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The Influence of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer on Hermann Hesse

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CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE

THE INFLUENCE OF NIETZSCHE AND SCHOPENHAUER ON HERMANN HESSE

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR JOHN FARRELL

AND

PROFESSOR JAMES KREINES

AND

DEAN GREGORY HESS

BY

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Introduction: Exploring the Limitations of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer through Herman Hesse

Although Hermann Hesse is reported in his biographies as having read Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer, the relationship between Hesse's works and their philosophy has not been explored in much depth.¹ Herbert Reichert is the most successful in this endeavor; in his book *Nietzsche's Impact on Modern German Literature*, he dedicates a single chapter to Hesse's entire oeuvre.² Hesse has mostly been understood through the lens of Carl Jung. Even though that sort of Jungian analysis is interesting, relying too heavily on Jung's archetypes typically leads to a reductionist reading of Hesse, in which each character or concept has a single universal meaning. While Hesse manages to achieve a sense of thematic unity in most of his novels, this unity is only possible as part of a process. This process requires setting up binaries and then uniting them so that any distinction between the initially separate concepts is destroyed.

One way might be useful to understand the destruction of these binaries is as an act of nihilism. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche writes that, broadly, nihilism is the “the radical repudiation of value, meaning, and desirability.” (Book 1, §1). He then states that nihilism is inherently ambiguous and offers a definition of two distinct types. To disambiguate, Nietzsche defines active nihilism³ as “nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit,” in contrast to passive nihilism, which is “nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit” (Book 1, §22). More concretely, passive nihilism is

¹ Joseph Mileck, Hermann Hesse: Biography and Bibliography: Volume 1 (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 18-20.

² Herbert Reichert, Nietzsche's Impact on Modern German Literature (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

³ Active nihilism, in many ways, seems to be oxymoronic, or at least a contradiction in terms. For the purposes of this paper, we will suppose that it is theoretically possible to negate the values of others in a way that does not impose any new values. However, I will try to show that this is impossible in practice.

famously attributed to Schopenhauer, Buddhism, Stoicism or asceticism, all philosophies that Nietzsche thinks of as worn out and weary. The active nihilism is distinctly Nietzschean in kind and the passive nihilism is similar to the German orientalism of Schopenhauer.

Although this is the language that I will use in this thesis, there is a certain way in which the division between these two types of nihilism makes a poor caricature of Schopenhauer, Stoicism, etc. as well as Nietzsche's own philosophy. That is, it reduces both modes of thought into a pure repudiation of values, on the premise that the existence of values is inherently problematic. But both views implicitly smuggle in their own sets of values. Nietzsche, at other points in his writing, suggests that self-created values, recognition, beauty, etc. have some form of value. Schopenhauer's theory depends heavily on a hedonistic theory in which the perpetual suffering of failed desire-satisfaction is the worst evil. Hesse, through his writings, works through the failures of active nihilist and passive nihilist protagonists and concludes with a unification and acceptance of the conflicting values that they were trying to destroy.

In order to explore these ideas, I will analyze a prominent motif in Hesse's oeuvre, the mark of Cain.⁴ Hesse uses this symbol for a number of different purposes. In my first chapter, "The Face of Cain," I will explore two particular ways in which the mark of Cain is used. First of all, it is a figuratively useful way to eliminate a large range of binaries, including the distinctions between masculine/feminine, young/old, ugly/beautiful, etc. Second, it is intimately connected with the incredibly rich and

⁴ The mark of Cain, put simply, is the metaphorical way in which the faces of descendants of Cain (from the Biblical story of Cain and Abel) are marked, so that they can be easily identified as being different from others. I will go deeper into the origin of this term and how it functions in the subsequent paragraphs.

complex distinction between *anthropos* (character) and *daemon* (fate).⁵ I will examine in greater depth Heraclitus' pronouncement "*Ethos anthropos daimon*" (Character equals fate) and how this relates to the idea of *amor fati* (love of fate).

In my second chapter, "The Parables of Hesse and Nietzsche," I will use the mark of Cain to better understand Hesse's flirtation with Nietzsche's active nihilism. This symbol is first introduced in the novel *Demian*, in which the title character tells an alternative version of the Cain and Abel story. According to Max Demian, the parable of Cain and Abel is not about an evil man who kills his brother, but instead, a man who was simply strong while another was weak. Demian says to Emil Sinclair, after being taught the Biblical story as gospel in school, "They were afraid of Cain's children: they bore a 'sign.' So they did not interpret the sign for what it was—a mark of distinction—but as its opposite.... People with courage and character always seem sinister to the rest."⁶ Demian argues that the mark of Cain is not a literal sign on one's forehead, but instead a metaphorical symbol invented by the weaker men to brand Cain and his descendants as societal outsiders. These outsiders make up one type of Hessean protagonist, as we see in *Demian*, *Steppenwolf* and *Klein and Wagner*. These titular characters are marked in the same way that Demian is marked: the symbolic mark that Demian, Klein, and Harry Haller bear is a sign of active nihilism.

In my third chapter, "The Problems of Somberness and Fanaticism," I will explore the limitations of living in a Nietzschean or Schopenhaurian fashion. I will do this by exploring the motif of running away that appears in *Demian*, *Klein and Wagner*, *Siddhartha*, and *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Then I will sound how each of these types of

⁵ I will primarily use the term character, but I will use *daemon* and fate interchangeably.

⁶ Hermann Hesse, *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth* (New York: Perennial Library, 1989), 29.

running away has distinctive problems. Finally, I will discuss briefly why Hesse hopes to avoid these two problems through simply unifying these ideas.

Although all of Hesse's characters are unique and some do not fit perfectly into any one category, most of his characters fall into a number of different types. Implicitly, I have already been dividing these characters into categories. One type I will call the Nietzschean (or active nihilist) character, and they are the protagonists for some of Hesse's novels. This group includes Max Demian, Emil Sinclair, Harry Haller, and Friedrich Klein, from *Demian*, *Steppenwolf* and *Klein and Wagner*. Additionally, there are the female characters who bear the mark of Cain, Frau Eva, Goldmund's mother and Teresina, represent the *daemon* which the men pursue. Then, there are two types of ascetics (or passive nihilists), which are primarily portrayed in *Narcissus and Goldmund*, *Siddhartha*, and *The Glass Bead Game*. There are divided into the true ascetics like Narcissus and Govinda, and the realistic ascetics, Siddhartha, Goldmund, and Joseph Knecht.

In short: In my first chapter, I will discuss the mark of Cain at greater length and introduce the idea of *daemon*. In the second chapter, I will discuss how it functions as part of Nietzschean active nihilism. Finally, in the third chapter, I will explore the problem of somberness and the problem of fanaticism, and see how Hesse tries to resolve these two problems.

Ch. 1 The Marked Face of Cain

Introduction

In this section, I will examine what the mark of Cain looks like, as it appears in the main characters of Hesse's novels. One notable pattern is that most of Hesse's Nietzschean protagonists are male, and generally pursue a particular female or the universal mother archetype. These female characters function as a metaphor or a symbol. They represent a particular idea, that of *daemon*, or fate, for those protagonists. In this chapter, I will explore where these two types of characters converge, namely through the concept of *daemon*.

The Mark of Cain

The mystery of character and fate seems to be hidden in this loaded imagery that recurs throughout descriptions of the marked men. One way to determine the fate of the people who bear the mark of Cain is to look at their character. In many ways, their character is presented right on their face, through the symbolism of the mark.

The most abstract representation of the mark of Cain in its essence is found in *Demian*. Sinclair attempts to paint a portrait of the unattainable woman he idealizes but instead paints something quite unexpected: it is both a portrait of himself and of Demian simultaneously. Sinclair mails this painting to Demian, and when the two men finally reunite, Demian confirms that Sinclair's mark is more pronounced and that the painting is of the true face of the mark of Cain.⁷ The description of Sinclair's painting becomes the archetypal image of the face marked by Cain. He describes it as haunting his thoughts and appearing repeatedly in his dreams:

⁷ Hesse, *Demian* 138-39.

It resembled a kind of image of God or a holy mask, half male, half female, ageless, as purposeful as it was dreamy, as rigid as it was secretly alive.... [A]live and eloquent, friendly or hostile to me, sometimes distorted into a grimace, sometimes infinitely beautiful harmonious, and noble.⁸

The mark of Cain is described here as both an “image of God” and as a “holy mask.” It is important to note that Hesse is not suggesting that these men are godlike in any way, but rather, they have the image of God on their face as though it were a mask. Most important about this description is that the distinctions between the binaries; instead, all contradictory features exist simultaneously. The predominant binaries being destroyed are the ones between notions of masculinity and femininity, ugly and beautiful, friendly and hostile, and young and old. Also, interestingly, the painting is not described as a two-dimensional piece of art, but as being “alive” as opposed to “rigid.”

Careful readers will recognize that the painting is of Demian before Hesse states it outright on the following page, as the language greatly resembles the novel’s physical description of Demian. Sinclair describes Demian’s face as he’s looking at a fallen horse:

I saw Demian’s face and I not only noticed that it was not a boy’s face but a man’s; I also felt or saw that it was not entirely the face of a man either, but had something feminine about it, too. Yet the face struck me at that moment as neither masculine nor childlike, neither old nor young, but somehow a thousand years old, somehow timeless, bearing the scars of an entirely different history than we knew; animals could look like that, or trees, or planets—none of this did I know consciously.... Perhaps he was handsome, perhaps I liked him, perhaps I also found him repulsive, I could not be sure of that either.⁹

Many of the same ideas show up again in this passage. The notion of “ageless” is spelled out in more detail as “neither old nor young” and “somehow timeless.” It is also simultaneously not the face of a boy or of a man. The degrees of masculinity and femininity are less evenly divided here; while Demian’s face in the painting was “half male, half female,” in real life he is characterized as being predominantly male with some ineffable feminine quality. Finally and interestingly enough, Demian’s face might be

⁸ Hesse, Demian 84.

⁹ Hesse, Demian 52.

repulsive and distorted, but also handsome and beautiful simultaneously. It is perhaps in this that people who bear the mark of Cain look sinister: “It is much more likely that he struck people as faintly sinister, perhaps a little more intellect and boldness in his look than people were used to.”¹⁰ Of course, like all statements made by cowards, this one must be taken with a grain of salt. A more favorable reference to the intellectual side of the mark of Cain is found in *Steppenwolf*. In the Preface, the narrator describes Harry Haller’s face as follows: “Above all, his face pleased me from the first, in spite of the foreign air it had. It was a rather original face and perhaps a sad one, but alert, thoughtful, strongly marked and highly intellectual.”¹¹ In Haller’s face, we see the bits and pieces of the other marked men: the thoughtfulness of Demian, and the intellect of Cain, and lastly the sadness of Klein.

In *Klein and Wagner*, Hesse suggests that destiny can be literally shown on one’s face. While on the run after embezzling money from the bank, Klein looks at himself in the mirror and does not recognize his own face:

[Klein’s] intoxication vanished and his anxious timidity returned, his curse and his mark of Cain....It was not his good, quiet, rather long-suffering Friedrich Klein face. It was the face of a marked man, stamped by destiny with new symbols, both older and younger than the former face, like a mask and yet permeated by a strange inner glow. No one loved such a face. Here he sat in a hotel room in the southland, with his marked face.¹²

Hesse begins first by casting off the features of his old face, that it is no longer “good, quiet, [or] rather long-suffering.” A simplistic reading of this passage would be to suggest that since Klein has become a criminal, his goodness has been replaced with evil. But based on Hesse’s treatment of Cain up until this point, that does not seem plausible. The three previous descriptive phrases have a very passively nihilistic sentiment to them, in

¹⁰Hesse, *Demian* 29.

¹¹ Herman Hesse, *Steppenwolf* (New York: Random House Inc., 1963), 8

¹² Herman Hesse, “Klein and Wagner,” in *Klingsor’s Last Summer* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux Inc., 1970), 55-56.

which goodness, quiet meditation, and long-suffering are all positive attributes. Rather than shifting from good to evil, it seems to be shifting towards the active nihilism.

Women as Daemon

Now that we have explored the sort of character associated with the mark of Cain, at least superficially, it is worth delving into their fates. The male protagonists of Hesse's novels all share explicit qualities, but the descriptions of the women in his stories are more subtle. The women who bear the mark of Cain are not derivative of the men, but are a purer distillation. In fact, these female figures are unrealistic to the point that they function primarily as symbols. Sinclair reacts strongly to a photo of Demian's mother because it resembles the perfect image of the mark of Cain in his mind, to an even greater extent than Demian does. He exclaims:

[N]ow as I saw the small likeness my heart stood still: it was my dream image! That was she, the tall, almost masculine woman who resembled her son, with maternal traits, severity, passion; beautiful and alluring, beautiful and unapproachable, daemon and mother, fate and beloved.¹³

Hesse takes the figure of an older female, Frau Eva, and of a younger male, Max Demian, and combines them into one image with the mark of Cain. Frau Eva is as much of a "masculine woman" as her son's face "had something feminine about it." Furthermore, while Demian is sometimes handsome, his mother is always beautiful. Unlike the original painting that is "distorted into a grimace" and Demian's face that is sometimes "repulsive," Frau Eva's beauty is referred to twice with no negative adjectives. While Demian's face is repulsing, Frau Eva's face is "alluring." At the same time, it is not completely alluring because she remains "unapproachable." This strange dichotomy plays

¹³ Hesse, Demian 135.

itself out in the fact that this is simultaneously Sinclair's image of a mother-figure and of a potential lover, two concepts that are closely linked in Hesse's works. In this passage, Sinclair's mind moves from the "maternal traits" of "severity" to the more ambiguous trait of "passion," and from there to "beautiful" and eventually "beloved." A similar progression occurs as Sinclair gets to know Frau Eva better and their dialogues become more sexually charged. Instead of offering a Freudian reading here, I would like to suggest that this is a way in which Hesse breaks down the distinction between repulsive and alluring with "unapproachable." She is of a status that can never be attained because she is a maternal symbol. As Sinclair becomes more obsessed with her, Hesse writes that "sensual love and spiritual love, reality and symbol began to overlap."¹⁴ Hesse uses these female figures not only to introduce the world of the sensual and of nature, but also the spiritual realm. Women are more associated with the spiritual than even monasteries are in Hesse's novels.

This theme of the unattainable yet continually pursued mother figure recurs in *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Goldmund's mother leaves him at a young age and he forgets all about her until Narcissus revives his mother's "radiant image in his soul."¹⁵ Goldmund leaves the monastery to pursue a string of women in the hopes of following his bliss, which ultimately he realizes is the image of an archetypal mother figure:

There was another face alive in his soul, although it did not altogether belong to him, a face he longed to capture and re-create artistically, but again and again it drew back and shrouded itself: his mother's face.... It had slowly changed during his days of wandering, his nights of love, during his spells of longing, while his life was in danger, when he was close to death: it had grown richer, deeper, subtler. This was no longer his own mother; her traits and colors had by and by given way to an impersonal mother image, of Eve, of the mother of men.¹⁶

¹⁴ Hesse, *Demian* 155.

¹⁵ Herman Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux Inc., 1968), 57.

¹⁶ Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund* 121.

Goldmund moves away from “his own mother” to “an impersonal mother image.” This indicates that through Goldmund’s journey, he gradually moves away from finite real-world women to a more abstract ideal of what the feminine is. This progression allows him not to get in touch with his mother, who has long since walked out of his life, but with the part of himself that is incomplete without her. In *Demian*, Sinclair says of Frau Eva, “[S]he existed only as a metaphor of my inner self, a metaphor whose sole purpose was to lead me more deeply into myself.”¹⁷ As the image of the impersonal mother “grows richer, deeper, and subtler,” Goldmund is also led more deeply into himself. Hesse has indicated that these female archetypes are symbols or metaphors rather than fleshed-out characters, but exactly what they are a symbol of is somewhat ambiguous. His most explicit statement is that “a metaphor of my inner self,” but this metaphor becomes quickly complicated by the fact this is not so much a stagnant symbolic inner core, but an introspective journey during which the self changes. Furthermore, the change is subtle and associated with a plethora of different experiences that sometimes seem diametrically opposed: “[The mother image] had slowly changed during his days of wandering, his nights of love, during his spells of longing, while his life was in danger, when he was close to death.” The first two experiences that Goldmund chooses are moments related to love or lust, while the last two are concerned with fear of death and death itself. This suggests the resolution of the dichotomy that is hinted in the title of *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Hesse seems to be discussing a way in which love and death can be part of the same impulse. This is in stark contrast Freudian dichotomy between the death drive and the sexual drive, which is a conflict between being drawn irresistibly

¹⁷ Hesse, *Demian* 155.

toward death or toward life and procreation. Instead, Hesse suggests a reconciliation of these two concepts by understanding their role in the overall journey of life.

Hesse, in his description of these feminine figures, pairs not only love and death but also love and fate. Frau Eva is declared as Sinclair's "*daemon* and mother, fate and beloved." When speaking of the painting of the mark of Cain, Sinclair refers to the picture as "what determined my life, it was my inner self, my fate or my *daemon*.... That's what the woman I would love would look like if ever I were to love one. That's what my life and death would be like, this was the tone and rhythm of my fate."¹⁸ This passage contains both the idea of "*daemon* and mother" of Frau Eva and the love and death of Goldmund's mother image. The use of "woman I would love" is ambiguous as to whether he means a woman he's romantically interested in or loves as a mother. In this context, it seems to indicate the woman Sinclair pines over, Beatrice, but we see that the woman he ends up loving is Frau Eva and she is closely related to his idea of *daemon*. From this, we can also gain some insight on the mother image in *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Goldmund's mother is what "both life and death would be like." She is life because mothers are associated with birth, but she is also death because it indicates a return to mother Earth. The association of the mother figure with nature is seen in Hesse's referring to her alternately as Eve, in *Narcissus and Goldmund*, and Frau Eva in *Demian*. Much of Goldmund's meditation on the mother image and death is also understood in a natural context. Half-way through the book, Goldmund has a sudden vision: "[H]e saw the face of the universal mother, leaning over the abyss of life, with a lost smile that was both beautiful and gruesome. She was looking at birth and death, at flowers, at rustling

¹⁸ Hesse, Demian 86.

autumn leaves, at art, at decay.”¹⁹ In the universal mother archetype, there is the perfect unification of another two elements that was not present in the faces up until now: life and death simultaneously. The domain of the universal mother, then, is an understanding of the whole trajectory of birth, life, and death, or the trajectory of fate.

Daemon & Amor Fati

Daemon quickly becomes synonymous with both fate and the inner self. Both are true because of the complexity of meaning that derives from its Greek etymological roots. *Daemon*, which Hesse uses in *Demian*, and *daimonion*, which he uses in *The Glass Bead Game*, both are etymologically linked to *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* typically transliterates to “good spirit,” with *eu* meaning “good” and *daimon* meaning “spirit.” In this word, there is both the ideal of a person’s spirit or soul, and what it means for that spirit’s life to be good, or flourish. These two parts combine to mean something like a standard of the flourishing life.

This coheres with how *daemon* is only defined by the context Hesse uses it in. In a single sentence, Hesse it is “what determined my life, it was my inner self, my fate.” However, there is a further, more substantial claim in Hesse’s writing. He essentially says that the “metaphor of my inner self” contains the “tone and rhythm of my fate.” The link of “daemon” to fate and character is seen in the inscription Sinclair puts under his painting of the mark of Cain. Sinclair inscribes the base with a quotation from a volume of Novalis: “I have rarely experienced a book more intensely, except perhaps Nietzsche.... I wrote [an aphorism] under the picture: ‘Fate and temperament are two

¹⁹ Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund* 180.

words for one and the same concept.”²⁰ This quotation seems to be a version of Heraclitus’ famous fragment “*Ethos anthropos daimon*,” which, given the way the Greek language operates, is equally “Character is fate” and “Fate is character.”

There are both normative and descriptive ways to interpret *ethos anthropos daimon*. A descriptive interpretation would suggest that the state of the world and the nature of man are such that character always determines fate and fate determines character, but it offers no statement about whether affairs could be any different or if men should try to be any different. But there are also ways in which *ethos anthropos daimon* could be understood as normative, as a suggestion as to how to live life. I will argue that Nietzsche and Schopenhauer both offer normative interpretations. On Nietzsche’s account, character *should* be fate, while on Schopenhauer’s account fate *should* be character. Then I will offer Nietzsche’s argument for why Schopenhauer’s account is untenable and impossible to live by.

Amor fati, as it is appropriated in Nietzsche, is a normative claim about how to live. Nietzsche writes in *Ecce Homo*, “My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it—all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary—but love it.”²¹ But on Nietzsche’s account, *amor fati* is different from passive acquiescence of fate. Nietzsche insists that “one want nothing to be different,” and in his terminology, desiring, wanting, and willing are all the same impulse. Furthermore, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche relates this idea of

²⁰ Hesse, *Demian* 86.

²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “Ecce Homo: ‘Why I am so Clever,’” in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House Inc., 1968), §10.

amor fati to the yes-saying life:

I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth!... Looking away shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer.²²

This usage of *amor fati* seems to contradict the attitude of Nietzsche in his other works.

However, the overall jubilation of the passage aside, the language and subtle implication of the passage can still be understood in a way that coheres with his overall philosophy. It is not sufficient to achieve “greatness in a human being” through the passive observation of the beautiful, but a great human being must go on to actively “make things beautiful.” As I will discuss more in the following chapter, the yes-saying life is all about active destruction: “negating and destroying are conditions of saying Yes.”²³

While Nietzsche is concerned with negating the values of others, Schopenhauer is more interested in the negation of the self. His argument for this, in *The World to Will and Representation* and in *Suffering, Suicide, and Immortality*, is simple. Human beings are driven by a set of desires, or their will. Once one desire has been satisfied, another one develops in its place. We can never satisfy all of our desires. If we cannot satisfy all of our desires, we suffer. Suffering is the greatest evil. The only way to not suffer is to not have any desires. Therefore, we should stop having desires by denying our will.

Schopenhauer suggests this by arguing that we should acknowledge that everything in one’s life is determined by fate and then become what fate wants us to be. Schopenhauer argues in *Counsels and Maxims*, “Men of any worth or value soon come to see that they are in the hands of Fate, and gratefully submit to be moulded by its teachings. They

²² Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Gay Science” in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House Inc., 1968), §276.

²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Will to Power,” in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House Inc., 1968), §22.

recognize that the fruit of life is experience, and not happiness.”²⁴ In contrast to the language of Nietzsche, who says that men who love fate “want” and “make,” Schopenhauer believes we should “gratefully submit” to fate. This submission demonstrates that fate has mastery over man, rather than vice versa. Later on in this same collection, Schopenhauer notes that “[t]his is the Stoic temper – never to be unmindful of the sad fate of humanity.”²⁵ Unsurprisingly, Schopenhauer’s ideas regarding fate have strong ideological similarities to Stoic thought. Schopenhauer’s arguments depend on his premise that because we are creatures that will, or have desires, and these desires can never all be fulfilled, we are doomed to suffer. Therefore, the only way to minimize suffering is to remove ourselves from our desires, through some form of asceticism or religion. Because the alternative of suffering from perpetually unfulfilled desires is so bad, we should not only accept even the worst of what happens to us, but also mold our own wishes and desires to conform to fate.

Nietzsche takes issue with this view, however, when he argues that

Schopenhauer’s denial of the will is counter to life. In *The Antichrist*, he writes,

[O]ne doesn’t say “extinction”: one says “the other world,” or “God,” or “the true life,” or Nirvana, salvation, blessedness.... This innocent rhetoric, from the realm of religious-ethical balderdash, appears a good deal less innocent when one reflects upon the tendency that it conceals beneath sublime words: the tendency to destroy life. Schopenhauer was hostile to life.²⁶

According to Nietzsche, the submission of one’s will to either the will of the world (fate) or to the will of others is hostile to one’s own will to power. Suppose that Schopenhauer is right in that our lives are composed only of suffering, and that even turning to God, the true life, etc. will not alleviate this suffering, but only minimize it. But then it seems that,

²⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Counsels and Maxims*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007), 11.

²⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Counsels and Maxims* 77.

²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Antichrist,” in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House Inc., 1968), York: Random House Inc., 1968), §7.

if suffering is unrelenting and irreducible, that life is not worth living at all. If one was really committed to the idea of eliminating desires, then it seems like death or suicide would be a welcome alternative to suffering. This is one way in which this attitude has the tendency to destroy life. However, Nietzsche does not necessarily have this in mind. Instead, the implicit argument seems to be that Schopenhauer's alternative is equivalent to extinction. If suffering from unfulfilled desires is already bad, then refusing to fulfill any desires must be worse. While the average man might have most of his desires unfulfilled, at least some are attainable. On the other hand, the ascetic fulfills none of his desires. From Nietzschean standpoint, it seems that a Schopenhauerian way of life does not seem worth living. Let us examine what a Nietzschean alternative might look like in the next chapter.

Introduction

Between 1919 and 1927, Hesse's interest in Nietzsche was at an all-time high and his usage of the mark of Cain during that time is distinctly Nietzschean in kind. However, it conflates two versions of Nietzsche's "ethics," the immoralism of *Ecce Homo* and the active nihilism of *The Will to Power*. As I discussed in the introduction, active nihilism is the "increased power of the spirit."²⁷ Active nihilism is an act of strength; it is the spirit that flourishes, grows, and gains power over and against pre-existing convictions and authorities. At minimum, it posits for itself. Active nihilism at "its maximum of relative strength [is] a violent force of destruction."²⁸ In "Why I am a Destiny," Nietzsche characterizes this active nihilism as immoralism, in which he discusses the specific types of negation in which the active nihilist engages. He writes:

Fundamentally, my term immoralist involves two negations. For one, I negate a type of man that has so far been considered supreme: the good, the benevolent, the beneficent. And then I negate a type of morality that has become prevalent and predominant as morality itself—the morality of decadence or, more concretely, Christian morality. It would be permissible to consider the second contradiction the more decisive one, since I take the overestimation of goodness and benevolence on a large scale for a consequence of decadence, for a symptom of weakness, irreconcilable with an ascending, Yes-saying life: negating and destroying are conditions of saying Yes.²⁹

These are the two negations of value that I will be exploring through the first part of this thesis: the negation of the good and the negation of Christian morality. These two negations play a pivotal role in Hesse's works, primarily *Demian* and *Steppenwolf*, in which this conflict is discussed in metaphorical terms. The metaphor that Hesse chooses in *Demian* is the dichotomy between Cain and society. The metaphor that Hesse uses in *Steppenwolf* is the wolves and the sheep. Both of these are essentially derivations of Nietzsche's parable of the birds of prey. First I will examine this parable in depth. Next, I

²⁷ Nietzsche, "The Will to Power" §22.

²⁸ Nietzsche, "The Will to Power" §23.

²⁹ Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo: 'Why I am a Destiny'" §4.

will look at how Hesse introduces these ideas in *Demian*. Subsequently, I will explore how this metaphor is presented in *Steppenwolf*. Finally, I will look at how these two groups are understood in these novels as a whole.

The Parable of the Birds of Prey

Nietzsche, in the *Genealogy of Morals*, entitles his first essay “Good and Evil,” “Good and Bad.” He attempts to illustrate how the concepts of good and evil arose in nature by explaining the relationship between lambs and birds of prey. Birds of prey, for Nietzsche, are in many ways the ideal animal. They act as quickly and consistently as lightning: their thoughts immediately translate into desire, which immediately translates into their will. However, the objects of their desire, the lambs, try to apply value judgments to the actions of the birds of prey:

That lambs dislike great birds of prey does not seem strange: only it gives no ground for reproaching these birds of prey for bearing off little lambs. And if the lambs say among themselves: “these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb—would he not be good?” ... [N]o wonder if the submerged, darkly glowering emotions of vengefulness and hatred exploit this belief for their own ends and in fact maintain no belief more ardently than the belief that the strong man is free to be weak and the bird of prey to be a lamb—for thus they gain the right to make the bird of prey accountable for being a bird of prey... [T]his, listened to calmly and without previous bias, really amounts to no more than: “we weak ones are, after all, weak; it would be good if we did nothing for which we are not strong enough.”³⁰

This passage articulates the first negation of Nietzsche’s active nihilism. It claims that “the good, the benevolent, the beneficent” are all fictions invented by the lambs to make themselves seem the victims and the birds of prey seem like victimizers. But Nietzsche argues that the birds of prey cannot be victimizers because it is not as though they choose to do this; it is simply in their nature. The lamb mistakes natural acts of strength as deliberate immoral acts: “popular morality [the morality of the lambs]... separates

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Genealogy of Morals, ‘First Essay’” in Basic Writings of Nietzsche, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House Inc., 1968), York: Random House Inc., 1968), §13.

strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was *free* to express strength or not to do so.”³¹ Nietzsche, as he is wont to do, explains this with a metaphor. A bird of prey’s action is like lightning; its movement is as instantaneous and unthinking as any scientific force. This illustrates how the lamb fundamentally misunderstands the nature of the birds of prey: a predator’s “being” cannot be separated from the predator as a “doer” anymore than lightning can be separated from its flash.³² To suppose that there is separation between the bird of prey that exists and the bird of prey that acts is to assume that there is any deliberation that occurs. Furthermore, it is to assume that the bird of prey has free will, or the will to choose to be any other than what it is. The genuine impetus of the bird of prey seems to be as instinctive as the behavior of the birds of prey; they try to strip the strong of their power so that they are no longer strong. This instinctiveness is something that Nietzsche argues for quite vehemently in this passage, because he believes that the fiction of evilness is built upon the fiction of free will.

For birds of prey, character completely determines their action. Nietzsche argues that lambs invent the fiction that “the strong man is free to be weak” in order to hold them “accountable.” It is not that he is free; he just acts. This resembles the inscription Sinclair puts under his painting of Demian’s face. When Sinclair reflects on a volume of Novalis, he thinks, “I have rarely experienced a book more intensely, except perhaps Nietzsche.... I wrote [an aphorism] under the picture: ‘Fate and temperament are two words for one and the same concept.’”³³ Rather than have a free will, the birds of prey

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Hesse, Demian 86.

have a determined will, specifically a will determined by their nature. The lambs mistakenly maintain “the belief that the strong man is free to be weak and the bird of prey to be a lamb,” but this is blatantly false on Nietzsche’s account. It is as ludicrous as the belief that a lamb could be a bird of prey if he wanted. Instead, everything that the bird of prey does is determined entirely by his character because he cannot act in any other way.

The Parable of Cain and Abel

Demian’s version of the parable of Cain and Abel is incredibly similar to Nietzsche’s parable of the birds of prey. The most salient feature of Demian’s parable is the refusal to use the terms good or evil in evaluating Cain’s actions. When Demian tells Emil Sinclair his version, Sinclair asks whether Cain was evil or not. Demian’s response is that Cain’s action is not a matter of good or evil, but of weakness and strength: The strong man slew a weaker one. It’s doubtful whether it was really his brother, But it isn’t important. Ultimately all men are brothers. So, a strong man slew a weaker one: perhaps it was a truly valiant act, perhaps it wasn’t. At any rate, all the other weaker ones were afraid of him from then on, they complained bitterly and if you asked them: ‘Why don’t you turn around and slay him, too?’ they did not reply ‘Because we’re cowards,’ but rather ‘You can’t, he has a sign. God has marked him.’³⁴

Like Nietzsche’s lambs, the cowards of Cain and Abel’s time invent the fiction of the evilness to avoid admitting weakness. Like the lambs that “[leave] revenge to God,”³⁵ the cowards defer to God to punish Cain. The cowards invent the fiction of the mark as an excuse not to retaliate. If they can attribute Cain’s power to a source other than

³⁴ Hesse, *Demian* 30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

himself, like God, then they can shift the glory from Cain to God. Additionally, if God is the one who marked Cain, then he is the one who has designated Cain for punishment and the onus is not on society to punish him. Nietzsche offers a comprehensive picture of the psychology at work: not only do the weak conspire together, but they also consider this an act of vengeance. Demian also refers to this impulse: “It was a scandal that a breed of fearless and sinister people ran about freely, so they attached a nickname and a myth to these people to get even with them, to make up for the many times they had felt afraid.”³⁶ There is no way to apply *lex talionis*, that is, a death for a death, because none of the cowards are strong enough to avenge Abel’s death. Instead, they try to punish with social death, or public censure. But it seems strange to call this punishment equitable.

Demian’s argument here revolves around the reversal of dichotomies and distinctions. He begins by acknowledging that while old stories are “always true,” the preservation of detail and openness of interpretation poses problems.³⁷ The only detail that is definitively true, in this sense, is that one man killed another. The debate is over whether or not it was a “truly valiant act.” Truth and falsity is presented in an important way in this section. To say that a valiant action is true is a normative appraisal of the action. To be truly valiant would be good rather than evil, and Demian’s story tries to omit these binaries. Instead, he wants to replace them with social, or power-based, comparisons: Abel is a coward, while Cain is a noble person because he bears a “mark of distinction.”³⁸ This nobility of “distinction” is the recognition by Cain’s peers of his mastery over another man. However, this recognition is not a positive one; rather than

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Hesse, Demian 31.

gaining glory for his action, Cain receives condemnation. Demian explains the rationale for this as one of fear and cowardice. The other cowards, who sympathize with Abel's cowardice, choose to retell the story as though Abel is the victim rather than a loser of a fair fight.

However, despite Demian's best efforts, he does not successfully provide an account that negates values. Instead, he is slipping in his own system of virtues, in which strength is good and weakness is bad. But Hesse's view is not necessarily Demian's. Sinclair, the protagonist of the story, has a flurry of reactions upon hearing this parable. He thinks it, absurd, blasphemous, and crazy.³⁹ He wonders if Demian is evil. He wonders how God fits into the picture. But most importantly, this event convinces Sinclair to go home and reads over the Bible passage for himself and interpret it for himself. Demian inspires in Sinclair an interest in personal Biblical exegesis for the first time. This allows Sinclair to not only form opinions of his on spiritual matters, but it causes him to begin a skeptical appraisal of all values in his life: "[F]or a very long time this matter of Cain, the fratricide, and the 'mark' formed the point of departure for all my attempts at comprehension, my doubts and my criticism."⁴⁰ Sinclair, in this novel, is the ideal reader. He does not tacitly assume Demian's truths to be absolute, but tries to engage with them; certain features he agrees with and other features he feels have been twisted or left unexplained. Hesse does not necessarily want us to whole-heartedly adopt Demian's side; Max Demian, at the end of the day, is not a sage, but a fairly young man. It is Sinclair's task to mediate between conflicting role models. Very early on in the novel, the goodness of his mother and father is pitted against the evilness of Franz

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Hesse, Demian 32.

Kromer. When Sinclair chooses to follow Kromer, Hesse is not advocating choosing evil, but advocating the decision to decide for himself. Sinclair's decision is to break free from parentally and culturally enforced societal norms. But Sinclair's problem is that he enters into a new system that is equally oppressive; Kromer's world of mischief is just as rigid as the parental world of moral uprightness. Demian sets Sinclair free from that bind, and this forms the first negation of immoralism, the destruction of ideas of goodness. Then Demian himself is set up as part of a new dichotomy: the Christian rigidity of the teacher who gives the scripture lesson and Demian's reversal of moral valuation. Again, Sinclair does not give himself to either, but ends up in a state where he is faced with his "doubts and [his] criticism." As easy as it would be to accept Demian's alternative theology for his own, the importance lies not in the fact that Christian morality is being refuted, but that Sinclair is doing the refutation for himself. Sinclair's path ultimately diverges from Demian as he reaches similar ideas, but in his own way. Sinclair places himself in the position to decide his own bearing: "[A]t that moment I, who was Cain and bore the mark, had imagined that this sign was not a mark of shame and that because of my evil and misfortune I stood higher than my father and the pious, the righteous."⁴¹ Sinclair, through his own journey, learns to reject the clear-cut goodness of his father and the piousness of the Christian church.

The Parable of the Sheep and the Wolves

However, as Hesse's works progress, we see a shift in the tone of the Nietzschean outsider. While *Demian* in many ways is a glorification of the Nietzschean superman,

⁴¹ Ibid.

Steppenwolf addresses some potential problems of the superman in ordinary society. In the “Treatise on the Steppenwolf,” Hesse establishes a treatise on what it means to be an outsider in relation to bourgeois society. He uses the metaphor of the bourgeois as sheep and the outsiders as wolves of the Steppes to tell the story a bit differently. He writes,

It is clear that this anxious being [the bourgeois]... can play no other role in the world than that of a herd of sheep among free roving wolves. Yet we see that, though in times when commanding natures are uppermost, the bourgeois goes at once to the wall, he never goes under.... Neither the great numbers of the herd, nor virtue, nor common sense, nor organization could avail to save it from destruction.... Nevertheless the bourgeois prospers. Why? The answer runs: Because of the Steppenwolves. In fact, the vital force of the bourgeoisie resides by no means in the qualities of its normal members, but in those of its extremely numerous “outsiders” who by virtue of the extensiveness and elasticity of its ideals it can embrace.⁴²

These problems were introduced, but mostly left unchecked in *Demian*. By defining values against the societal norm, Max Demian only succeeded in creating an alternative value system rather than negating the existence of all value systems. Although Harry Haller, the protagonist of *Steppenwolf*, rails against the values of the bourgeois, he simultaneously embodies them. Logically, if rising above the herd is possible, then someone would have done so and fundamentally changed society at this point. However, the ideology of the herd is so strong that even those who rally against it define themselves by it and only end up reinforcing the social mores that already exist. The outsiders define the majority, and vice versa. In both *Steppenwolf* and *Demian*, we see the contrast between two societal groups. There is majority view is represented in *Demian* as the moral Christian world of the father and of the scriptures taught in school. In *Steppenwolf*, the majority is the bourgeois, which are represented by Haller’s young professor friend and his

⁴² Herman Hesse, *Steppenwolf* 58.

wife, who hangs a portrait of Goethe in their “Philistine drawing-room.”⁴³ By contrast, the protagonists of the novels are always part of a vocal out-group that refuses to conform with the majority will. Sinclair and Demian are part of Frau Eva’s Edenic garden society, while Haller is introduced to the magic theatre, which is expressly “for madmen only.” However, even though these out-groups define themselves against the majority, there is a symbiotic relationship between these two groups.

The Marked Outsider

Kurt Fickert, in his essay “The Development of the Outsider Concept in Hesse’s Novels,” identifies nearly all of Hesse’s protagonists as outsiders in society. Walter Naumann makes a similar observation in “The Individual and Society in the Work of Hermann Hesse.” While this is a prevalent theme in Hesse’s work, I would like to argue that Demian, Klein and Harry Haller are all linked because they are outsiders to bourgeois culture.

Character is not only fate for Haller, but these two concepts are inextricably tied to his loneliness. The narrator describes his first impression of Haller with sadness: “How deep the loneliness into which his life had drifted on account of his disposition and destiny and how consciously he accepted this loneliness as his destiny, I certainly did not know until I read the records he left behind him.”⁴⁴ It is Haller’s disposition and destiny, here paired together, which drive him into the depths of loneliness. This loneliness seems to be necessarily paired with the mark of Cain. Klein has a similar worry, which he says

⁴³ Herman Hesse, *Steppenwolf* 91.

⁴⁴ Herman Hesse, *Steppenwolf* 7.

to himself: “No one loved such a face.”⁴⁵ Even when marked protagonists find love, as in the cases of Beatrice, Teresina, and Hermine, it is often unconsummated and ends unhappily. But this is merely the first part of the destiny of those marked by Cain: the anxiety that results from the rejection from and alienation by society.

From Haller’s conscious acceptance of this destiny, we see that after loneliness, there is the acceptance and eventually the pride of being an outsider. This pride comes from self-recognition that Demian’s marked face bears a “mark of distinction.” Naumann remarks that even though there is a stigma against the outcasts, there is a positive side to it as well: “The stigma which makes the individual an outcast is also the sign of election.”⁴⁶ Fickert explicitly mentions that this stigma is the same as the mark of Cain.⁴⁷ The realization of their election coincides with the realization of the futility of society. For example, Haller actively rejects the bourgeois world he comes from. Reichert argues that this idea is Nietzschean in kind: “[T]he polarity burgher versus outsider is obviously borrowed from the Nietzschean antithesis of herd and master.⁴⁸” However, in the novels in which the Nietzschean protagonist does completely remove himself from society, such as with Klein, the result is almost always suicide. Instead, the more successful novels feature protagonists who find others who are of their own kind.

Once the marked men are able to realize that they have been elected to this calling, they naturally seek out others who are marked in the same way. Demian and Frau Eva seek out Sinclair and Hermine and the other members of the Magic Theater seek out

⁴⁵ Herman Hesse, “Klein and Wagner,” 56.

⁴⁶ Walter Naumann, “The Individual and Society in the Work of Hermann Hesse,” *Monatshefte* 41 (1949): 35.

⁴⁷ Kurt Fickert, “The Development of the Outsider Concept in Hesse’s Novels,” *Monatshefte* 52 (1960): 174.

⁴⁸ Herbert Reichert, “The Impact of Nietzsche on Hermann Hesse,” 105.

Haller. These out-groups have formed around their shared mark and they look for others to follow their leadership. While this communal activity might seem less Nietzschean than a single superman, there is something powerful about the way these marked individuals come together. Naumann writes, “Using a term from Nietzsche, who at one period strongly influenced him, Hesse speaks of the others as of ‘Herdenmenschen.’ The elected individuals, however, belong together, they form a group, they wish for a binding link.”⁴⁹ These others are considered part of the “herd instinct,” which Demian refers to disparagingly. He states that the community spirit has negatively manifested itself in the herd instinct, and implies that there is an alternative way to harness this community spirit.

Sinclair describes this alternative community as follows:

Our task was to represent an island in the world, a prototype perhaps, or at least a prospect of a different way of life. I, who had been isolated for so long, learned about the companionship which is possible between people who have tasted complete loneliness....And gradually I was initiated into the secret of those who wear the sign in their faces.⁵⁰

This alternative community has a task of accomplishing the opposite of the task of the herd. Haller describes the goals of the bourgeois as follows: “Now what we call ‘bourgeois,’ when regarded as an element always to be found in human life, is nothing else than the search for a balance. It is the striving after a mean between the countless extremes and opposites that arise in human conduct.”⁵¹ This form of life is of course impossible. According to Haller, these individuals attempt to be saint-like by negating the self. He describes the outcome as of this instinct “a herd of sheep among free roving wolves.”⁵² The goal of the outsider, then, is to be one of these wolves. Instead of searching for a balance between good and evil, the marked men try to destroy

⁴⁹ Naumann. “The Individual and Society in the Work of Hermann Hesse,” 35.

⁵⁰ Hesse, Demian 149.

⁵¹ Herman Hesse, Steppenwolf 56.

⁵² Herman Hesse, Steppenwolf 58.

dichotomies rather than being bound by them, as Demian demonstrates in his parable of Cain.

While Hesse's work is an interesting extension of Nietzsche's idea of the superman, he also falls prey to the same criticism that could be applied to Nietzsche. Fickert makes an interesting observation about the dependence of the outsider on the excluding group: "The outsider needs the impetus modern society gives him to rise above it; society needs the outsider to keep it from deteriorating, to give it form and substance."⁵³ Even though it seems that the out-group of marked individuals holds more power than the bourgeois because they are able to negate the values of the bourgeois, they depend on these pre-existing values. A Hegelian line of criticism could be applied to Hesse's version of the master/slave morality. At first, the outsider is empowered by the recognition of his distinction from society, but these protagonists end up being even more dependent on society, because they gain their notoriety from defining themselves against the norm. However, dependence on society means that they do not have self-mastery. Therefore, they are no more or no less powerful than the rest of society.

Chapter 3: The Problems of Fanaticism and Somberness

Introduction

In this section, I will use Hesse's theme of running away as a way of exploring the

⁵³ Fickert, "The Development of the Outsider Concept in Hesse's Novels," 176.

limitations of *amor fati* on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer's account. Running away is a recurring theme in Hesse's novels that he drew from his own life. Malthaner writes about this in the context of *Siddhartha*:

[Hesse] ran away in an attempt to shape his own life. Self-education is the main theme of most the novels of Hesse, especially of the books of his youth. Self-education has been for centuries a very favorite theme in German literature and men like Luther, Goethe, Kant, and many other leading German writers and philosophers were the inspirers of German youth in their longing for independence.⁵⁴

The novels that have the theme of running away most strongly at their core are *Demian*, *Klein and Wagner*, *Siddhartha* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*. In them, the idea of shaping one's own life seems intimately tied to the themes of determining one's character and pursuing one's *daemon*. On the face of it, it seems that shaping one's life lends itself to the "character is fate" interpretation. I will argue that Nietzsche's account, as it is portrayed in some of these novels, fails because of the problem of fanaticism. Then I will examine running away in a Schopenhaurian context and show that it fails because of the problem of somberness.

Running Away as Negation

Nietzsche's conception of *amor fati* is well disposed to the idea of running away. When Nietzsche writes that "looking away shall be my only negation," this is not necessarily a weakening of the negation requisite in the yes-saying life. Instead, when a person looks away from something he considers ugly, it is a negative appraisal of the value of the object. Therefore, his looking away negates its standardly accepted beauty. A parallel for what "looking away" might mean in life would be running away. To run away from home or from civilized society is to negate the values of one's parents or of

⁵⁴ Johannes Malthaner, "Hermann Hesse. *Siddhartha*," *The German Quarterly* 25 (1952): 105.

contemporary social mores. If this is what *amor fati* means, then the characters that leave society to find their own path are all yes-saying. When Sinclair leaves the bubble of his father-world,⁵⁵ when Klein leaves his family after his successful bank heist,⁵⁶ when Harry Haller recoils from bourgeois society,⁵⁷ they are all negating the values of society. They have said yes to their own fate at the expense of feeling like they are part of society or feeling like they are a part of the universe.

The Problem of Fanaticism

One way to understand the issue of running away and the issues presented in chapter two might be to call it a problem of fanaticism.⁵⁸ All of the characters overzealously insist on living life in an empowering and original way. This leads to them essentially seeking out others who share similar qualities and imparting their philosophy onto these other people. However, even though they are successfully building small groups of people with shared belief, it often seems like not much is happening. Despite Demian's tendency to give inspiring speeches, in the end he does not seem to have any troops that rally around him, and he presumably dies alone in war.⁵⁹ Despite the elaborate ritualism of the magic theatre in *Steppenwolf*, none of the action occurs in real life; it is

⁵⁵ The first chapter of *Demian* is concerned with the father-world and mother-world of Sinclair's childhood, in which he is sheltered from all evil. Sinclair actively defies their morality by running away with other boys and stealing apples.

⁵⁶ Klein leaves behind his wife and children and his entire past life in search of a new one.

⁵⁷ Although Haller does not run away in the same way as the other protagonists, the idea of *Steppenwolf*, or wolf of the Steppes, suggests an inability to ever really be free of solitude.

⁵⁸ This term will become important later, when I refer to Joseph Knecht, whom Hesse holds up as an ideal, as a character who is "free of somberness and fanaticism."

⁵⁹ Demian leaves Sinclair and Frau Eva to become a ranking officer in World War I, but he seems to practice none of what he preaches in the previous chapters about realizing a genuine "community spirit," one that could potentially be well-suited to troops in war. At the end of the novel, Demian tells Sinclair that he "will have to go away" in a manner that suggests his death.

all smoke and mirrors.⁶⁰ Furthermore, if the goal in life for these characters is to pursue their *daemon* to better understand themselves, they seem to unanimously fail. Instead of becoming enriched by their daemonic female figures, the men become obsessed with them. In *Demian*, Sinclair ends up spending so much time sitting around and worshipping Frau Eva that she resorts to telling Sinclair stories to entreat him to love her less.⁶¹ In *Steppenwolf*, Haller fails the test of the magic theatre because of his intense obsession with Hermine.⁶² And finally, in *Klein and Wagner*, Klein drowns himself because he is in agony over being unable to permanently maintain the comfort of being with his ex-wife or Teresina.⁶³ All of these seem to be signs of wishing to pursue one's daemon so eagerly that they quickly lose sight of what is important. This problem of fanaticism will be contrasted with the problem of somberness.

Running Away as Self-Education

Siddhartha and *Narcissus and Goldmund* demonstrate a different way to love fate, which is associated with the ascetic. All four of the main characters, Siddhartha, Govinda, Narcissus, and Goldmund, are young ascetics who try to find purpose in life. Siddhartha and Goldmund are the protagonists of their respective novels, with their best friend as

⁶⁰ The magic theatre is a place where fantasies seem to come to life in the form of powerful phantasmal hallucinations.

⁶¹ Frau Eva tells Sinclair two stories. The first is about a man who tries to love the whole planet and fails because he does not understand love. The second is about a man who experiences unrequited love and learns instead to love himself. These both seem to indicate that Frau Eva is trying to teach Sinclair to quit his obsession with loving her and to love and understand himself.

⁶² Haller is tested in the Magic Theatre by being shown an image of Hermine, whom he is in love with, and Pablo lying naked together. Haller fails the test because he stabs the illusion of Hermine, and the story ends with Pablo being disappointed that Haller lost control of himself.

⁶³ Klein's obsession with women is somewhat different than the other two. While Sinclair and Haller feel an excess of love, Klein inevitably hates the women in his life because of their simplicity and seems to simultaneously want to be more like them and to kill them, which he almost does.

their foil. Both Siddhartha and Goldmund try to fight their fate of being an ascetic monk, while Narcissus and Govinda never stray from the path of religious truth. Siddhartha's journey, in which he leaves the path of asceticism to temporarily become a wealthy business trader and lover of courtesans, has the same basic structure as Goldmund's journey, in which he leaves the monastery to pursue women as lovers and returns to monastic life the end of the novel. However, Hesse's view is not simply advocating the view of the ascetic. If that were true, Govinda and Narcissus would be the protagonists of his novels. Furthermore, his novel would thematically emphasize idea of regret or repentance for the time spent away from the monastic life, or even contain a simplistic positive appraisal of asceticism by any character in his works. Even at the end of the *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Abbott Narcissus, who is in many ways the character that Goldmund holds up as an ideal, refuses to privilege life in the monastic order as being any better than the life that Goldmund lived. Additionally, at the end of *Siddhartha*, when Govinda finds Enlightenment in the face of the Siddhartha, it turns out the Perfect One was Siddhartha all along, and Govinda would never have accomplished this without Siddhartha straying from the path into decadence.

Perhaps it can be argued, along the lines of Schopenhauer, Narcissus, Goldmund, Siddhartha and Govinda "recognize that the fruit of life is experience, and not happiness." Even outside *Counsels and Maxims*, Schopenhauer argues, similarly to Hesse, for self-education as fruitful for experience and independence. In his essay "On Education," Schopenhauer seems to give special emphasis to education as engagement with the world. Put succinctly, he asserts, "To acquire a knowledge of the world might be

defined as the aim of all education.”⁶⁴ On the face of it, this seems like a non-controversial claim. All knowledge, hypothetically, should be knowledge of the world. But this is in interesting contrast to the education of the time, in which the rote memorization of mathematical facts differed little from the memorization of famous Greek or Latin passages. Schopenhauer greatly disagrees with the overemphasis on this sort of learning: “Instead of developing the child’s own faculties of discernment, and teaching it to judge and thinking for itself, the teacher uses all his energies to stuff its head full of the ready-made thoughts of other people.”⁶⁵ This is why, for example, many of Hesse’s characters leave the structured education of their youth, like when Sinclair leaves the world of his parents or when Goldmund leaves the Catholic monastery.

The Problem of Somberness

However, if the ideal is self-education at the expense of happiness, it would be very strange to suggest that Siddhartha and Goldmund’s behavior is as acceptable as Govinda and Narcissus’s actions. Schopenhauer would have trouble condoning their behavior; Siddhartha and Goldmund both fall into extremely decadent lifestyles. In “The Vanity of Existence,” Schopenhauer disparages this explicitly: “[S]ensual pleasure itself means nothing but a struggle and aspiration, ceasing the moment its aim is attained.”⁶⁶ He goes on to argue that sensual pleasure is merely a cheap distraction from boredom, but

⁶⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, “On Education,” in *Suffering, Suicide, and Immortality: Eight Essays from the Parerga*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 64.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, “The Vanity of Existence,” *Suffering, Suicide, and Immortality: Eight Essays from the Parerga*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 23.

does not truly alleviate suffering. Even his line of argument from *Counsels and Maxims*, that one should “recognize that the fruit of life is experience, and not happiness,” implicitly suggests that even negative experiences, the experiences of suffering, are beneficial to one’s life. Therefore, on Schopenhauer’s view, a boring life like that of Narcissus, who quietly spends his entire life in the monastery and is promoted through the ranks of the church, should be privileged over Goldmund’s life of promiscuity, because it does not privilege happiness. However, this brings us back to Nietzsche’s argument against Schopenhauer’s denial of the will, specifically the charge that Schopenhauer’s view is no better than extinction. While it would be hyperbolic to argue that Narcissus or Govinda live lives so tedious that they would be better off extinct, Hesse deliberately chooses not to write a novel with either of them as the protagonist because the story would become utterly dull.

At this point I have hopefully shown that both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche’s conceptions of *ethos anthropos daimon* are impossible creeds to live by. Nietzsche’s suggestion that character *should be* fate has two potential problems. First, there is the potentiality of character overpowering or ignoring fate, that is, a fanaticism at the expense of following one’s fate. Schopenhauer’s view has problems as well. There is the question of activity: how we be active and pursue *amor fati* at the same time? Is not the acquiescence of fate essentially a passive mode? There is, at the heart of Stoicism, a backwards-looking quality to fatalism. It is not prescriptive as to what should be done, just an acceptance of what has happened. That means at time slice t_n , an ascetic who looked back on his life would not have behaved in the same way had he known at t_1 what his life was going to be like. Instead, he would have tried to get to the mental state t_n

without doing the intervening work between t_1 to t_n . That is, of course, impossible.

This brings us to Hesse's alternative. Joseph Knecht, the protagonist of Hesse's last novel *The Glass Bead Game*, seems to embody his conception of the ideal lifestyle.

Indeed, it is probably not so much this tragedy in itself that has tempted us to delve so deeply into the personality of Joseph Knecht; rather, it was the tranquil, cheerful, not to say radiant manner in which he brought his destiny and his talents to fruition. Like every man of importance he had his daimonion and his amor fati; but in him amor fati manifests itself to us free of somberness and fanaticism.⁶⁷

Thus far, I have dealt with the problems of somberness and fanaticism and how they manifest themselves in characters styled after Schopenhauer and Nietzschean respectively. Knecht manages to manifest his *amor fati* in a way that is surprisingly "free of somberness and fanaticism." Not much clue is given as to how he accomplishes this, other than his disposition, which is "tranquil," "cheerful," and "radiant." This echoes the language of the image of Goldmund's mother, the "radiant image in his soul." This seems to indicate a return to the themes that have been prevalent in Hesse all along, which will be explored through the clearest account presented in *Siddhartha*.

The Image of the Perfect One

This idea of tranquility is one of the major themes of Hesse's novel *Siddhartha*, which marks the substantive turn toward asceticism late in Hesse's literary career. Siddhartha's face is never described as bearing the mark of Cain, but in the final scene, Govinda is described as having a deeply spiritual experience while looking into Siddhartha's face. Siddhartha's face disappears and Govinda has a vision: "In its stead he saw other faces, many, a long series, a flowing river of faces, hundreds, thousands, which all came and went, and yet all seemed to be there at once, which all constantly changed

⁶⁷ Hermann Hesse, *Magister Ludi: The Glass Bead Game*, (New York: Bantam, Doubleday, Dell, 1980), 36-37.

and became new ones, and yet all were Siddhartha.”⁶⁸ His visions encompass all of the faces of human experience: the face of a crying newborn, the face of a murderer in act of killing and his face as he is executed, the faces of men and women during lovemaking, and the faces of corpses. At the end of this, all of these visions return to the image of Siddhartha’s actual face, which has become a mask:

And over everything something thin, inessential yet existing, was continuously drawn, like thin glass or ice, like a transparent skin, a sheath or mold or mask of water. The mask was smiling, and the mask was Siddhartha’s smiling face... Thus Govinda saw the smile of the mask, the smile of unity over the flowing forms, the smile of simultaneity over the myriad births and deaths. The smile was exactly the same, resembled exactly the still, refined, impenetrable, perhaps-kind-perhaps-disdainful, wise, thousandfold smile of Gotama the Buddha.... So Govinda knew, this is the way the Perfect One smiles.⁶⁹

This idea bears resemblance to Sinclair’s painting of the mark of Cain, which resembled “an image of God” or “a holy mask.” This is the way in which Hesse indicates that one’s face can be both simultaneously. Siddhartha’s face is both mask-like and an image of the Buddha; in fact, its mask-like quality seems to be what makes it god-like. This has an interesting connection to Klein face when he looks in the mirror, which was, “like a mask and yet permeated by a strange inner glow.” This inner glow indicates that the mask is a symbol for something that exists deeper within the self. But the symbol of the mask as a face is essentially paradoxical. The painting of the mark of Cain is “as rigid as it was secretly alive.” In the way that this holy mask makes paintings seem alive, it also makes living faces seem dead. As Teresina dances, Klein describes her face with irritation: “But the quiet coolness of her face irritated him, the composure of its expression, the almost masklike immobility.”⁷⁰ The composure that irritates Klein might be its similarity to his own face, but it might simultaneously be the lifelessness of the rigidity of a smiling

⁶⁸ Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*, trans. Sherab Chodzin (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), 115.

⁶⁹ Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha* 116.

⁷⁰ Herman Hesse, “Klein and Wagner,” 84.

human face. The nuance of the potential meaning of the mask as a symbol makes it worth exploring further.

In “Nietzsche’s Honest Masks: From Truth to Nobility Beyond Good and Evil,” Paul Kirkland argues that Nietzsche uses masks as a standpoint from which he can honestly disseminate truth. Kirkland writes paradoxically about how masks operate; he states that masks are meant to conceal, but in their concealment, they reveal the truth: “[T]he masks chosen are more significant than the hidden thoughts in their impact and will reveal the most about what is most deeply hidden.”⁷¹ He then goes on to examine Nietzsche’s understanding of truth. Nietzsche famously asks at the beginning of *Beyond Good and Evil*, “Supposing truth is a woman – what then?”⁷² He begins by saying that dogmatists misunderstand truth because they misunderstand women. Nietzsche goes on to complicate matters by saying that women’s real concern is appearance and beauty. Kirkland goes on to interpret this quotation to indicate a complicated connection between women and truth. According to Kirkland, Nietzsche suggests that the nature of truth involves concealing itself in its appearances, that is, the truth masks itself. Kirkland argues, “If the nature of truth is concealment and beautification, might not the specific ways in which truth presents itself be more significant than what lies beneath the adornment?”⁷³ The question then remains as how we can determine what the mask is by what it is hiding. The features listed above are difficult to imagine in tandem: masculine and feminine, young and old, ugly and beautiful.

⁷¹ Paul Kirkland, “Nietzsche’s Honest Masks: From Truth to Nobility ‘Beyond Good and Evil,’” *The Review of Politics* 66 (2004): 583.

⁷² Friedrich Nietzsche, “Beyond Good and Evil” in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House Inc., 1968), York: Random House Inc., 1968), 192.

⁷³ Paul Kirkland, “Nietzsche’s Honest Masks: From Truth to Nobility ‘Beyond Good and Evil,’” 583.

Yet they all exist simultaneously in a way that is almost impossible for a human being to represent in nature. Therefore, Hesse must lean on the image of the mask, which is simultaneously an artificial construct and a work of art. Unlike a human face, a mask can represent these all simultaneously; it can have layers, it can be divided into quadrants, or it can artistically blend all of these elements. Hesse hopes to make the unity of binaries possible by imposing the order of the universe onto the existence of the individual. For Hesse, character and fate is just another binary to be collapsed. He does not think of it as a normative claim, in which either character or fate has a greater pull over one's behavior. Instead, in Hesse's fictional universe, character equals fate in a descriptive way: it happens to be a trivial truth about the world that they are one in the same. Furthermore, any attempt to privilege one over the other, asserting one's own character or acquiescing to fate, results in a natural correction toward equilibrium.

Ultimately, Hesse presents a solution to the question of how one should live life that is similar to Schopenhauer's solution. He suggests that one should pursue self-education through first-hand experience of the world, but unlike Schopenhauer, there is no stigma of wandering down the decadent path of sensual pleasure. Hesse does not rule out pleasure or happiness from his version of asceticism. In fact, in order to be a true ascetic, one must make the mistakes associated with the supposedly wrong paths. Govinda, who has not made the mistakes that Siddhartha did, has no ability to reach Enlightenment by himself. He hopes to gain knowledge of the world without ever having lived in the world. This approach is as wrong-headed as trying to impose one's own views onto the world. Instead, Hesse suggests that we should use these two paradigmatically problematic examples, that of somberness and fanaticism, as correctives

to our behavior.

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