hearing for their demands with rewards and punishments” (Notebook 1885-1886, 2: 197). It is Christianity that alters the relationship between man and religion by providing an absolute idea of the Almighty God, polarises human nature into good and evil according to Christian moral values, and makes us feel guilty because of original sin. Christianity dominates the self by means of the belief in morality and undermines our self-confidence.¹⁵

Nietzsche criticises Christianity because it uses morality as a tool of domination on

¹⁵ See Chapter 3 for the further analysis of Nietzsche’s concept of morality.

man, and brings about decadent culture:

Nihilism appears at that point, not that the displeasure at existence has become greater than before but because one has come to mistrust any 'meaning' in suffering, indeed in existence. One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered *the* interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain. (WP 55)

Nietzsche here explicates why nihilism appears in modern culture. Christian morality falsifies the meaning of existence, polarises humanity by moral judgement, and enslaves us in Christian precepts. People who rely on Christianity actually lose faith in salvation. As a result, we live in pessimism and nothingness, and finally lose the self-confidence to live. "Nihilism in this sense thus represents the failure of the metaphysics of weakness to overcome decadence and liberate the weak" (Dudley 134). Nietzsche considers nihilism as a symptom of modernity and names it a "European form of Buddhism – doing No after all existence has lost its 'meaning'" (WP 55). The consequence of this is that "man has lost *dignity* in his own eyes to an incredible extent" (WP 18). However, Nietzsche has no intention to dissolve nihilism because he realises it is a part of western culture, the effect of Christianity. For him, nihilism is incomplete because we are in the midst of it (WP 28). He identifies two ways of understanding nihilism, suggesting instead that we should confront nihilism with a new view of it. One is active nihilism, which Nietzsche regards as "a sign of the increased power of the spirit", and the other is passive nihilism, which he regards as "a decline and retreat of the spirit's power" (Notebook 1887, 9: 35). Nietzsche on the one hand argues that passive nihilism is undermining in its consequences because the attitudes that typify it consider everything to be ultimately meaningless. On the other hand, active nihilism strengthens the intention to act and experience. "Nihilism is the state of strong spirits and wills: and for these it's not possible to stop at the No 'of judgement' – the No of the deed springs from their nature. An-nihil-ation by the

judgement is seconded by annihilation by the hand” (Notebook 1887-1888, 11: 123).

Passive nihilism compels us to embrace nothingness but active nihilism revives us, provoking us to take action. If we are able to perceive how nihilism restrains us through the power of its ‘in vain’, we can transform ourselves without being destroyed by it. In this respect, active nihilism becomes the power that enables the self to live in a nihilistic era and go beyond it.

Nietzsche is aware that we are in a nihilistic era in which we lose our assurance of the self and live in meaninglessness, as he claims, “we are losing the center of gravity by virtue of which we lived; we are lost for a while” (WP 30). This thought gives a new impetus to modern culture, especially to postmodern thinkers. As David Harvey says in *The Condition of Postmodernity*: “By the beginning of the twentieth century, and particularly after Nietzsche’s intervention, it was no longer possible to accord Enlightenment reason a privileged status in the definition of the eternal and immutable essence of human nature” (18). Nietzsche suggests we face the advent of nihilism and then overcome it. However, postmodern commentators misinterpret his philosophy. They argue that Nietzsche initiates a decentering of the subject and regard him as a proto-postmodernist. Thus they connect themselves with Nietzsche, for the purpose of legitimising the postmodern standpoint: “To the degree that it does try to legitimate itself by reference to the past, therefore, postmodernism typically harks back to that wing of thought, Nietzsche in particular, that emphasizes the deep chaos of modern life and its intractability before rational thought” (Harvey 44). In terms of the relationship between Nietzsche and postmodern thinkers, these postmodern thinkers misunderstand Nietzsche’s thought and adapt it as a key element in mounting their own critique of modernism and subject. The reason why I argue here is because I want to clarify that Nietzsche’s concern is not to destroy tradition and advocate

fragmentation as postmodernism stresses, but to claim a self-reflexive concept of individuality. Nietzsche has widely been misinterpreted, as Solomon and Higgins elucidate, his “argument of ‘only interpretation’ “warm the cockles of the ‘nothing but the text’ generation”, and his attack to traditional conception of the self “much in tune with the ‘fragmentation of the subject’ and ‘death of the author’ fixations of the current French academic scene”, but he is not a postmodernist. Nietzsche solely tends to “promulgate a more vigorous, positive philosophy” by giving very different views of the self and subjectivity (42). In what follows, I analyse how postmodern commentators appropriate Nietzsche’s thought.

Harvey argues that an emphasis on pluralism is a central trait of postmodern thought. As he observes: “The idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate is essential to the pluralistic stance of postmodernism” (48). Postmodernism attempts to overturn modernity by concentrating on pluralism and replication in a chaotic condition, and postmodern thinkers advocate a pluralistic perspective, explicitly associating this stance with Nietzsche’s philosophy. Postmodernism which entirely accepts the condition of “fragmentation”, “ephemerality”, “discontinuity” and “chaotic change” in fact “swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is” (Harvey 44). For postmodern thinkers, Nietzsche offers an unconventional way of criticising modernity with his concept of nihilism. There are numerous accounts which differently interpret Nietzsche’s attitude toward nihilism. We need to keep in mind that reading Nietzsche, as Sedgwick argues, “always involves an appreciation of the conflicts which provide the grounds for interpretation itself” (1991: 24). I take Gilles Deleuze as the first example. Deleuze conspicuously

creates a new vision of Nietzsche.¹⁶ In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, he reinterprets Nietzsche's thought, arguing that the concept of multiplicity is developed to its utmost in his philosophy. In Deleuze's understanding, Nietzsche's concept of the eternal recurrence¹⁷ is considered as "the expression of a principle which serves as an explanation of diversity and its reproduction, of difference and its repetition" (49). Nietzsche calls this principle will to power.¹⁸ The will to power for Deleuze is articulated on the basis of the affirmation of becoming: "This is why the eternal return must be thought of as a synthesis; a synthesis of time and its dimensions, a synthesis of diversity and its reproduction, a synthesis of becoming and the being which is affirmed in becoming, a synthesis of double affirmation" (48). Deleuze argues that Nietzsche's thought is in accordance with the affirmation of becoming, saying that the idea of becoming is the foundation of the concept of the eternal recurrence.

I agree with Deleuze when he argues that Nietzsche's philosophy cannot be recognised for what it is if we neglect to take his essential pluralism into account (4). It is, on the other hand, possible to question whether it is accurate to assimilate Nietzsche's thought simply to the affirmation of becoming as Deleuze does. We can interpret Nietzsche's pluralism as embracing becoming or ceaseless movement, but we risk ignoring the ambiguities of his pluralism if we seek to render it solely in terms

¹⁶ Deleuze is not a postmodernist, but he and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* stresses multiplicity by offering the idea of rhizome: "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*" (25), which is derived from his understanding of Nietzsche's idea of becoming.

¹⁷ In terms of the concept of the eternal recurrence, Nietzsche argues, "Everything becomes and recurs eternally – escape is impossible!" (WP 1058) He stresses the revaluation of all values: "No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer 'cause and effect' but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, 'everything is *merely* subjective,' but 'it is also *our* work! – Let us be proud of it!" (WP 1059) Nietzsche's idea of the eternal recurrence suggests us not escape from the situation in which we are, i.e. a decayed realm, but interpret anew the world and keep proceeding our lives. The eternal recurrence offers a new way that shows us to see how we ought to live.

¹⁸ The will to power, according to Nietzsche, is "a multiplicity of forces, connected by a common mode of nutrition, we call 'life'" (WP 641). Nietzsche suggests us see life in a perspectival attitude.

of an ontology of becoming. Deleuze misinterprets Nietzsche's concept of becoming. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche posits the idea of eternal recurrence and asks: "Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?" (GS 341) He also claims in *Ecce Homo*: "At this point, I can no longer avoid actually answering the question how one becomes what one is...That one becomes what one is presupposes that one does not have the remotest idea what one is" (Clever 9). We do not need to ponder how to become what we are, because becoming and the self for Nietzsche are linked as an essential way of existence. What Nietzsche means is not solely to affirm 'becoming' but to claim that the self becomes what it is when it experiments with life. But the premise is that the conception of the embodied self should be understood and distinguished from the mind-body dichotomy.

We are unable to presume what we will become; in other words, we become what we are while experiencing our lives. Nietzsche's concept of becoming is in accordance with his conception of the self. As Thiele remarks:

The paradox contained within the dictum 'Become who you are' reveals the nature of living one's life as a work of art. The self is not so much created as unfolded. The uniqueness of the individual makes this revelation appear as creation, for what unfolds is nowhere duplicated...As the individual 'creates' himself over time, facet after facet of the preexisting self is revealed. Yet the self is never completely discovered. Its unfolding is as the paring of an infinitely large onion. (1990: 215)

When Nietzsche argues that we have to become ourselves, he does not say that we can anticipate what we become. As Thiele explicates that the self for Nietzsche is never completely revealed and discovered but constantly creates itself as an art, Nietzsche's concern is not to concentrate on how 'becoming' can be affirmed but how the self

creates and simultaneously becomes what it is through self-reflection and self-interpretation. Nietzsche argues that the self needs constantly to reflect and transform itself; in other words, he suggests we experience life with zeal at every moment. In this respect, there is no core of the self independent of becoming, since identity as it is articulated with regard to humankind is always a matter of self-interpretation. We simply become what we are through experimentation. We can regard Nietzsche's concept of becoming as a ceaseless process in which the self reflects on itself. It is wrong to emphasise his concept of becoming without mentioning his conception of the self. When Nietzsche mentions becoming, his aim is not to break altogether with tradition but to understand that the self becomes what it is through experimentation and self-awareness. "Nietzsche does not argue for an *escape* from the conceptually determined realm of 'metaphysical philosophy' into pure becoming" (Sedgwick 2001: 156). We can say that Nietzsche's primary concern is the self, which endlessly transforms itself and becomes what it is. But I do not mean that Deleuze's should not relate Nietzsche's philosophy to the affirmation of becoming; rather, Deleuze views Nietzsche's thought partially and fails to understand that it would be one-sided to equate Nietzsche's pluralism simply with the affirmation of becoming. Therefore, Deleuze's approach is questionable.

I take the postmodern thinker Jean-François Lyotard as another example to demonstrate how Nietzsche's idea has been misinterpreted. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard argues that the legitimation of knowledge, in postmodern culture, is formulated in different terms and that the grand narratives have lost their credibility, which is considered an effect of modern techniques and technologies (37). Knowledge in postmodern society, according to Lyotard, has become "linked to exchange value and the play of exterior forces" (Sedgwick 2001:

268). Lyotard links his idea to Nietzsche's philosophy, saying that the ideas of fragmentation and pluralism are shown in Nietzsche's thought. According to Lyotard, Nietzsche uses different terminology to indicate the advent of European nihilism, the problem of modern culture which has "resulted from the truth requirement of science being turned back against itself" (39). In response to postmodern condition, Lyotard claims that it is necessary to provide a pluralistic view, and emphasises the importance of dissension and paralogy:

The problem is therefore to determine whether it is possible to have a form of legitimation based solely on paralogy. Paralogy must be distinguished from innovation: the latter is under the command of the system, or at least used by it to improve its efficiency; the former is a move (the importance of which is often not recognized until later) played in the pragmatics of knowledge. (61)

According to the issue of the legitimation of knowledge that he raises, Lyotard contends that paralogy is essential and necessary for humans to respond and then legitimate knowledge in such a fragmented postmodern culture. Lyotard's analysis of knowledge in contemporary culture is acceptable, but I need to say he also misinterprets Nietzsche. His thesis of fragmentation is different from Nietzsche's.

Nietzsche argues the notions of fragmentation and pluralism, but they should not be separated from the conception of the self, which is the fundamental concern in his thought. His ideas of fragmentation and pluralism should be considered an alternative attitude that Nietzsche advises we understand humanity and world. As Higgins comments, although Nietzsche and the postmodernists "advocate a fragmented, perspectivist orientation toward our experience, Nietzsche's purpose distinguishes him from his alleged intellectual heirs. Nietzsche's primary concern is the possibility of rich and meaningful subjective experience"(191). Nietzsche's pluralistic perspective differs from postmodernism. His concept of pluralism does not aim at

advocating fragmentation and breaking down the discourse of modernity, but represents an alternative viewpoint of interpreting humanity and culture. When he proclaims the death of God, declaring our new battles in nihilism, Nietzsche inspires us to perceive how we liberate ourselves from the views which stem from Christian values and create new values. In other words, he criticises the absolute, the subject which emerges from traditional philosophy and Christianity but emphasises human subjectivity which is related to his conception of the self. His aim is to release us from traditional notion of subjectivity so as to raise the importance of self-reflection. Put simply, Nietzsche does not argue for the necessity of fragmentation; on the contrary, his philosophy emphasises creating our values in a self-reflexive stance. His criticism of “the modern obsession with history is thus directed at the personal instead of the societal. This call to existential, subjective self-transformation differentiates Nietzsche from the large number of postmodernist theorists who deny the meaningfulness of the idea of a coherent self” (Higgins 1990: 197-198). Nietzsche motivates us to concentrate on the self, without following the mind-body dichotomy that is imposed by tradition and Christianity, and then overcome modernity and nihilism.

I finally compare Habermas’ with Gregory Smith’s different understandings of Nietzsche and postmodernism. Habermas argues that it is Nietzsche who marks the advent of postmodernity: “With Nietzsche, the criticism of modernity dispenses for the first time with its retention of an emancipatory content. Subject-centered reason is confronted with reason’s absolute other” (94). Habermas is not a postmodernist – far from it - but he sees Nietzsche as a proto-postmodernist. He criticises Nietzsche and other postmodern thinkers who intend to break with tradition and give up “the project of modernity”, which “aimed at applying the values of scientific objectivity, universal morality and law as they had developed according to the rules of their own ‘inner

logic' to the everyday social realm" (Sedgwick 2001: 280). Smith in *Nietzsche, Heidegger and the Transition to Postmodernity* gives a commentary on the relationship between Nietzsche, Heidegger¹⁹ and postmodernity. Smith, however, distinguishes Nietzsche from postmodernism. He claims that Nietzsche's idea of nihilism has been overemphasised by postmodernists, but on the other hand admits that Nietzsche's philosophy reveals the idea of postmodernity.²⁰ Contemporary postmodernism, as Smith argues, "is fundamentally a sign of disintegration, of transition, of waning faith in the modern ideas of Reason and Progress, and the Enlightenment project in general. It lacks faith in the modern autonomous subject as self-grounding and self-legislating" (8). In order to advance and stabilise their position, postmodernists take Nietzsche's perspective as a means to support their ideas and argue that diversity is allowable, but they fail to understand that it should be dependent upon the condition that we embrace a self-reflexive critical stance.

Postmodernists, in Smith's view, are unable to understand Nietzsche's protean thought.

On the other hand he argues,

Contemporary postmodernism is only one conceivable deflection of the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger – and not the most essential deflection given that it deflects Nietzsche's and Heidegger's thought back onto a fundamentally modern path. Postmodernism abstracts elements of the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger and uses them as weapons to defeat the essential core of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's thought. That most essential core is what opens a door to the genuinely postmodern. (281)

¹⁹ In my discussion, I only focus on Smith's view of Nietzsche's thought although he attempts to link Nietzsche and Heidegger together in order to analyse their effect upon postmodern culture.

²⁰ As Smith argues, "A postmodern thinking, understood as free-spirited, would have to take itself out of the business of legislation, manipulation, change, and control" (170). This point shows how postmodernism differs from Nietzsche's thought. Smith also says, "any consistently postmodern position must try to stand beyond the highest manifestations of modern thought: metaphysical freedom and history" (62). He takes Nietzsche's and Heidegger's thought to explicate his idea of postmodernity linked with the concept of metaphysical freedom and history, i.e. the emancipation of praxis.

Smith distinguishes between postmodern and 'genuine' postmodern attitudes. The latter is akin to what Nietzsche and Heidegger do (the 'essential core' of their thinking), and the former merely reintroduces many of the errors the postmodernists seek to rid us of. Regarding Habermas' and Smith's views of Nietzsche, I say they both misinterpret Nietzsche. Since I have already argued that Nietzsche is not a postmodernist, it will be clear that I do not agree with Habermas' view of Nietzsche. Nietzsche does not abandon modernity; in contrast, he uses an unconventional way to emphasise the development of the self, which can be attained through self-reflection. As Smith remarks, Nietzsche's attack on tradition does not mean an attack on traditionalism. Nietzsche on the contrary gives us a possible future with his philosophy that is different from the view of postmodernists: "At a time when philosophy seemed at an end, he [Nietzsche] sought to restore the possibility of philosophy as a way of life rather than something always eventuating in dogmatic systems and the Spirit of Revenge" (168).

On the other hand, I have to concede that Smith is partially right in seeing how postmodernists use Nietzsche for the purpose of opposing modernity. I agree with his criticism of the postmodernists, but his claim that Nietzsche's philosophy provides a route toward achieving a "genuinely postmodern" (281) standpoint, I think, is questionable. Nietzsche does not advocate any '-ism'; his thinking is more subtle than that. His thought elucidates radical and unusual ways of viewing modern culture and moral values, and escapes the kind of categorisation that the word 'postmodern' has come to imply. Nietzsche provides us with an alternative view of humanity and the world. But this does not mean that he is positing a postmodern future for us. The term 'postmodern' does not mean anything to Nietzsche because he died before postmodernism emerges. Smith denies one version of the postmodern link to

Nietzsche but asserts another. Nietzsche is concerned more with how we are able to create values in a self-reflexive way and overcome modernity and nihilism when we live in modern culture. Our awareness of nihilism in the modern era should not be considered a pretext for evading life but a reason for affirming life. Unlike postmodernists who insist on breaking with tradition and modernity, Nietzsche has no intention to negate modernity according to his criticism of our decadent modern culture. He stands in a higher self-critical position viewing the human world in an ambivalent perspective. In terms of the interpretations of Nietzsche's conception, I accept diverse views of Nietzsche because I realise some of them are correct in different ways. Nietzsche's philosophy inspires postmodernists and influences their ways of thinking, but it is inappropriate to solely interpret Nietzsche as a harbinger of postmodernism by associating his attack on Christianity and tradition with postmodern premises. In contrast, Nietzsche seems to be a kind of individualist who is concerned with the development of the self. In what follows, I am going to explore his concept of individuality which is related to the notion of nihilism.

When Nietzsche espouses nihilism, he tells us that we no longer require the Christian God to save and redeem us, and then suggests we develop the self and redefine the meaning of existence. Nietzsche addresses the conception of individuality on the basis of his notion of nihilism. The route to developing the self, according to Nietzsche, is to break with Christianity and be aware of the need for individuality and independence. As he argues,

The Kingdom of Heaven is a condition of heart: Not something 'above the earth.' The Kingdom of God does not 'come' chronologically-historically, on a certain day in the calendar, something that might be here one day but not the day before: it is an 'inward change in the individual,' something that comes at every moment and at every

moment has not yet arrived. (WP 161)

In Nietzsche's view, Christianity cannot lead humankind to attain the kingdom of Heaven because it misinterprets what the kingdom of heaven refers to. The kingdom of Heaven, for Nietzsche, is not a place above the earth which we should seek; in contrast, it is the condition of our hearts. We do not need to search for the kingdom of Heaven, as proclaimed by Christianity, and rely on it for supporting our lives; it can be reached by way of self-reflection and self-overcoming. In other words, we should depend on ourselves and live independently. In Nietzsche's view, Christianity provides us a pessimistic view of humanity. The nihilistic culture not only decreases our self-confidence, but also tightly restricts us in the prison of nothingness; as a result, we lose our dignity and wallow in pessimism. Nietzsche has already perceived this terrible consequence; therefore, he shows his rejection of it by his attack on Christianity. "Nietzsche's critique of traditional and dominant moralities rests rather on a sharpened concept of the *individual responsibility of the self*, which he thinks is incipiently present in traditional moral systems, but not taken seriously by them" (Gerhardt 284). Nietzsche's notion of nihilism not only reveals a nihilistic culture that we should be aware of, but also inspires us to overcome it by affirming the concept of individuality.

In terms of Nietzsche's concept of individuality, two points should be noted. First, Nietzsche's concern for the individual does not mean that his thought is akin to the European Individualism which is associated with Christian morality. As he argues,

Through Christianity, the individual was made so important, so absolute, that he could no longer be sacrificed: but the species endures only through human sacrifice – All 'souls' became equal before God: but this is precisely the most dangerous of all possible evaluations! If one regards individuals as equal, one calls the species into question, one encourages a way of life that leads to the ruin of the species. (WP 246)

For Nietzsche, European individualism, which emphasises liberty and civilisation as the need for every person, misinterprets the meaning of individuality and undermines our ability to develop the self. This individualism, which regards that everyone is equal before God and asks for personal liberty, obviously denies one's distinctive ability to create one's life and damages the foundation of our communal life, that is, the need for interaction and cooperation of every person. Nietzsche criticises Christianity which provides humans with a concept "strictly egoistic fundamental belief in the 'one thing needful', in the absolute importance of eternal *personal* salvation" (D 132). To be an individual, for Nietzsche, does not mean that we live only for satisfying our personal desire and waiting for the redemption of the Christian God. On the contrary, we are responsible for our deeds and conduct, as he argues that all of us have to undergo the rigours of life: "No one is free to live everywhere; and he who has great tasks to fulfil which challenge his entire strength has indeed in this matter a very narrow range of choice" (EH *Clever*: 2). The concept of individuality, therefore, should not be taught and regulated by tradition and Christian morality. Rather, it refers to the human ability to continuously reflect upon the self and overcome the self. Because of this, one does not need to prove one is individual by means of others' judgements or standpoints; in other words, humanity stands only for itself as an individual. As Nietzsche tells us: "When man no longer considers himself evil, he ceases to be so – 'Good and evil are only interpretations, by no means fact or in-themselves'" (Notebook 1885-1886, 2: 131). Individuality should be attained through the ceaseless development of and reflection on the self.

Second, I stress that Nietzsche's concept of individuality is only suitable for the few. To live independently and practising life through experimentation without being restricted by Christian tradition and morality is fundamental to Nietzsche's attitude.

But he does not say that everyone can develop himself. Those few individuals who are able to overcome themselves and create their values are able to attain the possibility of self-development. In order to develop the self, Nietzsche emphasises the need for creating a battlefield in the mind, a self-reflexive and self-overcoming arena. Nietzsche in this respect argues that only the rare individual overcomes the weakness of humanity and accepts his fate. As Kaufmann argues: “The highest type, to Nietzsche’s mind, is the passionate man who is the master of his passions, able to employ them creatively without having to resort to asceticism for fear that his passions might conquer him” (1959: 217). Likewise, I want to point out that Nietzsche is not only concerned with the importance of individuality, but also represents himself as an individual who affirms life with the experimentation of the self. I take Nietzsche’s attitude towards his illness as an example to show how he conceives of self-development. As he describes, “I discovered life as it were anew, my self included, I tasted all good and even petty things in a way that others could not easily taste them – I made out of my will to health, to *life*, my philosophy” (EH Wise: 2). Nietzsche does not complain about his unhealthy condition when he feels intolerable but regards it as a stimulant that helps him to explore the self and understand life. As he also describes himself: “I am by nature warlike” (EH Wise: 7). This claim does not mean that Nietzsche likes war; in contrast, it shows us what way of life Nietzsche wants to have. He is determined to insist on fighting with the difficulties of life, both physically and mentally, until the last moment of being conscious before his insanity.

Nietzsche does not allow himself to be defeated by physical discomfort but insists on the need to fulfil ‘his’ task of life, as he says,

It is my fate to have to be the first *decent* human being, to know myself in

opposition to the mendaciousness of millennia...I was the first to *discover* the truth, in that I want the first to sense – *smell* – the lie as lie...My genius is in my nostrils...I contradict as has never been contradicted and am none the less the opposite of a negative spirit. (EH Destiny: 1)

More precisely, I argue that Nietzsche's understanding of the self through self-reflection sustains him to keep overcoming the self and laying stronger claim to individuality. Nietzsche shows us the way of life he creates and this is how he responds to nihilism by taking himself as a living experiment for his philosophical investigation. As he argues, "so onwards along the path of wisdom, with a hearty tread, a hearty confidence! However you may be, be your own source of experience!" (HAH 292) The exceptional individual, in Nietzsche's view, is the one who is able to conquer his limitations by understanding the self and then affirms life according to what he learns from his experience of life. "The only means to affirm life as a whole is to affirm the suffering it entails, which is to say, to transform it into growth" (Thiele 1990: 54). When the individual observes that modern culture is pessimistic, he chooses not to follow Christian values; on the contrary, he behaves autonomously and independently. As Nietzsche claims: "We few or many who dare to live again in a world *emptied of morality*, we who are pagan by belief: we are probably also the first to understand what a pagan belief is: having to imagine *higher beings* than man, but these as beyond good and evil; having to appraise all being-higher as also being-immoral" (Notebook 1888, 16: 16). The individual is a man who knows that he keeps conquering contradictory human nature and lives unconstrained by any moral doctrine. As an individual, Nietzsche reveals how he views life through his concept of individuality, and his insistence on the task of life also proves how he responds to life with a thoughtful and responsible attitude.

In "Revisiting the Will to Power: Active Nihilism and the Project of Trans-human Philosophy", Daniel Conway argues that Nietzsche identifies nihilism with the experience of decay, referring to it as "a psychological state and a physiological condition, both of which are marked by exhaustion, pervasive pessimism, a pandemic dissipation of will, and an unprecedented erethism" (2000: 119). Nietzsche redefines the meaning of nihilism by distinguishing between active nihilism and passive nihilism, in order to provide a trans-human philosophy. I agree with Conway that Nietzsche does not intend to "redeem" anyone from decadent modern culture with his concept of nihilism (2000: 123). Nietzsche argues that most philosophers are passive nihilists who "treat decay as the definitive objection to existence itself" (2000: 126). Against this, Nietzsche plays the role of a philosopher who questions Christian value.

As Conway argues,

Turning to his advantage the nihilism that darkens the horizon of late modernity, he conducts various philosophical experiments that have been heretofore impossible to undertake. The devaluation of the highest values uniquely positions him to call into question – and perhaps to suspend – several of the hoariest prejudices of Western philosophy and theology. (2000: 127-128)

Nietzsche illustrates how much we live pessimistically in the shadow of nihilism by blindly following Christian morality. So he set out to provide different attitudes toward values and life by showing us his criticism of Christianity. Understanding the nihilism deeply rooted in Western philosophy, Nietzsche consequently emphasises the need for developing the self in the direction of an experimental mode of life. Life, for Nietzsche, is considered as "a transpersonal force that spontaneously overflows itself in a sumptuary expression of its unquenchable vitality" (2000: 131). Conway, at this point, tells us that Nietzsche demonstrates his view of life which is different from other philosophers; Nietzsche questions Christian values which leads us to nothingness, and then stresses the need to overcome nihilism by experiencing life

with our values. As he argues: “One must have loved religion and art like one’s mother or wet-nurse – otherwise one cannot become wise. But one must be able to look beyond them, outgrow them; if one stay under their spells, one does not understand them” (HAH 292). Nietzsche here points out that we should realise how Christian morality dominates humankind, and then treat ourselves as ‘experiments’ so as to understand what way of life we ourselves want to have. Experimentation is crucial for humanity because it leads us to reflect upon ourselves, and then overcome our limitations and become an individual. According to Nietzsche, we stop following Christian doctrine and looking for salvation to the Christian God. We, on the contrary, regard ourselves as experiments, brave enough to confront the nihilistic era in which we have broken with the Christian God.

In this respect, nihilism, in Nietzsche’s view, is an important and necessary means for alerting us to know how to live independently. Nietzsche considers nihilism, i.e. the crisis of modernity, as something that alternatively causes us to understand our decayed culture and rethink the way we are able to live amidst nihilism. It seems that we stand at the crossroads, perceiving the need for breaking with traditional Christian morality and seeking new directions. As Nietzsche argues,

The period of clarity: one understands that the old and the new are basically opposite, the old values born of declining and the new ones of ascending life – that all the old ideals are hostile to life (born of decadence and agents of decadence, even if in the magnificent Sunday clothes of morality). We understand the old and are far from strong enough for something new. (WP 56)

In this situation, the crux is how we, who no longer believe in the Christian God and live in the condition of nihilism, resolve to move ahead. Modernity, as viewed by Nietzsche, is a realm wherein nihilism springs up. Although Nietzsche points out that we are not able to free ourselves from the nihilistic milieu of modern culture, he

implies a new vision of individuality that provokes us to rethink our responsibility for being human, overcome our limitations, and learn to live in the nihilistic era. This new vision of individuality, which leads us to gain a radically new perspective on how humanity, morality and the self can be integrated, can be considered as three steps as shown in the following chapters. The first step is to understand our contradictory nature in a way which is distinguished from the judgement of tradition and Christianity, and then redefine the relationship between the individual and society. The second step is to analyse the misconception of Christian morality, and explore what way of life we require for affirming life and living as an individual. The third step is to examine how humankind overcomes and improves itself to the point of becoming autonomous through self-realisation, and live confidently and independently in modern culture. As Dudley writes: "This opportunity for self-redemption is liberating in two senses: it frees us *from* our dependence on a Christlike savior, and it enables us to be free *in* our world, since we no longer need to escape that world in order to be redeemed. The tragic soul who redeems the world thus liberates herself at the same time" (208). Nietzsche's philosophy implies a sense of freedom and self-redemption, which can be achieved through self-reflection and self-overcoming. This sense of freedom does not belong to everyone but to the few individuals who can constantly overcome themselves and live affirmatively at present. "Simply being unconstrained is not an appropriate mark of freedom; being free should only serve the pursuit of great achievement, a pursuit that most people can not endure" (Hatab 53). According to Nietzsche, we are responsible not for others but for our own conduct; therefore, life offers us an opportunity to identify who we are. Nietzsche's perspective offers us a chance to welcome a new conception of the self. In order to see how Nietzsche affirms life on the basis of his concept of self-development, I am going to explore his concept of individuality which is

developed in the following chapters.

Likewise, I should explain why I do not analyse Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and his ideas of the will to power and eternal return, as most of Nietzsche's readers do. I have two reasons. First, regarding Nietzsche's self-critical interpretation as discussed in my fourth chapter, I do not choose *Zarathustra* but *Ecce Homo* since the latter is more precise in showing Nietzsche's critical view of humankind and himself. As distinct from *Zarathustra* which inspires us to understand human beings and the world according to Zarathustra's teaching, *Ecce Homo* brings us to see how Nietzsche conceives himself as a self-interpreting individual who reflects upon himself and affirms life. Second, the concepts of the will to power and eternal return are derived from Nietzsche's notion of the embodied self and his rejection of the concept of the absolute. When Nietzsche's concept of the self is not restricted by the concept of the absolute, i.e. Christian doctrine, but understood through self-reflection, we are able to grasp that his concepts of the will to power and eternal return are connected to his notion of individuality. In this respect, there is no need to separately emphasise these concepts because what Nietzsche does is to stimulate us to become aware of the embodied self and the process of self-cultivation. The next chapter sets out to clarify his conception of human nature, the first step toward his concept of individuality.

Chapter 2

The Self-Interpretative Development of Human Nature

In the Preface to *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche states that a person must become his “own master” and the master of his “own virtues” in order to be a free spirit (HAH Preface: 6). On the one hand, we are aware that our nature is complex and contradictory, but on the other hand, we are capable of mastering ourselves and creating our own values. In order to create values, we need to prevent ourselves from being misled by traditional values and judgements of human nature, and conceive that humanity can be raised to a higher level through its self-interpretative development. The first step on the journey of self-cultivation is to understand the different aspects of our nature. In this chapter, I examine Nietzsche’s concept of human nature as outlined in *Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, clarifying his conception of self and the relationship between individual and society. I do so in three sections, which seek to highlight Nietzsche’s conception of the human by way of comparative analysis of his writings with those of other important figures. The first compares Nietzsche’s view of human nature with those of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and the Social Darwinists.²¹ They support the idea of human evolution but give different aspects in interpreting it. This comparison highlights their respective concepts of evolution in relation to the development of humanity. The reason why I compare them is because Nietzsche does not approve Darwinism and the Social Darwinists’ conceptions of humanity in accordance with their theory of evolution from a biological point of view. He criticises their inaccurate conceptions of culture and human development with his

²¹ Nietzsche’s views of Darwin, of Spencer and of the Social Darwinists are connected together in his criticism.

anti-Darwinian stance. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche argues: “The utility of an organ does not explain its origin; on the contrary! For most of the time during which a property is forming it does not preserve the individual and is of no use to him, least of all in the struggle with external circumstances and enemies” (WP 647). Nietzsche conversely puts the case that this evolutionary conception, which refers to natural selection and the struggle for existence and resembles man and animals as organisms, reveals the progress of humanity. In contrast, he criticises this conception that degrades distinctiveness of human beings and misinterprets humanity. Nietzsche accepts that evolution is essential to the progress of humankind, but he does not agree with Darwinism and the Social Darwinists’ conception of evolution regarding the need for competition and struggle for life. Nietzsche argues that we require cultural evolution for the progress of humanity; we develop ourselves through self-interpretation.

The second section is the comparison between Sigmund Freud and Nietzsche. Both Freud and Nietzsche claim instinct as essential to human nature but they analyse its importance in different ways. Kaufmann²² in *Discovering the Mind* reports that Freud showed his admiration of Nietzsche in the weekly meetings of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. On October 28, 1908, according to the *Minutes*²³ (1967, p. 31f.). As Freud said: “The degree of introspection achieved by Nietzsche had never

²² In the second volume, *Nietzsche, Heidegger and Buber*, and the third volume, *Freud, Adler and Jung*, of the trilogy, *Discovering the Mind* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1992), Walter Kaufmann stresses the similarities between Freud and Nietzsche. He points out Freud’s admiration of Nietzsche which is shown in many reports, and analyses their similar ways of interpreting human nature. But Kaufmann also remarks that Freud denied that Nietzsche had influenced him. As Kaufmann explains, Freud “did not wish to be influenced by Nietzsche’s formulations one way or the other – either to accept them or to make changes to show his own independence” (Vol. 3: 264). Regarding Freud’s contradictory attitudes toward Nietzsche, Kaufmann says that Freud might have felt guilty because he “had never given Nietzsche sufficient credit for his creation of depth psychology and had slighted him in a way by not reading him and by not indicating all the points on which Nietzsche actually had priority” (Vol. 3: 270).

²³ *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, Translated by M. Nunberg. New York: International Universities Press, 1962, 1967, 1974, 1975.

been achieved by anyone, nor is it likely ever to be reached again” (Vol. 2: 47-49). Kaufmann comments that Freud and Nietzsche are similar when they view humanity from a psychological viewpoint, for instance, Nietzsche uses a similar image to call himself an old psychologist who has ears behind his ears in the Foreword of *Twilight of the Idols* (Vol. 2: 53). Kaufmann also argues that their concepts of the unconscious are similar: Both Freud and Nietzsche “were endowed with an exceptionally powerful reason...but they also recognized that we cannot begin to discover the mind as long as we ignore the irrational and subterranean springs of behavior as well as thought” (Vol. 2: 65). Kaufmann obviously to this extent regards Freud as the heir of Nietzsche, whereas Paul-Laurent Assoun in *Freud and Nietzsche* provides another commentary on them. He mentions that Freud, in a letter to his friend Fliess on the first of February 1900, shows his interest in Nietzsche’s ideas and thus turns to Nietzsche “in the hope of finding the words for the many things that remain mute within him” (20). Freud and Nietzsche both endeavour to proffer an account of human nature that has psychological elements and elucidate human nature according to their conceptions of instinct and the unconscious, but I have to say their focal points of self-understanding differ from each other and this is why I have chosen to compare them. “Nietzsche and Freud are often in a position of practically *saying the same thing, but not always about the same thing*” (Assoun 50). My attempt is to clarify their ambivalent concepts of human nature.

Freud considers psychoanalysis as “the hermeneutic science of the drives, whose parallel ‘meta-psychology’ describes its theoretical scope” (Assoun 70) and his concept of instinct, which is hereafter transformed into the concept of drive, is initially based on a biological standpoint. Freud designs his psychoanalytic method with experiment, stressing that this psychological method is the key element to

discover the self. But Nietzsche does not consider psychology as an effective solution for discovering the self. As he argues,

Until now, all psychology has been brought to a stop by moral prejudices and fears...we are going to be travelling *beyond* morality, and by daring to travel there we may in the process stifle or crush whatever remnant of morality we have left – but what do *we* matter! Never yet has a *deeper* world of insight been opened to bold travellers and adventurers. (BGE 23)

Nietzsche raises the critical claim that psychology, under the influence of Christian morality, is a science which limits our understanding of humanity and leads us to the key problems but not to the resolution. Human nature, in Nietzsche's view, cannot be wholly revealed through psychological observation and experiment because it is constantly undergoing transformation. Nietzsche shows us a nature inside humankind which stimulates us to create our values. Freud highlights his psychological method for the purpose of exploring what we are unaware in the unconscious, whereas Nietzsche is concerned with self-critical interpretation for raising our self-awareness. My comparison between Freud and Nietzsche aims at exploring how we might view human nature according to their psychological accounts of human life.

Saint Augustine and Nietzsche is the last section, which allows us to address the issue of human nature in a religious view. Robert M. Helm argues, "Augustine and Nietzsche are alike in having a polemical rather than an expository purpose in their references to Plato" (31). Augustine's thought²⁴ can be regarded as a mixture of

²⁴ In his crucial role as a thinker bridges classical culture and the Christian tradition, Augustine has exerted a great influence on Western philosophy and theology. His spiritual quest was developed in four stages. He was firstly inspired by Cicero's dialogues to have an interest in ethical and religious ideas. He recognised the ideas of good and evil by the dualistic religion of Mani, or Manicheism. Unsatisfied with the conception of evil that is based on materialism, he turned to Neoplatonism. However, the temporary spiritual peace provided by Neoplatonism could not help him to quell his physical desire and inner conflict when choosing his path of life. His conversion occurred instantaneously, and Augustine was finally determined to dedicate himself to Christianity and the Christian God.

Neoplatonism and Christianity in accordance with his own conception of religion. Augustine accepts the Platonic concept of God as absolute and unchangeable, but he does not agree with the Platonic devaluation of the body, which Nietzsche also criticises. As Augustine argues in *Confessions*: “In each category of your works, when you had said they should be made and they were made, you saw that every particular instance is good....This truth is also declared by the beauty of bodies. A body composed of its constituent parts, all of which are beautiful, is far more beautiful as a whole than those parts taken separately” (Conf, 13, 28, 43). For Augustine, as Carl Vaught remarks, a human being is a composite of a soul and a body, but he regards the soul as primary and the body as secondary, and the soul rules the body through the will (11). Augustine accepts that the soul is more important than the body, but he views the body as a part of God’s creation which should not be undervalued and abandoned as Neoplatonists claim. Carol Harrison also argues, Augustine concedes that the Platonist theory of body and soul is preferable to that of the Manichees, but he argues that the body, which is created by God, should not be considered solely as a prison according to the Platonism (157). This is the first reason why I compare Augustine and Nietzsche, who views humanity according to their own interpretation.

My second reason is that they both are concerned with self-understanding, but regard it differently according to their conceptions of God and man. Augustine’s focus is to advocate that humanity can only be developed by way of relying on God’s word, but Nietzsche concentrates on the ability of self-reliance and self-awareness. Based on his adaptation of Platonic thought mixed with his personal interpretation of Christian doctrine, Augustine emphasises that man needs to obey God’s will and repents for salvation. He argues that our contradictory nature can be redeemed through God’s word, and thus regards Christian doctrine as fundamental to the development of

humanity. But Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* proclaims the death of God and points to a crisis of value (125). He attacks Western philosophical and religious ideology which is built upon Christian culture and morality, and asserts that we should be courageous enough to live moral lives ourselves without relying on external support but on our creation and affirmation of our lives. Nietzsche does not agree that we follow Christian doctrine and ask for redemption as the only method to develop ourselves; Christianity for Nietzsche makes us suffer by accepting the notion of original sin. In contrast, Nietzsche stresses the need for self-awareness and self-transformation. Regarding Augustine's doctrine of reliance on Christian doctrine for salvation, Nietzsche views him as weak, feeble-minded and a slave to religious doctrine. As Nietzsche comments: "A person who lives in an age of disintegration that mixes all the races together, will carry in his body the heritage of his multifarious origins, that is to say, contradictory and often more than merely contradictory standards and instincts that struggle with one another and seldom come to rest" (BGE 200). Augustine, according to Nietzsche, lacks self-assertion and does not know how to live wisely and independently but takes Christian doctrine as a compulsory way of life. In this section I shall explore how Augustine and Nietzsche analyse human nature according to their conceptions of God and man.

In contrast to *The Birth of Tragedy*, which argues for a Dionysian, aesthetic viewpoint influenced by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human* is often considered to mark the beginning of Nietzsche's middle period,²⁵ where he alters his viewpoint and starts to explore increasingly controversial perspective on human nature, morality,

²⁵ "The Entry into Postmodernity: Nietzsche as a Turning Point" in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987, Massachusetts, Cambridge: the MIT Press, pp. 83-105) Habermas divides Nietzsche's thought into two periods. The young Nietzsche, influenced by Wagner and Schopenhauer, formulates an aesthetic idea in his admiration of the Dionysian ecstasy. The mature Nietzsche is the one who recognises his disappointment with Wagner and starts to view knowledge, culture and morality in a more sceptical way.

knowledge. In *Daybreak*, his next book, Nietzsche begins to more fully develop his ideas on the morality of custom. *Beyond Good and Evil* reveals how the mature Nietzsche views the human condition, and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the work after *Beyond Good and Evil*, displays his critique of morality and interpretation of the history of ethics. Above all, it illustrates possible ways of reflecting on the self, creating values, and simultaneously affirming life. In what follows, I shall explore Nietzsche's account of human nature under these three different aspects, and show how he affirms life through his understanding of human nature.

2.1 A View of Evolution: Darwin Versus Nietzsche

In human history, the continuous development of reason and self-consciousness is what makes human beings cultivated and different from animals. Human evolution is a crucial concept that stresses the development of humanity. In what follows, I analyse how Darwin, Spencer and the Social Darwinists view human nature according to their evolutionary conceptions, and how Nietzsche criticises them with his notion of evolution. In *The Origin of Species* Darwin expounds his theory of natural selection and observes that the struggle for existence is an unavoidable condition for organisms due to limited resources. He argues that "each organic being is striving to increase at a geometrical ratio; that each at some period of its life, during some season of the year, during each generation or at intervals, has to struggle for life, and to suffer great destruction" (1968: 129). With regard to this condition, he states that natural selection is essential to organisms because it preserves those species which are able to survive and procreate their kind (130-131).

Darwin explains that natural selection decides how organisms are able to survive and

exist according to their capacity for adaptation. According to Kenneth Waters, Darwin's theory of natural selection holds that "species changed through a process of selection akin to the method of artificial selection that breeders used to modify domesticated varieties of plants and animals" (118). Darwin illustrates evolution through his observation of the various species, arguing that the species most adaptable to the environment are able to survive in the process of natural selection and produce their descendants. Natural selection is vital for the evolution of organisms; it is, for Darwin, the mechanism of their evolutionary change. Darwin's concept of the evolution refers to the mechanism underlying the development of organisms, but he did not directly refer to humankind when he originally outlined the theory of natural selection in *The Origin of Species*. He uses plants and animals to explain the modifications and evolution of organisms, and his initial aim is to find out the facts by biological observation and experiment in order to explain the mechanism of evolution which he calls 'natural selection' (Bratchell 47). But he links the theory of evolution to humankind by inferring the resemblance between man and animals in *The Descent of Man*. As he writes: "We have now seen that man is variable in body and mind; and that the variations are induced, either directly or indirectly, by the same general causes, and obey the same general laws, as with the lower animals" (Vol. 1: 135). Darwin compares people and animals, attempting to infer similarities between them and thus implying that the struggle for existence appears not only in animals but also in humankind. Humans, according to Darwin, too are affected by natural selection and governed by the struggle for existence: "As all animals tend to multiply beyond their means of subsistence, so it must have been with the progenitors of man; and this will inevitably have led to a struggle for existence and to natural selection" (Vol. 1: 154).

Darwin uses biological facts to explain the modifications of human body structure,

and indicates that organisms are adapted to the environment by natural selection. The similarities between humans and animals that Darwin infers highlight the evolution of humankind, saying that it is the most distinctive of organisms. As he argues in *The Descent of Man*,

Man in the rudest state in which he now exists in the most dominant animal that has ever appeared on the earth. He has spread more widely than any other highly organised form; and all others have yielded before him. He manifestly owes this immense superiority to his intellectual faculties, his social habits, which lead him to aid and defend his fellows, and to his corporeal structure... These several inventions, by which man in the rudest state has become so pre-eminent, are the direct result of the development of his powers of observation, memory, curiosity, imagination, and reason. (Vol. 1: 136-137)

We can see that Darwin wants to elucidate why humans are more adaptable than other organisms by the way of evolution. He lists many traits to show how man evolves. For example, we can use mental power properly with talent, express ideas through language, cooperate each other in society, and defend ourselves against the treat of the struggle of existence. Darwin here not only stresses that we are more adaptable than other animals to the environment, but also implies that it is natural selection that causes us to evolve more distinctively than animals.

Likewise, Darwin takes civilisation as an example to emphasise why the theory of natural selection is crucial in explaining the development of humankind. In *The Descent of Man*, he tells us: “Although civilisation thus checks in many ways the action of natural selection, it apparently favours, by means of improved food and the freedom from occasional hardships, the better development of the body. This may be inferred from civilised men having been found, wherever compared, to be physically stronger than savages” (Vol. 1: 170-171). On the one hand, Darwin regards the origins of humankind and animals as similar, but on the other hand he says that the difference

between them is that human beings progress because they are more adaptable to the environment. Darwin's theory of evolution overturns orthodox theological ideas about the divine creation of human beings; his aim is to show how a natural mechanism – i.e. natural selection – is essential to the development of human nature. In response to Darwin's concept of natural selection, I would say that it is inappropriate to view the development of human nature solely according to the theory of natural selection. Loren Eiseley comments that Darwin fails "to distinguish consistently between biological inheritance and cultural influences upon the behavior and evolution of human beings" (202). Benjamin Farrington likewise argues that Darwin's weakness is his extension of this account to every aspect of humankind: "Having made an immense advance in understanding the mode of evolution in the instinctive realm of animal life, he then without any misgiving applied his findings to the rational life of man" (103). Darwin regards humans as organisms and emphasises human evolution in accordance with his theory of natural selection. We cannot deny that he is a pioneer in biology. As Farrington comments: "His quick insight into nature's ways enabled him to anticipate modern views on the transition from the inorganic to the organic stage and on the dramatic change in the whole economy of nature involved in the advent of life" (102). Darwin implies that the modifications of human body structure, expression and lifestyle are crucial to the evolution of human beings, but fails to understand that they are not the key reason that explains the progress of humanity.

The key thing that Darwin neglects is our ability to interpret and thereby fashion ourselves. At this point, we can understand that Darwin's concept of the progress of man is based on the concept of adaptation to the environment. This is Darwin's view of the 'higher' organism. As George Levine explains: "'Higher' simply refers to capacity for adaptation, which, for Darwin, usually, but even here not inevitably,

means more complex organizations with more elaborate division of labor among the organs” (112). Darwin obviously regards humankind as an organism and his view of the progress of human beings is based on a biological point of view. As Levine goes to argue, “the idea of progress can only mean this *biological* development in adaptation, and has no moral or spiritual significance” (113). In other words, Darwin sees humankind as an organic kind of being, and his concern with human evolution is solely based on its biological development. For Levine, “Darwin’s insistence on law - natural selection is, after all, a ‘law’ - was required not only to displace the erratic interpositions of a miracle-making God without leaving the world unintelligible, but also to affirm the scientific validity of the study of organisms (and the human, too)” (89). Though Darwin wants to provide us with a new interpretation of the origins of life from a scientific viewpoint, his view of human nature and culture is superficial. It is too restrictive for Darwin to explain human nature in terms of his biological observations and theories. Let us go back to his argument in the introduction of *The Origin of Species*,

Still less do we know of the mutual relations of the innumerable inhabitants of the world during the many past geological epochs in its history. Although much remains obscure, and will long remain obscure, I can entertain no doubt, after the most deliberate study and dispassionate judgement of which I am capable, that the view which most naturalists entertain, and which I formerly entertained – namely, that each species has been independently created – is erroneous. (69)

Although Darwin here admits that there are many problems and issues about the evolution of organisms that he is unable to completely explain by means of his theory of natural selection, but his insistence on the theory of natural selection and his extension from animals to humanity is not appropriate in interpreting human nature. Darwin fails to understand that human nature is controversial and changeable. Though Darwin’s world can be regarded as “a world of ‘mixed’ conditions” (Levine 112), it

seems that his view of human nature does not correspond to the 'conditional' viewpoint he suggests. He stresses that we are descended from other animals and regards the mechanism of development (natural selection) as fundamental to the progress of human nature.

Darwin cannot conceive that his theory of natural selection does not completely explain the human condition, and is unaware of the difference between humanity and other animals, that is, our ability to create. But his evolutionary viewpoint has had a powerful impact upon modern culture. When he develops the theory of natural selection and publishes it, he makes a clash with the orthodox Christian teaching of creation and the origin of humankind (Bratchell 16). As Bratchell continues,

There was considerable interest in the theory of evolution before 1859, but Darwin's book acted as a catalyst and precipitated universal comment on an unprecedented scale, because although it was written for the layman it aroused serious scientific opinion and provoked theological and philosophical reaction. For many Darwinism became synonymous with evolution, and the 'monkey theory' became the talk of the day, not the explanation of the mechanism of natural selection which was Darwin's real contribution to the debate on evolution. (73)

Darwin attempts to discover the facts which could explain the evolution of humankind by means of biological observation. But his theory of natural selection and interpretation of human nature surprised his contemporaries, forced them to ponder what man is, and sparked intensive public debate on the nature of humanity. In turn, his theory was adapted by the contemporary the British philosopher Herbert Spencer and the Social Darwinists. Although Spencer's theories were largely formed before Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, as Siân Martin Davies points out, Spencer later used Darwin's work for the purpose of validating the authority of his own (193). In other words, Spencer postulated "the existence of a universal principle of

‘evolution’ or ‘development’ in nature (a progressive tendency towards increased complexity), although Darwin did not want his scientific theory to be confused with Spencer’s philosophical speculation (Gayon 242).

Spencer makes a synthesis of biology, physics, sociology, and philosophy with his concept of evolution. In terms of evolution, Spencer in “The Principles of Biology” uses the phrase “Survival of the Fittest” to replace Darwin’s “Natural Selection”. As Oldroyd explicates, “Spencer coined his famous phrase ‘Survival of the Fittest’ – the phrase that Darwin chose to adopt and add to the heading of Chapter 4 of the fifth edition of *The Origin*, and which led subsequently to the charge that the theory of evolution by natural selection was non-scientific, being tautological or unfalsifiable” (207). Darwin is considered a naturalist who concentrates chiefly on biological facts and experiments, but Spencer, as Bratchell remarks, links the principle of evolution to sociology in order to envisage a progressive development in human affairs (104).

Furthermore, Spencer’s followers, the Social Darwinists, also used natural law to polarise relations between rich and poor, arguing that, “whatever existed was natural – the rich were rich and the poor were poor because of natural law” (Berry 134). The term ‘Social Darwinism’, as explained by Oldroyd, takes Darwin’s evolutionary theory as a means to “give descriptions of society or prescriptions for its best constitution”; therefore, Social Darwinism is generally considered “a loose amalgam of doctrines such as conservatism, militarism, racism, rejection of social welfare programs, eugenics, laissez-faire economics and unfettered capitalism” (212). The movement of Social Darwinism “was made up of people who tried – in many different or even contradictory ways – to apply the theories of Darwinian evolutionism to descriptions of the way society is constituted, or, more riskily, to say

how they thought it *ought* to be structured” (Oldroyd 204). Likewise, Berry in *God and Evolution* explains the intention of the Social Darwinists,

Social Darwinists fallaciously derived behavioural prescriptions from very questionable premises, from distorted slogans summarising the early theory of evolution. That life was a competition in which the fittest survived by dint of superior strength, cunning and aggression was somehow supposed to justify the laws of the socio-economic jungle.
(160)

Under the influence of Spencer, the Social Darwinists transform Darwin’s theory of natural selection, emphasising the idea of ‘Survival of the Fittest’ which may have as its consequence a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. Though Spencer and the Social Darwinists seem to advocate the progress of humanity and society, they do not help people elevate themselves to a higher level but restrict them by imposing concepts that stimulate competition and inhibit developmental capabilities.

Darwin offers a striking vision that stimulates us to rethink the relationship between man and nature, whereas Nietzsche rejects this vision, arguing that the evolutionary development of an organism is not the appropriate way to evaluate the progress of humankind. Nietzsche agrees that evolution is fundamental when we encounter the struggle for life, but he thinks evolution is not the mechanism that underlies human development, which is more essentially characterised by a self-interpretative development of personhood through cultural practices. For Nietzsche, Darwin’s emphasis on the evolution of organisms is unable to account for the development of human nature; on the contrary, Nietzsche explains that the Darwinist solely stresses the importance of mechanism. Darwin’s concept of evolution cannot help to elevate human nature but makes the human condition worse. Nietzsche rejects Darwin’s concept of evolution: “‘Useful’ is the sense of Darwinist biology means: proved advantageous in the struggle with others. But it seems to me that the feeling of

increase, the feeling of becoming stronger, is itself, quite apart from any usefulness in the struggle, the real *progress*: only from this feeling does there arise the will to struggle” (WP 649). Nietzsche does not agree with Darwin who claims that the improved adaptation of an organism refers to the progress of human beings. Darwin emphasises too much on the need for struggle and survival. But this emphasis on the contrary brings us to a lower level of self-awareness. As Nietzsche also explains: “These half-animals who were happily adapted to a life of wilderness, war, nomadism, and adventure were affected in a similar way to the creatures of the sea when they were forced either to adapt to life on land or perish – in a single stroke, all their instincts were devalued and ‘suspended’” (GM II: 16). Nietzsche here criticises Darwinism for regarding humanity as the most adaptable organisms and saying that the development of human being is based on our ability to biologically modify ourselves for adaptation to the environment. Nietzsche argues that this conception stressing human progress through biological adaptation will diminish our potential ability to create our values. Nietzsche’s disagreement is also shown in his criticism of Spencer and the Social Darwinists. He regards Spencer as a mediocre man with a shopkeeper’s philosophy (WP 382) and a decadent (TI 9:37). With regard to Spencer’s concept of ‘Survival of the Fittest’, Nietzsche argues that it is not the right way to develop culture and humanity.

Taking the industrial progress of England as an example, Nietzsche points out that it is incorrect to believe that the progress of society through Darwinian style adaptation and competition can raise human nature to a higher level, as Nietzsche argues: “The conditions under which a strong and noble species maintains itself (regarding spiritual discipline) are the reverse of those which govern the ‘industrial masses,’ the shopkeepers à la Spencer” (WP 901). Human evolution, for Nietzsche, is not a

development involving merely adaptation to the environment but a dynamic and ceaseless development through self-understanding. Nietzsche demonstrates his opposition to the progress of humanity argued by Darwin, Spencer and the Social Darwinists:

First proposition: man as a species is not progressing. Higher types are indeed attained, but they do not last. The level of the species is not raised.
Second proposition: man as a species does not represent any progress compared with any other animal...*Third proposition:* the domestication (the 'culture') of man does not go deep – Where it does go deep it at once becomes degeneration (type: the Christian). (WP 684)

According to Nietzsche, the evolution of human beings differs from the evolution of animals. Our modified ability to adapt to the environment does not mean we are progressing to a higher level. Nietzsche claims that people need to elevate themselves to a higher type by way of self-interpretation. In other words, Nietzsche argues that human evolution occurs not merely through biological development but by self-critical understanding. The understanding of the self is the key to human evolution; it is not biological modification but self-understanding that most essentially characterises our development. According to Lewis Call, what Nietzsche rejects is not “biological science in its entirety, but rather [...] Darwinistic trends within nineteenth-century biology” (3). Nietzsche provides an alternative approach to the topic of human evolution, and stresses that Christian culture is the main reason which prevents us from attaining a higher level of cultural existence. After all, Nietzsche is primarily concerned with cultural evolution.

Darwin's theory of evolution shows us a scientific way to understand human nature, but the fact is that human nature is too complicated to be completely subsumed by his theory. Nietzsche, in contrast, formulates his own controversial interpretation of human nature. As Schacht points out, there are two crucial themes in Nietzsche's

work. One is the analysis of what we are. The other is an attempt to address the question of what we may become (1989: 885). Both Darwin and Nietzsche argue that we are animals, but they interpret the similarities between man and animals differently. Nietzsche believes that we all have natural instincts and desires like animals for survival and competition. Thus, for example, in *Daybreak* he claims that the beginning of justice, “as of prudence, moderation, bravery – in short, of all we designate as the *Socratic virtues*, are *animal*: a consequence of that drive which teaches us to seek food and elude enemies” (D 26). Like Darwin, who considers us biologically evolving organisms, Nietzsche argues that we are animals. But he also argues that we are not solely animals which fight and procreate for survival. Nietzsche draws our attention more to human nature. Although Nietzsche regards man and animals as being similar, he argues the reason why we are distinctive from animals is because we are able to adjust ourselves through inner reflection and self-interpretation.

Likewise, Nietzsche argues that we are also inevitably influenced by our innate human animality and limits of consciousness. As he says,

All judgments about the values of life have developed illogically and therefore unfairly...Man cannot experience a drive to or away from something without the feeling that he is desiring what is beneficial and avoiding what is harmful, without evaluating knowingly the merit of the goal. We are from the start illogical and therefore unfair beings, *and this we can know*: it is one of the greatest and most insoluble disharmonies of existence. (HAH 32)

Here Nietzsche explains what human nature is. Simply put, we are illogical, contradictory in behaviour and our judgement is partial and subjective. Nietzsche claims that animality is an essential part of human nature, which indicates that we are organisms like animals. But this is not Nietzsche’s conclusion about human nature.

The fundamental point is that he wants to stress our need to understand who we are. Even though we know that we are illogical and contradictory, Nietzsche wants to tell us that human nature can potentially be developed through self-understanding. He is thereby concerned with the progress of human nature, but in accordance with his concept of the will to power. As he argues in *Genealogy*,

Man has had enough...but, like everything else, even this disgust, this fatigue, this frustration with himself emerges so powerfully in him that it is immediately transformed into another chain. The No which he says to life brings, as it by magic, an abundance of tender Yeses to light; even when this master of destruction, of self-destruction *wounds* himself – it is the would itself which afterwards compels him to *live*. (GM III: 13)

We feel frustrated and challenged by our illogical and contradictory nature, but on the other hand, Nietzsche says that humanity also has an inner self-reflexive and self-interpreted ability to continuously transform and develop itself, and this is the will to power. Nietzsche's notion of power exists as potentiality, as Ansell-Pearson comments, and the 'power' in the term 'will to power' should not be denoted a fixed and unchangeable entity but an accomplishment of the will overcoming or overpowering itself. (1994: 46).

While Spencer and the Social Darwinists tell us that we need to struggle and compete for existence, Nietzsche holds that we are, essentially, continuously in conflict with our own contradictory nature. But Nietzsche considers this ceaseless contradiction within humanity as a stimulus to understand humanity and life. He takes ancient philosophers as an example,

The old ancient philosophers were able to give their existence and appearance a meaning, a support, an underlying reason which inculcated *fear* in others. Examined more closely, this derived from an even more fundamental need, that of inspiring self-respect and an inner fear of themselves. For within themselves they found all the value-judgements

turned against themselves, they had to suppress all sorts of suspicion and resistance towards 'the philosopher within'. (GM III: 10)

According to Nietzsche, ancient philosophers did not ignore the conflict with their contradictory nature and neither did they evade from their struggles; on the contrary, they cultivated themselves through self-interpretation in order to overcome the limitations and continue to live. This is how Nietzsche understands human evolution. What people have suffered and experienced in their lives will then be transformed into a powerful strength, i.e. the will to power, that assists them to overcome struggle and attain self-development and individuality.²⁶

Regarding human evolution, Nietzsche does not imply that Darwin's theory of evolution is false. What he rejects is that aspect of Darwin's concept of evolution which is mainly concerned with the adaptation of organisms, and the need for competition, ignoring the fact that human nature should be enhanced not through the adaptation to environment but through will to power within humanity. As he explains: "Basic errors of biologists hitherto: it is not a question of the species but of more powerful individuals. Life is not the adaptation of inner circumstances to outer ones, but will to power, which, working from within, incorporates and subdues more and more of that which is 'outside'" (WP 681). Nietzsche's notion of the will to power refers to the ability within humanity that overcomes the struggle for life, develops us by way of self-reflection, and drives us to move ahead with perfect self-assurance. For Nietzsche, we need to understand the meaning of being humans, and this is the most essential to humanity, which can be achieved by way of self-interpretation. "The

²⁶ Nietzsche's view of life is connected with the will to power, as he argues: "Life – to us, that means constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame, and also all that wounds us; we simply *can do* no other... Only great pain is the liberator of the spirit... Only great pain, that long, slow pain that takes its time and in which we are burned, as it were, over green wood, forces us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths and put aside all trust, everything good-natured, veiling, mild, average – things in which formerly we may have found our humanity" (GS Preface: 3).

thoroughly self-referential world of the individual was a prominent theme throughout Nietzsche's writings" (Thiele 1990: 35). We exist because we come to experience life and thereby raise ourselves to a higher level of self-understanding. The notion of human nature and self-development, according to Nietzsche, is what will to power is all about. We evolve and progress is not because we are the most adaptable organisms to the environment but because we are able to cultivate ourselves and fashion our fluid and contradictory nature through will to power, the inner ability that leads us to interpret and reflect upon ourselves, and then continue to be alive as an independent individual. As he claims, "the famous theory of the survival of the fittest does not seem to me to be the only viewpoint from which to explain the progress of strengthening of a man or of a race" (HAH 224). As opposed to Darwin's concept of evolution, which is biological, Nietzsche conceives of a cultural evolution that develops in us, making us different from animals through the cultivation of self-interpretation.

Nietzsche addresses two crucial points about human evolution. First, he suggests we conceive of the possibility that we are continuously evolving. As he argues: "However far man may extend himself with his knowledge, however objective he may appear to himself – ultimately he reaps nothing but his own biography" (HAH 513). According to Nietzsche, our knowledge is undoubtedly limited no matter how hard we attempt to view everything in an objective way. Regarding this point, Nietzsche argues that humanity can continuously overcome and evolve itself by way of self-interpretation. Second, he proposes that we can liberate ourselves from the restraint of tradition and philosophy if we are aware that we create our values. Nietzsche inspires us to understand that human evolution should not be solely and narrowly interpreted according to Darwin's biological conception. As he argues, "The struggle for survival

is only an *exception*, a temporary restriction of the will to life; the great and small struggle revolves everywhere around preponderance, around growth and expansion, around power and in accordance with the will to power, which is simply the will to life” (GS 349). Nietzsche argues that the struggle for existence which Darwin emphasises should not be considered as the primary concern in evaluating self-development. Though Nietzsche agrees with Darwin who claims that we encounter the struggle for existence as other organisms, he also argues that we need to understand how to cultivate ourselves through self-understanding, and then we are able to encounter our struggle and overcome it by way of self-interpretation. The crux is that we need to know the self, understanding that we need no longer allow ourselves to be limited and directed by tradition and custom but are also able to focus on and cultivate our individuality. As Nietzsche claims, “it is not part of the nature of the free spirit that his views are more correct, but rather that he has released himself from tradition, be it successfully or unsuccessfully. Usually, however, he has truth, or at least the spirit of the search for truth, on his side: he demands reasons, while others demand faith” (HAH 225). Nietzsche’s concept of individuality can best be grasped in this way. What Nietzsche does is to provoke our sense of self-awareness and individuality, which propels human evolution not in physical and biological but in cultural ways. Thus Nietzsche emphasises the importance of self-awareness for the development of human nature.

Keith Ansell-Pearson, in “Nietzsche contra Darwin”, explores what Nietzsche really wants to say in his criticism of Darwinism. In Ansell-Pearson’s view, although Nietzsche criticises Darwin and proposes an alternative law of life with his concept of self-overcoming, he actually endorses “the subtler Darwin he never cultivated an appreciation of” (1998: 8). Nietzsche nevertheless provides wide-ranging,

unconventional and open-minded interpretations of human nature and human evolution. Ansell-Pearson argues that Nietzsche does not respond to Darwinism as “a biological theory” but as “a social theory, as *social Darwinism*” (1998: 10), offering an innovative and striking idea of evolution and selection:

It is not so much, therefore, a question of refuting Darwin’s conception of utility, where ‘useful’ is synonymous with proven advantageousness in the struggle with others, but of constructing an order of rank, in which the ‘real development’ is located in the feeling of increase in power, ‘the feeling of becoming stronger’, apart from any usefulness in the struggle of life as the ‘survival of the fittest’. (1998: 11)

According to Ansell-Pearson’s commentary, Nietzsche aims at correcting the Darwinian conception of evolution, which mainly focuses on the need for struggle and survival and arguing that will to power drives humanity to cultivate and evolve itself and becomes what it is. Nietzsche does not refute the biological facts argued by Darwin. He criticises Darwin’s, Spencer’s and the Social Darwinists’ theories of evolution which have a negative impact on culture and society. With regard to human evolution, Nietzsche differs from Darwin, stressing a cultural evolution for the progress of humanity in connection with his concepts of self-overcoming and individuality.

Nietzsche gives his personal interpretation of human evolution, as argued by Gregory Moore in *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor*:

Nietzsche envisages life itself – the will to power – as a struggle of unequal parts. The concept of struggle is not, as it was for Darwin, merely confined to the antagonistic relationship between organisms or between organisms and their environment. According to Nietzsche, there is not only a struggle for existence; existence is itself an incessant struggle. (46)

Nietzsche at this point proposes to view evolution not by emphasising the relationship between people and environment but by analysing how humankind is able to evolve

through self-interpretation. Whereas Darwin describes and explains the struggle for existence, Nietzsche regards life as a battle, and self-understanding as the specifically human trait that characterises our battle. On the one hand Nietzsche explicitly exposes the traits of our nature: its pride, pity, power and arrogance. “The *pride* of mankind, [...] resists the theory of descent from the animals and establishes the great gulf between man and nature” (D 31), and pity “becomes the antidote to self-destruction, as a sensation which includes pleasure and proffers the taste of superiority in small doses” (D 136). On the other hand, he contends that people are capable of freeing themselves from the cage of custom, morality and history when they become aware of the hidden motives of action, and can challenge themselves to accept their animal being. This is the point that Nietzsche seems to convey metaphorically in the analogy between a butterfly flying high and the free spirit,

The butterfly wants to break through his cocoon; he tears at it, he rends it: then he is blinded and confused by the unknown light, the realm of freedom. Men who are *capable* of that sorrow will make the first attempt to see if mankind *can transform itself* from a *moral* into a *wise* mankind...Everything in the sphere of morality has evolved; changeable, fluctuating, everything is fluid, it is true: but everything is also streaming onward – to one goal. (HAH 107)

In this passage, Nietzsche makes two points. First he reminds us that we are able to overcome our animality, but this can only be achieved when we are liberated from the limitations imposed by Christian morality. The second point is that we live as an independent individual, who is willing to face his contradictory nature and experience every good and bad thing happened in his life.

In contrast to Darwin’s concept of biological evolution, Nietzsche is concerned with the achievement of culture. Moore concludes that Nietzsche “reintroduces a teleological aspect to evolution by claiming that there is in nature a vital force that

seeks the increase of power” although he does not want to equate his idea of evolution with the progress of organisms or a linear ascent of organic forms (55). In this way Nietzsche offers us a new perspective on human evolution. The path that leads to human progress is not smooth, as Nietzsche claims,

Every smallest step in the field of free thought, of a life shaped personally, has always had to be fought for with spiritual and bodily tortures: not only the step forward, no! the step itself, movement, change of any kind has needed its innumerable martyrs through all the long path-seeking and foundation-laying millennia. (D 18)

Nietzsche in this respect reveals the need to fight ceaselessly for the enhancement of individuality by enduring spiritual and physical struggle. He not only criticises Darwin and Spencer for offering inaccurate views of evolution and the progress of humanity, but also argues that human nature should be developed through cultural evolution. Darwin raises the question of the difference between human nature and exclusively animal nature. My comparison between Darwin and Nietzsche discusses human nature and explores how according to their respective conceptions of human development the progress of humankind is attained. This is the first step toward understanding Nietzsche’s viewpoint of human nature. Regarding the complexity of human nature, the next step is to explore how Nietzsche interprets human nature by focusing on his analysis of instinct and the unconscious, in comparison with Freud’s concepts which reveals the conflict between reason and instinct in human nature.

2.2 A View of Instinct : Freud Versus Nietzsche

Freud defines the essential nature of instinct in *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*.²⁷ He claims that instinct arises not from the external world but within the organism where it

²⁷ All materials which reveal Freud’s thought are according to the selected work furnished by Peter Gay (1995) in *The Freud Reader*. Ed. Peter Gay. London: Vintage.

never operates as a force giving a momentary impact. Freud approaches the concept of instinct from a biological viewpoint: instinct appears constantly in organisms. There are two kinds of primal instinct that Freud stresses: the self-preservative instinct, and the sexual instinct (568). Freud views human instinct (especially the sexual instinct) as the central motive of human behaviour. As Freud argues,

If now we apply ourselves to considering mental life from a *biological* point of view, an 'instinct' appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body. (566)

Freud regards instinct as an innate force which originates within the organism and stimulates people to action. He associates instinctual stimuli with the term 'need' and argues that a need can only be satisfied with "an appropriate ('adequate') alteration of the internal source of stimulation" (564-568). We can say his concept of instinct refers to inner impulse or drive of humanity. Taking sexual instinct as the main subject in his conception of psychoanalysis, Freud assumes that a person's fundamental character can be derived from analysing manifestations of sexual instinct in childhood and that sexual satisfaction is important to the development of human nature. In turn, the problems that arise in the course of seeking sexual satisfaction lead to psychoneurosis. Instinct is crucial to humankind, according to Freud, and the aim of instinct is to achieve an instant satisfaction through the body. In contrast to external stimuli which is from muscular movement, Freud claims that instinctual stimuli, which "maintain an incessant and unavoidable afflux of stimulation", will force the nervous system "to renounce its ideal intention of keeping off stimuli" until they have been satisfied (566). As he concludes that instinctual stimuli are "the true motive forces behind the advances that have led the nervous system, with its unlimited capacities, to its present high level of development" (566), the neurotic problems arise if instinct cannot be

fully satisfied.

Freud likewise uses the concept of the unconscious, which is related to the notion of repression, to explain the complexity of human nature.²⁸ As he argues in *The Unconscious*: “Consciousness makes each of us aware only of his own states of mind; that other people, too, possess a consciousness is an inference which we draw by analogy from their observable utterances and actions, in order to make this behaviour of theirs intelligible to us” (575). But the unconscious is different. As he explicates, “We have learnt from psycho-analysis that the essence of the process of repression lies, not in putting an end to, in annihilating, the idea which represents an instinct, but in preventing it from becoming conscious. When this happens we say of the idea that it is in a state of being ‘unconscious’” (573). In contrast to consciousness which makes us aware of our behaviour so that we are then able to identify ourselves, Freud regards the unconscious as our inner drive which we are unaware of its existence. The unconscious helps us to modify our inference of the self and know our ‘primitive animism’ (577) when it is disclosed by psychological investigation.

Freud pictures man as aggressive and instinctive, stressing that instinct which motivates us, especially from the unconscious, should not be neglected. Freud wants to argue two points in accordance with his concept of instinct. The first one is his criticism of civilisation. As he argues in *The Future of An Illusion*,

²⁸ In *Repression*, Freud explains: “One of the vicissitudes an instinctual impulse may undergo is to meet with resistances which seek to make it inoperative. Under certain conditions... the impulse then passes into the state of ‘repression’” (569). According to his psychoanalytic observation, repression for Freud is not “a defensive mechanism which is present from the very beginning”; on the contrary, he argues that the essence of repression “lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious” (569-570). Assoun likewise argues that repression for Freud is to “designate the unconscious process in its dynamic reality” because what is produced by repression is fundamentally unconscious. Freud thus affirms that ‘the theory of repression is the cornerstone on which rests the whole edifice of psychoanalysis’ (115).

[E]very individual is virtually an enemy of civilization, though civilization is supposed to be an object of universal human interest. It is remarkable that, little as men are able to exist in isolation, they should nevertheless feel as a heavy burden the sacrifices which civilization expects of them in order to make a communal life possible. Thus civilization has to be defended against the individual, and its regulations, institutions and commands are directed to that task. (687)

Freud thinks that instincts are natural and constant needs within organism that have to be fulfilled, and argues that everyone wants to fulfil the desire for contentment. Humans, on the one hand, want to fulfil their instinctive satisfactions but they, on the other hand, have to conform to the regulations of civilisation and society. In this respect, Freud objects that civilisation restricts humans from fulfilling their essential needs as an individual. Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* also contends that civilisation “has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man’s aggressive instincts and to hold the manifestations of them in check by psychical reaction-formations” (750). Freud does not deny civilisation; on the contrary, he suggests we view civilisation in a different way. We should not let us be restricted by civilisation but regard it as a proper means to understand and develop ourselves. As he also argues, “the liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization...The development of civilization imposes restrictions on it, and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions” (ibid.: 741), Freud stresses the need for understanding instincts and attacks the bad influence of civilisation on us. The second point is his assertion of the theory of psychoanalysis. He advocates the importance of psychoanalysis, asserting that the assumption of the unconscious in psychoanalysis helps us explain hidden impulses that we are not aware of in conscious life but are apt to unconsciously repress. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, he explains how he uses psychoanalysis for treating hysteria²⁹: “Psycho-analysis, however, can invariably

²⁹ Freud explicates that a neurotic problem is revealed in the character of hysterics: “a degree of sexual

bring the first of these factors to light and clear up the enigmatic contradiction which hysteria presents, by revealing the pair of opposites by which it is characterized – exaggerated sexual craving and excessive aversion to sexuality” (255). For Freud, he views psychoanalysis is a way that provides us to respond to our instinct more rationally and be more human (Bettelheim 33).

Freud directs us to disclose the facets of instinct in humanity according to his biological conception of instinct: human instincts arise naturally in the body and constantly need to be fulfilled. He stresses that humans need to recognise and accept themselves as instinctive beings, and satisfy their inner drive. I would like to add my point of view in response to Freud’s attitude towards instinct and psychoanalysis. Assoun argues that Freud regards instinct as a demand which is necessary in a physical system; instinct for Freud “connotes less a value than it denotes a function”, and his notion of drive shows “a material, incomplete nature submitted to a positive, descriptive investigation” (69). Likewise, the concept of the unconscious is applied by Freud to designate “a representational sphere accessible to a psychological, clinical investigation” (Assoun 116). Freud intends to use a biological viewpoint to explain instinct. Freudian concept of human nature in this way represents an extension of the biologism that Darwinian thought generates. But this conception restricts our understanding of human nature. In the first section, we have discussed that Darwin ignores human ability to create when he stresses the importance of evolution. Freud seemingly focuses too much on approaching to discover and satisfy instinct, in accordance with his psychoanalytic concept, but neglects our self-reflexive nature that

repression in excess of normal quantity, an intensification of resistance against the sexual instinct (which we have already met with in the form of shame, disgust and morality), and what seems like an instinctive aversion on their part to any intellectual consideration of sexual problem” (Three Essays 255).

is able to bring us to understand the self. As Ilham Dilman comments in *Freud and Human Nature*, “Even if, with Freud, we could still say that there is a beast in man, it does not mean man ‘must remain uninterested in the claims of morality’” (145); he disputes Freud’s deterministic viewpoint of human nature and instincts and shows that we cannot confine the motives of human behaviour merely to self-satisfaction as Freud was sometimes prone to argue. Based on this limited conception, Freud believes that his theory of psychoanalysis enables him to “say with some certainty what the appearance of a symbol in the dream of any patient meant” (Bettelheim 47). But his assurance that psychoanalysis is essential to understand ourselves does not mean that this psychoanalytic treatment is necessary and effective to everyone. No matter how precisely instinct and the unconscious can be disclosed through psychoanalytic treatment, human nature, which is constantly evolving and transforming, cannot be completely revealed and understood according to psychological investigation. We have to bear in mind that the key to self-understanding is not through psychoanalytic treatment but through our ‘own’ self-interpretation of human nature, as what Nietzsche argues in his thought.

There are three kinds of instinct that Nietzsche distinguishes and describes. The first kind of instinct arises from the body is used as a means for socialisation. This concept of instinct is similar to Freud’s concept, which indicates our inner animal-like impulses. The second kind of instinct arises from our collective nature, which is related to the conception of consciousness argued by tradition and Christian morality. Nietzsche names it herd instinct and considers it an “instrument of culture” that is in control of humanity (GM I: 11). Herd instinct dominates and confines us in our daily life. As Nietzsche argues, “people ‘know’ what is good and evil. It must sound harsh and trouble the ears, then, if we insist over and over that it is the instinct of man the

herd animal that thinks it knows, that glorifies itself and calls itself good whenever it allots praises or blame” (BGE 202). Nietzsche declares that people rarely know what good and evil is because they are apt to judge things according to the dominant Christian culture and morality. Christian morality, in Nietzsche’s view, is herd morality. Herd instinct, as Nietzsche continues, “has had a breakthrough, has come to predominance, has prevailed over the other instincts and continues to do so as a symptom of the increasing process of physiological approximations and resemblances” (BGE 202).

Nietzsche here explains that the reason why herd instinct becomes predominant is because people are used to believing consciousness is the self and habitually following it as a way of life. Nietzsche criticises traditional philosophy for misleading people to regard consciousness as the self, as I have discussed in the introductory chapter. Similarly, he argues that Christian culture and morality mislead us into accepting a pessimistic attitude toward life, “the tired, pessimistic view, the mistrust of the enigma of life, the icy NO of disgust at life” (GM II: 7), and spreads a negative assumption, the concepts of original sin and redemption, that makes us feel ashamed of our animal-like impulses in order to control us. Nietzsche rejects of Christian concept of consciousness, and claims that instinct which is connected with consciousness leads people to misinterpret humanity. In this respect, Nietzsche criticises herd instinct, and shows us another way to understand the potential of consciousness. Our habitual consciousness, in Nietzsche’s view, brings with it the tendency to adhere to the commands of tradition and religion. People habitually follow tradition and do not conceive of this as a mistake. This is how herd instinct dominates us. As Nietzsche argues that consciousness is superficial (WP 476) and is used for communal life, we should not assert that consciousness is the only correct

method that we use for making judgements. Though here we can see how Nietzsche criticises Christian culture which limits people in herd instinct, his intention in criticising Christian culture is different from Freud's.

Freud advocates the need for satisfying the instinctive drives, that is, revealing the innate and unconscious impulses and desires of the organism. As Assoun concludes instinct for Freud is an essential physical demand which has to be satisfied (69). In contrast, Nietzsche argues that we should understand how we are dominated by herd instinct, and then we master intellectually our inner nature. Self-understanding is important, though it is not easy to perceive. Nietzsche's aim is to suggest we conceive of the third kind of instinct: our self-evaluating and self-interpretative nature, and act according to it. Nietzsche's concept of instinct in this way, according to Assoun, is more creative in perceiving the vigour of life (68). Nietzsche emphasises its importance because this kind of instinct drives us to overcome our contradictory nature and attain self-development. But people are rarely aware of the existence of this instinct, which is repressed in the unconscious, while they are accustomed to recognising only the conscious dimension of their mental lives and remaining under the domination of herd instinct and Christian morality. As Assoun states, Nietzsche considers the unconscious "a mask and means to health" for humankind and consciousness is "an non-necessary and non-universal predicate of life and action" (110). This concept of instinct is connected with Nietzsche's notions of will to power and individuality. As Assoun goes on, the unconscious, for Nietzsche, not only "indicates an instinctive determination" but also "manifests the fundamental Will" (114). Nietzsche claims that people should liberate themselves from the domination of Christian culture which restricts humankind in pessimism, perceive the self and then act instinctually. To be aware of this 'unconscious' instinct, for Nietzsche, is

fundamental way to view life and the development of humanity. As he tells us: “Physiologists should think twice before deciding that an organic being’s primary instinct is the instinct for self-preservation. A living being wants above all else to *release* its strength; life itself is the will to power, and self-preservation is only one of its indirect and most frequent *consequences*” (BGD 13).

According to Nietzsche, we should not erroneously assume our animal-like instinct as the primal concern for the purpose of preserving life, nor do we mistakenly have to be subject to herd instinct and consciousness. On the contrary, we need to understand that our freedom can be attained only at the great cost of multifarious modes of subjugation, and our self-interpretative nature helps us reach self-transformation and individuality, according to Nietzsche. “A man is called a free spirit if he thinks otherwise than would be expected, based on his origin, environment, class and position, or based on prevailing contemporary views” (HAH 225). For Nietzsche, an exceptional individual does not retreat from the situation he has to confront but is willing to live instinctively by way of continuous transformation of the self. When the man could understand and reflect upon the self, he could let himself not be distracted by anything outside himself, such as the domination of traditional standards of Christian morality and culture. His focus is himself and he is continually struggling but overcoming himself so as to be the individual endowed with a free spirit. As Gerhardt says: “This ‘free spirit’ has his ground in himself. He determines himself not according to consequences – which are incalculable anyway – but from his beginning. His origin lies in what he is potentially, that is, in what really lies within his powers” (290). The wise individual, for Nietzsche, is capable of experiencing life with inner strength and a free spirit. As Nietzsche also remarks: “However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the

totality of *drives* which constitute his being” (D 119). Nietzsche tells us that humankind raises itself to a higher level of through self-interpretative development.

Likewise, Kaufmann distinguishes Nietzsche’s will to power from Freud’s concept of the pleasure principle. Freud’s pleasure principle means “a conscious state that is free of pain, displeasure and discomfort”, but Nietzsche does not agree that everyone desires this pleasure (Vol. 2: 84). Kaufmann points out that Nietzsche provides us with a twofold concept: “He denied the hedonist doctrine that all men really desire pleasure and the absence of pain, and he replaced this doctrine with his own hypothesis that what people really desire is power” (Vol. 2: 85). But this power, or will to power, in Nietzsche’s view, means how humanity is able to interpret instinct, struggling with inner contradictory nature and self-misunderstanding so as to overcome and develop itself with free spirit. In other words, Nietzsche regards this kind of instinct as a “creative-affirmative’ virtue” which is valued by the demands of regeneration (Assoun 69). Nietzsche brings us to understand human nature by distinguishing the concept of the unconscious from the concept of consciousness, and claiming that the free spirit can be found not in consciousness but the unconscious. Thus: “When an individual’s highest and strongest instincts break forth with a passion, driving him far above and beyond the average, beyond the lowlands of the herd conscience, the community’s self-regard is destroyed as a result” (BGE 201). Nietzsche explores the possibility of a new way of thinking about and evaluating humanity, according to his conception of instinct. This self-interpreted and self-cultivated justice is not to depend on Christian culture and morality but depends on a higher, more intellectual and more impartial attitude toward the self, people and life.

If we want to apply the Nietzschean conception of justice and take it as a perspective on life, as Ansell-Pearson argues, it means that “one is able to comprehend life beyond the moral valuation of good and evil and beyond the standpoint of humanism”(1993: 278). But Nietzsche knows this new way is immensely hard to fulfil by most people. After all:

Every exceptional person instinctively seeks out his fortress, his secrecy, where he is *delivered* from the crowd, the multitude, the majority, where he is allowed to forget the rule of ‘humanity’, being the exception to it; in one case, however, an even stronger instinct pushes him, as a person of great and exceptional knowledge, towards this rule. (BGE 26)

Only those exceptional individuals can conceive of their self-interpretative nature and use it for overcoming and developing themselves. But we can regard Nietzsche’s concept of instinct as an alternative source for perceiving how we are able to liberate ourselves from being dominated by tradition and Christian culture, and viewing humanity with an affirmative attitude. As Thiele claims: “The thoroughly self-referential world of the individual was a prominent theme throughout Nietzsche’s writing” (1990: 35). Freud’s conception of instinct and the unconscious are his means of analysing human nature and advocating that we should satisfy the need for contentment. But Nietzsche’s is to delineate the importance of self-awareness and independence, the core of being an affirmative and developed individual, and leads us to understand human nature on a psychological level which is more profound than Freud’s. Though Freud and Nietzsche have different interpretations of instinct, they both examine human nature and encourage us to understand ourselves through those conceptions. At the beginning of this chapter, we compared Darwin and Nietzsche, examining the fundamental distinction between man and other animals by means of their concepts of evolution. Then we compared Freud and Nietzsche, focusing on the psychological analysis of human instinct and the unconscious. The third part is the

nucleus of my exploration in this section. In it I compare Saint Augustine and Nietzsche, examining how differently they identify human nature in their conceptions.

2.3 A View of God and Man : St. Augustine Versus Nietzsche

Augustine's view of human nature is accordant with his conception of God. A son of a pagan father and a Christian mother, the young Augustine was inspired to recognise the ideas of good and evil by Manicheism, which "expressed in poetic form a revulsion from the material world, and became the rationale for an ultra-ascetic morality" (Chadwick 11). Augustine later rejected the notion of evil based on Manichean materialism which regards God as "subtle luminous matter" (Chadwick 23), and turned to Neoplatonic ideas of the soul and God.³⁰ Augustine in his *Confessions* claims that God is incorruptible, immune from injury and unchangeable (Conf, 7, 1, 1). "By introspection in solitude and by practising the way of dialectical regress from external to internal, from inferior and physical to superior and mental, he [Augustine] briefly attained a vision of eternal truth and unchanging beauty" (Chadwick 23). However, this spiritual peace provided by Neoplatonism did not solve Augustine's question concerning the origin of evil, which was related to his irresistible sexual desire. As Chadwick continues, "Neoplatonic spirituality and the stress on interiority and on liberation from the distractions of the external world, sharpened Augustine's feeling of being pulled in two different directions with his sexual drive as a downward pull" (25). Augustine was finally released from his torment of sexual desire after he had experienced a conversion, and dedicated himself to the Christian God and Christianity. In what follows, I discuss how Augustine views

³⁰ Augustine met many Neoplatonists in Rome and his ideas in this respect were mostly influenced by Plotinus.

human nature according to his interpretation of God, mixing his adaptation of the Platonic thought and Christian doctrine.

Following Neoplatonism, Augustine interprets God as absolute and immutable. He regards God as “not just someone or something who happens to exist; he is Being itself, and the source of all finite beings” (Chadwick 41). Likewise, he believes that God is the creator and all things that God creates are essentially good. He agrees with Plotinus who rejects any doctrine of evil as “an independent power which could impinge upon the good” and teaches “the initiative of the good in giving form and unity to matter and evil as a declining from this order whilst being comprehended by it” (Harrison 7). Though Augustine accepts Neoplatonism and argues that origin of evil is not from God but from humanity, his view of evil is different from the Neoplatonic view. He prefers to argue that the root of evil is in “the soul’s instability” rather than is “in the body and in matter”, as claimed by Plotinus. Evil, for Augustine, “originated in a misused free choice which neglected eternal goodness, beauty and truth” (Chadwick 38). In Augustine’s view, evil does not exist because everything that is made by God is good: “Accordingly, whatever things exist are good, and the evil into whose origins I was inquiring is not a substance, for if it were a substance, it would be good” (Conf, 7, 12, 18). In this respect, we can see that Augustine uses a dualistic principle to distinguish God from humanity. He regards God as an immutable Being and man as created by this Being in its image. Humans, for Augustine, are created and endowed by God with free will, but they misuse their free will and in consequence sin. As he argues, “the free choice of the will is the reason why we do wrong and suffer your [God’s] just judgement” (Conf, 7, 3, 5). In other words, Augustine argues that all the things that God creates are good, including all of nature, and stresses that sin and evil derive not from God but from humanity. As he

says: “From a human nature, which is good in itself, there can spring forth either a good or an evil will. There was no other place from whence evil could have arisen in the first place except from the nature – good in itself – of an angel or a man” (En, 4, 15).

Augustine implies that humanity is essentially good when God creates it but our nature is not immutable like that of the creator. It is the weakness of the soul that causes evil and makes people sin. Sin has two causes, as he explains in *Enchiridion*, “either from not seeing what we ought to do, or else from not doing what we have already seen we ought to do. Of these two, the first is ignorance of the evil; the second, weakness” (En: 22, 81). God provides us with free will to choose what we want to do, according to Augustine, and this free will would cause evil if we are ignorant and misuse it. At this point, he asserts that original sin is innate because of Adam’s and Eve’s fall: “The cause of evil is the defection of the will of a being who is mutably good from the Good which is immutable” (En, 8, 23). Augustine explains that it is Adam’s and Eve’s free will that brings them to disobey God and sin. As Herbert Deane explains, sin for Augustine is “man’s refusal to accept his status as a creature, superior to all other earthly creatures but subordinate to God. So the root cause of sin, of falling away from God and from goodness and toward evil, is man’s prideful self-centeredness” (16-17). Adam and Eve make themselves be sinners because they choose not to obey God’s command but behave according to their will. Adam’s and Eve’s disobedience also causes their descendents to be sinners from birth. Augustine here says that people are easily tempted to sin due to their weakness and disobedience to God. As he also says that sin results from “the punishment of a more freely chosen sin, because I was a son of Adam” (Conf, 8, 10, 22), we were born with sin and suffer because we are the descendents of Adam. But Augustine also argues that sin can be

cleansed when people are willing to obey God's will and understand the need for repentance. The only way to avoid sin is to ask for the divine help.

According to Augustine's conceptions, he distinguishes God from man: God is an immutable Being but man is created in the form and image of God. "In God, Being is identical with changeless goodness. In man, 'to be or not to be' signifies the measure in which he is approaching God's goodness or falling away from it" (John Burnaby 37). Augustine also claims that sin is unavoidable; it is not only because we are the descendents of Adam and Eve but also because we are not God and we misunderstand our free will. By accepting the judgement of the apostle Peter, Augustine contends that there is no more free will unless people are "delivered from the bondage of sin" and start to "be the servant[s] of righteousness" (En 9,30); true liberty is obeying the will of God, which is the right thing that people should. Accordingly, Augustine argues that our free will should not be regarded as doing what we want but doing what God wishes us to do. Otherwise, we are ignorantly led by our free will to disobey God and sin.

For Augustine, God is eternal and powerful but man is a creature bearing original sin. Separating man from God, Augustine argues that the only and essential way to raise ourselves and bring us back to God is depending on what God says through the Scripture. Augustine impresses upon us "the necessity of man's turning towards God whose image is present in his rational soul, in order to be, to know, and to be beautiful" in his thought, and also suggests that "a turning away from this to lower, material reality would be to diminish his being and his capacity for knowledge and beauty" (Harrison 142). In contrast to his notion of God, Augustine claims that man should firstly confess his sin by means of God's word, and then is able to know his

soul as “an image of God” and to perceive “the beauty of Creation and God’s presence in it” (Harrison 179). This is the way that Augustine views human nature, stressing that the development of humanity can solely be attained through Christian scripture. According to his conception of God contrasting with his conception of man, Augustine’s faith in God and Christian doctrine is doubtless, and his attempt is to advocate God’s will and love. But I argue that he on the other hand adopts a pessimistic attitude toward humanity which limits us by through his notions of sin and evil. The problem is because Augustine lacks self-assertion, and his self-criticism restricts him from viewing humanity in a positive way. He focuses on Christian doctrine but neglects that humans are distinctive not only because they are made in the image of God but also because they have the ability to reflect on themselves, create their lives and be independent. This is our free will when God create us. Yet Augustine shows a misconception of free will by arguing that people should obey God in order to find true free will. He refers free will to choose to follow God’s will. This kind of free will is limited because it is based on people’s obedience to God.

Though Augustine says that evil does not exist because everything that is created by God is good, he does not believe that we have the potential to understand ourselves through self-awareness. In contrast, he regards humanity as miserable, arguing that the only right thing that people have to do is to obey the will of God. God creates humanity, but God does not ask us to obey his commands blindly by following Christine doctrine. Augustine’s conception of man is questionable because he sees only the weakness of humanity and takes this as evidence for the necessity of our obedience to God. When God creates us, he makes us in his image and gives us the ability to choose and create. According to this view, we are able to create our values and lives by ourselves. God does not solely create us as his toys for the purpose of

obedience but humanity who is responsible for what he acts. However, Augustine neglects the connection between God and humans: the ability to create. As he argues, “In their perverted way all humanity imitates you. Yet they put themselves at a distance from you and exalt themselves against you” (Conf, 2, 6, 14). The problem is that Augustine resolves to obey God’s will so blindly and criticises his own weakness so much that he is unable to see human nature in an alternative way. Augustine presents a pessimistic notion of human nature, which is mainly according to his personal uncomfortable experience and his interpretation of Christian doctrine. As he argues: “The blindness of humanity is so great that people are actually proud of their blindness” (Conf, 3, 3, 6). I take his following description of his son, to emphasise how pessimistic and partial he is when he views human nature: “He was about fifteen years old, and his intelligence surpassed that of many serious and well-educated men. I praise you for your gifts, my Lord God, Creator of all and with great power giving form to our deformities. For I contributed nothing to that boy other than sin” (Conf, 9, 6, 14). Augustine obviously lacks the confident belief that he deserves to be a father. He treats himself and humanity in a negative way although he has faith in God and gratefully praises everything provided by God. Augustine is unable to provide a flexible attitude towards human nature. His personal experience before his conversion to Christianity and his conceptions of God and man cause him to keep criticising not only himself but also humanity.

Augustine obeys God and lives by following Christian doctrine, but on the other hand condemns man which is created by God, including himself. As Evans remarks, for Augustine, the effect of evil will on human souls “is to make them behave in a manner more appropriate to bodies, that is, to appear to be material not spiritual” (39). In order to avoid sin and bring us back to God, Augustine sees Christian doctrine as a

necessary way to promote the development of humanity. But Augustine neglects the fact that self-awareness is the primal element that motivates humankind to avoid sin and develop itself. I take Augustine as an example. As I have discussed, what leads Augustine to release from being tempted by his irresistible physical desire and finally turn to God is not the notion of God that he has previously acquired through Neoplatonism but the conversion that he suddenly experiences and that inspires him to willingly rid himself of his desire and devote himself to God. When Augustine was in conflict over whether to convert to Christianity, he heard a voice “from the nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl” which kept asking him to “pick up and read, pick up and read” until he opened the book of the apostle: “I seized it, opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eyes lit: ‘Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts’ (Rom. 13: 13-14)”. He thereby completely relinquished his desire: “I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled” (Conf, 8, 12, 29). The main motive that leads him to persevere in his spiritual quest, from Manicheism to Neoplatonism and finally to Christianity, is that he is always conscious of his physical desire, which he names evil will, and wants to find a solution to release it, as he recalls his experience of stealing the pears with friends: “But my pleasure was not in the pears; it was in the crime itself, done in association with a sinful group” (Conf, 2, 8, 16). The reason that Augustine is aware of the need for self-development is not that he from the outset reads Christian doctrine and obeys God’s will but because he is unable to endure his inner conflict which emerges from physical impulse, and then turns to Christianity by which he finds a way to help him master his contradictory nature.

However, Augustine does not appreciate his capacity of self-awareness; on the contrary, his conversion limits himself in Christianity, and misleads him to think that obedience to God is fundamental to the development of the self. Merely obeying Christian doctrine cannot raise us to a higher level; it would oppositely inhibit us from knowing the self and in consequence dominates us, as what Nietzsche claims in his thought. This is the reason why Nietzsche criticises Augustine as a slave of Christianity: “The passion of God... There is an oriental deliriousness in it, like that of a slave who has undeservedly been pardoned or promoted; we find it in Augustine, for example, whose gestures and desires are offensive in their lack of any nobility” (BGE 50). According to Nietzsche, Augustine follows Neoplatonism and accepts the notion of God, but he does not know how to create and live as an independent individual. His conception of God with its mixture of Neoplatonism and Christianity frees him from being tempted by physical desire; however, his limited and negative conception of humanity including himself prevents him from achieving human creativity and causes him to be a slave who is dominated by Christianity. Nietzsche also argues, “among such born *enemies of the spirit* emerges occasionally the rare piece of humanity that the people revere under such names as saint or sage. From among such men come those monsters of morality who make noise, who make history – St Augustine is among them” (GS 359). Nietzsche declares that Augustine is unable to live with a free spirit because he does not provide humanity the way of life that we ought to have, but confines us in a pessimistic life by preaching Christian doctrine.

In contrast to Augustine who advocates obeying God and relying on Christian doctrine for enhancing humanity, Nietzsche condemns Christianity that turns all evaluation “*upside down*” (BGE 62), and claims that we should not follow Christian

doctrine but count on ourselves. With his proclamation of the death of God, Nietzsche rejects the conception of God claimed by Judeo-Christian doctrine: God exists and is the absolute and powerful Being which is capable of protecting and redeeming humans from suffering and misfortune. This notion that conceptualises God as superior, immutable and perfect but contrarily sees humankind as sinful and imperfect, for Nietzsche, is a means that the priests use for misguiding humans to fear of this portrayal of God as “a punishing justice” (HAH 132), and hereafter dominate them.

The idea of the omnipotent God, as Nietzsche argues, originally does not exist in ancient culture. People in ancient times do not have any idea of God. They do not feel themselves shameful but consider themselves as the only certain and calculable: “man is the rule, nature without rule”. “In the mind of religious men”, as Nietzsche continues, “all nature for them is the sum of the actions of conscious and intentioned beings, an enormous complex of *arbitrary acts*”; people in ancient culture do not lose confidence and feel subordinate when they encounter nature which is unknown, mysterious and inexplicable. Nietzsche regards this attitude as man’s basic conviction that governs “primitive, religiously productive ancient culture” (HAH 111). But Christianity inverts this conviction, altering man’s attitude towards humanity and nature and undermining his self-confidence by inculcating the notion of the existence of God. As Nietzsche states, a man “would have no reason to be dissatisfied with himself to any special degree” when he compares himself to other men, and would only “be sharing the common burden of human dissatisfaction and imperfection”. The notion of a transcendent and absolute God, which is contrast to humankind, makes us feel not only frustrated about ourselves, as we look into a bright mirror which reflects our own imperfect and distorted nature, but also humiliated and appalled by perceiving the existence of God in our imagination: “in every possible experience,

large or small, he thinks he recognizes its anger, its menace, and he even thinks he has a presentiment of the whiplashes it will deliver as judge and executioner” (HAH 132). This conception of God, which teaches us to repent for original sin and ask for redemption, thus causes humankind to disbelieve its own creativity, and finally to lose the ability to be independent and master itself.

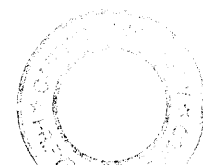
By questioning the existence of God, Nietzsche not only attacks Christianity which tames us by way of Christian precepts, as he contends: “For thousands of years, a deep, suspicious fear of an incurable pessimism has forced people to cling to a religious interpretation of existence” (BGE 59), but also reveals his concern for humanity which has to free itself from being repressed by Christian doctrine and no longer waits for an unfulfilled salvation. For Nietzsche, it is fundamental to perceive the demise of the belief in the existence of God, which he regards as “a cultural event of profound significance for people who from time immemorial have been accustomed to thinking in terms of a theocentric interpretation of themselves, their lives, values, and reality” (Schacht 1983, 119-120). Nietzsche also clarifies the conception of sin in Christianity, arguing that we should release us from it in order to live with a free spirit. As he claims: “If one goes through the individual moral statements of the documents of Christianity, one will find everywhere that the demands have been exaggerated so that man *cannot* satisfy them; the intention is not that he *become* more moral, but rather that he feel *as sinful as possible*” (HAH 141). Nietzsche elucidates that Christian doctrine provides us a frustrated and negative view of humanity and makes us sacrifice and undervalue ourselves according to the conceptions of sin and salvation: “[The] Christian faith has meant a sacrifice: the sacrifice of freedom, pride, spiritual self-confidence; it has meant subjugation and self-derision, self-mutilation” (BGE 46).

Nietzsche tells us that we do not have innate sin. He mentions that it is important for us to understand that we are contradictory and have weakness, but conflicting nature should not be considered as sinful. As he also claims, “we want to avow that man has arrived at this condition not through his ‘guilt’ and ‘sin’ but rather through a series of errors of reason, that if his nature seemed dark and hateful to him to that degree, it was the fault of the mirror, and that that mirror was his creation, the very imperfect creation of human imagination and powers of judgment” (HAH 133). The reason why people feel themselves evil is because they accept the existence of the pure and absolute God, which is inculcated by Christianity, and assume their imperfection as evil by contrasting their contradictory nature from God. But Nietzsche argues that it is erroneous for humankind to regard itself sinful and then count on Christian doctrine for expecting a redeemed life. In this respect, Nietzsche criticises the notion of evil which is based on Christian moral judgement: “To be evil is to be ‘not moral’ (immoral), to practice bad habits, go against tradition, however reasonable or stupid it may be” (HAH 96). Nietzsche, for instance, argues that Christianity distinguishes the mind from the body, condemns human sensation which is naturally within our nature and inverts it into evil according to Christian morality: “The passions become evil and malicious if they are regarded as evil and malicious...Must everything that one has to combat, that one has to keep within bounds or on occasions banish totally from one’s mind, always have to be called *evil*” (D 76). But this judgement of evil, in Nietzsche’s view, is invalid and perverse. He contends that we need to recognise that “there are no sins in the metaphysical sense; but, in the same sense, neither are there any virtues; we recognize that this entire realm of moral ideas is in a continual state of fluctuation, that there are higher and deeper concepts of good and evil, moral and immoral” (HAH 56). There is no absolute moral judgement regarding good and evil, for Nietzsche.

What we abide by Christian morality, i.e. the conceptions of good and evil, are produced according to the interpretation of Christianity.

Christianity counsels us to accept what it preaches and live by following the conceptions of good and evil in the doctrine of Christianity, but Nietzsche argues that the notions of good and evil “make sense only in reference to men” (HAH 28). Nietzsche’s view of evil is different from the interpretation of Christianity. Augustine argues that evil is from human nature and it emerges when man acts against God’s will, whereas Nietzsche considers the notion of evil as the invention of humans: it is one of the things that humankind names and brings into being. (Higgins 2006: 410). Nietzsche regards evil as the frightful energies of human nature, “the Cyclopean architects and pathmakers of humanity” (HAH 256) that drives us to interpret our nature, and then see if we are able to transform or destroy ourselves, which is decided by our determination. As he claims: “No one knows how far circumstances, pity, or indignation may drive him; he does not know the degree of his inflammability. Miserable, mean conditions make one miserable; it is usually not the quality of the experiences but rather the quantity that determines the lower and the higher man, in good and in evil” (HAH 72). We are unable to reflect upon ourselves and understand whether we are weak or strong unless we experience many incidents that cause us conflict, contradiction and suffering. We need to understand that good and evil cannot be measured according to Christian doctrine. In contrast, they depend on how we view and understand our nature; in other words, we judge ourselves according to our value and self-interpretation.

Augustine claims that the only virtuous way of life is to believe in God and follow what God says according to Christian doctrine, but Nietzsche refuses to accept it. He



criticises Augustine who advocates the eternity of God in accordance with Platonism, arguing that Christianity dominates human culture as “the annihilation of the decaying races” (WP 862). Christianity brings humanity to the state of psychological decadence wherein we believe in the existence of God but undermine our own. As he says, “the idea of a God disturbs and humiliates as long as it is believed, but given the present state of comparative ethnology, *its origin* can no longer be in doubt; and with insight into that origin, the belief disappears...But if the idea of God disappears, so too does the feeling of ‘sin’ as a transgression against divine precepts, as a stain on a creature consecrated to God” (HAH 133). There is no need for humanity to feel shameful because of original sin, as shown in Christian doctrine. For Nietzsche, the truth of human nature is that everyone has weaknesses of character but there is no sin. We are the ones who help ourselves overcome weakness and transform ourselves for the better.

In response to the Christian God, Ansell-Pearson comments that Nietzsche’s intention is “to encourage modern human beings to cultivate the only attitude he believes can redeem the world in the absence of a centre-point or a God, and restore innocence to the flux of life” (1994: 45). Nietzsche suggests we get rid of the conceptions of God and sin, and live intellectually and independently when we no longer rely on Christian doctrine but ourselves. We should firstly understand that we are not sinful and then develop us by way of self-reflection. As Nietzsche explicates,

The man who wants to gain wisdom profits greatly from having thought for a time that man is basically evil and degenerate: this idea is wrong, like its opposite, but for whole periods of time it was predominant and its roots have sunk deep into us and into our world. To understand ourselves we must understand *it*; but to climb higher, we must then climb over and beyond it. (HAH 56)

According to Nietzsche, what brings us to cultivate ourselves is the understanding that

there is no certain judgement on human nature like the conceptions of sin, good and evil, and we know we are responsible for justifying our conduct and living independently. When people habitually rely on Christianity as the way of life, they are unable to perceive their own power with which they are endowed as human beings, and do not know how to rely on it intellectually. As Nietzsche argues: “Only a very few people can be independent: it is a prerogative of the strong. And when independence is attempted by someone who has the right to it, but does not *need* it, we have proof that this man is probably not only strong, but bold to the point of recklessness” (BGE 29). Though Nietzsche understands that only few individuals are able to reach independence and achieve a free spirit, he stresses the importance of individuality in our striving toward that goal. He tells us that individuality is decided by how we are capable of understanding our nature, liberate ourselves from the restriction of tradition and morality on humanity, and willingly raise ourselves by means of our own strength. As he suggests,

The strength of a person’s spirit would then be measured by how much ‘truth’ he could tolerate, or more precisely, to what extent he needs to have it diluted, disguised, sweetened, muted, falsified...Perhaps harshness and cunning furnish conditions more favourable for the development of strong, independent spirits and philosophers than taking things lightly which we prize in scholars, and with good reason. (BGE 39)

For Nietzsche, the development of humanity cannot be attained by relying on Christian doctrine and seeking for redemption; on the contrary, it can only be attained when a man is willing to develop himself and understand what his nature is. This man, according to Nietzsche, needs to see if he is able to overcome himself through the processes of self-contradiction, suffering and misunderstanding, and then transforms himself to be independent. In contrast to Augustine who regards obeying one God and asking for salvation as the only way to develop humankind, Nietzsche emphasises that

self-interpretative development is essential to us. He shows us an alternative way to understand human nature: we have to create our way of life without relying upon Christian doctrine.

Karl Marx's commentary on Ludwig Feuerbach can be compared to Nietzsche's on Augustine. The atheist and humanist Feuerbach has a profound impact on Nietzsche and Marx.³¹ Feuerbach in *The Essence of Christianity* argues, "God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man" (12-13). He claims that the Christian God is "essentially but universally man – man stripped of his individual limitations, man as a species-being, man as an expression of the essentially human" (Kamenka 46). Feuerbach criticises Hegelian dialectic and espouses that Christianity is an absolute religion not for Hegel's reason but for our self-consciousness, as he regards religion "a function of the emergence of self-consciousness" (Van Harvey 12-13). For Feuerbach, Incarnation which is promoted in Christian doctrine is to express "the atheistic insight that humanity's well-being is more important than God's" (Harvey 27). Marx gives a favourable response to Feuerbach's atheism. As Kamenka remarks:

The young Karl Marx, within two years of the publication of the *Essence of Christianity*, drew the concrete conclusion on which so much of Feuerbach's popularity rested: 'The criticism of religion ends in the teaching that man is the highest being for man, it ends, that is, with the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a debased, forsaken, contemptible being forced into servitude.'³² (16)

The young Marx agrees with Feuerbach, admiring him as "a true conqueror of the old philosophy" (Harvey 10), but this opinion changes later on. In his "Theses on

³¹ In *Conversations with Nietzsche* (1987), Ida Overbeck recalls how Feuerbach has influenced Nietzsche long ago before Schopenhauer: "If 'The Concept of God as Man's Generic Nature' and other essays written by Feuerbach are read in Nietzsche's spirit, one will understand what their way of thinking contributed to his superman. This Nietzschean central idea drew its nourishment here, more than from all natural-scientific argumentation" (114).

³² This commentary is from Marx's "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" [Towards the Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right], written in 1843 and published in the *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher* [German-French Yearbooks] of 1984.

Feuerbach”, Marx points to Feuerbach’s inability to put his ideal but abstract concept of religion and humanity into real life through practice: ³³ “Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* theoretical activity...he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judaical manifestation” (Theses I). Marx advocates that all social life is fundamentally practical (Theses VIII), and thus he in *The German Ideology* disapproves Feuerbach who is unable to see “how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society” (62).

Feuerbach, according to Marx, stays firmly in “the realm of theory” and sees human beings “not in their given social connection, not under their existing conditions of life” but stops “at the abstraction ‘man’ and get no further than recognising ‘the true, individual, corporal man’ emotionally” (64). Thereby, Marx comments that Feuerbach, who locks himself in the realm of his theory, can only consider himself as an “object of the senses” but never “sensuous activity” (63-64). Up to a point, Feuerbach can be considered similar to Augustine. Though Feuerbach’s atheistic argument of the Christian God inspires Nietzsche and Marx to rethink humanity and the values promoted by Christianity, Marx argues that Feuerbach cannot give an effective view to help developing humanity. On the contrary, Feuerbach remains himself in his contemplation with his “isolated surmises” (62). Augustine brings us to rely on Christian doctrine for salvation, but he ignores the potential to beware of our self-reliant ability. Feuerbach provides us with an atheistic view to see God as man,

³³ Marx’s “Theses on Feuerbach” is included in the supplementary texts in *The German Ideology*, pp. 121-123.

but he is also unable to practice his theory in reality, as Marx gives a crucial point: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it” (Theses XI). For Marx, as for Nietzsche, we cannot solely be interpreted and categorised in a mental and abstract thought; on the contrary, we need to transform ourselves through daily practice and the ability to create in order to understand what we are.

Discussing Nietzsche and his concept of salvation, Giles Fraser comments that Nietzsche’s concept of the death of God is necessary to make salvation possible for humankind (30). For Nietzsche, humans have to find their way without following Christianity. Nietzsche’s concept enables us to grasp that we can live in the world in such a way that we will not be destroyed by the reality of human life, no matter how unbearable it could be (67). As Fraser continues, Nietzsche’s message reveals a crucial point: “[W]e must give up all hopes of being saved and that we must find the courage to live life as it is. Salvation...is the attempt to imagine that there is some other form of life for us to have, a life free from the restrictions of embodiment, a life without pain, without growing old and without death” (72). Fraser comments that Nietzsche’s attack on Christianity is about the founding of a new conception of religion. Weaver Santaniello claims that Nietzsche offers a new conception of God, which is not the God claimed by Christianity. He argues that Nietzsche concentrates on how we know we are the creators of our lives: “The divine element of life does not resemble a judge or lawmaker, does not reward or punish, does not offer salvation in other worlds, but relates to humans in this one” (94) Santaniello comments that Nietzsche’s concern is with humanity and his essential insight is that “the gods we create are reflections of ourselves and our society. The origin of values has never come from above, as religion often teaches, but from humans” (104). Nietzsche

argues that humanity is able to depend on itself experiencing life with courage and affirmation. William Lloyd Newell provides a similar commentary on Nietzsche. He explains why Nietzsche condemns Christianity. It is because Christianity offers the false humanitarianism that makes us feel distressful (176). In addition, Newell explicates Nietzsche's affirmation of his concept of religion and human nature. As Newell claims, "Nietzsche has made men's and women's essence their existence. One's essence is not determined by God or by the imposition of absolute norms, not by reason's ideas and laws, but by what one makes of oneself" (182). Moreover, "Nietzsche's faith was in human nature, and it was a deep and abiding faith. Virtue consisted in conforming, not to external laws, but to one's own truth. Creativity consisted also in being oneself; this was the divine element in human nature" (185), he comments that Nietzsche opens a new and affirmative perspective on humankind, claiming the possibility of being more creative and independent in the world.³⁴

The three approaches to Nietzsche's view of human nature that I have explored above show Nietzsche's key arguments in his philosophy: to break with the traditional standpoint of human nature, to accept human nature is contradictory and evolving, and to understand that humanity is developed through self-interpretation and self-cultivation. Whereas Darwin considers humankind as an organism and emphasises the importance of natural selection for human evolution, Nietzsche emphasises the importance of self-awareness, arguing that human evolution does not refer to biological but cultural evolution. Freud argues that we should admit and release our natural instinct, and advocates the importance of psychoanalysis. Nietzsche's definition of instinct is subtler than Freud's. Nietzsche's concept of

³⁴ Newell's some ideas are selected from Rose Pfeffer's *Disciple of Dionysus* (1972, Lewisbury, PA: Bucknell University Press, pp. 250, 265.) in discussing Nietzsche's Dionysian faith.

instinct is about the limits of consciousness in culture. He claims that we have to understand our instinct in order to create our affirmative life by breaking the restriction of consciousness. Augustine asserts that we have to repent and ask for salvation by relying on God and Christian doctrine, Nietzsche claims that God is dead and we should depend on ourselves. Additionally, Nietzsche argues that there is no sin and we need to create our values. As distinct from Darwin, Freud and Augustine, Nietzsche's focus is on how humanity relies on its will to power for experiencing life and attaining its development. His intention is to delineate the importance of self-understanding and independence, the core of being an affirmative and developed individual. "Those of us who are destined to be independent and to command must in return set ourselves our own tests – and set them at the proper time" (BGE 41).

It is undoubtedly the case that Nietzsche understands we might have the privilege of being different from animals because of our ability to overcome our limitations. It is also undeniable that Nietzsche admits that not everyone can conceive of this privilege because of the boundaries of humanity. Only those few who want to be themselves, overcome the selves and accept their fate could possibly find the way to independence and individuality, according to Nietzsche. To sum up, human nature is uncertain and contradictory, but it is crucial for humans to willingly find the way out of the domination of Christian tradition and morality, in order to overcome nihilism. The thesis starts with Nietzsche's question of the self, arguing his idea of the development of the self. How the self develops through self-reflection and then approaches individuality is Nietzsche's main concern. His view of humanity examined in this chapter is the first step to see human nature in many aspects. The second step is to shift focus from humanity in general to culture and morality, analysing why Nietzsche attacks tradition and Christian morality and stresses individuality. I illustrate the

dilemma of morality by comparing Nietzsche's concepts of morality and individuality in *On the Genealogy of Morals* in comparison with John Stuart Mill's, which is the theme I am going to argue in next chapter. As Nietzsche in *Daybreak* suggests to us an unusual way of seeing the world: "Open your theatre-eye, the great third eye which looks out into the world through the other two!" (D 509) Let us prepare to see the conception of Christian morality afresh with our third eyes.

Chapter 3

The Dilemma of Morality

Having discussed Nietzsche's view of human nature, I focus on how to disclose the dilemma of morality in society. The dilemma is this: we no longer need the traditional Christian conception of morality that emerges from culture and custom, and which dominates and restricts our conduct. But we need a new way of life, which is established in an autonomous conception, for self-development, self-integration and bettering our lives, and this new way according to Nietzsche does not need to be regulated by any formula of morality. This is the second step on the journey of self-cultivation to individuality. Nietzsche names himself the immoralist, breaking all standards of Christian morality, as he argues: "Insofar as we believe in morality we pass sentence on existence" (WP 6). His strategy is to attack the historical conception of morality in the traditional sense, which degrades the value of the self and leads us to decadence and nothingness. Nietzsche's new 'immoral' conception, in contrast, embraces a new social order which aims at affirming the meaning of life and breaking with any dogma of Christian morality. As Ansell-Pearson claims,

[...] Nietzsche wishes a new (aristocratic) social order to cultivate in order to invert and challenge the Christian-moral tradition and its secular successors. It is Nietzsche's insights into history and culture which determine his conception of great politics – a conception of politics which seeks to overcome morality and the moral view of the world and posit a vision of the animal 'man' and 'beyond good and evil.' (1994: 122)

Nietzsche on this view intends to call for a new self-conscious social order which differs from the morality that historically emerges from Christianity.

This chapter compares John Stuart Mill's idea of morality (in his essays *Utilitarianism*

and *On Liberty*) with Nietzsche's moral perspective in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. The reason why I choose to compare Mill with Nietzsche is because they both perceive a crisis in modern culture, raise the problems of morality and stress the primacy of the individual. But on the other hand, their concepts of morality vary from each other. Mill criticises Christian morality that builds up a one-sided social judgement and provides us the misconceptions of truth and religion. He additionally observes that the mediocre majority misuse morality as a tyrannical means to spread despotism and restrict individuality.

In response to Christian morality, Mill corrects the erroneous conception of morality in tradition, proposing a new 'moral' conception, in accordance with his notion of individuality. John Robson shows us how Mill views morality: "man has sympathetic as well as selfish feelings, and morality depends upon the former, not as Bentham and James Mill thought, upon the latter" (135). Robson claims that Mill, a utilitarian, is primarily concerned with the individual: "The individual must not be shut up within a controlled and restrictive system of social morality; he must be free to choose his own destiny in the light of his moral views – consideration always being given to the happiness and equal development of others" (127). Mill regards the end of utilitarian morality as not "an abstract formula" but "a state of being" (Robson 129). At this point, Mill accordingly develops an individualistic utilitarianism whereby he argues that morality is fundamentally "an individual and human, not a logical problem" (Robson 129-130). Mill's attempt is to advocate human rights in society, expecting to establish a self-developed society based on utilitarian morality. As Maurice Cowling argues, Mill has a strong wish to persuade and create "a society which is morally homogeneous and intellectually healthy" to achieve his utilitarian liberalism (28). Mill claims that the theory of utility is the standard of life, and happiness is the

ultimate end of his utilitarianism.³⁵

Both Mill and his precursor Jeremy Bentham are concerned with classical utilitarian theories, but Mill afterward rejects Bentham's narrow concept of utility. He redefines and enlarges his own thought of utilitarianism. "Although John Stuart Mill agrees with his father and Bentham that pleasures and satisfactions have intrinsic properties and also relational properties, including causal and intentional properties, he differs with them in regarding these latter as relevant to the evaluation of pleasurable experiences" (Wendy Donner 15). Donner goes on to pinpoint the divergence between Mill and Bentham. She argues that Mill's theory can be regarded as "a sophisticated form of hedonism because its theoretical associationist psychological foundation is set out in terms of pleasures or pains" (18). Mill, in this respect, criticises the weakness of Christian morality and argues that utilitarian morality is essential to protect individual liberty in society. Cowling argues that Mill's concept of individual liberty differs crucially from Bentham's:

For natural rights Mill had as much dislike as Bentham. Pursuit of individual liberty for Mill is not, by itself and without regard to its consequences, a proper end of social action. Individuals must be left as free as possible from social pressure, not because they have a right to consideration of this sort, but because, if they are not left free, society may find it more difficult than otherwise to achieve the ends for which it exists. Individual freedom must be maximized, not because diversity of opinion is desirable in itself, but because, without diversity of opinion, men are unlikely to approach nearer to truth than they have done hitherto. (41)

In this respect, Mill explores why the utilitarian conception of morality is important

³⁵ Mill claims that his theory of utility is the directive rule of human conduct and the ends of utilitarianism are happiness and freedom from pain. He also names it a theory of life or of happiness and it is grounded in the utilitarian conception of morality for the welfare of all humankind. Though Mill's ultimate end of utilitarianism is to achieve the universal happiness for all sentient beings, he argues that it could only be attained when human character would be elevated to nobleness (U 137-142).

and how people can rely on it for achieving freedom and happiness. But Nietzsche does not accept Mill's utilitarian idea, arguing that Mill is unable to release himself from the domination of Christian morality. As Nietzsche claims: "The insipid and cowardly concept 'man' à la Comte and Stuart Mill, perhaps even the object of a cult – It is still the cult of Christian morality under a new name" (WP 340). Mill on the one hand tells us that people should be free to do what he likes in his own concerns, but he argues that people should concern and not harm others as an obligation. This argument, on the other hand, restricts his concept of individual liberty. Nietzsche criticises Mill who neglects the uniqueness of every person but intends to establish a new norm of morality that he calls utilitarian morality.

By Nietzsche, Mill's individualistic utilitarianism limits the development of humanity. In contrast, Nietzsche proposes an advent of the sovereign individual endowed with creativity and self-transformation. Nietzsche attacks Christian morality, arguing that it not only undermines humanity but also brings us into endless decadence by inculcating the negative attitude toward life. Nietzsche delineates his standpoint of Christian morality, breaks the traditional restrictions of Christian morality, and attacks the bad influence of Christian morality upon humankind. His aim is to address a new autonomous judgement on human conduct that liberates from the domination of Christian morality, and concentrate on the affirmation of life. Javier Ibáñez-noé points out that Nietzsche know what the task he has when he attacks Christian morality, "the task for Nietzsche is not the destruction of tradition but rather the building of a new tradition in the face of the breakdown of the tradition grounded in the Christian God" (71). Nietzsche argues that we need to become the masters of moral standards to overcome the restriction of Christian morality. Nietzsche attacks modern culture and Christian morality from a sceptical and radical perspective. As Thiele contends,

Nietzsche's indictment of morality arises not because it seeks to impose order, but because of the typical motivations for this imposition... Yet Nietzsche evidences a profound ambivalence toward the ethical drive. He does not seek the abolition of all (moral) values, but rather aims at their 'transvaluation.' He does not aim to condemn all moral actions, but to offer different, and better, reasons for pursuing them. (1995: 61)

Through the concept of transvaluation, according to Thiele, Nietzsche seeks to provide a new way of judging morality. Nietzsche asserts that Christian morality does not guide humankind to live morally but to live with pessimism. The purpose of his condemnation of Christian morality is not to destroy tradition and advocate a new norm of morality as Mill does, but to show how humans are able to perceive their pessimistic condition and overcome it in order to live confidently with free spirit. As Solomon and Higgins argue, "Christianity's repudiation of nature, particularly human nature, is a further target of Nietzsche's attack... the Christian worldview encourages the idea that our psychological makeup, which naturally seeks self-assertion and self-enhancement, is pernicious" (90), Nietzsche is aware that Christian morality has promoted a degraded vision of humanity. He rejects this self-denying vision but proposes the importance of self-awareness and self-development.

To begin with, I shall briefly discuss some ideas about morality in order to understand the connection between morality and human identity. Living as social beings, we are held responsible for our action and conduct. Morality is usually taken to be the fundamental standard that we depend upon to judge action and conduct. Stocks in *Morality and Purpose* claims that "the moral will is the self-conscious will" (31) and "the moral attitude is essentially a concern for the rightness of action" (77). To put it simply, morality provides a means of judging the behaviour of people. To know how to judge the rightness of action and have proper moral attitudes is important. As Joel Kupperman points out, "morality is a social device to minimize certain sorts of

behaviour, especially behaviour that threatens the security of members of the community” (28-29). This social device is not only for conducting us, but stands as “an important element of cohesion, in strengthening a sense of community and of a shared outlook” (Kupperman 26). On this view, the aim of morality is to maintain a harmonious society where each person can be equally protected. In *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society* Amitai Etzioni claims it is undeniable that we expect to live in a good society, but a good society needs to establish a social order that should be “aligned with the moral commitment of the members”(12). Morality has to do with core values. We accept these values, for the most part, and we accept the role these values play with regard to judging our behaviour. But moral judgements are not fixed and absolute. We can correct them according to the demands of different cultures and social structures. For example, it might be commendable for a woman in the eighteenth century to be obedient to her parents and husband. But it is a sign of self-respect when a woman today openly expresses her opinion. Morality helps us understand how to appreciate, to respect, and to develop ourselves. This is the basis of morality that sustains society. It is necessary to understand and reinterpret the conception of morality as the means to establish a better society. As Stocks says,

[T]he basis of moral judgment and the root of moral values is a similar but quite general conception of will and action as a continuing form finding its changing embodiment in the changing situations of life...In all action there is effort, for effort is the law of life; but the conception provides a criterion by which the effort may be justified in itself, not merely for what it brings. (66-67)

Whether the consequence we expect is fulfilled or not, Stocks claims that morality should be justified by itself. It is possible to change the moral rules in different eras but it is impossible to deny that morality is required to better society. In a word, morality provides a fundamental means for us to reflect on ourselves.

There are serious problems of morality revealed in modern culture. Regarding the problems of morality raised by Mill and Nietzsche, they offer two important points, though they use different ways to express their ideas. The first point is how Christian morality dominates human mind by offering an absolute idea, like the conceptions of the Almighty God, original sin, redemption and salvation, and then restricts us in one-sided standpoint of culture and moral values. Most people lack the concept, “diversity of opinions”, addressed by Mill and the perspective argued by Nietzsche. The second point is that we, under the domination of traditional Christian morality, are not aware of the need for the development of the self and the importance of being an individual. Grayling in *What is Good? The Search for the Best Way to Live* argues that Mill and Nietzsche “are both products of that same century, both inheritors of the changes that led to it, and both passionately concerned to identify and describe the best life. And there are significant points of contact, despite the great difference in manner of expression” (160). Mill’s criticism of Christian morality differs from Nietzsche’s. Mill is concerned with individual liberty, and uses this conception to advocate the necessity of a utilitarian morality. Nietzsche on the contrary emphasises the importance of individuality, arguing that humanity can be raised when we are able to create and rely on our values without following any formula of morality. In what follows, we will see how they analyse the problems of morality and show us their different concepts of morality and individual.

3.1 Mill’s Conceptions of Morality and Individual

In *Utilitarianism*, Mill states the concept of utility:

In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the

ethics of utility. To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality. As the means of making the nearest approach to this idea, utility would enjoin, first that laws and social arrangements should place the happiness, or the interest, of every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole; and secondly, that education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use the power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole. (U 148)

The aim of utilitarianism is to achieve the welfare of humankind. Mill argues that the spirit of utilitarianism is to naturally love others as oneself, as in Jesus' teaching, and personal happiness could be achieved by the moral standard grounded in the concept of utility. According to Mill, utilitarian morality is not only the means to achieve personal happiness but also the end of human action. It can provide the rules and precepts of human conduct for protecting all humankind and the whole sentient creation in the universe from being harmed (U 143). Mill's theory of utility envisions the achievement of the universal happiness of all humanity. I will explore how Mill reveals his concern with humanity and individuality, and his insight into customary morality.

Mill argues: "Among the works of man, which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself" (L 66). Mill stresses that man is distinctive and his individual liberty should not be neglected. As he explains,

If it were felt that the free development of individuality is one of the leading essentials of well-being; that it is not only a coordinate element with all that is designated by the terms civilisation, instruction, education, culture, but is itself a necessary part and condition of all those things; there would be no danger that liberty should be undervalued, and the adjustment of the boundaries between it and social control would present no extraordinary difficulty. (L 63)

Mill asserts that the free development of individuality is fundamental to develop humanity and enhance the progress of society; therefore, he argues that we should maintain it for achieving human happiness. He also argues that this idea should be applied to all humankind who is equal to each other, and therefore people should primarily regard others as themselves and do not have any intention to harm anyone. As he states: "It is desirable, in short, that in things which do not primarily concern others, individuality should assert itself. Where, not the person's own character, but the traditions or customs of other people are the rule of conduct, there is wanting one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress" (L 63). On the basis, Mill addresses that we need utilitarianism to protect happiness of all humanity, and attacks Christian morality which restricts human individuality. He raises two problems of morality and amends them. The first problem is the misunderstanding of truth and religion. For Mill, the fundamental principle of utilitarianism is to protect everyone equally from being hurt. With regard to this, utilitarianism requires everyone to be "as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator" (U 148) in observing others and the world. This is the ideal conception of utility. But in reality, according to Mill, we habitually allow ourselves to be limited by custom, culture and tradition: "Men are not more zealous for truth than they often are for error, and a sufficient application of legal or even of social penalties will generally succeed in stopping the propagation of either" (L 34). Ignorance and fear direct us to injustice and prejudice.

Taking heretical opinions as an example, Mill reminds us of the misunderstanding of truth:

Those in whose eyes this reticence on the part of heretics is no evil, should consider in the first place, that in consequence of it there is never

any fair and thorough discussion of heretical opinions; and that such of them as could not stand such a discussion, though they may be prevented from spreading, do not disappear. But it is not the minds of heretics that are deteriorated most, by the ban placed on all inquiry which does not end in the orthodox conclusion. The greatest harm done is to those who are not heretics, and whose whole mental development is cramped, and their reason cowed, by the fear of heresy... Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think. (L 38)

Mill argues that it is one-sidedness that prevents us from accepting this many-sidedness (L 52). In this example, Mill argues that most people do not accept heretical ideas, but none of us can deny these ideas contain a part of truth. The one-sidedness is due to our passive acceptance of orthodox opinions. But the assumption derived from the orthodox side is in fact one-sided. In consequence, we are unable to see things impartially and achieve truth because we are limited by this one-sided assumption.

Most people neglect the meaning of truth due to weakness of mind. As Mill argues,

Truth, in the great practical concerns of life, is so much a question of the reconciling and combining of opposites, that very few have minds sufficiently capacity and impartial to make the adjustment with an approach to correctness, and it has to be made by the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners. (L 54)

The world is full of opposites if it is regarded from the standpoint of dualism. For instance, the colours white and black are opposites. But the idea of opposites is derived from comparison and reflection. They might be irrelevant if they are observed from a different point of view. This point is that we rarely open ourselves enough to accept a diversity of opinions. It is better to understand truth from different sides, as Mill argues. Regarding the concept of diversity which is argued by Mill and the cultural relativists, I shall clarify their different views of it. Cultural relativism is “the

principle that an individual human's beliefs and activities should be interpreted in terms of his or her own culture” (Wikipedia).³⁶ William Kent elucidates that cultural relativism is “a response to variety” but holds “an empirical responsibility to the diversity”. As Kent goes on, cultural relativism is not considered “an escape from multiplicity” but “an attempt to handle multiplicity” (196), and their standpoint of the concept of diversity is different from Mill’s. While many liberals including Mill accept “differences of opinion only as a device for attaining and holding on to truths which eventually will be really and absolutely true”, as Kent argues, cultural relativism accepts “diversity as something good in itself, not as just a means toward its own elimination” (196-197). Kent likewise claims, for the cultural relativists, “there is an idea abroad which has become more widespread through the ages. It holds that what you value and what you believe always has a certain suitability for what you are, and that there is no single pattern to which all men should be forced to conform” (197). In this respect, Mill regards diversity as necessary to promote what he argues; but the cultural relativists accept it for its own good and do not use it as a means to advocate their thought. Accordingly, remaining too limited and fixed in one-sidedness will not only entrap us in self-centredness, but also prevent us from considering the purpose of utilitarian morality: the welfare of all humanity.

Furthermore, a similar situation is shown in the misunderstanding of religion. Mill claims that Christian morality is “a doctrine of passive obedience; it inculcates submission to all authorities found established; who indeed are not to be actively obeyed when they command what religion forbids, but who are not to be resisted, far less rebelled against, for any amount of wrong to ourselves” (L 56). Christian morality

³⁶ Cultural relativism was established by Franz Boas in the first few decades of the 20th century and then popularised by his students. Boas did not use the term often but it became common among anthropologists after his death in 1942. (Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_relativism)

forces people to “take them [Christian doctrines] in and make them [people] conform to the formula”, teaching people to have a habitual respect for the doctrine without any feeling “which spreads from the words to the things signified” (L 47-48). People passively follow written doctrines as truisms but rarely apply them to concrete experience. Mill does not reject Christianity but rather considers it a partial doctrine that has been modified and adapted to reveal only a part of truth. The Christian doctrine hence is never equivalent to the moral spirit of Christ:

[M]any essential elements of the highest morality are among the things which are not provided for, nor intended to be provided for, in the recorded deliverances of the Founder of Christianity, and which have been entirely thrown aside in the system of ethics erected on the basis of those deliverances by the Christian Church. And this being so, I think it a great error to persist in attempting to find in the Christian doctrine that complete rule for our guidance, which its author intended it to sanction and enforce, but only partially to provide. (L 57)

People distance from each other and cause a lot of conflict and misconduct because of their one-sided misunderstanding of truth and religion. Mill argues that this could be corrected if a diversity of opinions is accepted.

Morality is a self-conscious judgement of human conduct; therefore, it can be corrected if we are conscious of the error. As Mill states,

I acknowledge that the tendency of all opinions to become sectarian is not cured by the freest discussion, but is often heightened and exacerbated thereby...But it is not on the impassioned partisan, it is on the calmer and more disinterested bystander, that this collision of opinions works its salutary effect...there is always hope when people are forced to listen to both sides; it is when they attend only to one that errors harden into prejudices, and truth itself ceases to have the effect of truth, by being exaggerated into falsehood. (L 58)

The erroneous standard of morality can be amended if we are willing to keep ourselves open to experience, impartially criticising different opinions and conduct.

As Mill argues, “there are many truths of which the full meaning *cannot* be realized, until personal experience has brought it home” (L 49). Self-consciousness will not be developed by following tradition and custom but it can be through personal experience: “Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing” (L 66). Thus, the attitude toward truth should be cultivated out of recognition of our natural dispositions and our natural diversity. As Mill comments, “only through diversity of opinion is there, in the existing state of human intellect, a chance of fair play to all sides to the truth” (L 54). Those who³⁷ are open to different opinions, for Mill, are able to realise the meaning of truth beyond the limits of customary morality.

The second problem that Mill indicates is a moral-political problem: the tyranny of the majority that habitually spreads despotism and diminishes individuality. As Mill states, “society between equals can only exist on the understanding that the interests of all are to be regarded equally” (U 165). A healthy democratic society ought to respect and protect all its citizens’ security and individuality. But in reality this is not the case:

[T]here is also in the world at large an increasing inclination to stretch unduly the powers of society over the individual, both by the force of opinion and even by that of legislation: and as the tendency of all the changes taking place in the world is to strengthen society, and diminish the power of the individual, this encroachment is not one of the evils which tend spontaneously to disappear, but, on the contrary, to grow more and more formidable. (L 18)

³⁷ Mill here does not say that all humans are able to accept a diversity of opinions. Though people act according to their personal preferences, Mill conceives that only a few people with originality of mind are able to open to different opinions and recognise the importance of individuality, as he argues that originality is “a valuable element in human affairs” (L 71).

Morality becomes a legal means to dominate people for the purpose of stabilising social power. Such “power itself is illegitimate...It is as noxious, or more noxious, when exerted in accordance with public opinion, than when in opposition to it” (L 21). The struggle for power thereby ruins the harmony between individual and society. If society becomes more able to strengthen its power by misusing morality, dominating and punishing people for disobedience, the disastrous consequence is the entrapment of the soul. The more despotism prevails, according to Mill, the less individuality it allows. “The political positions for which Mill is famous – delimitating the power of government and asserting the need to maintain a high degree of individual social freedom – are characteristic preoccupations of his writing at all times throughout his life” (Cowling 43).

Mill likewise argues,

The majority, being satisfied with the ways of mankind as they now are, (for it is they who make them what they are), cannot comprehend why those ways should not be good enough for everybody; and what is more, spontaneity forms no part of the ideal of the majority of moral and social reformers, but is rather looked on with jealousy, as a troublesome and perhaps rebellious obstruction to the general acceptance of what these reformers, in their own judgement, think would be best for mankind. (L 63-64)

Tradition and custom prevent people from perceiving the need for individual liberty. In consequence, people let themselves be controlled by customary morality. This is the tyrannical poison of despotism that Mill refers to: “The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement, being in unceasing antagonism to that disposition to aim at something better than customary, which is called, according to circumstances, the spirit of liberty, or that of progress or improvement” (L 78). It is necessary to use moral standards to preserve basic personal

liberty through moral standards, according to Mill. Mill also claims: “Every despotism does not produce its worst effects, so long as ‘individuality’ exists under it; and whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called, and whether it professes to be enforcing the will of God or the injunctions of men” (L 71). Thus, the despotism of the tyranny of the majority is the chief obstacle to the achievement of genuine individuality. To keep an impartial attitude toward individuality is to return to utilitarian morality. As Mill goes on,

That mankind are not infallible; that their truths, for the most part, are only half-truths; that unity of opinion, unless resulting from the fullest and freest comparison of opposite opinions, is not desirable, and diversity not an evil, but a good, until mankind are much more capable that at present of recognizing all sides of the truth, are principles applicable to men’s modes of action, not less than to their opinions. (L 63)

Mill knows that we would misjudge due to the limits of our consciousness and habits, and we are limited by the despotism of the tyranny of the majority. He also thinks social conflicts stimulate us to accept a diversity of opinions and enhance the possibility of healthy social life. But he asserts the necessity of utilitarianism because the ultimate aim of utilitarianism is developing individuality: “Not only does all strengthening of social ties, and all healthy growth of society, give to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others; it also leads him to identify his *feelings* more and more with their good, or at least with an ever greater degree of practical consideration for it” (U 165). Thus, awareness of individuality will create a harmonious bond between individual and society and hence be of benefit to humankind in general.

Isaiah Berlin in his essay “John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life” praises Mill for his exceptional awareness of the human problem and his optimistic belief in the development of humanity:

What he did see before him was the spectacle of some men, civilized by any standards, who were kept down, or discriminated against, or persecuted by prejudice, stupidity, 'collective mediocrity'; he saw such men deprived of what he regarded as their most essential rights, and he protested. He believed that all human progress, all human greatness and virtue and freedom, depended chiefly on the preservation of such men and the clearing of paths before them. (197)

Berlin regards Mill as a humanist pursuing an ideal of freedom. For Mill, according to Berlin, human happiness is an ideal end of life "[a] realization of one's wishes" (181). This ultimate end of utilitarianism is to realise honestly what freedom is and how it benefits all humanity. Mill's humanistic idealism can be seen in his thought of religion: "He revered Christ as the best man who ever lived, and regarded theism as a noble, though to him unintelligible, set of beliefs...He was, in fact, a Victorian agnostic who was uncomfortable with atheism and regarded religion as something that was exclusively the individual's own affair" (Berlin 204). We may consider Mill as a secular and untraditional Christian who searches for an ideal in religion, society and humanity, which is in accordance with his own moral standard. Thus, we can say that Mill's concept of freedom is his hope for humanity, for he regards freedom as "a condition in which men were not prevented from choosing both the object and the manner of their worship. For him only a society in which this condition was realized could be called fully human" (Berlin 206). This is Mill's ideal of society based on utilitarian morality, and his ambition is to fulfil the principle of utility.

As Roger Crisp also comments, Mill believes that "these customary obligations are securely grounded on the principle of utility...[and] the failure to fulfil them may well result in harm to others" (182). Mill encourages us to realise our capacity for self-development through personal practice. "For autonomy to count as a constituent of individuality and so of welfare, it must be exercised in the development of one's

own potentialities” (Crisp 196). His conception of utilitarianism aims at developing individuality, which brings humans to automatically consider the welfare of others and see it as a way for fulfilling human happiness. “Without individuality, there is no life of higher pleasures. In that sense, at least, individuality is the highest of all pleasures” (Crisp 199). After all, the self-development of individuality is the highest notion that Mill addresses in his theory of utility.

Don Habibi compares Mill’s theory of utility to human growth. He argues that “Mill’s aim was to impress upon people the value of growth. He left it up to the individual to decide how and in what direction to grow” (47), Mill maintains a higher standard which is for the individuals in “an elite class” (35) but not for the common people. Mill “perceives the ignorance and intolerance of the masses as a threat to individuality, liberty, and growth”, while conversely he regards democracy as “a system designed to promote the good of the people” (ibid.). The rare individuals, for Mill, are able to conceive of the errors in traditional morality and act upon utilitarian principles. Mill expects to inculcate his concept of individuality into an elite class, inspiring them to develop themselves first and others later (ibid.), and morality grounded in Mill’s utilitarianism is the means that helps individuals fulfil the principle of utility, as Habibi argues,

For Mill, cultivating our human capacities and elevating others are the most worthwhile and profitable activities. They are so valuable because they lead to the refinement of our moral faculties and to higher forms of happiness. They are the means by which we build and achieve social advancement. It is this process of growth that moves us toward the ultimate kind of satisfaction and fulfillment. (77)

Mill offers the possibility of happiness and fulfilment through self-development and the consciousness of individuality. Habibi concludes that Mill wants to help people attain the highest level of happiness: “He charted a path of ‘human development in its

richest diversity' for reaching our ultimate destination. He tried to guide us to this path, though he never provided a map. It was up to each of us to make our own path and find our own ultimate destination. He sought to convey this message through his growth ethic (250-251). Mill's intention is to guide us to be conscious of the capacity of our growth.

Utilitarian morality is a self-conscious standard that measures human conduct. Mill claims that utilitarianism "could only attain its end by the general cultivation of nobleness of character, even if each individual were only benefited by the nobleness of others, and his own, so far as happiness is concerned, were a sheer deduction from the benefit" (U 142). In Mill's view, utilitarian morality helps humankind elevate itself and protect individual liberty, in order to pursue for the ultimate end of utilitarianism, i.e. the welfare and the universal happiness of all humanity. According to Mill, utilitarian morality is the means to attain human happiness and promote the progress of society. But I argue that Mill's utilitarianism, including his concept of accepting a diversity of opinions, should not be considered as the obligatory means for humankind to attain human development. I agree with Mill who claims that every person is distinctive and criticises customary morality that hinders us from being an individual. But Mill argues: "Human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the worse, and encouragement to choose the former and avoid the latter" (L 84). Regarding this point, I do not agree that Mill sees this attitude as an obligation for all humanity.

According to Mill's understanding of individuality, people are able to help each other as part of their nature, but this behaviour cannot be regulated as compulsory but must be voluntary. As Mill continues, if a person displeases us, we "may express our

distaste” and “stand aloof from a person as well as from a thing that displeases us” but we shall not “feel called on to make his life uncomfortable”. Moreover, “the worst we shall think ourselves justified in doing is leaving him to himself, if we do not interfere benevolently by showing interest or concern for him” (L 88). I do not mean that treating others equally is wrong, but I point out that Mill’s viewpoint is questionable because he ignores that human nature is flexible but insists solely on this one precept, that is, treating others equally, as an obligatory rule that all of us should follow in order to achieve happiness, the ultimate end of his utilitarianism. I argue that Mill does not need to ‘overemphasise’ his concepts as a principle that we ‘shall’ follow. On the contrary, concerning others’ need is part of our nature; we do not need to regulate it because it changes according to different people and situations. We can provide our suggestion to others and help them but we cannot say they have to accept our help because we think it is right and helpful. We are unable to know precisely what others feel but only feel ourselves; the fact is that everyone is different. The uniqueness of humanity is what Mill ignores when he emphasises the purpose of his utilitarianism. What makes a person feel good might be bad to others, for example, as Mill tells us: “The same things which are helps to one person towards the cultivation of his higher nature, are hindrances to another. The same mode of life is a healthy excitement to one, keeping all his faculties of action and enjoyment in their best order, while to another it is a distracting burthen, which suspends or crushes all internal life” (L 75). In this respect, to feel good or harmful must be measured not according to the givers who provide help and thinks his conduct is good but according to every receiver stance.

Mill’s conception of not hurting others and making their lives uncomfortable (L 88) is according to his point of view, but I have to say this view is partial. Though Mill says

that we should maintain our individual liberty, and argues that the term ‘duty to oneself’ means self-respect or self-development (L 87), his insistence on maintaining individual liberty and equality however becomes a blind spot that limits his view of humanity in his utilitarian conception. In other words, Mill seemingly uses his notion of individuality as a powerful means to advocate and convince the necessity of a new moral formula: utilitarianism. Regarding this, this is the reason why Nietzsche criticises Mill’s utilitarianism is because Mill establishes a new standard of good and evil that he considers as a good formula for people. As Nietzsche comments on the mediocre Englishman like Darwin, Spencer and Mill: “they do not even start out in any propitious relationship to ‘rules’. In the end they have more to do than merely to perceive, and that is to *be* something new, to *signify* something new, and to *represent* new values” (BGE 253). In this way, there is not much difference between Mill’s utilitarian morality and Christian morality because both ignore the difference between individual humans and inculcate people what is right and wrong according to their own value and judgement. As John Gary argues that Mill’s doctrine of liberty “is weakened...if it has to depend on Mill’s Comtist view of the progressive stages of human society, or on his claims for utilitarianism as a religion of humanity” (123).

In addition, Nietzsche criticises Mill for misleading us to assume that humans should strive for happiness and avoid pain, according to Mill’s theory of utility. But for Nietzsche, this is a misconception of humanity and life. As Solomon and Higgins argue, “Nietzsche rejected the basic theoretical underpinnings of utilitarianism – in particular, the utilitarian presupposition that one should aim to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, which struck Nietzsche as absurd”; “Pleasure and pain are experienced together” for Nietzsche, and “the most effective strategy for minimizing pain, blunting one’s sensibility, makes one ill-equipped to experience pleasure” (166).

Nietzsche does not agree that humankind should strive to get rid of pain and approach happiness as Mill argues. On the contrary, Nietzsche asserts that pleasure and pain can only be understood personally according to the self-interpreting ability, as he explicates, “a violent stimulus is experienced as pleasure or pain is a matter of the *interpreting* intellect, which, to be sure, generally works without our being conscious of it; and one and the same stimulus *can* be interpreted as pleasure or pain” (GS 127). However we interpret pleasure or pain, Nietzsche claims that it is a necessary stimulus that helps humankind to understand life through experience and develop itself without being dominated by tradition and morality. The purpose of Nietzsche’s attack on Christian morality is not “to remove men’s chains, but rather to force men, under a heavier burden, to attain to a higher rank” (Karl Jaspers 95). This burden means that men can no longer depend on any formula of morality but men themselves so as to attain their development and live independently. Different from Mill who claims individualistic utilitarianism for the welfare of humanity, Nietzsche provides a new reflection for interpreting morality and the value of individuality.

Nietzsche’s concern with culture and individuality leads him to spurn the desire to construct a rule-based ethics in place of customary morality. As Conway in *Nietzsche and the Political* claims: “The laws of an omni-inclusive ethical community would express only the commonalities and banalities of the individuals involved, rather than their unique strengths and virtues” (1997: 30), Christianity inhibits us from perceiving that we are unique and distinctive from each other. Regarding this point, Nietzsche raises the question: “What kind of people would choose to (or have to) live this way?” (Solomon 53) Nietzsche perceives that Christian morality has deeply influenced human history, and attempts to break its bad effects on humanity. He sees the cultural illness transmitted through Christian morality, and proclaims that there is a need of “a

critique of moral values, the value of these values itself should first of all be called into question” (GM Preface: 6). Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* will show us how he condemns Christian morality. He strives to show us how we intellectually reexamine the values that stem from tradition and Christian morality and overcome the sick condition through self-realisation. My analysis of the *Genealogy* will be divided into two parts. The first part analyses how Nietzsche considers Christian morality as a slave morality, and criticises its domination of humanity. The second part discusses how Nietzsche examines his account of the individual, showing a possibility of overcoming nihilism and living with a free spirit beyond the domination of tradition and morality.

3.2 Nietzsche’s Conceptions of Morality and Individual

In his criticism of Christian morality, Nietzsche firstly attacks Christian morality which tyrannises humanity by providing the conception of God that separates imperfect man from the perfect and omnipotent Being, and inverting the notions of good and bad to the notions of good and evil for polarising humanity. Nietzsche argues that the noble and the slave had existed as the ruler and the ruled of society in the pre-moral time, and people lived and affirmed life with energy according to the aristocratic noble morality which existed in human history before Christian morality. At that time, good means “the noble, the powerful, the superior, and the high-minded”, the ones who “felt themselves and their actions to be good” and bad, in contrast, means “everything low, low-minded, common, and plebeian” (GM I: 2). The notions of good and bad are originally no connection to Christian moralistic value-judgement. However, the Jews and Christians bring the conceptions of God and redemption, inculcating the poisonous ideal to human consciousness with their monotheistic

“priestly mode of evaluation” (GM I: 7) in order to tame humankind, as Nietzsche criticises the Jews and Christians who use “an art of the most intelligent revenge” to reverse and transvalue the original concepts of good and bad in order to defeat their enemies. They emphasise the contrast between the noble and the slave according to their moral values of good and evil:

It has been the Jews who have...dared to undertake the reversal of the aristocratic value equation (good=noble=powerful=beautiful=happy =blessed) and have held on to it tenaciously by the teeth of the most unfathomable hatred (the hatred of the powerless). It is they who have declared: ‘The miserable alone are the good; the poor, the powerless, the low alone are good. The suffering, the deprived, the sick, the ugly are the only pious ones, the only blessed, from them alone is there salvation. You, on the other hand, the noble and the powerful, you are for all eternity the evil, the cruel, the lascivious, the insatiable, the godless ones. You will be without salvation, accursed and damned to all eternity!’ (GM I: 7)

Christianity contrasts the slave with the noble and makes the slave feel resentful³⁸ of being ruled by the noble according to Christian value-judgement of good and evil. Under the domination of Christian morality, the typified slave morality, the slave is motivated by his repressed resentment to finally revolt in morals and declare the war between the noble and the slave in order to preserve itself: “The slave revolt in morals begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and ordains values: the *ressentiment* of creatures to whom the real reaction, that of the deed, is denied and who find compensation in an imaginary revenge” (GM I: 10). The slave begins to consciously react against its enemy through resentment, as Nietzsche argues: “Let us [the slave] be different from the evil, that is, good! And the good man is the one who refrains from violation, who leaves revenge to God, who lives as we do in seclusion, who avoids all evil and above all asks little of life, as we do, the patient, the humble, the just” (GM I: 13). As a result, there is a continuous contrast between the noble and the slave in

³⁸ As Nietzsche explicates, “the reversal of the evaluating gaze – this *necessary* orientation outwards rather than inwards to the self” is the essential characteristic of resentment. (GM I: 10)

human history.

The slave attempts to avenge himself on the noble by conceiving of himself good and contrasting with the noble, and blaming on the noble, the evil. In this way, the conflict between noble morality and slave morality then turns to be a ceaseless spiritual battle in which the resentment helps slave morality transform itself to overpower noble morality, as shown in the conflict between the Romans and the Jews:

The Romans were the strong and noble men, stronger and nobler than they had ever been on earth, or even dreamed themselves to be...The Jews conversely were the priestly people of *ressentiment par excellence*, with an innate genius in matters of popular morality...consider before whom one bows today in Rome as before the epitome of all the highest values – and not only in Rome, but over almost half the world, wherever man has been tamed or wants to be tamed – before *three Jews*, as one knows, and *one Jewess*...This is most remarkable: there is no doubt that Rome has been defeated. (GM I: 16)

In the battle of the noble and the slave, the slave imagines himself as “an after-image and counterpart” of the noble (GM I: 10), and spiritually inverts himself from the enemy of the noble to a ‘good’ man in his consciousness. On the contrary, the noble who is basically dull and takes his power and superiority for granted falsifies “the image of those despised” and is spiritually attacked and defeated by his enemy with imagery revenge. Slave morality, according to the contrast between the Romans and the Jews, transforms itself to spiritually defeat noble morality in the battle. In consequence, as Nietzsche explicates: “The ‘masters’ are done away with; the morality of the common man has won” (GM I: 9), Christian morality successfully defeats the noble morality, and then civilises human culture. But Nietzsche³⁹ does not

³⁹ Nietzsche does not deny that it is Christian morality that makes humans become more interesting animals, as he argues: “Human history would be a much too stupid affair were it not for the intelligence introduced by the powerless [priests]” (GM I: 7). Nietzsche here claims that the priests’ evaluation of morality which reverse noble morality, and the slave’ reaction to morals that make humankind think about its development and the knowledge of good and evil.

regard this consequence is healthy to humanity; oppositely, he claims that Christianity is a tyranny which spreads a poison rapidly everywhere to undermine humanity: “The ‘redemption’ of humanity (from the ‘masters’, that is) is proceeding apace; everything is visibly becoming more Jewish or Christian or plebeian (what does the terminology matter!). The progress of this poison through the entire body of mankind seems “inexorable” (GM I: 9). By negating the noble, Christianity makes the slave imagine not only being good for self-preservation but also being able to spiritually defeat his enemy. This resentful attitude is harmful to people and causes them to become weak and weary in facing life, according to Nietzsche. Thus: “We weak men are, after all, weak; it would be good if we refrained from doing anything *for which we lack sufficient strength*” (GM I: 13), the fact is that the slave who spiritually overcomes the noble is, in real life, incapable of competing and defeating the noble. Christian morality continuously contrasts the slave with the noble by way of making the slave, who lacks strength to affirm life, keep conflicting inwards with resentment. The battle between the noble and the slave will never be finished, under the influence of Christianity, and people are unaware that they turn to be a tame, weak and pessimistic thinking animal-man who is deceived by consciousness and controlled by Christian morality. In consequence, man finally lives without strength and even loses confidence to affirm life and develop the self. As Nietzsche argues that the human being is bred by culture to be a civilised and domestic animal (GM I: 11); in other words, we are accustomed to clinging to what we are taught by history, custom and morality, judging humanity according to the conceptions of good and evil in Christianity. Christian morality, the slave morality, “is obsessed with the category of evil, and its virtues are for the most part banal and mere obedience” (Solomon 52). In order to make people obedient, Christianity invents the conceptions of good and evil, and uses them as the means to control humanity. “In every oligarchy – the whole of

history teaches us this – the desire for *tyranny* always lies hidden” (GM III: 19). The intention of Christianity, for Nietzsche, is to tyrannise humanity and make people obedient under the doctrine of Christian morality.

Nietzsche likewise condemns Christianity for devaluing humanity by inventing the concepts of original sin and guilt, and regards human beings as sinful creatures. In the pre-historical time, humans are cultivated by the morality of custom to have conscience, which is used for regulating and measuring human conduct in society, through harshness and punishment. “In this picture of human evolution, conscience is not viewed as some kind of metaphysical entity unique to each individual, but as a moral faculty which is the product of a historical labour of culture or civilisation” (Ansell-Pearson 1994: 135). In this way, the morality of custom makes the animal-man to adapt to society, to follow regulations and to behave as a communal being with memory and a sense of responsibility. The concept of guilt in earlier ages is different from that in modernity. It derives ultimately from the conception of debt (GM II: 4). Man wants to show he is not only different and superior to other animals but also is able to designate himself as “the being who estimates values, who evaluates and measures, as the ‘measuring animal’” (GM II: 8), and thus uses the concept of guilt as a means for measuring himself against another. The relationship between debtor and creditor, according to Nietzsche, is regarded as a contractual matter. In this process, both debtor and creditor are responsible to each other for making their promises (GM II: 5). The debtor gives the possessions to the creditor in order to guarantee his promise. Conversely, the creditor feels pleased to make the debtor suffer and is able to demand everything from him. In this respect, the relationship between debtor and creditor implies an obliged, habitual but coerced interaction which precedes “society” in the modern sense. The relationship between

debtor and creditor becomes a legal and communal obligation that in turn gives rise to “the moral conceptual world of ‘guilt’, ‘conscience’, ‘duty’, ‘sacred duty’ which emerges from the human society containing torture and cruelty (GM II: 6).

This is how humanity is morally trained through violence and coercion in society. But Nietzsche argues that the situation changes and worsens when Christianity provides an ineradicable sense of indebtedness to God with the concept of original sin, and regards humans as sinful herd animals. As Nietzsche claims: “In ‘God’ he [human] apprehends the ultimate opposing principle to his actual and irredeemable animal instincts, he himself reinterprets these animal instincts as a debt towards God” (GM II: 22). Inculcated by Christianity, people feel ashamed of their animal-like nature which is in contrast to the perfection of God, and believe that they can only release from the suffering of life and be redeemed by obeying the doctrine of Christianity. This longing for redemption nevertheless causes humankind to negate the self and lose the ability to create and affirm life: “On his way to becoming an ‘angel’, man has bred for himself that dyspepsia and furred tongue, as a result of which not only the joy and innocence of the animal have become repugnant to him but even life itself has lost its savour” (GM II: 7). Christianity misleads humans to feel guilty for their sin and restrain their animal-like instincts as an obligation for the purpose of being saved. This fixed moral form of evaluation which judges people equally as “unhappy, arrogant, and repulsive creatures who are completely incapable of casting off a profound dissatisfaction with themselves, with the earth, with life as a whole” (GM III: 11), in Nietzsche’s view, inculcates the concept of sin and uses it as a means to offer a life-negating and pessimistic attitude towards human nature for formulating the morality of herd in human culture. “The most important characteristic of the morality of the herd is that it negates all distinctions and all differences between human

beings...The morality of the herd is an ideology of equality. For that reason it cultivates culpability: the subordination under a highest authority to whom everyone is equal” (Tongeren 395) Under the domination of the morality of herd, man on the one hand wants to express his instinct but on the other hand forces himself to suppress it in and through his subjection to Christianity. In consequence, man contradicts himself and succumbs to Christian morality as a tame and unhealthy animal-man by repressing the instinct inwards. As Nietzsche explains, “man’s suffering *from man, from himself*: this as a result of a violent separation from his animal past, of a leap which is also a fall into new situations and conditions of existence, of a declaration of war against the old instincts, which previously constituted the basis of his strength, pleasure, and fearfulness” (GM II: 16).

Following Christian precepts, people assume that they should inhibit animality in order to be good. Nietzsche contends that it is this obstinate misconception that makes people continuously afflict in self-contradiction and emerge bad conscience. As he states,

The man who is forced into an oppressively narrow and regular morality...this animal which is to be ‘tamed’, which rubs himself raw on the bars of his cage, this deprived man [...] who had no choice but to transform himself into an adventure, a place of torture, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness – this fool, this yearning and desperate prisoner became the inventor of ‘bad conscience’. (GM II: 16)

Bad conscience, for Nietzsche, is seen to be a self-torturing sickness for humanity. Nietzsche considers bad conscience as a serious illness that stems from Christian morality and represses the human capacity and confidence to affirm life. Nietzsche, on the other hand, views bad conscience a necessity that stimulates humankind as the potential to start reflecting and fashioning the self through the process of self-conflicting and self-struggling, like pregnancy, to enhance humanity. For

Nietzsche, as Guay argues, bad conscience can possibly render human character and human action “a matter of self-determination” and perceive how we, “although natural beings, could nevertheless come to hold ourselves to self-originating but nevertheless objective standards” (362). Accordingly, we may say the self is possible to be cultivated and developed by means of bad conscience, according to Nietzsche, but the prerequisite condition is that man is conscious of his need for enhancing the self.

Both Mill and Nietzsche elucidate how Christianity dominates and limits humanity. Mill criticises Christian morality which forces people to passively obey a fixed formula without permitting a diversity of opinions. Compared with Mill, Nietzsche too objects that it tyrannically polarises human nature by its bipolar conceptions of good and evil and misleads us to believe we were born with ineradicable sin and can only be redeemed by relying on its precepts. Christianity misguides us to assume life is replete with endless suffering and the only way to release ourselves from suffering is to follow Christian morality and ask for redemption. Nietzsche argues that Christianity does not develop humanity but keeps them indefinitely in the restriction of culture and tradition. Mill and Nietzsche attack Christian morality and argue the concept of individuality; however, their responses are different. “Mill and Nietzsche also shared a belief in the idea of exceptional individuals. Nietzsche’s ‘Superman’ ideal is a familiar feature of his thought, even in caricature. It is a more decided notion than Mill’s picture of a refined, reflective and high-feeling Aristotelian ‘great soul’” (Grayling 160). Mill corrects Christian morality by advocating a new and ideal norm of morality, i.e. utilitarian morality. He argues that utilitarianism is essential and necessary for protecting individual liberty from being dominated by Christian morality. What Mill does is direct us to view and follow another necessary ideal moral

regulation, which he believes is better than Christian morality. Mill expects to have a harmonious and balanced society based on the principle of utilitarian morality, and claims that this principle would help individuals discover their way of life. For Mill, utilitarianism is considered as the precondition for developing individuality.

Nietzsche does not assert any formula of morality as Mill does, as Kaufmann comments, “Nietzsche’s generic conception of morality is best understood in terms of a brief contrast with the rival utilitarian definition” (1974: 212). Nietzsche claims that Christianity inculcates a monotheistic asceticism with the goal of controlling human history without allowing “other interpretations” and “other goal”. This ascetic ideal “reproaches, negates, affirms, confirms exclusively with reference to *its* interpretation” (GM III: 23). Nietzsche points out that all the conceptions taught by Christianity are its absolute and petty interpretation of human nature and life that Christianity uses for dominating humanity. He also explicates that sin “has been the greatest event so far in the history of the sick soul: it represents the most dangerous and fateful trick of religious interpretation” (GM III: 21). Nietzsche does not agree that human nature should be measured and judged according to Christian conceptions of good and evil, and rejects that man can only be redeemed through Christian precepts. In contrast, he contends that Christianity ignores the possibility of individuality and limits the human potential to affirm life by inculcating an inflexible and pessimistic interpretation to our culture and building up another unattainable reality above earth. As Tongeren says, it is a reality “in which there is no change but eternity, in which there is no struggle but only peace” (398). Christian morality which is “concealed beneath the cloak of holy intentions”, for Nietzsche, “has thus carved its fearful and unforgettable inscription into the whole history of mankind; and, unfortunately, into *more* than just its history (GM III: 21). Nietzsche here unfolds how

Christianity controls human history according to its fixed and absolute interpretation and judgement on humanity.

As a result, Christianity denies the self and negates the affirmation of reality as it is. Perceiving the sick condition in which man lives, Nietzsche brings us to view Christian morality in a different way, in order to release ourselves from its dominant conceptions of good and evil and become independent through self-interpretation. As he argues, “Perspectival seeing is the only kind of seeing there is, perspectival ‘knowing’ the only kind of ‘knowing’; and the more feelings about a matter which we allow to come to expression, the more eyes, different eyes through which we are able to view this same matter, the more complete our ‘conception’ of it, our ‘objectivity’, will be” (GM III: 12). Mill who stresses the domination of Christian morality on humanity and the need for utilitarian morality, which is considered by Mill as a means to protect individual and enhance humanity for achieving happiness; nevertheless, Nietzsche is concerned to promote the potential to interpret and transform ourselves through self-reflection and self-overcoming. The key to develop humanity and be individual, from Nietzsche’s standpoint, is not to follow any mode of morality but to know we are able to create values and cultivate ourselves through self-reflection without relying on the negative mode of evaluation in Christianity. “Nietzsche finds that degenerate concepts arise from the negative evaluation of the earth. He suggests that an alternative response to the earth first requires a higher valuation of the subject than as a vehicle for a moralising cognition over which it has no control” (Peter Murray 176). Nietzsche wants to revalue the concepts in Christianity, and his criticism of Christian morality envisages a possible condition for developing the self and experiencing life with self-realisation and responsibility. Nietzsche emphasises “a certain kind of cultivation, an exquisiteness of taste, a way of bearing and thinking

about oneself” (Solomon 45), claiming that individuality is possible when we are able to liberate ourselves from the restriction of Christian value and judgement.

The concept of individuality is paramount for Nietzsche. The moral problem “concerns the perfection, not of society, nor of the masses of men but of the great individual” (Josiah Royce 270). As Nietzsche says, “we find as the ripest fruit on their tree the *sovereign individual*, the individual who resembles no one but himself, who has once again broken away from the morality of custom, the autonomous supra-moral individual” (GM II: 2). He indicates the concept of the sovereign individual: an original individual who is capable of constantly overcoming itself and stands independently without being confined to any norm of morality. In ancient ages, the morality of custom cultivated people by way of harshness and coercion and made them behave morally. In this process of cultivation, Nietzsche envisions the self-interpreting individual as the ripe but late fruit: “To be able to vouch for oneself, and to do so with pride, and so to have the *right to affirm oneself* – that is, I have said, a ripe fruit, but also a *late* fruit” (GM II: 3). The individual is able to interpret his conduct through self-overcoming and is responsible for it beyond the level of the morality of custom. He has autonomy and affirms his life with power and freedom. However, the potential to individuality in modernity has been impeded when people regard Christian morality as an indispensable way for living. Nietzsche contends that the civilised human beings in modernity, under the influence of Christianity, have lost the ability to be self-reliant and self-supporting but live pessimistically as tame herd animals.

Conway, in *Nietzsche and the Political*, argues that modern man lives with bad conscience, which as “a fiercely vigilant homunculus responsible for reckoning one’s

debts and obligations, represents the final – and most forbidding – barrier to genuine sovereignty” (1997: 19). Christianity tames humans by means of its precepts and prevents them from being able to live affirmatively with a free spirit. Modern culture is harmful to the self without providing the conceptions of individuality and life-affirmation; modernity becomes a disgrace to all humankind (GM I: 11). Christian morality is to obstacle the individual; it denies the value of the self and leads people to nihilism. In consequence, modernity reveals a perilous sign of the degenerate morality in which the affirmative value of the self and life has been taken away. “The *Genealogy*’s fundamental aim is to re-present our slavish self-interpretation in terms of original sin as not necessary...and thereby to open the possibility of our existing otherwise, as redeemed from a sense of ourselves as requiring divine redemption” (Stephen Mulhall 44). Nietzsche strives to prevent individuality from being diminished by social normalization and moralization (Thiele 1990: 40) and provides us with a powerful impetus to reexamine morality and rethink the value of the individual. Nietzsche emphasises the possibility of individuality through self-realisation and self-overcoming. Thus in the sovereign individual “we find a proud consciousness, tense in every muscle, of *what* has finally been achieved here, of what has become incarnate in him – a special consciousness of power and freedom, a feeling of the ultimate completion of man. (GM II: 2).

Mill claims the importance of individual liberty, elucidating that it has to be maintained in accordance with the theory of utility. In contrast, Nietzsche holds that individuality is attained through personal reflection and examination. As Ansell-Pearson comments, “an essential part of Nietzsche’s thinking beyond good and evil is that a virtue has to be the personal invention of each individual” (1994: 136). Furthermore, Nietzsche understands that being the self-interpreting and autonomous

individual is not a necessity for everyone. It is, according to Nietzsche, for those few who “can only attain ‘value’ by placing themselves in the service of culture (which for him [Nietzsche] means the cultivation of great or true human beings) and by representing, in some sense, the ascending forces of ‘life’” (Ansell-Pearson 1994: 11). For Nietzsche, the self cannot be developed when we still rely on Christianity and expect for being guided and redeemed by tradition and Christian morality. “The sense of guilt towards the divinity has continued to grow for several thousands of years, and always in the same proportion as the concept of sense of god has grown and risen into the heights” (GM II: 20). Nietzsche argues that we habitually allow ourselves to believe and regard the conceptions of guilt and redemption, which are inculcated by Christianity to human history, as an essential and compulsory way of life. Christianity offers us a pessimistic attitude towards life, but Nietzsche suggests we view life alternatively and rely on ourselves. The value of life depends on how we are able to evaluate it by our interpretation and be willing to affirm it. Nietzsche claims that the potential to develop the self and be an individual with freedom is not according to how we absolutely obey Christian morality but how we intellectually reflect ourselves and experience life through self-overcoming. Individual freedom, for Nietzsche, means self-mastery beyond any norm of morality: “the manly instincts that delight in war and victory have gained mastery over the other instincts – for example, over the instinct for ‘happiness’...The free man is a warrior” (TI 9: 38). In this way, freedom for the individual is the consequence of self-affirmation. Nietzsche’s remark on freedom, as Schacht argues, is associated with the assumption of responsibility for what one does (1983: 307). In other words, the individual can overcome and master itself and thus affirms life with assurance.

In *Nietzsche and the Political*, Conway also argues that Nietzsche’s concept of

self-overcoming aims to “gain for oneself of freedom from the limitations of one’s age, in order that one might command an expanded range of affective engagement and expression” (1997: 65). For Nietzsche, self-overcoming is a road for self-transformation to individuality with an alternative attitude toward human and life. Self-overcoming is not to devalue the current self but to constantly create a new self derived from the current one. The original self is weak because it is under the domination of Christian culture. The importance is to awaken and transform the repressed self to be original in the process of self-reflection. The individual makes himself a promise for his “next self arises only in the practice of one’s refusal of one’s current self” (ibid.: 67). In this way, the individual is able to transform him or herself through internalisation. With regard to the conception of self-development, there is the way that Nietzsche recommends: to turn the soul inside out (ibid.: 69). One has firstly to recognise himself and then raises one’s soul in order to renew the self, as claimed by Conway, “as a volcanic eruption augments the landscape it disfigures, so self-overcoming increases the dimensionality and surface area of the soul, allowing for an expanded range of capacities and expressions” (ibid.). This unceasing process is harsh but necessary for attaining self-development. Simply put, the individual guards himself as a warrior who “lives only to test himself in battle” (ibid.), in order to reveal his responsibility for life and existence through his way of life.

Ansell-Pearson, in *Nietzsche Contra Rousseau: A study of Nietzsche’s moral and political thought*, also offers a comparative commentary on Nietzsche’s concept of the sovereign individual. He argues that both Rousseau and Nietzsche want to “offer a teaching on how to live one’s life which is in accordance with nature” (1991: 102). But Nietzsche offers an exceptional teaching: “there is neither a fixed and immutable human nature for the individual to live in accordance with, nor an eternal moral order

on which one could base a deduction of the social and political. Rather, it is the law of life that everything must overcome itself again and again without final goal or ultimate purpose (ibid.: 102). Ansell-Pearson points out Nietzsche's concern for self-overcoming and considers it the law of life that Nietzsche claims. Self-overcoming is considered self-reflection that challenges and develops the self. This is an autonomous process for the individual because he alone is responsible for his own conduct. Nietzsche is concerned with a new culture that is free from Christian tradition and morality. We are never self-critical and independent, according to Nietzsche, if we follow Christian morality. "Nietzsche's originality lies in his attempt to demonstrate the necessity of a revaluation of the value of morality by showing that it is the result of a particular historical labour of culture, and hence is shown to be neither universal nor natural" (ibid.: 104). Ansell-Pearson argues that Christian morality blocks modern people from achieving an authentic conception of individuality, and bad conscience in modern culture causes people's resentment. This is how Christian morality dominates and manipulates us. But the concept of the sovereign individual reveals the possibility to be supramoral: man is able to "become a reflective being concerned with the moral origins of actions" only through "the cultivation of self-knowledge" (ibid.: 138). The sovereign individual lives on affirming himself at any moment with a free spirit. He is different from others because he is the ripest but latest product of human history. After all, in Nietzsche's view, the sovereign individual stands as a promise of his arrival and his responsibility for life and represents a new era of culture for human history. As Ansell-Pearson tells us: "For Nietzsche the arrival of the autonomous individual should not be regarded as an occasion for establishing a communal ethic on a rational foundation, but rather for producing aristocratic sovereign individuals who are unique, and who bear a will to self-responsibility" (ibid.: 140). The sovereign individual is not a symbol for social

community. It is rather Nietzsche's attempt to assert the value of the self through self-overcoming. "The sovereign individual displays courage and independence, for it enters into social relationships with others on the basis of a proud awareness of its sovereignty over itself, and of its distinction from others" (ibid.: 141). The sovereign individual manifests a new social and cultural structure and Nietzsche's conception of individuality is the basis of this new culture.

Nietzsche's attack on Christian morality is "against *all* fixated and derived phenomena of generally accepted morality and points beyond to the source of morality itself in a universally valid *ought*" (Jaspers 103). Nietzsche raises the problems of morality but leaves them to all of us for pondering and reflecting on ourselves. This is the task of all human beings: to overcome the animality of human nature through self-reflection, to raise the self and to affirm life. As Schacht comments: "What moralities fundamentally convey, on Nietzsche's view, are norms of human life (1983: 428). Condemning the domination of Christianity over human culture and providing the concept of an original and exceptional individual who accepts responsibility for his own existence, Nietzsche elevates humanity by implying that we live in an unhealthy condition, and suggests we recover our confidence and experience life with affirmation. His notion of morality is his contribution to humankind in modern culture: to remind us of the importance of the self and life-affirmation. In his criticism, Nietzsche chooses a sceptical view to expose the problems of morality and claims his moral judgement of modern culture and his stance on individuality. His moral judgement cannot be categorised by any formula of morality, and his notion of individuality reveals the potential to human development and better human culture. Nietzsche clearly evinces a deep concern regarding the development of humanity and the value of individuality. From his viewpoint of

human nature in chapter two to his criticism of Christian morality in this chapter, we can see how Nietzsche develops his perspective of humanity, morality and culture. In the next chapter, I examine Nietzsche's later works in comparison with Emerson's essays and analyse the stance that Nietzsche adopts to draw attention to the conception of life-affirmation in modern culture.

Chapter 4

An Internalised Path to Individuality

In an entry from his late notebooks from 1885-1888, Nietzsche says:

I wish men would begin by *respecting* themselves: everything else follows from that...This is something different from the blind drive to *love* oneself: nothing is more common, both in the love of the sexes and in that duality named 'I', than *contempt* for what one loves, fatalism in love-. (Notebook 1888, 14: 205)

This exemplifies Nietzsche's view of humankind. On the one hand, he proclaims the difference between blind self-love and self-respect and on the other hand, he stresses the importance of self-respect. We can respond to his wish in two ways. The first is to find out if we can evade the blind drive that seduces us into loving ourselves for our own benefit, and start instead to respect ourselves, as autonomous and responsible individuals. The second is to regard Nietzsche's claim as *only* his wish and thereby ignore the possibility of fulfilling this wish. I prefer the first option. Nietzsche distinguishes self-love from self-respect on account of his understanding of humanity on two levels. At one level, Nietzsche points out that humankind automatically loves itself. At another level he emphasises that self-respect is more important than self-love, for self-respect helps to develop humanity to a higher level of self-realisation. But we need to bear in mind that Nietzsche does not say that self-respect is for everyone. Only those rare individuals with the capacity for self-realisation and self-overcoming would be able to perceive it, knowing how important self-respect is. For those individuals, self-realisation develops the self to a higher level, and self-overcoming helps to liberate the self from the domination of Christian culture, morality, and restricted consciousness. I examine how people who realise themselves well could possibly respect themselves as individuals; this is the third step on the journey of

self-cultivation. In this chapter, I explore Nietzsche's concept of individuality by comparing seven essays of Emerson with some of Nietzsche's late works: *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-Christ* and *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche's *Writings from the Late Notebooks* are also discussed.

There are two reasons why I choose to offer a comparative analysis of Emerson and Nietzsche. First, Emerson and Nietzsche both claim the importance of autonomy and individuality and Emerson's thought has a great influence on Nietzsche from the time of his youth. There is evidence that indicates Nietzsche's high opinion of Emerson's thought. For instance, Nietzsche quoted a lot Emerson's essays when he was seventeen in 1862.⁴⁰ In "Nietzsche's Earliest Essays: Translation of and Commentary on 'Fate and History' and 'Freedom of Will and Fate'", George Stack claims that Nietzsche regards Emerson as his "soul-brother", that he read and reread Emerson's essays and then specifically copied out quotations from Emerson's essays "in preparation for the composition of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*" (1993: 153). There is a close intellectual affinity between Nietzsche and Emerson. As Stack continues, Nietzsche's early essays evidently show that he has been inspired in reading Emerson's essays:

The title of the first essay, "Fate and History," is a synthesis of two of Emerson's essays, "Fate" and "History." The second essay, "Freedom of Will and Fate," takes up a theme of Emerson's that will reverberate throughout Nietzsche's writing from his earliest published works to later works such as *Twilight of the Idols*. That these essays of Emerson were a stimulating, but recent discovery of the young Nietzsche is shown by the

⁴⁰ Anthony Graybosch (1995) in *Metaphilosophy* 26, 1-2: 158-161, gives his commentary in reviewing *Nietzsche and Emerson: An Elective Affinity*. (1992) By George Stack. Ohio, Athens: Ohio University Press. With his historical evidence, Stack indicates that Nietzsche heavily copies the ideas from Emerson's essays and frequently writes down "Das ist recht!" in the marginal space, showing his approval of the selected passages. Likewise in "Emerson's Influence on Nietzsche's Concept of the Will to Power", George Stack (1989: 175) stresses this point, claiming that it is clearly shown in Stanley Hubbard's *Nietzsche und Emerson* (1958).

misspelling of his name (“Emmerson”) and the not yet confident control of his ideas. (1993:153)

In *Nietzsche and Emerson: An Elective Affinity*, Stack depicts more explicitly the connection between Emerson and Nietzsche who never met or corresponded with each other: “Emerson had an unknown quasi-disciple in Germany who read him avidly in his youth and who returned to his writings for enjoyment, inspiration, or stimulus of his own thought over a long period of time. Nietzsche rarely travelled without his Emerson” (1992: 3).

Nietzsche’s admiration of Emerson is shown clearly in one of his letters (7 April 1866) to Carl Von Gersdorff, which proves that Nietzsche is inspired by Emerson’s essays,⁴¹

Dear friend, once in a while there come those hours of quiet contemplation when, with joy and sadness mixed, we hover over our everyday lives, like those lovely summer days stretching themselves comfortably over the hills, as Emerson describes them so well. It’s then, as he says, that nature achieves perfection; and we – we are then free of the curse of our ever watchful will, we are then pure eye, contemplative and disinterested. In this most desirable of moods I’m taking pen in hand to answer your kind letter, which is so full of good ideas. (Letters 1)

Nietzsche never ceased to admire Emerson throughout his life. In *The Gay Science*, for instance, Nietzsche praises Emerson so highly, saying that he is one of those who are “worthy of being called masters of prose” (GS 92). Nietzsche too expresses this admiration in *Twilight of the Idols*. For Nietzsche, Emerson is “a man as instinctively feeds on pure ambrosia and leaves alone the indigestible in things” and his spirit “is always finding reasons for being contented and even grateful; and now and then he verges on the cheerful transcendence of that worthy gentleman” (TI 9: 13). Emerson represents the spirit of American Renaissance and Transcendentalism. The conceptions of individualism and self-reliance are the main doctrines advanced in

⁴¹ This information is according to David Mikics (2003: 1) in *The Romance of Individualism in Emerson and Nietzsche*. (Athens: Ohio University Press)

Emerson's essays. According to Emerson, it is through self-reliance that man is able to understand the significance of life and behave autonomously, a view echoed in Nietzsche's concept of individuality.

The second reason why I choose Emerson is that his critical attitude toward conventional Christian doctrine is similar to Nietzsche's attack on Christianity. Emerson becomes highly critical of Christian doctrine, resigns his pulpit and turns to his own form of belief in God. Though the way he argues is different from Nietzsche, Emerson is no doubt a thinker who questions traditional Christianity and instead espouses self-support, self-culture and self-experimentation – ideas that Nietzsche, too, upholds. I choose Nietzsche's three books written in 1888 in order to stress his concern with the development of humanity and the affirmation of life through the notions of self-experimentation and the revaluation of all values expressed in his final works. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche criticises tradition and received ideas in philosophy, stressing that humanity has to be incessantly developed and overcome through self-realisation. *The Anti-Christ*, likewise, represents Nietzsche's most critical stance toward Christianity. He opposes Christian doctrine and redefines the meaning of Jesus' teaching. Nietzsche proclaims the decadence of Christianity and the need for the revaluation of all values. Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo* on the one hand conceives of humanity and culture, deploying his analysis step by step in his work. On the other hand he perceives, intends to reinterpret and better understand life through self-reflection.

In this chapter, my discussion will be divided into three sections. To start with, the first section examines the understanding of religion by discussing Emerson's "The Divinity School Address", "The Over-Soul" and Nietzsche's *The Anti-Christ*.

Emerson and Nietzsche both break with the false impression of Jesus in Christianity, i.e. the concept of redemption through his incarnation, and reinterpret the significance of his life. The second section will concentrate on Emerson's "Self-Reliance", "Experience" and Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*, exploring the understanding of the mind and the soul, which brings the individual to overcome his limited nature in order to be a man with self-knowledge. Emerson's "Fate", "Heroism" and "Circles" and Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* will be examined in the last section, which is concerned with examining how man knows the self from inside and seeks to envisage how man can develop to live as a self-reliant and autonomous individual.

4.1 An Exploration of Religion

Man is instructed by Christian doctrine to believe that God is the Almighty and that man needs firstly to repent his innate sinfulness in order to be saved. In this respect, Jesus is defined as the redeemer who comes to save all human beings. But Emerson and Nietzsche both break with this erroneous doctrine of Christianity and both provide a new interpretation of the significance of God and Jesus. In this section, I am going to explore how Emerson and Nietzsche reinterpret God and Jesus. For Emerson, God is redefined not "the Almighty God" but immanent God, "the Over-Soul", living in humanity itself. To begin with, I discuss some critics' interpretations of Emerson's religious outlook. David Smith in "'The Sphinx Must Solve Her Own Riddle': Emerson, Secrecy, and the Self-Reflexive Method" provides an approach to understanding Emerson's concept of secrecy, religious nondualism and self-reflexive turn. At first, Smith argues that the aim of Emerson's thought is "not to discover something hidden or to produce a more comprehensive formula" but "to lead the reader to a more simple and complete way of inhabiting the territory on which he or

she already stands” (837). Smith makes two points in response to Emerson’s thought. The first point is the concept of secrecy,⁴² according to Smith’s understanding, which is used by Emerson to reveal his essential notions of God and man. Smith claims that Emerson provides an abstract concept indicating that many secrets in relation to God and man are hidden in a world that it is unable to be defined by man. Emerson’s self-reflexive turn is the means that he employs in order to “explore and performatively resolve this kind of secret” (841). By tracing the development of Emerson’s notion of religion, Smith contends that Emerson “glimpses a chance for ‘wisdom’” which guides us in learning how to identify ourselves when we are in the condition of uncertainty (847). Clearly, as Smith suggests, a new and positive attitude toward life and religion is given through Emerson’s thought in which man can find energy and wisdom that help to understand himself.

The importance of Emerson’s nondualism is the second point emphasised in Smith’s article: “The essential art of nondual spirituality, in turn, is to learn to finesse this paradox – to learn to become who we are or to recover what was never lost and can never be attained” (852). According to this view, Emerson’s nondualist concept based on his notion of a self-reflexive turn awakens man to the knowledge that he is in connection with God and the universe. Thus: “The self, ceasing the struggle to grasp itself as an object of consciousness, finds itself, in its emptiness, in every detail of the world to which it belongs” (855). Moreover, Smith claims that it is better to understand Emerson’s thought from different perspectives, as he indicates that it is not his implication that “this self-reflexive method is the key to everything Emerson had to say” (857). From what he has stressed, Smith gives a positive response to

⁴² The concept of secrecy that Smith discusses is originated from the phrase “open secret” in a passage of Emerson’s journal (1960-1982: 4.87). My focus is not the phrase but Smith’s viewpoint of Emerson’s thought of religion.

Emerson's thought on religion.

David Robinson, too, argues that Emerson brings us a new perception of God in "Emerson and Religion". He on the one hand introduces the family and theological background from which Emerson's view on religion emerged, and on the other hand explained how Emerson was interested in Asian religion, particularly Hinduism. Robinson starts with the observation that "the belief in the presence and power of the soul is the core of Ralph Waldo Emerson's religious thought and the vital principle of his entire intellectual achievement" (151). Emphasising the development of the soul expressed in Emerson's essays, Robinson argues that his essays "indicate a striking kinship between Emerson's thinking and some of the fundamental concepts of Hinduism and other Asian religions; their roots are more in the traditions of Neoplatonism and Christian mysticism, as Arthur Versluis has shown"(165).⁴³ According to Robinson, Emerson uses both Western and Eastern traditions in order to "forge a universal religion, incorporating the truths from both" (165). Robinson claims that Emerson's reformation of the concept of God is concerned with manifesting a profound statement of affirmative faith, though he is also concerned that this thought might provoke the trouble that his readers are tempted to give up the idea of a personal deity (165). Robinson, however, suggests that the notion of the Over-Soul is better considered "a source of energy, an enabling power, of which each individual is a particular manifestation" (165). Robinson's view of Emerson's thought can be summed up as follows: "His [Emerson's] religious vision offers one of the most challenging and original modern approaches to the question of religious faith" (174). From Robinson's viewpoint, we understand that Emerson's perception of God,

⁴³ This point is discussed in Arthur Versluis's *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 54-61.

as distinct from the orthodox Christian view, provides an inspirable vision that guides humankind to search for the answer in quest of God and of itself.

Unlike Smith and Robinson who affirm Emerson's new interpretation of God, Lawrence Buell gives a more controversial argument. He argues that Emerson shows a religious radicalism that challenges both the commentators in his time and in our time. Buell firstly indicates that Emerson's view was considered a "slippery slope to atheism" by nineteenth-century conservatives (161). Buell then indicates that Emerson's thought continues to trouble contemporary writers who refuse to accept it.

Thus, Sharon Cameron, according to Buell,

[is] the scholar who has written most astutely on Emersonian impersonality, [but] is driven to accuse him of bad faith, because impersonality denies the intractable first-personness of a person's utterance, denies 'the responsibility a person should take for his words'. She presses the point so insistently because she finds it impossible to believe that Emerson means what he claims. (162)

Here lies Buell's point: "We have yet to grasp the full significance of this, his most contrarian act of intellectual radicalism: his insistence both on a God-in-me and on the 'impersonality' of the divine" (162). Buell at one level contends that Emerson's thought of God could be challenged and disapproved since, as he says, "no amount of historicizing can normalize the intractable peculiarity of Emerson's aversion to imagining the divine in personal terms" (167). At another level, Buell does not disavow Emerson's thought of God. On this view, Buell claims that Emerson is not a normal person for he is able to "express the felt unreality of workaday existence that most thinking people sometimes feel but prefer to repress" (168).

Buell likewise emphasises how Emerson is awakened to a keen interest in Asian religions, which have influenced Emerson in his religious worldview. However,

according to Buell, Emerson does not have any “intention of converting to Hinduism – or any other religion”, though he admires Asian religions, especially Hinduism. “His [Emerson’s] interest was eclectic and synthetic: to extract quintessential wisdom from the ‘inspired’ writings of all faiths” (179). Emerson urges us to rethink how we can achieve “a moral or spiritual universalism” (198). In the following, I am going to explore how Emerson reinterprets the meaning of “God”, the Supreme Being, and claims that humankind is able to perceive the existence of God within itself if the mind is open to this view.

Emerson begins with the observation that the sentiment of virtue is the essence of all religion (Address: 109). Even though we distinguish between different religions, such as Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Emerson claims that the essence of all religion is the same. His perception of the issue runs as follows:

A more secret, sweet, and overpowering beauty appears to man when his heart and mind open to the sentiment of virtue. Then he is instructed in what is above him. He learns that his being is without bound; that to the good, to the perfect, he is born, low as he now lies in evil and weakness. That which he venerates is still his own, though he has not realized it yet.
He ought. (Address: 108)

Emerson is concerned with emphasising the importance of virtue, which raises the mind to a higher level of awareness. He takes Jesus as an example for understanding his perception of God. For Emerson, Jesus realises how God incarnates himself in man and represents himself anew in the world (Address: 113). Emerson, at this point, explains why Jesus comes to the world and speaks of miracles: “he felt that man’s life was a miracle, and all that man doth, and he knew that this daily miracle shines as the character ascends” (Address: 113). Jesus does not come to show he is a redeemer who teaches doctrine, as recorded in Christianity. Jesus, appreciating the worth of all humanity, arrives to declare God and reveal the eternal revelation through his

incarnation, according to Emerson (Address: 114). He comes to the world in order to serve man with his holy thought, i.e. showing God is, not external to, but within humanity (Address: 115). Emerson continues: “A true conversion, a true Christ, is now, as always, to be made by the reception of beautiful sentiments” (Address 115). Jesus is an embodied representation of the religious sentiment for all humankind.

In Emerson’s view, historical Christianity, nevertheless, falsifies God as well as Jesus in the erroneous doctrine. First, Christianity exaggerates the notion of “the person of Jesus” (Address: 114). Jesus is a person who comes to the world showing what God is and where God can be found. In contrast, Christianity places too much emphasis on *the person named Jesus* who is crucified and reincarnated. In this respect, Christianity follows and inverts Jesus’ words as recorded by his disciples. It misleads us into forgetting God in man into accepting the conceptions of innate sin and the need for redemption. The miracles of Jesus, shown in Christian doctrine, have been considered fathomless events that are too difficult to be understood by human beings. Jesus’ aim in coming to the world is not to provide a doctrine for humans to follow but to show them how to find God and communicate with Him as Jesus does. In the light of Emerson’s standpoint, Jesus represents the universal nature of the human soul: “The soul knows no persons. It invites every man to expand to the full circle of the universe, and will have no preferences but those of spontaneous love” (Address: 114). According to this view, the conception of Jesus has been twisted by Christian doctrine which has already cut off the direct connection between man and God. Man is deceived by Christianity into believing the scripted doctrine rather than the truth represented through Jesus. “To aim to convert a man by miracles is a profanation of the soul”, says Emerson (Address: 115). Emerson argues that Christianity converts the truth that Jesus attempts to show to us through his conduct, miracles and life.

Christianity offers an erroneous view to distinguish Jesus from us:

You shall not be a man even. You shall not own the world; you shall not dare and live after the infinite Law that is in you, and in company with the infinite Beauty which heaven and earth reflect to you in all lovely forms; but you must subordinate your nature to Christ's nature; you must accept our interpretations, and take his portrait as the vulgar draw it. (Address: 115)

Jesus does not aim at showing the difference between him and other human beings, in Emerson's view, but wishes to remind them of their greatness, which is the same as Jesus has. To claim more precisely, Emerson is convinced that human beings have the same soul as Jesus has, which connects them to God. Because of its emphasis on such profanity, for Emerson, Christianity has destroyed man's belief in God.

The second error is that Christianity does not guide the human mind to open itself to see true faith beyond the limits of language and consciousness. Rather it restricts human potential through its emphasis on the need to obey Christian doctrine as stated by the preaching and teaching of priests, churches, and missionaries. In contrast, according to Emerson,

[t]he spirit only can teach. Not any profane man, not any sensual, not any liar, not any slave can teach, but only he can give, who has; he only can create, who is. The man on whom the soul descends, through whom the soul speaks, alone can teach. Courage, piety, love, wisdom, can teach; and every man can open his door to these angels, and they shall bring him the gift of tongues. But the man who aims to speak as books enable, as synods use, as the fashion guides, and as interest commands, babbles. Let him hush. (Address: 117)

In view of Emerson's elaboration, his purpose to redefine and correct the meaning of preaching and teaching is shown. Emerson continues,

[I]t is my duty to say to you that the need was never greater of new revelation than now...The soul is not preached. The Church seems to totter to its fall, almost all life extinct. On this occasion, any

complaisance would be criminal which told you, whose hope and commission it is to preach the faith of Christ, that the faith of Christ is preached. (Address: 117)

Here we can recognise how Emerson criticises the way of preaching and teaching in Christianity. Preaching is essential and good when we can conceive of true faith in accordance with the view indicated by Emerson: “The test of the true faith, certainly, should be its power to charm and command the soul, as the laws of nature control the activity of the hands – so commanding that we find pleasure and honor in obeying” (Address: 118). True faith never makes man obliged but leaves him naturally happy and peaceful. Emerson is not suggesting that traditional preaching should be rejected and abolished as he also mentions that Christianity has provided us the Sabbath and the institution of preaching (Address: 126). Emerson questions the meaning of preaching which has been converted in Christianity. In other words, if we attend to the sermon preached by the priests, we respond in a manner that is automatic and makes us pleased with no pressure and obligation. “The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life, - life passed through the fire of thought” (Address: 119).

The true preacher, for Emerson, is able to reinforce man’s belief in God and connect man with God. However, Emerson sees an opposed situation in the preaching of priests: “But now the priest’s Sabbath has lost the splendor of nature; it is unlovely; we are glad when it is done” (Address: 118). It seems to Emerson that historical Christianity sets a false example, as he claims,

But, with whatever exception, it is still true that tradition characterizes the preaching of this country; that it comes out of the memory, and not out of the soul; that it aims at what is usual, and not at what is necessary and eternal; that thus historical Christianity destroys the power of preaching, by withdrawing it from the exploration of the moral nature of

man; where the sublime is, where are the resources of astonishment and power. (Address: 121)

The significance of preaching, as Emerson observes, has been misinterpreted and destroyed in Christianity. When man cannot be raised up through preaching, he feels restricted and faithless: “Now man is ashamed of himself; he skulks and sneaks through the world, to be tolerated, to be pitied, and scarcely in a thousand years does any man dare to be wise and good, and so draw after him the tears and blessings of his kind” (Address: 121). This perverted understanding of Christianity drives humans into a state of misery in which they cannot be inspired and enlightened.

Denouncing the errors that emerge from Christianity, Emerson’s ambition is to correct them. Emerson does not encourage others to follow him blindly and slavishly: “Thank God for these good men, but say, ‘I also am a man.’ Imitation cannot go above its model. The imitator dooms himself to hopelessly mediocrity. The inventor did it because it was natural to him, and so in him it has a charm” (Address: 123). Emerson is concerned with conveying the unlimited power of the soul which is, he holds, to be found in everyone. As Makarushka argues that Emerson’s naturalistic and unmediated understanding of religion helps him “reconsider the role of religion in society not in relation to institutional power but as an expression of individual empowerment” (4). Emerson aims at correcting the errors found in religion, and awakening in us the need for enlightenment, when we can conceive of his conception of God. In “The Over-Soul”, Emerson, different from traditional Christianity explicates the meaning of God:

When we have broken our god of tradition and ceased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with his presence. It is the doubling of the heart itself, nay, the infinite enlargement of the heart with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side. It inspires in man an infallible truth. (The Over-Soul: 221)

Man is better able to find God, in Emerson's view, if he can sever himself from tradition and doctrine. God is not separated from man but is in man himself. God is within humanity. But, is humankind indeed conscious of the need to break with the conception of the god of tradition and rhetoric in order to find God, as Emerson suggests? Do we, in other words, *really* understand Emerson's implication, believing that we can find God, who is *actually* in us? In my opinion, it is possible to find God if we open the mind and help ourselves understand Emerson's concept of God.

Emerson claims that the creative source of human beings is the Over-Soul, as stated in the following passage,

The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other. (The Over-Soul: 206)

This "Over-Soul", for Emerson, refers to his reinterpretation of the meaning of God. Emerson then goes on with his conception of the soul in humankind: "We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One" (The Over-Soul: 207). We are not merely living beings who have a physical body, but we are the soul that associates us with God and the universe. The soul implied by Emerson is the universal nature that connects every part of the universe, including human beings, as a whole, i.e. the Emersonian conception of eternity. As Emerson says, "this deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, the one" (ibid.).

We can see how Emerson elaborates the relation between the soul and man in the following passage:

[T]he soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie, - an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. (The Over-Soul: 208)

The soul, according to this view, cannot be seen and measured as a part of our body, i.e. an organ. It permeates the body, guiding the mind and the will to respond intuitively. We can perceive the soul is in us as spiritual nature, but we are unable to possess it. Take love, hope and courage, for instance; we can possess none of them. We cannot define what love is but we set examples to express the nature of love as a matter of practice. Similarly, it is impossible to define the soul with language because language can cause misunderstanding. The soul invisibly and eternally exists in humankind though it cannot be defined and measured. The soul awakens us to conceive that “we are wiser than we know”. The nature of the soul can be manifested by Revelation (The Over-Soul: 214). Revelation is “the discourse of the soul” (The Over-Soul: 215) and a communicative connection between man and God. In order to elucidate the notion of Revelation, Emerson takes Jesus as an example:

Jesus, living in these moral sentiments, heedless of sensual fortunes, heeding only the manifestations of these, never made the separation of the idea of duration from the essence of these attributes, nor uttered a syllable concerning the duration of the soul. It was left to his disciples to sever duration from the moral elements, and to teach the immortality of the soul as a doctrine, and maintain it by evidences. The moment the doctrine of the immortality is separately taught, man is already fallen. (The Over-Soul: 216)

Jesus never thinks that he is separated from God. Jesus knows that he is connected

with God and all beings in the universe as the whole. “Jesus speaks always from within, and in a degree that transcends all others. In that is the miracle” (The Over-Soul: 218). The soul itself knows that it is naturally connected with the Over-Soul. It is not necessary to explain the soul with language.

According to Emerson, Jesus does not come to show he is different from humankind. On the contrary, Jesus comes to set a living example for humans, helping them also to open the mind and conceive that they and Jesus are the same: “We are all discerners of spirits. That diagnosis lies aloft in our life or unconscious power...[T]he wisdom of the wise man consists herein, that he does not judge them; he lets them judge themselves and merely reads and records their own verdict” (The Over-Soul: 217). At this point, Emerson suggests that the soul will decide for itself even though people might feel it too difficult to understand that the soul “is superior to its knowledge, wiser than any of its works” (The Over-Soul: 219). Simply put, humans are free to decide if they want to believe that they and Jesus are the same. It depends on the soul’s choice. At the beginning of “The Over-Soul”, Emerson claims: “Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual” (The Over-Soul: 205). The implication is that we can grasp the moment when faith comes, though our vice is so habitual that it cannot be removed from human nature. If we understand what Emerson states and perceive true faith that he addresses, we not only know that we are not sinful, but also are able to find God by the true faith. Here is Emerson’s understanding of true faith:

The faith that stands on authority is not faith. The reliance on authority measures the decline of religion, the withdrawal of the soul. The position men have given to Jesus, now for many centuries of history, cannot alter the eternal facts. Great is the soul, and plain. It is no flatterer, it is no follower; it never appeals from itself. It believes in itself...The saints and demigods whom history worships we are constrained to accept with a grain of allowance. Though in our lonely hours we draw a new strength

out of their memory, yet, pressed on our attention, as they are by the thoughtless and customary, they fatigue and invade. The soul gives itself, alone, original and pure, to the Lonely, Original and Pure, who, on that condition, gladly inhabits, leads and speaks through it. (The Over-Soul: 223)

True faith, for Emerson, is attained by the soul which always pervades man. As Emerson claims, we need wise people, for instance, saints, prophets, poets and genius, who can inspire us to perceive the soul. Emerson advises us not be deceived by the limited mind to make an error. To idolise wise people and follow them is erroneous, for man will be unable to expand his mind perceiving the soul if he is accustomed to following whether doctrine or wise people. Conversely, man will find God and perceive his union with God when he is awakened to a higher level of consciousness by the soul inside himself. So, if we want to find God, we have to look inside and find him within ourselves. To speak more precisely, there is no alternative means that helps us find God. Emerson argues that we will feel calm and pleased only when we know it is the soul that directs us to find God, as he claims that man “has not the conviction, but the sight, that the best is the true, and may in that thought easily dismiss all particular uncertainties and fears, and adjourn to the sure revelation of time the solution of his private riddles” (The Over-Soul: 221).

Christianity teaches man to search for God in doctrine in which he will never possibly find God. Emerson points to the errors of Christianity, declaring that the soul has already united with God, i.e. the Over-Soul. The man who can conceive of God is the simplest: “Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable. It inspires awe and astonishment” (The Over-Soul: 221). The soul connects man and God on condition

that man knows who he really is: “I the imperfect, adore my own Perfect” (The Over-Soul: 224). At one level, man is imperfect on account of the limits of language and consciousness. At another level, he is perfect because he has the greatest infinite soul inside himself. The key point of finding God is whether man is wise enough to understand that the self with the physical body is imperfect but the self with the soul inside is perfect. As Emerson claims,

I am somehow receptive of the great soul, and thereby I do overlook the sun and the stars and feel them to be the fair accidents and effects which change and pass. More and more the surges of everlasting nature enter into me, and I become public and human in my regards and actions. So come I to live in thoughts and act with energies which are immortal. (The Over-Soul: 224)

The soul, interpreted by Emerson, expands our mind to a circumstance in which we could understand humanity and know how to find God, as in the moment “all history is sacred”, and “the universe is represented in an atom” (The Over-Soul: 224). The soul, after all, awakens us to perceive God, the Over-Soul, within ourselves.

Emerson represents his convinced belief in the soul that awakens humankind to independence and self-reliance. His works, in this respect, are strongly opposed to the false impression of God conveyed by Christianity. As Makarushka argues: “The identity of ‘within and above’ is emblematic of Emerson’s understanding of the origin and nature of religion” (1), Emerson indicates the unity of the Over-Soul and the soul which denotes the unity of God and humankind, i.e. God is within humanity. Makarushka goes on saying, “if the origin and nature of religion can be attributed to human inwardness, then the authority and truth of religious experience must also be sited in an internal rather than in an external source” (1). Emerson provides an untraditional approach, which reveals his “rejection of religious orthodoxy” (Makarushka 2). He seeks to foster an inward awareness and envisages a new

possibility of communicating with God through the human soul. Like Emerson, Nietzsche criticises Christian doctrine and reinterprets the significance of God and Jesus, in order to emphasise the importance of being an individual with self-knowledge. But Nietzsche never intends to convince humankind and does not perceive the unity between man and God. Emerson and Nietzsche aim to declare the concept of individuality, but their perspectives on religion are different. The resemblance between them lies in is their shared concern with humanity and self-development, although their religious views of point are not the same. In “Emerson’s Words, Nietzsche’s Writing”, Timothy Gould argues that they both are not merely original thinkers but also thinkers of originality: “they are thinkers who demand their own original position in the intellectual world, and thinkers who demand of us an original relation to them (23). Makarushka too claims, “both Emerson and Nietzsche represent a claim of individual freedom over against the power of institutional religious claims, they address those who speak from the margins offering encouragement and affirmation” (4). If Gould’s and Makarushka’s commentaries are correct, in what follows, we will see how Nietzsche, like Emerson, in *The Anti-Christ* reinterprets the meaning of God and Jesus and attacks Christianity in his original perspective.

In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche argues that God, “who is fundamentally a word for every happy inspiration of courage and self-reliance,” has been given a new conception by the Jewish priesthood in the history of Israel, becoming “an instrument in the hands of priestly agitators who henceforth interpret all good fortune as a reward, all misfortune as punishment for disobedience of God, for ‘sin’” (A 25). In Nietzsche’s understanding, Christianity provides a false concept of God in order to create a “moral world-order”. The meaning of the moral world-order is “[t]hat there

exists once and for all a will of God as to what man is to do and what he is not to do; that the value of a nation, of an individual is to be measured by how much or how little obedience is accorded the will of God” (A 26). The priests, in this respect, decide “the value of things” by appealing to “the kingdom of God”, persuading us to follow “the *ruling power* of the will of God, expressed as punishment and reward according to the degree of obedience”, which leads man to a circumstance where “he [the priest] calls the means by which such a state is achieved or perpetuated ‘the will of God’ with cold-blooded cynicism he assesses nations, epochs, individuals according to whether they were conducive to the rule of priests or whether they resisted it” (A 26). The notion of sin in the priesthood, permeating through humankind, dominates society and culture. “From now on”, as Nietzsche claims, “all things of life are so ordered that the priest is everywhere indispensable” (A 26). Yet the situation, after the rule of the Jewish priesthood, does not become better but rather worse when Christianity arises and takes over the role of domination. The concept of God in Christianity is converted into a corrupt notion:

The Christian conception of God – is one of the most corrupt conceptions of God arrived at on earth...God degenerated to the *contradiction of life*, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal *Yes!* In God a declaration of hostility towards life, nature, the will to life! God the formula for every calumny of ‘this world’, for every lie about ‘the next world’! In God nothingness deified, the will to nothingness sanctified! (A 18)

Following the Jewish priesthood, as Nietzsche argues, Christianity not only continues to dominate human society and culture by the concept of sin and punishment, but also negates the will of life, leading humans to a decadent circumstance in which they are unable to affirm life but have a void and unfulfilled expectation of the next world after death. Under the domination of Christianity, people are led to embrace a state of decadence in which they are taught to rely on Christian morality and wait for redemption and salvation. In this respect, Jesus has been defined as the redeemer in

Christian doctrine in order to maintain and reinforce its domination over humankind.

Nietzsche criticises the falsification of the idea of redemption in Judeo-Christian morality that misguides us to embrace nothingness by proclaiming a false concept of immortality. As Nietzsche says: “The great lie of personal immortality destroys all rationality, all naturalness of instinct – all that is salutary, all that is life-furthering, all that holds a guarantee of the future in the instincts henceforth excites mistrust. So to live that there is no longer any *meaning* in living: *that* now becomes the ‘meaning’ of life” (A 43). In Christian consciousness, the crucified Christ is the redeemer who is incarnated to redeem us from sin through his death on the Cross. At this point, Nietzsche reinterprets the meaning of Jesus’ incarnation. When Emerson regards Jesus as the one united with God and all beings in the universe, Nietzsche rather regards him as the only Christian who manifests true faith with the glad tidings. First, Nietzsche reinterprets the meaning of the glad tidings, uttered by Jesus, in his statement: “True life, eternal life is found – it is not promised, it is here, it is *within you*: as life lived in love, in love without deduction or exclusion, without distance” (A 29). Nietzsche furthermore explicates what true Christian faith is as follows:

[T]he kingdom of Heaven belongs to children; the faith which here finds utterance is not a faith which has been won by struggle – it is there, from the beginning, it is as it were a return to childishness in the spiritual domain...Such a faith is not angry, does not censure, does not defend itself; it does not bring ‘the sword’ – it has no idea to what extent it could one day cause dissention. It does not prove itself, either by miracles or by rewards and promises, and certainly not ‘by the Scriptures’: it is every moment its own miracle, its own reward, its own proof, its own ‘kingdom of God’. Neither does this faith formulate itself – it lives, it resists formulas. (A 32)

Here, Nietzsche offers an alternative reading of both the Christian faith and the figure of Jesus. Nietzsche’s true faith, different from Christian faith, is similar to Emerson’s,

although they use different ways to explain it. They both claim that true faith is not to follow Christian God and doctrine. Emerson argues that true faith comes naturally without any command and obligation. According to Emerson, true faith should blend with all beings in the universe, such as “the light of rising and of setting suns”, “the flying cloud”, “the singing bird” and “the breath of flowers” (Address: 118), which makes humankind feel pleased and peaceful. For Nietzsche, the conception of true faith does not rely on the Christian God, waiting for salvation after death. According to Nietzsche, true faith is to know how to be a better and autonomous individual through self-reflection. Then we will realise we are never sinful as claimed in Christian doctrine and we never need to ask for redemption and salvation after death. It is unnecessary and impossible to measure true faith by following any formula; true faith appears itself calmly and naturally in every moment. Therefore, it is impossible to attain true faith by following Christian doctrine and scripture. If man wants to attain true faith, the key point is to be simple like children.

Second, Nietzsche considers that Jesus does not come to “redeem mankind” but to “demonstrate how one ought to live” (A 35). This is similar to Emerson’s view. Jesus, in other words, is a free spirit who comes to indicate a concept through his incarnation, as Nietzsche claims,

The concept, the *experience* ‘life’ in the only form he knows it is opposed to any kind of word, formula, law, faith, dogma. He speaks only of the inmost thing: ‘life’ or ‘truth’ or ‘light’ is his expression for the inmost thing – everything else, the whole of reality, the whole of nature, language itself, possesses for him merely the value of a sign, a metaphor.
(A 32)

The incarnation demonstrates Jesus to humans, expressing a way of life which can be attained by practical experience. Showing what life is and what truth is, Jesus indicates a possible path to the kingdom of God if man is willing to see and work on it.

This is the reason why the concept of Jesus, the redeemer, is in Christian history. For Nietzsche, “the concept ‘the Son of Man’ is not a concrete person belonging to history, anything at all individual or unique, but an ‘eternal’ fact, a psychological symbol freed from the time concept” (A 34). However Nietzsche does not regard Jesus as a person like all humankind. Nietzsche instead calls Jesus “the bringer of glad tidings” (A 35). Nietzsche distinguishes Jesus from all humankind, claiming that Jesus is “the Evangel” (A 33) who brings glad tidings and practises as a true Christian. In respect of Nietzsche’s reinterpretation of Jesus’ incarnation, Makarushka claims that Nietzsche has his “ambivalence towards Jesus” (27). Unlike Emerson who is convinced that man is united with Jesus and God, Nietzsche has his view of Jesus. As Makarushka says, “I argue that Nietzsche’s interpretation remained caught in the paradox of the ambiguity of the Incarnation. The reality of the god/man signifies the immanence of transcendence and remains an enigma” (27). I agree with Makarushka’s commentary, but I also argue that Nietzsche intends to interpret Jesus’ incarnation in order to understand how much the incarnation means to him. Similarly, Nietzsche argues that the concept of God is misinterpreted: “The same applies supremely to the God of this typical symbolist, [i.e. Nietzsche’s God], to the ‘kingdom of God’, to the ‘kingdom of Heaven’, to ‘God’s children’” (Makarushka 27). What Nietzsche implies, obviously, is the aim of Jesus’ incarnation which guides humankind to be conscious of something within itself, i.e. “[t]he profound instinct for how one would have to *live* in order to feel oneself ‘in Heaven’, to feel oneself ‘eternal’, while in every other condition one by *no* means feels oneself ‘in Heaven’” (A 33). In accordance with Nietzsche’s reinterpretation, after all, it is “a new way of living, *not* a new belief” (A 33) that Jesus shows in his life.

As noted above, Nietzsche claims that the true faith expressed in the glad tidings of

Jesus formulates itself, whereas Christianity converts it to its own doctrine, as shown as follows:

Our age is proud of its historical sense: how was it able to make itself believe in the nonsensical notion that the *crude miracle-worker and redeemer fable* comes at the commencement of Christianity – and that everything spiritual and symbolic is only a subsequent development? On the contrary: the history of Christianity – and that from the very death on the Cross – is the history of progressively cruder misunderstanding of an *original* symbolism. (A 37)

It seems to Nietzsche that man has been misled from true faith to a decadent condition by Christian morality and doctrine. Although Nietzsche's reinterpretation of Jesus is different from Emerson's, they both point to the crux that is not claimed in Christianity, i.e. Jesus does not come to redeem humankind but comes to show a new way for living, as Makarushka argues, "Nietzsche shared Emerson's perception that in its richest and most developed expression religion is lived in the creative moments of individuals" (29). Nietzsche tells us: "Everyone is a child of God – Jesus definitely claims nothing for himself alone – as a child of God everyone is equal to everyone else...To make a *hero* of Jesus" (A 28). Nietzsche regards Jesus as the Evangel, the true Christian who affirmatively experiences his life with bravery and responsibility: "Honoring the fact that the 'Evangel' lived and died in this world, he [Nietzsche] saw the significance his life and death as an affirmation of human possibility in an eternally ambiguous world" (Makarushka 30). There are three steps that could help man be aware of the domination of Christianity, possibly liberating him from Christianity and making himself a hero of Jesus.

First, man needs to conceive how he has been misled and dominated by Christianity. The perverted and absolute Christian faith, in Nietzsche's view, dominates culture by providing a misleading concept of God and Jesus' incarnation. Christianity does not

transmit true faith, a new way of life in the world uttered by Jesus to all humans but leads them to engage in “a war to the death against every feeling of reverence and distance between man and man, against, that is, the *precondition* of every elevation, every increase in culture” (A 43). Consequently, culture has been profoundly contaminated by Christianity. The influence of Christian morality causes us feel guilty on account of the erroneous concept of sin stated in Christian doctrine, as Nietzsche argues, “I have drawn back the curtain on the *depravity* of man. In my mouth this world is protected against at any rate one suspicion: that it contains a moral accusation of man...I understand depravity, as will already have been guessed, in the sense of *décadence*” (A 6). Humankind, in Nietzsche’s observation, is too weak to develop itself under the domination of Christian morality. Accordingly, we allow ourselves to stay in the decayed culture which emerges from Christianity.

Second, humankind needs to remind itself of the devastating power of human animality, which is likewise a hindrance that prevents from knowing itself. None can decide what we want to be except us, as Nietzsche contends, “I call an animal, a species, an individual depraved when it loses its instincts, when it chooses, when it *prefers* what is harmful to it” (A 6). Nietzsche argues that we are not wise enough to make decisions when we are not conscious of the intrinsic intellect, easily allowing us to be restricted by the limits of custom and consciousness. He also points out the contradictory weakness of humanity:

We know, our *conscience* knows today – *what* those sinister inventions of priest and Church are worth, *what end they serve*, with which that state of human self-violation has brought about which is capable of exciting disgust at the sight of mankind – the concepts ‘Beyond’, ‘Last Judgement’, ‘immortality of the soul’, the ‘soul’ itself: they are instruments of torture, they are forms of systematic cruelty by virtue of which the priest has become master, stays master...Everyone knows this:

and everyone none the less remains unchanged. (A 38)

For Nietzsche, man is habitually entrapped in self-contradiction. According to Nietzsche, the decayed modern culture, in relation to Christian morality, does not elevate humans but restricts them in custom and tradition. Nietzsche likewise implies that there is no sign of the development of humanity. For Nietzsche, “[m]ankind does *not* represent a development of the better or the stronger or the higher in the way that is believed today. ‘Progress’ is merely a modern idea, that is to say a false idea” (A 4). In Nietzsche’s view, humanity needs to be elevated and developed: “Humanity has not taken its first step here – the instincts of *cleanliness* are lacking” (A 46). Although Nietzsche criticises human animality, he has his perspective on the possibility of noble humanity shown in the rare individual who is able to live bravely and independently.

Third, it is important to know how to experience life. When Nietzsche claims, “I consider life itself instinct for growth, for continuance, for accumulation of forces, for *power*: where the will to power is lacking there is decline. My assertion is that this will is *lacking* in all the supreme values of mankind” (A 6), he clearly implies that civilisation does not guide us to affirm the self and life. Modern culture, which is deeply influenced by Christian morality, does not emphasise the importance of experiencing life but focuses on the conception of original sin and the need for redemption: “Christianity has taken the side of everything weak, base, ill-constituted, it has made an ideal out of *opposition* to the preservative instincts of strong life; it has depraved the reason even of the intellectually strongest natures by teaching men to feel the supreme values of intellectuality as sinful, as misleading, as *temptations* (A 5). Nietzsche, in the very beginning of *The Anti-Christ*, defines good, bad and happiness. “All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man” is

good; “[a]ll that proceeds from weakness” is bad; and happiness is “[t]he feeling that power *increases* – that a resistance is overcome” (A 2). The will to power is life itself. Nietzsche observes that Christianity never shows us the will to power, i.e. the energy of life: “The fate of Christianity lies in the necessity for its faith itself to grow as morbid, low and vulgar as the requirement it was intended to satisfy were morbid, low and vulgar” (A 37). Life, as Nietzsche claims, should represent itself not through denial and cowardliness, but through bravery and practice. In the history of Christianity, Nietzsche claims that Jesus is the only Christian who proves life itself as a true Christian, as shown in his argument, “only Christian *practice*, a life such as he who died on the Cross *lived*, is Christian” (A 39). And Nietzsche continues: “Even today, *such* a life is possible, for certain men even necessary: genuine, primitive Christianity will be possible at all times....*Not* a belief but a doing, above all a *not-doing* of many things, a different *being*” (A 39).

Here we can see the difference of attitude between Nietzsche and Emerson. Emerson is convinced by the possibility that all humans can find God when they are willing to open the mind and let the soul direct them to God. But for Nietzsche, his view is not as certain as Emerson claims. Nietzsche has two responses to this point. On the one hand he understands it is very difficult to raise the mind to a higher level on account of the weakness of human nature. On the other hand, he claims that only certain individuals will have the potential to realise how to live like Jesus. But Nietzsche’s and Emerson’s stances on life are similar. They not only stress the importance of experience, but also manifest themselves to affirm life through their experience. For Nietzsche, he differs his perception of life from Christianity, as is implied in his notion of the revaluation of all values. All values that emerge from Christianity, according to Nietzsche, should be revalued and reinterpreted in a new perspective. In

other words, we do not need to wait for the kingdom of Heaven after our death, as claimed by the dogma of Christianity. The kingdom of Heaven has been revalued and reinterpreted. As Nietzsche argues:

The 'Kingdom of Heaven' is a condition of the heart – not something that comes 'upon the earth' or 'after death'. The entire concept of natural death is lacking in the Gospel...The 'kingdom of God' is not something one waits for; it has no yesterday or tomorrow, it does not come 'in a thousand years' – it is an experience within a heart; it is everywhere, it is nowhere. (A 34)

In this view, the kingdom of Heaven is never an ordinary, physical kingdom that we can see through our eyes. At one level, according to Nietzsche, the kingdom of Heaven is nowhere because it does not exist in the physical world. It is everywhere, at another level, because it has already been in the heart of someone. The possibility of perceiving the existence of the kingdom of Heaven depends on whether man is wise and aware enough to be conscious of its existence. For Nietzsche, he appreciates the possibility of Jesus' path, albeit he does not advocate it. As he contends: "Let us not undervalue this: *we ourselves*, we free spirits, are already a 'revaluation of all values', an *incarnate* declaration of war and victory over all ancient conceptions of 'true' and 'untrue'" (A 13). Nietzsche concentrates on the development of the self and the notion of individuality. In his life, Nietzsche reveals the notion of the revaluation of all values through his works. After all, the possibility of being a hero of Jesus could be achieved on condition that firstly the individual conceives of his higher self through experience of life, and then the Christian values will be able to be converted.

In his essays, Emerson offers his own conception of God, contending that man is unlimited and powerful when he opens his mind and realises that he is united with God and all beings in the universe by the soul. Nietzsche likewise emphasises a possibility of being an individual. Though it is obvious that Emerson and Nietzsche

both reinterpret religion, criticise Christianity and emphasise the importance of individuality, we still can differ their views. Emerson is not only concerned with his concept of individuality, but also concentrates on the unity between man and God. Nietzsche is mainly concerned with the concept of individuality, claiming that his hero, who is liberated from Christian doctrine, can be elevated to a higher level through self-overcoming and self-realisation. In what follows, I will explore how Gary Shapiro and Daniel Conway interpret Nietzsche's *The Anti-Christ*.

As Gary Shapiro says in "Nietzsche's Graffito: A Reading of *The Antichrist*", many critics are disappointed by Nietzsche's text because they think it less striking than his previous works. Many critics consider *The Anti-Christ* as a ragbag in which they are unable to find any new inspiring ideas that Nietzsche might offer. For instance, Eugen Fink comments that "Nietzsche collects what he has already said about the morality of pity and the psychology of the priest – but now he gives his thoughts an exorbitant, violent edge and wants to insult, to strike the tradition in the face, to 'transvalue' by valuing in an anti-Christian way" (quoted in Shapiro, 304).⁴⁴ Shapiro declares his different stance on *The Anti-Christ*, arguing that it still contains some new and significant thoughts (306). In Shapiro's view, *The Anti-Christ* is a work which offers a new way of reinterpreting Jesus: "All morality is a semiotic interpretation of the body and society; if there is to be a transvaluation of values it must proceed by offering a new reading of that which has been misread" (307). In *The Anti-Christ*, according to Shapiro, Nietzsche reshapes the image of Jesus as "an anti-sign", which is completely opposed to the image formulated by the gospel and the church. Here is Shapiro's explanation: "The difference between Jesus and the church is that Jesus' signs are used with a consciousness of their inadequacy to their subject while the church

⁴⁴ The original source is Eugen Fink's *Nietzsches Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), p. 34.

believes that the gospels are divinely inspired and hence adequate signs” (311). It is apparent that Nietzsche portrays a self-conscious Jesus throughout his work, in which the notion of the revaluation of all values is signified. As Shapiro concludes,

The Antichrist aims at being the antithesis of Christian graffiti by opening up a space for playful writings like Nietzsche’s own; it is meant to clear the walls for an exuberant position of inscriptions which will break out of the narrow circle of revenge in which writing under the sway of Christianity and morality has moved. (321)

In *The Anti-Christ*, as distinct from his other polemical works, Nietzsche implies an affirmative attitude toward life and a revalued viewpoint of Jesus, which is obviously neglected by Christianity.

In the light of Nietzsche’s revaluation of all values, Conway (*Dangerous Games* 1997)⁴⁵ likewise stresses that Nietzsche’s *The Anti-Christ* helps us reconsider and redefine Nietzsche’s stance on Christianity. Firstly, Conway argues that *The Anti-Christ* is not only “a *statement* of his [Nietzsche’s] celebrated revaluation” but “a *performance*, or embodiment, of revaluation” as well (ibid.: 217). According to Conway, Nietzsche’s *The Anti-Christ* can be considered “an involuntary and unconscious memoir” which will never disappoint his readers (ibid.: 218). At this point, I agree with Conway’s desire to reinterpret Nietzsche in a new way. Disappointment, in my view, emerges from unsatisfied expectation. If we do not expect, then we cannot feel disappointed. Most Nietzsche’s readers expect too much when they read Nietzsche’s works from different periods, and it is better to keep in mind what Nietzsche always mentions in his thought: everything is changeable and is in flux. Therefore, it is unfair to say Nietzsche’s previous works are better than his

⁴⁵ Conway’s criticism of Nietzsche’s *The Anti-Christ* can be seen in chapter 6, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man: Nietzsche’s Revaluation of All Values” and chapter 7, “Standing between Two Millennia: Intimations of The Antichrist.”

later works. Every work, for Nietzsche, is unique, incomparable and irreplaceable. Every work has its own distinctive idea to communicate. In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche strives for a possible renewal of values in modern culture, as described in the Conway's analysis:

Nietzsche apparently believes that 'new' values arise either from an originary act of creation or from a reversal of existing values. The former, 'active' mode of evaluation is available only to healthy peoples and ages, whereas the latter, 'reactive' mode of evaluation characteristically falls to decadents, invalids, slaves, and anyone else who cannot afford the luxury of spontaneous self-expression. (ibid.: 182)

The Anti-Christ is a manifestation of this new possible value distinct from the values established by Christianity.

Conway also points out that *The Anti-Christ* is not only a declaration of war on Christian morality, but also a work in which he transforms himself into a declaration of war (ibid.: 185). In this view, the readers at one level can see how Nietzsche represents his revaluation of all values through *The Anti-Christ*, and at another level, they can observe that Nietzsche, standing as an embodied anti-Christ, himself performs in the declaration of war on Christianity. If this is Nietzsche's ambition, it could help to explain why *The Anti-Christ* is different from Nietzsche's other works. Clearly, *The Anti-Christ* is rather a book of "self-presentation" (ibid.: 201), aiming to "distinguish the truth of Christianity from the life of Christ and to expose the former as a wilful perversion of the latter" (ibid.: 223), according to Conway's commentary. Nietzsche, through his understanding of the significance of Jesus, not only provides a way to rethink the meaning of Christian doctrine, but also brings an unusual way to represent who he wants to be.

Secondly, Conway argues that Nietzsche is seen to be a decadent Antichrist rather

than an anti-Christian (*Dangerous Games* 1997: 228). Nietzsche's idea is never separated from his enmity toward Christianity; in other words, it appears that he is an unconventional priest who has an urge to preach a new value to humankind. "His [Nietzsche's] performance of revaluation reproduces in every respect the resentment and hatred for which he takes the priests to task. Despite his genuine contempt for Christian morality, he is not, strictly speaking, its other" (ibid.). Standing "at the crossroads of modernity and its successor epoch," Nietzsche is considered by Conway as an Antichrist who does not sever his connection with Christianity: "Whatever the ultimate merit of Nietzsche's appeal to dialectics, we are witness only to his complicity with Christian morality, and not to the logical transformation he supposedly instigates" (ibid.: 229). Nietzsche on the one hand attacks the decadence of Christian morality which permeates modern culture; on the other hand, his criticism of the decadence connects him tightly with the decadence of Christian morality. That is to say, Nietzsche cannot liberate himself from decadence because he not only knows he is different from the decadent spirit of the age, but also understands that he exists in it. Conway claims that Nietzsche does not produce "the other of Christianity" but explores "a more resilient strain of Christian morality", which clearly implies that he is seen not only as a type of Christian, but as a type of Christian priest as well (ibid.). For Nietzsche, "[t]he self-overcoming of Christian morality is consequently enacted neither in a teaching nor a syllogism, but in a *living human being*, in whom the signature contradictions of Christian morality have become incarnate" (ibid.: 203). It is too difficult to identify what role Nietzsche is playing in this respect; he might be a revolutionary Christian as Conway implies. But Nietzsche's contribution to his and our time is surely undeniable. He raises crucial questions regarding the conception of Jesus Christ and Christianity. Through his enmity against the decadence of Christianity and his notion of the revaluation of all

values, Nietzsche in *The Anti-Christ* opens up a different and non-Christian way that helps to know what we really are and what God really is, though we may admit that his perspective of humankind and God is not easy to be understood by most people.

Emerson and Nietzsche break with Christian doctrine, which has had effects on modern culture. As Makarushka comments,

In contrast to traditional Christianity's separation of 'the sacred' from this 'secular', Emerson's transcendentalism allowed him to instantiate the sacred within the individual. To know that the sacred is within and to know that salvation is the task of every individual is religious experience. Nietzsche also valorized the individual's power to see the world as a harmonious whole, at one with the creative and dynamic will engaged in configuring a self and a world in spite of fate. (23-24)

Though their ways of expression are different from each other, they both explicate their concepts of Jesus and God, addressing the importance of individuality. Emerson argues that Jesus is a person who comes to represent the soul that awakens us to know what God is and where God can be found. Jesus, according to Emerson, is the same as humankind when the mind perceives the unity of man and God. According to Emerson, it is not Christian doctrine but the soul within humanity that connects us with God. Emerson declares that humankind should not follow Christian doctrine but rely on the soul within itself if humankind wants to find God as Jesus does. For Emerson, everyone is the individual who can be like Jesus if he is willing to open the mind, realising he is united with God by the soul. Nietzsche gives a different interpretation of Jesus. Nietzsche does not consider Jesus the same as humankind; Nietzsche claims that Jesus is the only Christian who experiences life, even though he is crucified on the Cross. Lacking self-knowledge, most humans are unable to develop themselves, according to Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, those 'certain men' (i.e. individuals in the future) will know how to affirm life through experience, without

being dominated by Christianity. In this way, Nietzsche separates man in general from Jesus, and claims that only the rare individual is able to be a hero like Jesus. Unlike Emerson's belief in the unity of God and man, Nietzsche concentrates on the way of life with the will to power, which has to break with the concept of Christian God and doctrine. As Mararushka concludes,

Both Emerson and Nietzsche sought to redescribe religion and religious experience in order to empower individuals to speak for themselves, to take responsibility for creating aesthetic and moral values...Focusing on the spiritual and cultural malaise associated with the hegemony of the dominant Christian ideology, they provided alternative and competing paradigms for creating a religious self-understanding that emphasized freedom rather than obedience. (104)

Their concepts of God are different, but Emerson and Nietzsche both break with the prejudiced attitude towards God derived from Christianity, and emphasise the concept of individuality. In the next section, I analyse how they promote the possibility of attaining individuality through self-knowledge and self-development.

4.2 An Exploration of Mankind

In this section, I am going to explore a new understanding of the mind and the soul by comparing Emerson's two essays "Self-Reliance" and "Experience" and Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*, in order to firstly stress their different perspectives on humanity, and then concentrate on how the soul can raise the mind to a higher level and perceive the significance of life. Edward Wagenknecht and Lawrence Buell explore what Emerson proposes in his "Self-Reliance". Wagenknecht claims that "Self-Reliance" is the place in which we can easily find Emerson's desire for spiritual insight (34). He also points out that Emerson not only believes in intuition, the power is seen as "the 'ark of God' in every human breast, transcending the rational understanding" (34), but

also is convinced that “every man has a vocation and that his talent was his call” (39), which is emphasised in “Self-Reliance”. In Wagenknecht’s view, Emerson represents himself as “a spiritual man”, a person who insists upon “the integrity of the individual religious experience” (223), a person who despises “the sense” but wants to “live a complete life” (226). On the other hand, Buell elaborates more on Emerson’s “Self-Reliance”, starting with the observation that this essay “seemingly sets the highest value on egocentricity, yet also strives mightily to guard itself against the egotism it seems to license” (59).

First of all, Buell argues that Emerson considers self-reliance as “a personal life practice” which shows his conviction that “though everyone falls short of self-realization much of the time, everyone has self-transformative capacity” (62-63). This is, in Buell’s view, a fundamental belief about humanity expressed in Emerson’s essays. Without question, Emerson retains his conviction of human ability, i.e. self-reliance. Buell then claims that the notion of self-reliance, for Emerson, is a perception of impersonal individuality that aims not only at elevating but also at energizing (66). This explains why Buell observes that “Self-Reliance” is too ambiguous a text to define Emerson’s stance, whether in advocating the value of egocentricity or defending against egotism. At one level, Emerson asserts the value of egocentricity for everyone. At another level, the ego, he suggests, is derived from the mind which stands in a higher level of awareness, allowing the instinct and the soul to decide the path of life, as Buell argues that it is the existence of a universal mind implied by Emerson (74). So, that is the reason why Buell claims that Emerson reveals a perception of impersonal individuality. For Emerson, the universal wisdom is delivered not from the limited personal consciousness of egotism, but from the indefinite soul within humanity. Every person has to pursue his or her own solitary

path toward an understanding of the meaning of life. Thus, Buell comments that Emerson's self-reliance is "a lonely path that we choose only when driven to feel that 'imitation' is worse" (71), and when we realise that, in Emerson's view, it is individuality without egotism but egocentricity. Self-reliance is a way of life that is not only for Emerson himself but also for the individuals.

By defining genius at the beginning of "Self-Reliance": "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, - that is genius" (Self-Reliance: 175), Emerson aims at providing a new perception of humanity, which helps us raise the mind to awareness, beyond the limits of human nature, i.e. conformity in society, consistency of habits, and personal temperament, in order to live with the soul as an integrated individual. Emerson's definition of genius attempts to convince us of the importance of self-reliance which is not only a privilege of genius but also possible of all human beings:

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs. (Self-Reliance: 178)

Emerson observes that society is a place where self-reliance is not appreciated and conformity is required. Conformity is a means whereby society manipulates its members for the sake of security. Emerson disapproves it because it hinders humanity from being independent. Therefore, the idea of conformity, that is to say, the social rule that restricts humankind in others' opinions, is what Emerson opposes:

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your

duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. (Self-Reliance: 180-181)

In this view, Emerson does not wish to persuade us to evade society where nonconformity is often rejected and hide ourselves in solitude. He awakens us to this unhealthy attitude and thereby we understand that nonconformity is necessary for being an independent individual. In this respect, Emerson asserts that it is through self-reliance that humankind is able to hear the voice of God, perceiving the greatness of humanity, when the mind opens and awakens: "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (Self-Reliance: 178). No one, as Emerson asserts, can be responsible for our lives except us; therefore, we are able to create our lives without asking others' permission, as he argues that his life is "for itself and not for a spectacle" (Self-Reliance: 178). In order to be ourselves, we not only have to remind us of being affirmative in ourselves, but also need to convince ourselves to bravely confront the human world, which is filled with the idea of conformity: "For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face" (Self-Reliance: 182). The notion of nonconformity, according to Emerson, is the essential factor that leads to independence and individuality.

Another limit of human nature that Emerson criticises is the self-imposed consistency of personal conduct, which restricts humankind in the limitation of the mind and prevents humankind from perceiving the soul. Consistency, as Emerson points out, is "a reverence for our past act or word because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them" (Self-Reliance: 182). In other words, Emerson implies that it is unwise to follow

habits and memories rather than believe in ourselves. Here is his advice: “It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day” (Self-Reliance: 183). Life, in his view, cannot be determined by fixed memories. Life is actually transformed at every moment through unexpected miracles that cannot be entirely understood by consciousness.

Likewise, Emerson makes his view clear: “Life has no memory. That which proceeds in succession might be remembered, but that which is coexisting, or ejaculated from a deeper cause, as yet far from being conscious, knows not its own tendency” (Experience: 301). Life, therefore, is constantly transfiguring itself as unfathomable surprises given by God. “Life is a series of surprises, and would not be worth taking or keeping if it were not. God delights to isolate us every day, and hide from us the past and the future” (Experience: 299). For Emerson, consistency binds us in the world of conformity where we are too fearful and narrow-minded to trust the insight of the soul: “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do” (Self-Reliance: 183). However, Emerson conceives that the mind can be raised beyond the limit of consistency, as he advocates: “Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet” (Self-Reliance: 185-186). With regard to Emerson’s perception, it depends on how much humankind can open the mind and listen to the divine message delivered, through the soul, from God. The divine message, nevertheless, can be understood not by the consciousness but by the soul. In this respect, Emerson indicates that we should not merely attempt to achieve consistency but rather “should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the luster of the firmament of bards

and sages” (Self-Reliance: 176). We are, after all, great and unique if we are aware of our worth through self-trust and self-realisation, for then we will understand what Emerson says: “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles” (Self-Reliance: 203).

In order to enhance self-trust and self-reliance, Emerson suggests that we had better beware of our temperament, which might habitually prevent us from discerning the true self. Taking grief as an example, Emerson argues that people are used to misunderstanding themselves through the distorting effect of passing moods: “People grieve and bemoan themselves, but it is not half so bad with them as they say. There are moods in which we court suffering, in the hope that here at least we shall find reality, sharp peaks and edges of truth. But it turns out to be scene-painting and counterfeit” (Experience: 287). We are involved too much in those moods that make us unable to see the meaning they express. Emerson too mentions the death of his beloved son, which is painful but significant to him. By experiencing the torment of loss, Emerson finally knows that he will be calmer and stronger to face everything happened in life, as he continues,

The only thing grief has taught me is to know how shallow it is. That, like all the rest, plays about the surface, and never introduces me into the reality, for contact with which we would even pay the costly price of sons and lovers...Nothing is left us now but death. We look to that with a grim satisfaction, saying, There at least is reality that will not dodge us. (Experience: 287-288)

People assume that they cannot bear the painful suffering caused by the loss of those they love. But Emerson rather regards suffering as a hard means that helps us observe life from a different aspect. It does not mean that Emerson is able to ignore the pain of losing his son; for Emerson, the loss has become a part of experience that he does not want to evade. Or we may say that Emerson chooses to overcome his pain, no matter

how hard it is. So he does transform himself, through the pain, to realise the significance of life and death.

As Joel Porte argues, the loss of his son pushes Emerson into darkness with “a ghastly dream in which he has miles to go before he is truly awake” (182). Yet Emerson does not let himself be defeated in desperation but resolves to recover again with “his own power of the mind” (Porte 184) through self-transformation. Life can only be interpreted and understood through personal experience, such as suffering and happiness. As he claims,

Life is a train of moods like a string of beads, and as we pass through them they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus. From the mountain you see the mountain. We animate what we can, and we see only what we animate...The more or less depends on structure or temperament. Temperament is the iron wire on which the beads are strung. (Experience: 288-289)

In this respect, Emerson argues that temperament influences the way we view life. But it is unwise and damaging if we are dominated by it, letting it shadow the wisdom delivered by the soul. As Emerson writes, temperament is “a power which no man willingly hears any one praise but himself”, and it consequently “puts all divinity to rout” (Experience: 290). It seems to Emerson that temperament is a way that helps to understand the manifestation of life, as he says: “Illusion, Temperament, Succession, Surface, Surprise, Reality, Subjectiveness, - these are threads on the loom of time, these are the lords of life” (Experience: 309). Obviously, temperament is only a means for us in Emerson’s view; therefore, we need to let life express itself in which way it wants. “Life itself is a mixture of power and form, and will not bear the least excess of either. To finish the moment, to find the journey’s end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom” (Experience: 295). Life can only

be perceived by the awakened mind through a spontaneous insight: “Life is not intellectual or critical, but sturdy” (Experience: 294). It is the soul within humankind that opens and liberates the mind in order to understand life: “[It is] the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions” (Self-Reliance: 187). Through instinct, we are able to enjoy every possible moment of life: “In liberated moments we know that a new picture of life and duty is already possible; the elements already exist in many minds around you of a doctrine of life which shall transcend any written record we have” (Experience: 304).

But, do we believe that the meaning of life can be perceived through the primary wisdom, i.e. instinct and intuition, letting the mind be awakened not by temperament and the limits of human nature but by the soul? It is not merely Emerson but everyone who is able to answer the question. We are responsible for everything we decide. Emerson never persuades anyone to follow him: “Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life’s cultivation” (Self-Reliance: 199). He gives his personal experience as an example, showing his moderate attitude towards life,

I am thankful for small mercies. I compared notes with one of my friends who expects everything of the universe and is disappointed when anything is less than the best, and I found that I begin at the other extreme, expecting nothing, and am always full of thanks for moderate goods. I accept the clangor and jangle of contrary tendencies...The great gifts are not got by analysis. Everything good is on the highway. The middle region of our being is the temperate zone. (Experience: 296)

To expect nothing as Emerson suggests is not easy. But this is perhaps a good advice which offers a new and grateful way to appreciate life. As he too observes,

Most of life seems to be mere advertisement of faculty; information is

given us not to sell ourselves cheap; that we are very great...So in accepting the leading of the sentiments, it is not what we believe concerning the immortality of the soul or the like, but *the universal impulse to believe*, that is the material circumstance and is the principle fact in the history of the globe. (Experience: 303)

Emerson encourages us to believe in the greatness of humanity when we experience every moment of life, through the intuitive wisdom delivered by the soul. The more we see the meaning of life, as the miracles given by God, the more we realise it is the cosmic power that enlightens us to conceive of the greatness of humanity. Emerson not only convinces us of the importance of self-trust and self-realisation which leads humankind to understand its own humanity, but also implies that it is in fact the principle of the universe that helps the mind be awakened through personal experience. It seems to Emerson that to be modest and grateful to the universe and God and be self-reliant to humanity are the main points that lead humankind to enlightenment. As he continues: "The spirit is not helpless or needful of mediate organs. It has plentiful powers and direct effects. I am explained without explaining, I am felt without acting, and where I am not. Therefore all just persons are satisfied with their own praise" (Experience: 303). Here, we may plainly see how Emerson stresses that man is initially great and unique if he understands that the soul within everyone is connected with the cosmic power, and both will work together to open the mind and perceive life by means of instinct and personal experience. As Emerson suggests: "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events" (Self-Reliance: 177). After all, we can rely on our instinct and experience, which cannot be felt and comprehended by others, in order to live independently in the world.

In his essays, Emerson stresses the importance of self-reliance and experience, declaring that it is the main point that helps to achieve a balance between the mind and the soul, in order to develop the self as an individual. Nietzsche too concentrates on the concept of individuality. His perspective implied in *Twilight of the Idols* offers a possible means of approaching the question of self-knowledge, seeing if man is able to take off the mask of limited consciousness, reconcile himself with his human animality, and then follow his own instinct. Stack's critique helps us realise that Emerson's influence on Nietzsche is significant:

The existential individualism that is a phase, albeit an important phase, in the development of Nietzsche's thought was a response to Emerson's stress upon self-reliant, independent, strong individuals who eschew "public opinion" and dare to stand outside or above "the crowd" or "the masses." And in Emerson, too, one finds that the capacity for genuine individual existence is quite often linked to a natural potentiality that some people have to a greater extent than most. (1993: 161)

Stack, in this view, tells us that it is prominent for Emerson and Nietzsche to affirm the significance of individuality. Emerson is convinced that man can be the individual with self-reliance if he is willing to. But Nietzsche knows how great the difficulty of being a real individual is, as he claims,

The harshest daylight, rationality at any cost, life bright, cold, circumspect, conscious, without instinct, in opposition to the instincts, has itself been no more than a form of sickness, another form of sickness – and by no means a way back to 'virtue', to 'health', to happiness....To *have* to combat one's instincts – that is the formula for *décadence*: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness and instinct are one. (TI 2: 11)

It is, indeed, rare and difficult to find the way to Nietzsche's "happiness" but he argues that the self can possibly be developed and overcome. In other words, the possibility can be attained when the individual conceives of his *need* for combat, knowing how to identify himself in the decadent modern epoch.

Emerson argues that it is necessary to affirm human potential to be great and self-reliant. As he argues: “Every man is an impossibility until he is born; every thing impossible until we see a success” (Experience: 300). In this respect, Emerson holds that courage is essential for the self-reliant individual, and has to be manifested through personal experience: “Act singly, and what you have already done singly will justify you now. Greatness appeals to the future” (Self-Reliance: 184). However, Nietzsche’s perspective on humanity is different. We can find that courage is also significant to Nietzsche. Though he realises human nature is limited and imperfect, Nietzsche does not deny the greatness of humanity that Emerson is inclined to assert; on the contrary, Nietzsche’s idea of human nature could be seen as a reflection of his *own* expectation of humanity, which is in fact too idealistic to be found in modern culture.

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche argues why knowledge and consciousness restrict us. At first, he criticises philosophers whose dialectics and reason not only inhibit development but also lead us to falsify our conception of the real world. As he explains,

One chooses dialectics only when one has no other expedient. One knows that dialectics inspire mistrust, that they are not very convincing. Nothing is easier to expunge than the effect of a dialectician, as is proved by the experience of every speech-making assembly. Dialectics can be only a *last-ditch weapon* in the hands of those who have no other weapon left.

(TI 2: 6)

Dialectics and reason, in Nietzsche’s view, are the means that philosophers use to convince. However, Nietzsche questions the purpose of using dialectics and reason. Taking the conception of ‘the real world’ as an example, Nietzsche argues that “the ‘real world’ has been constructed out of the contradiction to the actual world: an apparent world indeed, in so far as it is no more than a *moral-optical* illusion” (TI 3:

6). Nietzsche considers the real world as an illusion that can neither be precisely estimated by judgement of consciousness, nor by senses. He likewise goes on,

I set apart with high reverence that name of Heraclitus. When the rest of the philosopher crowd rejected the evidence of the senses because these showed plurality and change, he rejected their evidence because they showed things as if they possessed duration and unity...But Heraclitus will always be right in this, that being is an empty fiction. The 'apparent' world is the only one: the 'real' world has only been *lyingly added*. (TI 3: 2)

Nietzsche agrees with Heraclitus who regards the world as appearance which cannot be judged by means of consciousness. At this point, Nietzsche also observes that humankind is entangled in the decadence through the false conception derived from philosophy and Christianity: "To divide the world into a 'real' and an 'apparent' world, whether in the manner of Christianity or in the manner of Kant is only a suggestion of *décadence* – a symptom of declining life" (TI 3: 6). For Nietzsche, we are restricted in an erroneous conception which denies life and restricts the mind. This is why Nietzsche strongly criticises modern culture.

In order to emphasise the view that life should not be denied but be affirmed, Nietzsche proclaims the importance of experiencing life by action as an artist, even in the tragic way: "The tragic artist is not a pessimist – it is precisely he who *affirms* all that is questionable and terrible in existence, he is *Dionysian*" (TI 3: 6). Nietzsche is concerned with defining life in a new perspective, that is to say, in a natural and healthy way with "an instinct of life" (TI 5: 4). Life does not need to be denied by Christianity but to be affirmed with bravery and vitality: "The Church combats the passions with excision in every sense of the word: its practice, its 'cure' castration. It never asks: 'How can one spiritualize, beautify, deify a desire?'"...But to attach the passions at their roots means to attach life as its roots: the practice of the Church is

hostile to life” (TI 5:1). Nietzsche claims that traditional philosophy and Christian morality mislead us to deny life. But on the other hand, he argues that the need of self-awakening that raises the mind to a higher level of self-knowledge is important. Nietzsche also claims: “Even the bravest of us rarely has the courage for what he really *knows*” (TI 1: 2). He implies that man is so limited and cowardly that he is unable to grasp his own motives; therefore, man habitually succumbs to the weakness of human nature when he is under the influence of traditional philosophy and Christian morality. Here is Nietzsche’s perspective of knowing life:

One would have to be situated *outside* life, and on the other hand to know it as thoroughly as any, as many, as all who have experienced it, to be permitted to touch on the problem of the *value* of life at all: sufficient reason for understanding that this problem is for us an inaccessible problem. When we speak of values we do so under the inspiration and from the perspective of life: life itself evaluates through us *when* we establish values. (TI 5: 5)

In this view, there are two main implications of Nietzsche’s perspective on life. Firstly, it is better to detach one’s true self from the limited human mind, understanding that everything cannot be measured by reason and language. Secondly, life can be perceived when the individual knows himself, creating the value of life through experience. In other words, there is no other way that knows the value of life except experiencing life thoroughly. As Nietzsche says: “Nothing can be predicted, but with a certain heightening of the human type a *new* force may reveal itself of which we have preciously known nothing” (Notebook 1885, 34: 125). Life, according to Nietzsche, is the force that inspires humankind to develop, in order to affirm life with action.

Nietzsche stresses the improvement of humanity, questioning if it can possibly be achieved by breaking with any conception of morality in human history, such as Indian morality, “the morality of *breeding*”, and Christian morality, “the morality of

taming”(TI 7: 5). Regarding himself as “an immoralist”, Nietzsche offers a new perspective on the improvement of humanity. Thus: “*every* means hitherto employed with the intention of making mankind moral has been thoroughly *immoral*” (TI 7: 5). However, we must be careful when we define Nietzsche’s metaphysical conception of immorality, which has to be interpreted at least to some extent in his own terms. To be immoral is not to act without due disciplines but rather to improve the mind and know how to be a better individual with self-development. As he argues,

In so far as morality *condemns* as morality and *not* with regard to the aims and objects of life, it is a specific error with which one should show no sympathy, an *idiosyncrasy of the degenerate* which has caused an unspeakable amount of harm!... We others, we immoralists, have on the contrary opened wide our hearts to every kind of understanding, comprehension, *approval*. We do not readily deny, we seek our honour in *affirming*. (TI 5: 6)

To be immoral, for Nietzsche, is to experience life, affirming it through every circumstance as a Dionysian hero.

Understanding the limits of the conscious mind, Nietzsche creates a battlefield in which the mind has to struggle and develop itself, in order to affirm life with the self-disciplined soul. As Thiele argues: “The battlefield is within the self, and the corpus of knowledge supplies all the mysteries and intrigue of uncharted water” (1990: 23). According to Thiele, Nietzsche creates a self-reflexive and self-overcoming battlefield: “The greatest struggles are not to be witnessed on the battlefield or in the sociopolitical arena, but in the rule of the self. The greatest victory is a well-ordered soul” (1990: 65). Nietzsche suggests that the mind needs to be developed to a higher level, through its inner struggle, in order to understand how to affirm life with courage. Furthermore, Nietzsche urges to establish a new conception, i.e. the reinterpretation of man and the world. Christianity dominates the human mind by spreading a false

conception of God and humanity. As he says, “Christianity presupposes that man does not know, *cannot* know what is good for him and what evil: he believes in God, who alone knows. Christianity morality is a command: its origin is transcendental; it is beyond all criticism, all right to criticize; it possesses truth only if God is truth” (TI 9: 5). Christianity imposes a doctrine that on the one hand devalues humanity and misleads man to believe in innate sin. The doctrine, on the other hand, controls the human mind by means of the conception of Christian God. Christian doctrine inculcates the need for redemption to the human mind, leaving us entrapped by the domination of Christianity. At this point, Nietzsche explicates his view of humanity as follows,

Man believes that the world itself is filled with beauty – he *forgets* that it is he who has created it...Man really mirrors himself in things, that which give him back his own reflection he considers beautiful: the judgement ‘beautiful’ is his *conceit of his species*...Man has *humanized* the world: that is all. But there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to guarantee to us that *man* constitutes the model for the beautiful. (TI 9: 19)

There are two levels that Nietzsche stresses in his argument. First, he reminds us that we create the beauty of the world through imagination. What we see in the world is a reflection of our thoughts. Second, although he mentions that we can create through imagination, he argues that there is nothing that can be constituted by us. To explain more clearly, everything is transitory and illusory in Nietzsche’s view. But Nietzsche maintains his radically transformative attitude toward life, affirming every event that happens in it. Here, his affirmative stance on life is similar to Emerson’s. As Stack argues: “At first Emerson, and later Nietzsche, interpreted the essence of actuality in terms of a central human characteristic: striving, willing, a *nisus* towards power. Emerson, and Nietzsche after him, understands all life in terms of an immanent “spiritual” movement towards the *telos* of power” (1989: 190). They both conceive that humankind can decide and create the significance of life.

Nietzsche too points out that life should be represented as art, even represented tragically: “Art is the great stimulus to life” (TI 9: 24). He observes that it is an honour to be brave and experience life like a hero, though the soul needs to struggle itself: “In the face of tragedy the warlike in our soul celebrates its Saturnalias; whoever is accustomed to suffering, whoever seeks out suffering, the *heroic* man extols his existence by means of tragedy” (TI 9: 24). Nietzsche conceives that only certain individuals who understand the weakness of humanity can respond to life through self-overcoming. For example, Nietzsche reveals his admiration of Goethe as follows,

He bore within him its strongest instincts: sentimentality, nature-idolatry, the anti-historical, the idealistic, the unreal and revolutionary...he did not sever himself from life, he placed himself within it; nothing could discourage him and he took as much as possible upon himself, above himself, within himself. What he aspired to was *totality*; he strove against the separation of reason, sensuality, feeling, will; he disciplined himself to a whole, he *created* himself. (TI 9: 49)

From Nietzsche’s viewpoint, Goethe is an admirable individual who is responsible for his life; Goethe does not choose to evade any plight that happened in his life but experiences life wholeheartedly, creating his life with courage and vitality. This is also Nietzsche’s perspective on the individual, who is able to regard life as a battlefield. Nietzsche never guarantees that it is easy to win the war of the self; he only stresses the significance of freedom of the soul, as he proclaims, “war is a training in freedom. For what is freedom? That one has the will to self-responsibility. That one preserves the distance which divides us. That one has become more indifferent to hardship, toil, privation, even to life. That one is ready to sacrifice men to one’s cause, oneself not excepted” (TI 9: 38). In other words, the war of the self is necessary for self-transformation and self-realisation. In his critical view of western culture:

The entire West has lost those instincts out of which institutions grow, out of which the *future* grows: perhaps nothing goes so much against the grain of its 'modern spirit' as this. One lives today, one lives very fast – one lives very irresponsibly: it is precisely this which one calls 'freedom'. That which *makes* institutions institutions is despised, hated, rejected. (TI 9: 39)

Nietzsche knows that it is really difficult to overcome the limits of humanity in modern culture, but he insists that life should not be evaded but treated as a constant challenge. Thus:

[A]ll priests and moralists have believed it was possible – they have *wanted* to take mankind back, *force* it back, to an *earlier* standard of virtue...even today there are parties whose goal is a dream of the crabwise *retrogression* of all things. But no one is free to be a crab. There is nothing for it: one *has* to go forward, which is to say *step by step further into decadence*. (TI 9: 43)

In Nietzsche's view, life has to be honoured, even if we remain at a decadent stage of existence: "Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems, the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the sacrifice of its highest types" (TI 10: 5). At this point, Nietzsche offers his ideal of an honourable individual, who is courageous and self-disciplined to confront life. As he argues, the most spiritual human beings not only can assume they are the bravest but also have the most painful experience. But it is also for this reason that "they honour life, because it brings against them its most formidable weapons" (TI 9: 17). As Nietzsche claims: "*For all creators are hard. And it must seem bliss to you to press your hand upon millennia as upon wax, bliss to write upon the will of millennia as upon metal – harder than metal, nobler than metal. Only the noblest is perfectly hard*" (TI 11). Only the rare individual can stand firmly, experiencing life with courage and affirmation as the great hero. As Thiele argues, our limited capacity for knowledge "does not determine the boundaries of reality, but the boundaries of man – a particular species on a particular planet in a particular universe" (1990: 30), Nietzsche provides a self-reflexive perspective of the

human mind, implying that it is humankind itself who is able to decide whether the self is to be developed and overcome. In following passages, let us conclude this section by discussing Conway's critique of *Twilight of the Idols* and my argument concerning it in comparison with Emerson's essays.

Conway remarks that Nietzsche in his late work from 1885 to 1888 "consistently treats individual human beings as the embodied media through which an age or people expresses its native vitality" (*Dangerous Games* 1997: 67). Then Conway defines Nietzsche's "twilight of the idols" as follows,

The idols in question are the dominant values and sustaining ideals of modernity as a whole. The "twilight" of these idols signifies an advanced stage of decay, such that the age can express itself only in a self-destructive retreat from, and betrayal of, its founding ideals and values. The twilight of the idols thus characterizes late modernity, the epigonic epoch in which modernity attains its debilitating self-consciousness. (ibid.: 82)

When Nietzsche introduces his idea of decadence, according to Conway, he never expects to change the decadence in modern culture; therefore, *Twilight of the Idols* is a reflection of Nietzsche's view of modernity. I think Conway is right; Nietzsche is not like Emerson who asserts his optimistic thought of humanity. In contrast, Nietzsche chooses to adopt an objective ever clinical stance, calmly observing that "we cannot reverse our decadence, though we can certainly and disastrously fool ourselves into believing otherwise" (ibid.: 90). When Nietzsche criticises modern culture as decadent, it is a reflection of his ideal of humanity, which cannot be fulfilled in modern culture. For Nietzsche, he knows some few individuals are great, but he also realises that it is too difficult for most people, especially his contemporary audience, to understand what he conceives. This is the reason why he claims: "Posthumous men – like me, for instance – are not so well understood as timely

men...More precisely, we are never understood – and *hence* our authority...” (TI 1: 15). However, the crucial point is that Nietzsche resists decadent modernity. As Conway argues, “Nietzsche can do nothing to reverse or arrest the decay of modernity as a whole, but he believes that he can exert an indirect influence on the founding of the successor epoch by bequeathing his insights to those who can translate them into active legislation” (*Dangerous Games* 1997: 120). Nietzsche never intends to persuade others of his perspective; on the contrary, he criticises modernity and maintains his own stance on life. This is his responsibility for being himself. As Conway comments,

To Nietzsche and those like him, the twilight of the idols constitutes an *entr’acte* in which the resistance of decadence can perhaps effect indirect political change...Because Nietzsche’s volitional resources excel those of “average” individuals, the twilight of the idols affords him a modest window of opportunity within which he might act to exert an influence on the disposition of the successor epoch. Indeed, he is an active nihilist because his insight into the economy of decadence frees him to squander – rather than sacrifice – his remaining volitional resources. (ibid.: 117)

Nietzsche knows that modernity is decadence, but he maintains his adversary stance against it. At least, he develops himself and confronts the reality of the modern age: “The age itself may be dying, but its besetting decay constitutes a thriving form (rather than an abject negation) of Life” (ibid.: 93). For Nietzsche, the self has to be combated in order to raise the mind to the higher level of awareness. Hence, the wars of humanity are crucial as “signs of renascent vitality, but they will in fact mark the spasmodic reflexes of a dying epoch” (ibid.: 93-94). Nietzsche is less assertive than Emerson when affirming the goodness of human nature. He knows that it is vain to expect to bring about an improvement in the human mind merely by his words. The possibility is not decided by him, but by the few individuals who have self-realisation and self-knowledge. By showing the way to individuality, Nietzsche chooses to let us

determine our own way of life, either ascending or descending. As Conway concludes,

He [Nietzsche] neither advocates a return to bygone standards of nobility and civility nor fatuously anticipates the redemption of his age. Simply waiting, whether in monkish repose or in preparing oneself to receive the gift of releasement, is as unacceptable to him as hastily implementing a half-baked scheme to revive an anemic epoch. (ibid.: 120)

Nietzsche, standing alone in isolation as a true individual with the soul, offers us a calmer, deeper and self-reflexive way to revalue and reinterpret humanity.

With respect to their concepts of individuality, Emerson and Nietzsche proclaim the individual who is able to develop the self and experience life with bravery and affirmation: “What he [Nietzsche] sought, as Emerson had earlier sought, was a reinstating of naturalness and natural surplus energy in an ultra-civilized, creative individual” (Stack 1989: 192). As I discussed above, they both affirm the significance of life. However, there are some points that I would like to argue in response to their different ideas of humanity. Firstly, Emerson is convinced that all humans can aspire to self-reliance and independence when they follow the message delivered by the soul. He also encourages us to be modest, to believe in the greatness of humanity, and to realise that it is the cosmic power from God that helps to awaken the mind. Nietzsche has a different idea of humanity. Though he points out the possibility of being the individual with self-knowledge, he does not say that everyone can raise the mind to a higher level and that is why he claims that the individual does not exist now but is prepared for the future. From Nietzsche’s viewpoint, he conceives of the difficulty of having self-knowledge for man in general. Humankind, with human animality, is controlled by Christian doctrine that hinders itself from self-development. In Nietzsche’s argument, those people who are able to overcome themselves through

internalisation can open the mind to be the independent individuals. Different from Emerson who asserts the universal unity of man and God by the soul, Nietzsche argues that everything is illusory, pointing out that it is humankind who creates the world through imagination, including God. Nevertheless, it is clear to see what Emerson and Nietzsche attempt to address, i.e. life should be affirmed and experienced through every circumstance. At this point, they criticise Christianity which denies life and dominates the human mind, providing humankind a new perspective of life in modern culture. Furthermore, they do not want any follower, proclaiming that the individual needs to develop himself, approaching to a possible balance between the mind and the soul. Man needs to experience life and responds to it with his own effort. According to their affirmative stances on life, in the final section as follows, I am going to concentrate on how Emerson and Nietzsche perceive the significance of life in connection with the concept of individuality, and how they manifest themselves the meaning of life with it.

4.3 An Exploration of Life

My aim in this section is to explore how to understand life and live independently in the human world by analysing Emerson's "Fate", "Heroism", and "Circles" and Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. Edward Wagenknecht claims that the Emersonian ideal is "that of the man who is free to do as he likes but who chooses to do what is right and in harmony with the Will of God" (230), and Wesley Mott in "The Age of the First Person Singular: Emerson and Individualism" offers a similar view of Emerson. Mott not only regards Emerson as a great philosopher-psychologist-poet of the Self in America, but also argues that the gift that Emerson gives to his contemporaries and later generations is "his ability to ignite in others an empowering sense of

self-reliance” (61). Mott also says that Emerson’s optimism, is “a hard-earned faith forged against the backdrop of early illness, personal loss, and doubt” (92). He contends that Emerson shows a specific way to individuality through his self-experimentation, though Emerson has a hard time in his self-experimentation. But Emerson is distinctive, as Mott claims:

He [Emerson] accepted the challenge of flux implicit in each of these traditions, confronting head-on the psychic and social destabilization that were intensified by the gross materialism of his age and the disruptive insights of modern science. But he remained an advocate of human dignity founded on the centrality of character. His enduring appeal is not that he endorsed certain ideologies but that he never lost faith in the potential of the individual, the potential not to achieve final truths or successes – and surely not to dominate others – but to grow continually.
(92)

In Mott’s view, Emerson never succumbs to the difficulties in his life and never loses his faith in individuality. On the contrary, he chooses to overcome them by his belief in the self which is united with the immanent God. Indeed, he adopts a positive and affirmative stance both on humanity and on life, which is explicitly shown in his work.

Regarding Emerson’s thought, his contemporaries also offer their commentary, for example, William James and John Dewey.⁴⁶ As William James argues, “This duty of spiritual seeing and reporting determined the whole tenor of his [Emerson’s] life” (18), Emerson never ceases to assert his character and testing as a spiritual seeker. James also mentions that Emerson’s conviction that Divinity is everywhere makes Emerson be “an optimist of the sentimental type that refuses to speak ill of anything” (22).

⁴⁶ William James’ “Address at the Emerson Centenary in Concord” is from *Memories and Studies*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1911, and John Dewey’s “Ralph Waldo Emerson” is from *Characters and Events*, vol. 1, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1929. Both are selected in *Emerson: A Collection of Critical Essays*.)

More precisely, Emerson let himself represent the spirit of the individual with vitality, as James delineates as follows,

Emerson's belief that the individual must in reason be adequate to the vocation for which the Spirit of the world has called him into being, is the source of those sublime pages, hearteners, and sustainers of our youth, in which he urges his hearers to be incorruptibly true to their own private conscience. Nothing can harm the man who rests in his appointed place and character. Such a man is invulnerable; he balances the universe, balances it as much by keeping small when he is small, as by being great and spreading when he is great. (21)

Emerson is convinced that the notion of the individuality is essential; for this reason, he not only delivers it to others, but also practises it diligently himself as a true individual. Similarly, Dewey respects Emerson, regarding him as more than a philosopher: "To Emerson, perception was more potent than reasoning; the deliverances of reception more demonstrative than the conclusions of intentional proof" (25). Emerson proclaims his transcendental notion both in philosophy, literature and life. Emerson is unique in his articulation, as Dewey calls him the Philosopher of Democracy, who delivers a philosophy "which religion has no call to chide and which knows its friendship with science and with art" (29). Emerson, after all, stands firmly, inspiring us with his vigorous mind and undiminished hope.

Now I shall elaborate on Emerson's ideas of man and the world. In the essay "Circles", Emerson tells us: "The key to every man is his thought...The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end. The extent to which this generation of circles, wheel without wheel, will go, depends on the force or truth of the individual soul" (Circles: 227). Here he implies two levels of perception of man and the world. First, he knows that man is able to decide everything by using his

thought, and life is a dimension of self-experimentation that enables and motivates man to identify who he really is. Second, he conceives that there is a higher power over the physical human body, i.e. the power of the soul united with God and the universe. In Emerson's view, life involves a circling without end by the power of the soul, which is seen under its universal aspect. For the soul, there is no end and no beginning; the soul is eternally united with everything in the world beyond any merely physical limit. When one's life ends, one merely finishes the use of the physical body but the spiritual life continues. When the soul finds another physical body, a new life in a new physical body starts. The implication reveals Emerson's conception of reincarnation, as he claims, "Dante and Columbus were Italians, in their time; they would be Russians or Americans to-day. Things ripen, new men come" (Fate: 384). But Emerson knows that the conception of reincarnation is never easy to accept, especially to those western people who are under the influence of Christianity. In other words, Christian doctrine does not suggest the concept of reincarnation but focus on the need for redemption in order to be eternally saved after death. Emerson gives a new concept of the relation between the body and the soul. In so doing, he says: "Every spirit makes its house; but afterwards the house confines the spirit" (Fate: 365). The spirit refers to the soul and the house refers to the physical human body, including the limited human mind. When we live in the world, how can we perceive that we are united with everything in the world, which cannot be measured by the physical senses? Though it is true that this concept challenges us, it however inspires us to learn how to open the mind and understand ourselves in a new way.

I argue Emerson's conception in two parts. The first part is to clarify his two-level conception of humankind. Compared with Nature, physically, human beings are too trivial and limited to fight against the power of Nature, as Emerson depicts,

But Nature is no sentimentalist, - does not cosset or pamper us. We must see that the world is rough and surly, and will not mind drowning a man or a woman, but swallows your ship like a grain of dust...The diseases, the elements, fortune, gravity, lightning, respect no persons. The way of Providence is a little rude...Providence has a wild, rough, incalculable road to its end, and it is of no use to try to whitewash its huge, mixed instrumentalities, or to dress up that terrific benefactor in a clean shirt and white neckcloth of a student in divinity. (Fate: 364-365)

In Emerson's view, we have to know that the world has its law, which can never possibly be predicted or manipulated by the human mind: "Whatever limits us we call Fate" (Fate: 372). Due to the physical limitations that make humankind unable to overcome fate with human power, Emerson suggests that "we must respect Fate as natural history" (Fate: 373), which stresses the importance of being humble; on the other hand he argues that "there is more than natural history" (Fate: 373), which refers to the second level of the conception of humankind. In other words, though it is true that man cannot dominate either Nature or fate with his limited power, Emerson claims that man is capable of raising the mind spiritually, and conceiving of his unlimited power that is not from the body but from the soul, in order to know how to bravely live at any moment, even under the unpredicted threat of fate. As he explains,

T' is the best use of Fate to teach a fatal courage. Go face the fire at sea, or the cholera in your friend's house, or the burglar in your own, or what danger lies in the way of duty, - knowing you are guarded by the cherubim of Destiny. If you believe in Fate to your harm, believe it at least for your good. For if Fate is so prevailing, man also is part of it, and can confront fate with fate. If the Universe have these savage accidents, our atoms are as savage in resistance. We should be crushed by the atmosphere, but for the reaction of the air within the body. (Fate: 375)

Fate, as Emerson argues, actually plays the role of a severe teacher who awakens us to feel the inner power of the soul through its horrible and unexpected manifestation in the material world. Though man cannot control fate, Emerson asserts that man is able to learn how to defend himself, confronting the challenge posed by fate through

human thought and experience: “Self-trust is the essence of heroism. It is the state of the soul at war, and its ultimate objects are the last defiance of falsehood and wrong, and the power to bear all that can be inflicted by evil agents” (Heroism: 237).

Emerson also emphasises that we have to open “the inward eye” in order to understand “the Unity in things” and “the omnipresence of law” (Heroism: 237). In this way, we can pass through the visible obstacles provided by fate, realising the greatness of the soul united with the universe:

This insight throws us on the party and interest of the Universe, against all and sundry; against ourselves as much as others. A man speaking from insight affirms of himself what is true of the mind: seeing its immortality, he says, I am immortal; seeing its invincibility, he says, I am strong. It is not in us, but we are in it... Where it shines, Nature is no longer intrusive, but all things make a musical or pictorial impression. The world of men show like a comedy without laughter: populations, interests, government, history; 't is all toy figures in a toy house. (Fate: 376)

The more we are able to perceive the greatness of the soul beyond our limited conscious human mind, according to Emerson, the more we understand that we can be in charge of everything with the power of the soul; thus, Emerson says: “We are as lawgivers; we speak for Nature; we prophesy and divine” (Fate: 376). It seems that Emerson believes in the heroic nature of the individual, who can develop the mind and is responsible for himself: “Heroism works in contradiction to the voice of mankind and in contradiction, for a time, to the voice of the great and good. Heroism is an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual’s character” (Heroism: 236-237). For Emerson, this heroic nature is not a manner of pride and arrogance but modesty and confidence that the individual naturally expresses. When the mind is opened to perceive the unity of man and everything in the universe, man is able to conceive of the unlimited omnipresent power working within himself: “Omnipresence is a higher

fact. Not through subtle subterranean channels need friend and fact be drawn to their counterpart, but, rightly considered, these things proceed from the eternal generation of the soul. Cause and effect are two sides of one fact” (Circles: 233), and will know how to play with the game of fate, which “then is a name for facts not yet passed under the fire of thought; for causes which are unpenetrated” (Fate: 379).

Second, there is Emerson’s two-level perception of the world. The world, in Emerson’s understanding, is too boundless and changeable to be perceived adequately by the mind: “The whole world is the flux of matter over the wires of thought to the poles or points where it would build” (Fate: 387). Emerson likewise implies: “There are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees. Our globe seen by God is a transparent law, not a mass of facts. The law dissolves the fact and holds it fluid. Our culture is the predominance of an idea which draws after it this train of cities and institutions” (Circles: 226). The world is illusory. How can we regain self-assurance and affirm life when we conceive that everything is in flux? There is no way that helps us escape from the unfinished anxiety of facing the unpredicted and uncertain world. The only way we can do is to focus on ourselves, realising that we are also unlimited: “There are no fixtures to men, if we appeal to consciousness. Every man supposes himself not to be fully understood...there is always a residuum unknown, unanalyzable. That is, every man believes that he has a greater possibility” (Circles: 228). Then man will be enlightened and encouraged by the soul to balance the power between man and the world. According to Emerson, the key problem is that humans are used to accepting the idea that they live in an unlimited world of duality, forgetting the unity of themselves and the world. This conception, in this aspect, causes them to believe that they are divided from the world. But Emerson stresses the point that is ignored by us, i.e. the unity of man and all

beings in the universe. Man strives to dominate the world by his human power, but finally he feels frustrated and impotent on account of knowing that it is impossible to control the unexpected world. The limitation is what Emerson names “fate”.

Emerson sees the truth behind man’s fear of fate, attempting to convert the perception into a new understanding: “People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them” (Circles: 237). That is to say, there is nothing in the world that we should feel afraid of. We might wonder if Emerson’s claim is so idealistic that he does not see how much people struggle when experiencing death, misery and suffering. Does he create an unattainable hallucination with his blind American confidence? In order to answer the question, we need to understand the terms ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ he uses. When Emerson says that we wish to be settled, he does not mean it is false; on the contrary, he explains that it is our natural reaction, our temperament when we feel frustrated by unexpected fate and desire to be settled in order to protect ourselves from being upset again. When he says that hope is there for us only if we are unsettled, he means that chance and possibility is always there for us to move ahead when we accept our temporary natural reaction but do not let it destroy our self-confidence. In response to unknown fate, Emerson argues that there are two ways that we can choose. The first is to detach ourselves from our frequent ups and downs and view them as self-test for training us to avoid repeated mistakes and manage situations better. The second is to withdraw or remain in our temperament and reject to encounter them again. If we choose the first one, we can answer the question and attain what Emerson says, knowing that what he offers is not blind hope but a strength to accept life and move on. Emerson does not say we are not allowed to choose the second one, but our frustration of life and ourselves is the consequence. As he also argues in the following,

Life is a series of surprises. We do not guess to-day the mood, the pleasure, the power of to-morrow, when we are building up our being. Of lower states, of acts of routine and sense, we can tell somewhat; but the masterpieces of God, the total growths and universal movements of the soul, he hideth; they are incalculable. I can know that truth is divine and helpful; but how it shall help me I can have no guess, for *so to be* is the sole inlet of *so to know*. (Circles: 237)

When we learn to be modest but grateful and confident to perceive everything that happens around us is meaningful to our development, in Emerson's view, we will be guided and enlightened by the soul within ourselves to see through the significance of life manifested by God. Then we will not feel fearful and frustrated when we know everything in the material world is illusory but the soul is infinite and permanent.

Emerson does not denigrate the value of humankind; on the contrary, he encourages us to experience life not with the limited mind but with the unlimited and infinite soul. As he explicates, "I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no Past at my back" (Circles: 236). When he raises the mind to a higher level, man will recognise that he can confront the unlimited world with his unlimited power from the soul, which is associated with God and the universe, in order to create every possibility in his life. Emerson provides a new conception of the world. The world can be regarded as united with humankind where there is no conception of difference and division. In other words, humankind determines the world with the power of the soul, i.e. the power of the universe. Emerson believes that it is not the physical but spiritual power that helps the mind be awakened and united with the world, which we can never predict and control. Emerson likewise argues that the universal power, which is beyond the understanding of the limited mind, can automatically manage the harmony between man and the world: "When there is something to be done, the world knows how to get it done"

(Fate: 384), though people need to practise to perceive the universal power with the soul, as he elaborates as the follows,

All great force is real and elemental. There is no manufacturing a strong will. There must be a pound to balance a pound. Where power is shown in will, it must rest on the universal force...But the pure sympathy with universal ends is an infinite force, and cannot be bribed or bent. Whoever has had experience of the moral sentiment cannot choose but believe in unlimited power. (Fate 377-378)

For Emerson, it is the courageous individual who balances himself and the world, as a hero: "The hero is a mind of such balance that no disturbances can shake his will, but pleasantly and as it were merrily he advances to his own music, alike in frightful alarms and in the tipsy mirth of universal dissoluteness" (Heroism: 236). Being a hero is to see through the meaning of life by means of experience, without retreating from any plight in life. This is the way of life that Emerson offers to us.

This is an unusual perception that inspires us to understand that the physically limited human creature is spiritually unlimited when he opens the mind, perceiving himself in the unity with the unlimited power of the universe: "Simple hearts put all the history and customs of this world behind them, and play their own games in innocent defiance of the Blue-Laws of the world" (Heroism: 241-242). In this way, life will be affirmed with the possibility when we are awakened to know who we are, with the purest soul. So Emerson claims,

The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory and to do something without knowing how or why; in short to draw a new circle. Nothing great was even achieved without enthusiasm. The way of life is wonderful; it is by abandonment. The great moment of history are the facilities of performance through the strength of ideas, as the works of genius and religion. (Circles: 238)

There is always hope for human beings, for Emerson, and we are able to be brave,

creating the possibility of life at any moment. Though we might feel that Emerson is indeed optimistic in his interpretation of humankind, it is undeniable that his firm trust in humanity and life does enlighten us to confront any obstacle in the journey of life, especially with his perception of the unity of man, God and everything in the universe. Emerson urges us to understand the purpose of life is to acquaint man with himself and the highest revelation is that God is in every man (Richardson 152). God, for Emerson, is “the most elevated conception of character that can be formed in the mind. It is the individual’s own soul carried out to perfection” (Richardson 97). So, as Emerson argues, man lives with a belief in the soul within himself as well as a belief in God.

While Emerson expresses his assertive and optimistic stance on the humanity, insisting that every man makes his own religion and his own God (Richardson 97), Nietzsche represents his idea of humanity and the world in a different way. First of all, I would like to explore Stack’s view of Emerson’s optimism. Stack speaks up for Emerson, claiming that Emerson’s optimism is neither naïve nor superficial: “His optimistic faith in life and man was a reflection of a deep, personal religious faith combined with an effort to overcome sceptical doubts and affirm the value of existence despite its obvious flaws and imperfections” (1992: 41). Additionally, Stack gives his reference implying that Emerson’s notion of the world associates Nietzsche’s notion of the world. To say more precisely, Stack argues that it is Emerson who firstly suggests Nietzsche perceive “life is shot through with illusions” (1992: 28), since Nietzsche started to read Emerson’s essays in 1862. Stack points out that it is not Schopenhauer but Emerson who at first inspires Nietzsche to understand the concept of illusion.

David Mikics takes a similar view: “Nietzsche learned the risk and promise of transformation from Emerson, not from Schopenhauer, who is usually named as Nietzsche’s major influence. Emerson and Schopenhauer are, in fact, Nietzsche’s two crucial philosophical fathers, though students of Nietzsche have usually granted Schopenhauer priority” (16). Stack argues that Emerson and Schopenhauer are both influenced by oriental philosophy, accepting the notion that life is illusory. But Emerson differs from Schopenhauer, not only encouraging humankind “to view life as a gift, as something ‘sacred’”, but also “to penetrate the veil of illusion that covers life and force ourselves to look unblinking into the heart of darkness of reality” (1992: 29). In Stack’s commentary, Nietzsche’s ideals of “becoming who we are”, “affirming our originality”, “asserting our uniqueness” and “exercising our self-legislating capacities” are associated with Emerson’s thought (1992: 53). Stack, accordingly, argues that Nietzsche chooses to view the world from his own individual perspective.

Taking their stances on science as an example, as Stack compares,

Emerson in a mild way and Nietzsche in a more intense way worried over the burgeoning culture of science...For Emerson, as for Nietzsche, matter is not the ultimate reality; rather, it is a phenomenon, a manifestation of a spiritual reality the essence of which is a living power. Both embraced a dynamic, spiritual interpretation of reality. (1992: 15)

In this view, we know that Emerson and Nietzsche are similarly concerned with power, i.e. the essence of life, but they stress it in different ways. For Emerson, he asserts the theory of immanence, “a belief that there is a spiritual force in nature that ‘seeks’ material embodiment” (1992: 14), and believes in the power of the soul which is permanently connected with God and the universe. His optimistic belief in humanity is contained within the concept of immanence. Nietzsche, for his part, focuses on how to develop the self and affirm life through self-overcoming, although he does not deny what Emerson claims.

Now I shall explore Nietzsche's view of man and the world in *Ecce Homo*. In "Behold Nietzsche" Michael Platt elaborates on his interpretation of *Ecce Homo* with regard to several crucial points. Comparing Nietzsche with Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Rousseau and Kierkegaard, Platt claims that *Ecce Homo* is Nietzsche's apology, the work of self-portraiture where he chooses to present an account of his own life in solitude. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche gives spiritual and positive guidance: "Nietzsche makes spiritual war against all anti-nature teachings, especially those of the priest and the Christianity that had ruled the world since antiquity" (Platt 231). In addition to the spiritual war, Platt maintains that Nietzsche takes nature as the theme of this book. As Platt says, "fundamentally it is nature that calls one to be what one is and that in such a man as Nietzsche actually achieves what it wants to" (231). At least, Nietzsche offers himself as the representative of nature, being who he is. Moreover, Platt tends to reinterpret Nietzsche's implication when he says, "[h]ave I been understood? - *Dionysus versus the Crucified*" (EH: Destiny 8). Platt means that it is at any rate questionable to regard Nietzsche as Dionysus; on the contrary, Nietzsche considers himself as Jesus. Thus:

Dionysus and Christ, both gods, both suffer for man, but only Christ is a teacher and lover, as Nietzsche is; likewise his Zarathustra, whose greatest struggle is with regret, anger, vengeance and resentment, and whose greatest victory is the *amor fati* implicit in his loving celebration of eternity at the end of Part Three. All this is like Christ, not Dionysus...Perhaps he may be better described as a Sokrates with the soul of Christ, for the view of human things Zarathustra achieves in Part IV is comic, like Sokrates', and yet the virtue he achieves is, like Christ's, one of love. So, too, Nietzsche, in imitation of his hero, and his heroes, in *Ecce Homo*, tries to unite Dionysus, Sokrates and Christ. How this might be is hard to see. (225)

Nietzsche does indeed characterise himself as an exemplary "healer", "a teacher", "a

prophet”, and “a destiny”(225). Platt also points out that Nietzsche feels ready when he declares the war, preparing to make a defence: “In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche tried to be a Christ who lived on after his redemption to become a Caesar ready to fight a war for the earth and perish in it for the children of the earth” (244). Though Nietzsche does not be able to continue his war after he collapses in January 1889, his belief of self-affirmation is surely proved. After all, though it is difficult to know that Nietzsche views himself as another Christ or Caesar, it is undeniable that he does know how to measure his life with amor fati, “the quality and the strength of love” (Platt 250).

Here is Sarah Kofman’s commentary on *Ecce Homo* in “Explosion I: Of Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*”:

Ecce homo has a more specific status as a test book which is to put spirits to the test, to gauge whether or not they will be capable of bearing the radical inversion of values, whether or not they will be strong enough to tolerate and thus understand the boldness of the immoralist, this hitherto unheard-of type which Nietzsche the artist invented as his own. (219)

Kofman considers *Ecce Homo* as a work that Nietzsche sets for himself as a test, in order to see how much pain he can bear and how individual or distinct he can become when he discloses himself in retrospect. Self-explosion is never easy, according to Kofman, but it is surely Nietzsche recreate his life. Self-explosion is Nietzsche’s means to know himself. As she points out,

Burying himself, exploding himself as a German in order to be reborn – make himself be reborn – and to reaffirm himself as a Frenchman, does not mean changing his nationality: what do nationalities matter to Nietzsche, this ‘stateless person,’ this beyond-all-borders! It means effecting a much more profound conversion: giving himself the opportunity of being recognized for what he is, a man – or Dionysus, which, understood correctly, is the same thing. (222)

By criticising the Germans and praising the French, Kofman observes that Nietzsche selects the harshest path in order to identify his exceptional courage and distinction.

The second point that Kofman questions is to relate *Ecce Homo* to Nietzsche's madness which follows. *Ecce Homo* is his last work and is always considered the maddest text in his philosophy, at least bearing "symptoms of the madness to come" (223). But Kofman has a different interpretation of it. She argues that Nietzsche feels it is his duty to say "in what respects he has remained 'himself' and in what respects he has become someone else" (223). Therefore, how Nietzsche has attained, in Kofman's view, is not "his most profound self" but "the one which was situated way above 'him', at 'his' highest point" (223). As Kofman argues, *Ecce Homo* is regarded as the exceptional autobiography; it is a work "which no one has had the courage or the intelligence to write, letting people know *who* he is and that he is not mad" (225).

However, Kofman also points out that Nietzsche reassures himself through *Ecce Homo* that "he is not mad and that at the very moment he is planning to blow up the entire earth he is not himself in the process of exploding – of shattering into a thousand figures with no link or unity" (225-226). Kofman, furthermore, has her own interpretation of Nietzsche's "satyr" as follows,

Nietzsche would prefer, he says, to be taken for a satyr than a saint, that is, a servant of Christ, for he is neither a fanatic nor an apostle, a founder of a religion, a monster of virtue, or a moral man. But taking him purely and simply for a satyr would mean making another mistake. For the satyr is also that cynical and shameless buffoon who is unafraid to wallow in his books as in his own dung...Nietzsche feels no typological affinity at all with these buffoons, whose cynicism is the form in which only base and vulgar souls prize what is called sincerity. (229)

Kofman concludes that Nietzsche is not a cynical person at all, though he criticises Christianity in a cynical perspective (229). Being a cynic, in other words, is the way that Nietzsche chooses to testify and prove himself, in order to express his radical criticism of Christianity and then point out a new understanding of life, as a living

hero with the purest spirit.

In this respect, I agree with Kofman's comment, arguing that Nietzsche plans to identify himself by setting a test for himself. In *Ecce Homo*, we can see that Nietzsche treats himself as "a disciple of the philosopher Dionysos" (EH: Foreword 2), expresses his own unshakable belief in affirming life through self-display, and indicates that life should manifest itself not with cowardice but with courage. As he says: "Error (-belief in the ideal-) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*...Every acquisition, every step forward in knowledge is the *result* of courage, of severity towards oneself, of cleanliness with respect to oneself" (EH: Foreword 3). *Ecce Homo* is a retrospective book which deliberately exposes Nietzsche's self-reflective analysis of human beings and the world. There are two aspects of his thinking that call for analysis here. The first part is his conception of humanity. In Nietzsche's view, those who live in the modern world are habitually unaware of the domination of Christian morality, which he calls a "*décadence* morality" (EH: Destiny 4) with its denial of life. Nietzsche stresses the prevalence of resentment, the dangerous effect of the Christian morality that he rejects: "the instinct for self-recovery *forbade* to me a philosophy of indigence and discouragement" (EH: Wise 2). He insists that the essential step to free us from resentment is to overcome the weakness of humanity through self-recovery, in order to affirm life. Taking himself as an example, Nietzsche writes:

Freedom from *ressentiment*, enlightenment over *ressentiment* – who knows the extent to which I ultimately own thanks to my protracted sickness for this too! The problem is not exactly simple: one has to have experienced it from a state of strength and a state of weakness... Being sick *is* itself a kind of *ressentiment*...to free the soul of *that* [resentment] – first step is recovery. *Ressentiment*, born of weakness, to no one more harmful than to the weak man himself – in the opposite case, where a rich nature is the presupposition, a *superfluous* feeling to stay

master of which is almost the proof of richness. (EH: Wise 6)

Nietzsche knows that it is indeed hard for a person to rid herself of the influence of resentment. Accordingly, he is convinced that he is the one who is capable of helping himself and achieving a release from resentment. Nietzsche understands that man has to test and prove himself through his own experience, which cannot be replaced by anything else. His view of the need for experience is closely analogous to Emerson's. They not only claim the importance of self-experimentation which helps to be wise, independent and self-reliant, but also choose to manifest it themselves by the means of writing in solitude. "Both Emerson and Nietzsche often suggest that the realization of the ambitions of the great writer may require keeping the personal, or impersonal, distance called solitude" (Hanson 36). Their works make a proof of what life in themselves they urge to claim.

As Nietzsche explains his experience awakens him to reproach the virtue claimed in Christianity: "My experience gives me a right to a general mistrust of the so-called 'selfless' drives, of the whole 'love of one's neighbour' which is always ready with deeds and advice" (EH: Wise 4). By announcing what follows, Nietzsche is convinced of his attack on Christianity:

If I wage war on Christianity I have a right to do so, because I have never experienced anything disagreeable or frustrating from that direction – the most serious Christians have always been well disposed towards me. I myself, an opponent of Christianity *de rigueur*, am far from bearing a grudge against the individual for what is the fatality of millennia. (EH: Wise 7)

This experience of reproaching Christian morality, for Nietzsche, is the means of self-recovery by which he releases himself from resentment in modern culture. Self-recovery, for Nietzsche, is the cure that makes him bravely confront resentment. According to Nietzsche, he knows that he is different from others, observing that

resentment makes modern people sick, as explained in the following passage,

I took myself in hand, I myself made myself healthy again: the precondition for this – every physiologist will admit it – is that *one is fundamentally healthy*. A being who is typically morbid cannot become healthy, still less can he make himself healthy; conversely, for one who is typically healthy being sick can even be an energetic *stimulant* to life, to more life. (EH: Wise 2)

Being healthy, in Nietzsche's view, can be interpreted in psychological and physical terms. Those who are psychologically sick, those 'morbid' people, are difficult to be healthy on account of the lack of will and courage; nevertheless, those who are physically sick, like Nietzsche himself, can be cured through self-recovery, affirming life through experiencing every test happened in it. In this respect, we can see how Nietzsche regards his physical sickness as the source of a strength that stimulates his affirmation of life. However, the implication does not mean that everyone is able to conceive what Nietzsche claims, agreeing that he is fundamentally healthy. In other words, Nietzsche understands that he is the one who helps himself away from resentment through self-recovery.

Regardless of his unhealthy body condition and finally insanity, Nietzsche in his life demonstrates himself as a living example of life-affirmation. As Lou Salomé shows, Nietzsche reveals himself "in the way a poet shapes his own unique world through words, metaphors, and correspondences" (quoted in Behler, 285).⁴⁷ Nietzsche, in Salomé's portrayal, is more than a so-called theoretician or academic philosopher: "For the value of his thoughts does not lie in their originality of theory, nor does it lie in that which can be established or refuted dialectically. What is of value is the intimate force which speaks through one personality to another personality" (ibid.).

⁴⁷ Ernst Behler describes how Lou Salomé portrays Nietzsche's life and writings not as a biography nor a psychological study but a book depicting his personality and individuality (1988, Redding Ridge: Black Swan Books, Trans. Siegfried Mandel).

But Nietzsche surely knows that it is impossible to persuade others to believe his writing unless they dare to experience life on their own account, as he argues: “Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only *when you have all denied me* will I return to you” (EH: Foreword 4). Similar to Emerson, Nietzsche claims that life can only be affirmed through experience, which can never be taught by others. At this point, he understands that his business is to exemplify himself, to “overthrow idols” (EH: Foreword 2), including himself, if someone wants to treat him as a new idol. Like Emerson who never asks for the followers, Nietzsche does not want to be a new idol at all; he shows how he is capable of affirming life. “It was Emerson who first saw himself (as Nietzsche would later see himself) as a source of cultural strength – the hero who could restore the balance of power between man and his environment” (Lopez 45).

Nietzsche and Emerson both choose to affirm their lives alone as a living individual:

[H]e [Emerson] encouraged an experimental approach to thought and prized the accumulation of knowledge – knowledge of nature, of the world, of the human condition, and of the self...Seeing through deceptions and renouncing our former beliefs in what Nietzsche later calls ‘self-overcoming.’ That is, deliberately overcoming one’s own cherished ideals, one’s consoling illusions. (Stack 1992: 59)

Likewise, with respect to resentment, Nietzsche realises that it is hard to free oneself from its effects but nevertheless strives to overcome the self with courage and determination. Nietzsche argues that only the rare individual, like himself, who is able to conceive of the need for freedom from resentment through self-overcoming and self-realisation, will know how to live in the world with a free soul: “He [the individual] is always in *his* company, whether he traffics with books, people or landscapes: he does honour when he *chooses*, when he *admits*, when he *trusts*” (EH: Wise 2). Nietzsche knows that this is his own path of solitude to individuality. As he

argues, “my humanity consists, *not* in feeling for and with man, but in *enduring* that I do feel for and with him...My humanity is a continual self-overcoming. – But I have need of *solitude*, that is to say recovery, return to myself, the breath of a free light playful air” (EH: Wise 8). With his ceaseless affirmation of life, Nietzsche demonstrates himself as an exceptional and honourable individual, like Emerson, who never ceases to overcome his own human weakness with great endurance and strength.

The second part sets out to analyse how Nietzsche views modern culture. He criticises modern culture which has been misled and dominated by Christianity. Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity resembles Emerson’s. Both Emerson and Nietzsche, simply put, are concerned with cultural values and crisis, and Stack regards them the philosophers of culture (1992: 33). As Stack continues,

Although other thinkers later reinforced Nietzsche’s awareness of a coming crisis in Western culture in general and an emerging crisis in Christian culture in particular, it was Emerson who first conveyed to him the idea that Christendom was in decline, that the official doctrines of the Christian religion were losing their hold on the minds and hearts of men. His allusions to the question of the status of the claims to truth in Christianity, as well as to changing attitudes toward them, in “Fate and History,”⁴⁸ were framed in the context of his recent reading of Emerson. (1992: 33-34)

Emerson and Nietzsche provide a new religion with a new morality, according to Stack (1992: 35). But the difference between them is their personal definition of this new religion. Emerson believes in “an affirmative religion of immanence”, which should be “a religion of life and affirmation, a religion of beauty and strength, that

⁴⁸ “Fate and History” is one of Nietzsche’s early essays which have been translated from German to English by Richard Perkins in *Young Nietzsche and Philosophy: Three Juvenile Essays* (Mount Pleasant, MI: Enigma Press, n.d.). Stack retranslates it again with another essay “Freedom of Will and Fate”, which I have already mentioned.

would replace the encrusted forms of ‘historical Christianity’” (Stack 1992: 35). Nietzsche nevertheless concentrates on the development of the self, without offering any arguments related to the religion of immanence that Emerson claims. Though their stances on the new religion are different, Emerson and Nietzsche similarly assume that this new religion has to be made with a new morality with autonomy and self-development, which is different from Christian morality. Nietzsche argues that Christian morality misinterprets love: “The Circe of mankind, morality, has falsified all *psychologica* to its very foundations – has *moralized* it – to the point of the frightful absurdity that love is supposed to be something ‘unegoistic’” (EH: Books 5). Christian morality misleads us into following Christian doctrine, assuming that being unegoistic is the quintessential manner of expressing love. Nietzsche, like Emerson claims in “The Divinity School Address”, corrects this false concept: “One has to be set firmly upon *oneself*, one has to stand bravely upon one’s own two legs, otherwise one *cannot* love at all” (EH: Books 5). According to Nietzsche, it is only after a person is firstly able to love and respect himself that he will automatically know how to spread love to others. Love, in Nietzsche’s interpretation, should not be manifested by doing something according to Christian doctrine as obligation, but by expressing itself naturally and instinctively.

Moreover, as Nietzsche explicates that “what isolates *us* is not that we don’t *find* any God, either in history, or in nature, or behind nature – but that we feel what was revered as God to be not ‘divine’ but a hideous holy grimace, a sheep-like, absurd and pitiful inanity, a principle of slander against man and the world: in short, that we deny God as God” (Notebook 1887-1888, 11: 122), Nietzsche argues that modern culture isolates those few individuals with self-knowledge in decadence and depression. Life, under the influence of Christianity, is denied and degenerated, as Nietzsche continues:

“Our human life being as it is, all ‘truth’, all ‘goodness’, all ‘holiness’, all ‘divinity’ in the Christian style has hitherto proved to be a great danger – even now, mankind is in danger of perishing through an ideality hostile to life” (Notebook 1887-1888, 11: 122). The danger that emerges from Christianity is the denial of life. Being aware of the danger, Nietzsche has a new way of interpreting the world as follows:

It is precisely here that one has to begin to learn anew. Those things which mankind has hitherto pondered seriously are not even realities, merely imaginings, more strictly speaking lies from the bad instincts of sick, in the profoundest sense injurious natures – all the concepts ‘God’, ‘soul’, ‘virtue’, ‘sin’, ‘the Beyond’, ‘truth’, ‘eternal life’. (EH: Clever 10)

All these imaginary concepts, according to Nietzsche, are illusory. All the concepts related to the world, similarly, are imagined. Nietzsche claims that it is better to be wary of knowledge and consciousness: “The entire surface of consciousness – consciousness *is* a surface – has to be kept clear of any of the great imperatives. Even the grand words, the grand attitudes must be guarded against! All of them represent a danger that the instinct will ‘understand itself’ too early” (EH: Clever 9). To develop humanity to a higher level with the free soul is the way that helps to clarify and overcome the limits of consciousness.

Everything in the world is transitory, as Nietzsche claims,

To ‘want’ something, to ‘strive’ after something, to have a ‘goal’, a ‘wish’ in view – I know none of this from experience. Even at this moment I look out upon my future – a distant future! – as upon a smooth sea: it is ruffled by no desire. I do not want in the slightest that anything should become other than it is; I do not want myself to become other than I am...But that is how I have always lived. I have harboured no desire. (EH: Clever 9)

On the one hand, it seems that Nietzsche is too passive and indifferent to the outside world; but on the other hand, this is the way he knows himself through self-realisation. Nietzsche never calls a halt to his self-transformative and self-overcoming process

through self-realisation, knowing that he is responsible for exhibiting himself through his life, even in an erratic way as he portrays, “I am the *anti-ass par excellence* and therewith a world-historical monster” (EH: Books 2). Additionally, he never denies the inner struggles of his tragic life, such as his relationship with his family and Wagner. He knows he is never perfect, but he dares to confront his past experience in order to continually overcome and develop himself. As he points out,

The genius of the heart who makes everything loud and self-satisfied fall silent and teaches it to listen, who smooths rough souls and gives them a new desire to savour...The genius of the heart from whose touch everyone goes away richer, not favoured and surprised, not as if blessed and oppressed with the goods of others, but richer in himself, newer to himself than before, broken open, blown upon and sounded out by a thawing wind, more uncertain perhaps, more delicate, more fragile, more broken, but full of hopes that as yet have no names, full of new will and current, full of new ill will and counter current. (EH: Books 6)

In this view, Nietzsche does not only conceive that he will be the genius of the heart, but also realises that all his previous works merely record the traces which help him return to himself, becoming who he is. As he argues in the very beginning of *Ecce Homo*, “How should I not be grateful to my whole life? –And so I tell myself my life”.⁴⁹ *Ecce Homo* in this respect signifies a significant point of closure not only for Nietzsche’s work but also for Nietzsche’s life.

“Emerson and Nietzsche also hold in common those various, exalted nineteenth-century conceptions of the seer – the artist-philosopher or poet-thinker capable of initiating profound transfigurations in culture and humanity” (Lopez 127). Both Emerson and Nietzsche provide a new conception of the world and a new way of living. They emphasise the significance of individuality and the affirmation of life, manifesting themselves as true individuals. Emerson regards himself as a seeker, an

⁴⁹ This is from a short passage after the Forward of *Ecce Homo*.

individual alone on the spiritual path with the unlimited power of the soul. He advocates that the soul inside humankind unites itself and God, contending that it is not the limited mind but the unlimited power of the soul that allows humankind to conceive of the greatness of humanity. He also argues that it is possible for us to know greatness through personal experience. Emerson stresses two points: the first is to keep a humbler attitude toward fate and Nature that can never be manipulated by the mind, in order to make a balance between man and the world through the power of the soul. The second is to know man is united with all beings in the universe and believe that man can be a hero determining the world with the power of the universe. Nietzsche represents himself, like Emerson, as a hero: "There remains a final affinity between the Nietzschean image of a man 'beyond-man' as he has been and Emerson the man and 'the teacher' of practical wisdom. It is one that is based upon Nietzsche's profound admiration for the man himself and his orientation towards life" (Stack 1992: 351). Nietzsche focuses on the importance of being an individual and proclaims that life is affirmed through self-experimentation.

Nietzsche argues that only the few individuals with self-knowledge are able to develop the mind. The world, according to Nietzsche and Emerson, is a realm of transient appearances. For Nietzsche, the crucial point is that life should be proved and affirmed through experience, which is echoed in Emerson's. Though Nietzsche is not like Emerson who proclaims the concept of religious immanence and the unity of man and God, their criticism of Christianity, assertion in life-affirmation and proclamation of the concept of individuality are the same. As Lopez comments,

Nietzsche and Emerson were, differences notwithstanding, both well aware of the danger, the extravagance, of thought and language and of the potential for misunderstanding inherent in the vocation of any thinker who aspires to more than lecture-hall wisdom. Both speak of the

hyperbolic and apocalyptic nature of their own profession; both recognize the potential destructiveness involved in the transformations great thinkers can initiate. (130)

Emerson and Nietzsche know that they are exceptional individuals who are responsible for their lives. As Emerson argues: “We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them” (Experience: 294); life is the way that helps Emerson discern what man really is. For Nietzsche, he conceives of decadence derived from Christianity in modern culture and reveals his resistance of being a part of it. Nietzsche demonstrates himself with courage and individuality, proclaiming that life should be affirmed through internalisation. As Stack concludes,

Because Emerson and Nietzsche desired a ‘victory to the senses,’ they sought and hoped for a living embodiment of an aesthetico-ethical ideal and turned away impatiently from the ancient promise of a perfection that transcends the world of time and becoming. They hoped for a creative, self-creative, independent person who could escape the powerful nets of the all-too-human and cultivate an affirmative, distinctively individual style of thought and existence. They tried to teach mankind a difficult faith, a faith far more demanding than a belief in a distant, perfect, omniscient, but hidden and strangely silent, deity: a faith in man and his capacity for self-overcoming. (1992: 355-356)

From his first book *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche’s project finally fulfils itself with the idea of eternal return, proving himself a self-critical individual, like Emerson a self-reliant individual. His hope, therefore, is not for all humanity but for himself, which is the strength he ceaselessly embraces in the journey of life.

I add a crucial point to clarify Nietzsche’s claim here. Nietzsche is not a self-centred person who acts as he likes and attacks what he dislikes, because this is contradictory to his perspectivism. In other words, when we interpret Nietzsche’s rejection of decadence in modern culture, we should connect it with his concept of individuality, which is the basis of his thought. Rorty in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* displays

a self-contradictory attitude in reading Nietzsche. On the one hand he comments that Nietzsche is an ironist who stands in contrast to Proust:

When Nietzsche and Heidegger stick to celebrating their personal canons, stick to the little things which meant most to them, they are as magnificent as Proust. They are figures whom the rest of us can use as examples and as material in our own attempts to create a new self by writing a bildungsroman about our old self. But as soon as either rests to put forward a view about modern society, or the destiny of Europe, or contemporary politics, he becomes at best vapid, and at worst sadistic. (1989: 119-120)

Rorty here drastically divides Nietzsche into two types of personhood: the one to the public inspires us by emphasising self-creation, but the one in private is an alternative person who cares about himself, as Rorty on the other hand associates Nietzsche to Proust: “Proust and Nietzsche are paradigm nonmetaphysicians because they so evidently cared only about how they looked to themselves, not how they looked to the universe” (1989: 98). Rorty’s self-contradictory but absolute criticism is questionable because we should not forget that Nietzsche’s key argument in his perspectivism is to reject the concept of the absolute; for Nietzsche, the concept of the absolute inhibits individuality. In this respect, Nietzsche does not divide himself into two different types in public and in private as Rorty argues. In contrast, Nietzsche not only sets himself as a living example for maintaining his concept of individuality, but also shows his concern of humanity by stressing the significance of this concept of individuality in his work. Nietzsche might be a solitary and reclusive thinker, but his concern with humanity does not distinguish him from others. Alexander Nehamas also gives his question of Rorty’s commentary: “But on what grounds can we maintain such a strong distinction between the private project of making something out of ourselves and the public goal of changing the lives of others, for better or worse?” (237) With regard to any criticism of Nietzsche, we need to keep in mind that rejection to the absolute is what Nietzsche maintains, as Nehamas remarks: “Absolute

rejections, like absolute distinctions, are very much what he [Nietzsche] constantly, absolutely tried to avoid” (245). Through his work, we may say that Nietzsche has transformed himself as a tragic, imperfect but brave individual who honours life with love and respect. As he claims: “My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity. Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity, still less to dissemble it – all idealism is untruthfulness in the face of necessity – but to *love* it” (EH: *Clever* 10), Nietzsche is an individual who knows how to love life and respect the self.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

What creates a morality or a law-book, the deep instinct for the fact that only *automatism* can enable perfection in living and creating.

(Nietzsche: Notebook 1888, 14: 226)

If philosophy is a self-reflexive means for inspiring us to understand ourselves, Nietzsche's attitudes toward humanity and morality not only allow us to see the possibilities of the development of the self, but also show us the way we can choose to live with self-respect and intellectual independence. Nietzsche doubtless provides us with a radical and unconventional way of interpreting the self, life, history and culture, and brings us to understand how we are able to enlighten ourselves. "Nietzsche's radicalism proclaims itself, in all possible guises, as a critique embodying a radical break from the philosophical presuppositions which dominate thinking from Plato to Hegel" (Sedgwick 1991: 30). In order not to follow traditional philosophy which maintains the mind-body dichotomy, and Christian morality which implants an extreme and pessimistic view of life by directing us to rely on divine redemption, Nietzsche suggests we should instead identify the embodied self and overcome nihilism with life-affirmation. As Murray argues: "For Nietzsche, value is to be based in life, where this world retains the expanded meaning derived from the belief in such a 'beyond'. The feeling of being exceeded by the world, should be experienced as rapture, rather than fear" (162). My study of Nietzsche's concept of individuality, which compares it with the ideas of Darwin, Freud, St Augustine, Mill and Emerson, aims at exploring how Nietzsche inspires us to rethink the self and be responsible for our existence.

Nietzsche's concept of individuality is the main concern of his philosophy. To understand human nature is the first crucial step toward grasping his concept of individuality. Attacking Darwin's theory of evolution and Spencer's theory of "Survival of the Fittest" which mislead us to believe we, nearly physical organisms, progress through competition and struggle for the survival, Nietzsche argues the need for cultural evolution. In Nietzsche's view, we are animals but we are more than animals; we cultivate ourselves by way of the ability to reflect ourselves. Different from Freud who provides biological conception of instinct and argues that instinct should be satisfied for contentment, Nietzsche likewise elucidates the concept of instinct in different levels. Nietzsche explores how herd instinct and consciousness, under the influence of Christian culture and morality, skilfully work on us and constantly hinder us from knowing the self. He also emphasises our self-evaluating nature, which is usually repressed in the unconscious, and suggests we liberate ourselves from herd instinct and master ourselves intellectually by way of self-interpretation. For Nietzsche, we live in a decadent modern culture which is inculcated by Christianity to believe we were born with original sin and we need to ask for redemption. Nietzsche does not agree with Augustine who argues that the fundamental way to develop humanity is to obey God and follow Christian doctrine. In contrast, he suggests we firstly understand what Christianity claims is solely a product of interpretation, and then recognise our self-interpretative nature for developing the self. Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God and his attack on Christianity not only show his view of life, which should not be denied but be affirmed, but also confirms his belief in this stance, arguing that we liberate from the domination of Christianity in order to create our values. As Keith May comments, Nietzsche knows that "a world without God must be a wilderness as well as an opportunity" (144). Nietzsche understands that human nature is contradictory and

most people find it difficult to develop themselves to a higher level on account of the limitations of consciousness, but he implies the potential to be an individual with higher humanity. People usually try to limit their experience and simplify themselves, but according to what Nietzsche tells us, man is “more complex than other organisms and must healthily embrace a greater diversity of experiences” (May 149). Nietzsche, after all, provides us a new approach to understand contradictory human nature and shows us how the self can possibly be raised through self-interpretative development.

Nietzsche’s criticism of Christian morality is the second step to approach his concept of individuality. Nietzsche and Mill both hold that the one-sided and prejudiced value judgement that emerges from Christian morality misleads and dominates humankind in modern culture, and they emphasise the development of individuality. Mill indicates the errors transmitted Christian morality and claims his concept of individuality, which is on the basis of his utilitarian morality. Nietzsche similarly attacks Christianity, contending that Christian morality negates the self and brings humankind to nothingness and decadence. Mill aims to present a new moral conception concerning the development of individuality by means of his ideas of liberty and utilitarianism, whereas Nietzsche does not formulate any norm of morality. Nietzsche rejects Mill’s theory of utility and claims that individuality does not require following any mode of morality. As May comments: “Our aim should be not to weaken morality for the sake of self-gratification, but to confine morality to its proper, subordinate place” (149). Nietzsche proposes the possibility of the development of individuality through self-realisation and self-overcoming. As Kaufmann explains,

Traditional morality seems to Nietzsche ineluctably moribund – a dying tree that cannot be saved by grafting new fruit on it. We may recall his conception of the philosopher as a doctor – a surgeon. The health of our civilization appeared to him to be severely threatened: it looked

impressively good, but seemed to Nietzsche thoroughly undermined.
(1974: 109)

Nietzsche on the one hand is like Mill who loathes the problem of Christian morality in its denial of life and its way of undermining our self-confidence by emasculating human culture. But he on the other hand has different response to Christian morality and individuality. His aim is to offer an autonomous judgement on human conduct and an affirmative stance on life beyond the domination of Christian morality. In his understanding of Christian morality, Nietzsche argues that human history and modern culture do not develop humanity but restrict us through custom and tradition. Nietzsche offers a different way that inspires us to view the possibility of individuality by means of his concept of the sovereign individual. This individual, the ripest but late fruit, according to Nietzsche, is exceptional and supramoral. The individual, with power and freedom, is able to constantly reflect and overcome himself without being restricted by tradition and Christian morality.

The final step to approach to Nietzsche's concept of individuality is to see how Nietzsche leads us to understand the potential to individuality. Compared with Emerson's concept of individuality, we can see clearly how Nietzsche appreciates Emerson's thought and how he ceaselessly transforms his own ideas through personal experience and self-reflection. Emerson has greatly influenced on Nietzsche from the time of his youth. Emerson advocates the unity of God and humankind, attempting to give his new conceptions of God, Jesus and religion. Emerson's concept of individuality is based on the idea of immanence and the unity between God and human beings. Emerson implies the importance of conceiving the soul that associates humankind with God and the universe. In Emerson's view, there is no difference between Jesus and humankind. According to Emerson, Jesus comes to show us how

he finds God and unites with him; therefore, man can potentially develop his or her mind to a higher level, perceiving his unity with God as Jesus does. Emerson obviously shows his conviction of the infinite power of the soul that awakens humankind to independence and finds God not through Christian doctrine but within humankind itself.

In order to address his concept of individuality, Emerson suggests we rely on ourselves, the unlimited power of the soul inside us, to open the mind and believe that life is constantly transforming itself at every moment through personal experience. Arguing that we require self-reliance and experience as the means to be an individual, Emerson then emphasises that we can rely on our inner wisdom to undergo any obstacle provided by fate, and finally realises that we are great with the power of the soul which unites us and everything in the universe. The individual who knows his greatness without pride and arrogance but with gratitude and contentment is able to bravely experience life with affirmation and responsibility. Like Emerson, Nietzsche also offers his conceptions of God, Jesus and religion, which are not based on the idea of immanence but the idea of self-understanding and self-overcoming. Nietzsche criticises Christian morality, reinterpreting that Jesus does not come to redeem humankind but shows us how we ought to live; Nietzsche in other words regards Jesus as the only true Christian who dares to experience life. Nietzsche disagrees about the conceptions of sin and redemption claimed by Christianity; on the contrary, he claims that it is possible for the individual to create life by himself without being restricted by Christian morality. Knowing that this possibility is the task not for ordinary people but for a select few individuals, Nietzsche stresses the development of the self and the importance of individuality through self-overcoming and experimentation.

Nietzsche attempts to break the erroneous conception taught by traditional philosophy and Christian morality that misguides us to deny the self and life. Conscious of the limitations of humanity, Nietzsche redefines his stance on life and argues the development of the self. For Nietzsche, life is a battlefield in which we have to be brave to confront and experience by ourselves through self-overcoming and self-transformation. Nietzsche never says that it is easy or even possible for everyone to raise the self; he knows it is only through self-overcoming that life can be affirmed, which is the task that is prepared not only for those rare individuals but for himself as well. This is Nietzsche's way, in association with his concept of individuality, of representing himself as an autonomous individual with courage and responsibility. As Michael Harr comments, "Nietzsche aims at a reversal not only of the optimistic naturalism of the Enlightenment, or of the Rousseauian myth of the original goodness of nature, but also of the Stoic idea of the essence – both divine and moral – of nature. He also wants to dismiss finalistic views" (78), Nietzsche enlightens us to understand the possibility of the true and independent individual beyond any limitation of tradition, culture and morality.

Emerson and Nietzsche are essentially similar in their concepts of individuality, though they choose different ways to express their ideas. They both represent themselves as an exceptional and independent individual, showing that life should be affirmed and experienced to the maximum. Emerson's concept of individuality is in accordance with his ideas of immanence and self-reliance which are associated with God and the universe. Emerson sees himself as an individual who is walking alone on the spiritual path. He too advocates the importance of self-development in his concept of individuality, asserting that humanity needs to conceive of the soul inside itself that

unites itself with God and the universe. Similarly, Nietzsche not only stresses the importance of self-overcoming and life-affirmation in his concept of individuality, but also bravely manifests himself as a supramoral individual who does not evade nihilism but knows how to overcome nihilism and live responsibly. As Ansell-Pearson says, “Nietzsche claims that the causes of nihilism lie in our faith in the categories of reason by which we have measured the value of the world in accordance with categories that refer to a purely fictitious world” (1997: 161), Nietzsche introduces an unusual way of understanding nihilism. In Nietzsche’s view, everything in the world, including nihilism, can be interpreted by perspective. The crucial point is how we can possibly see through everything without being entrapped in it, and how we can create our values affirming life when we live amid nihilism.

“Nietzsche urges us to throw ourselves into life... We achieve something admirable when we pursue our endeavors with intensity and strive to give the process a well-wrought shape” (Somolon & Higgins 101). Nietzsche suggests we perceive the potential for individuality and develop ourselves through self-mastery. To conclude, my study in Nietzsche is a way I choose for myself in response to Nietzsche’s concept of individuality, understanding that life should not be denied but affirmed and enriched through experience. To be an independent individual who is able to constantly develop and transform the self by self-overcoming is significant not only for Nietzsche and those who are inspired by his thought, but also for me. As a person who was born and grew up in a very traditional family in an Asian country but has unexpectedly been sent again and again by my family to schools studying Western culture, art and thought since adolescence, I always feel confused and eccentric as an outsider standing at the crossroads between Western culture and Eastern culture. My study inculcates me to see things extremely but my life and experience brings me to

see things in a neutral way. The study of Nietzsche finally assists me to transform myself into a person who can live with extremes without losing her identity. I am not saying that I no longer view things extremely, but I know how to adjust it and return to balance when I am conscious of the danger of the extremes. The method is learned from Nietzsche's perspectivism and the notion of self-reflection. For example, I learn to keep a balanced and considerate relationship with others, not to distinguish sharply but to appreciate difference between Western culture and Eastern culture, and to see responsibility and freedom as two sides of one thing. I feel contented not only because I experience life in a balanced way but also because I live as an independent individual with a heightened sense of life's challenges and rewards.

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