

The Strength of Measure: Nietzsche and the “Grand Style”¹

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*Erstaunte euch nicht auf attischen Stelen
die Vorsicht menschlicher Geste?*

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I. Whoever undertakes to examine one or another among the best-known concepts in Nietzsche’s writing will often find, to their surprise, that the concept examined occurs less frequently in these writings than one might have expected. Such, for example, is the case of the formulation “grand style” [*großer Stil*], which occurs around a dozen times in Nietzsche’s published works and several times more in the philosopher’s posthumous notes.

Notwithstanding this, however, this particular notion proves to possess a special interest of its own. Originating in the sphere of aesthetics, it expands far beyond this latter, taking on a whole series of philosophical and anthropological meanings within a certain precisely defined socio-historical context that spans and pervades a large number of Nietzsche’s individual exercises in philosophical analysis. To study, then, the various constellations of meaning that bind and blend together in this concept of “the grand style” can allow us to explore in depth certain principal elements of Nietzsche’s philosophical thought that prove, in fact, to find their summary and condensation in this initially apparently merely aesthetic notion.

The formulation *großer Stil* appears for the first time in Nietzsche’s writing in 1878, in the ninety-sixth aphorism of *The Wanderer and His*

Shadow: “The grand style arises where the beautiful achieves a victory over the immense.” It is, however, only after the third part of *Zarathustra* has been completed that this phrase acquires a recurrent, even constant presence in Nietzsche’s writing, with this remaining the case right on until the very lattermost of the philosopher’s posthumous fragments. The first significant datum that needs to be noted here is that, among all the phrase’s various occurrences, Nietzsche in fact offers only two concrete examples of artistic productions, one architectural and the other poetic, to which this notion of “grand style” pertains. The architectural example is the Palazzo Pitti in Florence; the poetic example is the dithyrambic *Song of the Seven Seals*, or *Yes and Amen Song*, which concludes the third part of Nietzsche’s own *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. If this latter serves to reaffirm the artistic character of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and its specific artistic achievement, the former provides us with some initial orientation which can facilitate our entering into a full and proper exegesis of the concept.

Specifically, this reference to the Palazzo Pitti allows us to identify—as has been pointed out by Carlo Gentili³—the origins of this notion of “the grand style” as lying in Nietzsche’s reflections on the topic of stylistic unity as developed in the first of the *Untimely Meditations*. This notion, in other words, has a very precise place of genesis within Nietzsche’s body of work—namely, in the philosopher’s meditations, specifically on that aesthetics of the Renaissance expounded by Jacob Burckhardt: “That from which any taste that can be called ‘decadent’ lies farthest removed is *the grand style*, to which there belongs, for example, the Palazzo Pitti.”⁴ The Palazzo Pitti is presented as the architectural manifestation of a classical solemnity which is the characteristic aesthetic expression of the *Gewaltmenschen* (“the men of force”) of the Renaissance. Burckhardt writes, “One must ask oneself who that world-despising man of force must have been who, though amply equipped with all the means required to achieve it, eschewed nonetheless all that smacked of the merely beautiful or agreeable.”⁵ When, at the end of August 1881, Nietzsche is first seized by the intuition of “the eternal return of the same” and begins to conceive of his *Zarathustra* as a vehicle for this key idea’s expression, the very first private note in which he puts to himself the question of the style

most apt to attain this end concludes with a reference precisely to this passage from the work of the great Swiss historian of culture: "‘Eschew all that smacks of the merely beautiful or agreeable, like a world-despising man of force,’ says J. Burckhardt contemplating the Palazzo Pitti."⁶

I will attempt later on in the present study to clarify the meaning of this "forceful" quality of a certain type of Renaissance individual whom Nietzsche links to the notion of a "grand style"—although the reader may safely assume even at this point that the "force" alluded to is nothing so crude as mere violent muscularity. The fact most important to emphasize at this point, however, is that the notion of "the grand style" here proves to belong, initially, to the context of Nietzsche's reflections on his own literary style and in particular on the specific form of writing that he envisaged applying in the composition of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

It is interesting, then, to consider the ten short precepts on the topic of good writing, gathered together under the title *On the Theory of Style* [*Zur Lehre vom Stil*], which Nietzsche composed for Lou Salomé during the early period of the gestation of this latter work in the late summer of 1882.⁷ Those—not a few, perhaps, among Nietzsche's casual readers—who may have hastily conceived the expectation that any model of style proposed by the author of *Zarathustra* would likely consist in an urging that free rein be given to every overwhelming burst of expressive freedom and that there be allowed to spill out onto the paper all the fruits of a Dionysian impulse born both of genius and of the immediate inspiration of the moment will be astonished to observe, on perusing this document, that the elements and characteristics of style recommended here by Nietzsche are of a nature directly contrary to this. They include an attentive thoughtfulness with regard to just what it is that one is writing; a consistent rational verification that the means applied are precisely appropriate to the ends pursued; and a specific attention paid to scale and measure, expressed particularly through the view that the good writer refrains from constructing excessively lengthy phrases. Such are, for Nietzsche, the conditions needing to be fulfilled in order for there to emerge a style infusing profundity with vitality in such a manner as to achieve the very highest virtues of all writing, namely: honesty [*Ehrlichkeit*] and integrity [*Redlichkeit*] (see

NF-1885,1[145]). For Nietzsche, then, much more important considerations in respect of style than those “expressionist” ones that are so often unthinkingly ascribed to him are the following: an application of intelligence to all the writer’s impulses to be sentimental and of self-control to all his urges to be vehement.

Describing what he himself felt he had achieved with his *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche declares that “my style is a dance: a game with symmetries of every kind that is also a mocking leapfrogging of these symmetries. As much holds true even of the vowels that I select when constructing my sentences.”⁸ These declarations reveal themselves, on a little consideration, to be coherent with and consequent upon the aesthetics that Nietzsche had worked out some years before in the course of that polemic against all romanticism that his work had, from *Human, All Too Human* onward, in very large part become. Perhaps the most vivid single formulation of this anti-romantic aesthetics developed by Nietzsche in the years leading up to 1880 is the “dancing in chains” evoked in an aphorism of this title included in *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (WS-140).⁹ An unpublished note from this period indicates that here too Burckhardt may have exercised an important mediating influence on Nietzsche’s thought: “But where art *imposes limits on itself* as regards its *means*, it must be *powerful* as regards its essence (Jacob Burckhardt).”¹⁰

The “grand style” recognizes here its own origins, which lie in the moderation which despises all excess, in the quest for logic and intellectual cleanliness, and even in the bovine calm of “cows in the meadow” (VM-107) or that “descent toward the sea in proud and tranquil symmetry” described by the mountains at Portofino “where the bay of Genoa sings its melody through to the very end” (FW-281).

There can be added in this way to the notion of style such qualities as formal simplicity, intellectual clarity,¹¹ and the moderation and self-control [*Selbstbeherrschung*] of expressive energies only once the romantic belief that the *raptus* itself forms a sufficient basis for creativity has been abandoned and its place has been taken in the writer’s mind by an attention to the demands of slow and patient labor. The notion of the “grand style,” in other words, takes form through an observation of the aesthetics of the classical era

and of later classicisms and through a correlative denunciation of the ultimately harmful effects of the tumults and narcotic ecstasies typical of the various forms of romanticism:

The imagination of the good artist or thinker is continually producing things that are good, middling and downright bad. It is the artist's or thinker's *power of judgment*, kept sharp by frequent practice, that rejects, selects and associates [...]. All great creators were also great workers, tireless not only in inventing but also in rejecting, screening, transforming and re-ordering. (MA-155)

The late Nietzsche was also to recall how indebted he felt to the classical world with regard to his own "sense of style [...]. There will be recognized in me, right on even into my *Zarathustra*, the very serious ambition to achieve a *Roman* style, a style *aere perennius*" (GD-Alten-1). Thence the repeated affirmation on Nietzsche's part, right up to the final years of his intellectual activity, of a choice in favor of "the classical taste; the simple, the severe, the grand style" (NF-1888,14[7]) in passages that, like this one just cited, a clearly traceable connection is constantly maintained between the "classical" style and the "grand" one.

But it is to be noted that if, already from the first years of his philosophical meditations on, Nietzsche cultivates a "classical" ideal, this latter is an ideal that has nothing in common with that static image of formal perfection and enduring marble equilibrium that had been propounded under the same name over a century earlier by the eminent Winckelmann. Nietzsche's "classical ideal" presents itself, in contrast to Winckelmann's, as the final result of a sense of measure consisting in creative and ordering capacities slowly and arduously *achieved* by human beings—that is to say, as a victory over the formless and chaotic which, though sustained perhaps in the present moment, is always an imperiled and provisional victory.

The true contrasting form and figure to "the classical" that Nietzsche has in mind when he relates this latter to "the grand style" is not so much "the romantic" as it is a certain notion of "the baroque" conceived of as a form essentially trans- or super-historical (with "the romantic," then, taking on the

role of just one among the numerous successive historical exemplifications of “the baroque”). Coincident in its basic tendency with Nietzsche’s conception is that definition of “the baroque style” that we find in the preface to Borges’s *Universal History of Infamy*:

“I should define as baroque that style which deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) all its possibilities and which borders on its own parody [...]. I would say that the final stage of all styles is baroque when that style only too obviously exhibits or overdoes its own tricks.”¹²

Nietzsche had been moving in the direction of this same insight already from the time of *Human, All Too Human* on. It is not by chance that among the aphorisms in this latter work that most offended Richard Wagner was the one entitled *On the Baroque Style* [*Vom Barockstile*]:

“The baroque style always arises at the time of decay of a great art, when the demands of art in classical expression have become too great. It arises as a natural phenomenon which will be observed with melancholy, since it is a forerunner of the night [...]. Just now, when *music* is passing into this last phase, one can observe the baroque style in peculiar splendor and can learn very much, by comparison therewith, also about earlier epochs, since from the time of the Greeks onward there has often been such a thing as a ‘baroque style.’” (VM-144)¹³

II. Once it has been taken up into his characteristic theoretical apparatus, the notion of the “grand style” first becomes a powerful critical instrument that Nietzsche deploys with a specifically musical significance¹⁴ against Wagner. Later on, this concept also rapidly expands to take on the role of an antidote against all the vast consequences of a much broader cultural malady: a malady of which Wagner’s music is only a symptom, even if Wagnerianism counted at the time as this latter’s clearest and most evident phenomenon.¹⁵ “The grand style” takes shape, then, as an overturning and reversal of all the main aesthetic characteristics of Wagnerianism. The

"grand style," in other words, signifies what is contrary to all things Wagnerian: contrary to Wagner's lack of measure; to his rhetorical search for "effect"; to his exaggeration of feeling and sentiment at the expense of compositional logic; to his recourse to such hypocritical expedients as the hypnotic technique of the *Leitmotiv*; to the indefinite vagueness of his harmony, the Wagnerian "endless melody" which ends up dissolving into an "infinite" that is both nebulous and ambiguous, and in which all formal clarity is drowned. "The grand style demands a single strong basic will and abhors nothing more than distraction and dissipation" (FP-1884,25 [332]). This style, in other words, makes itself bearer of an appeal to the will to conquer simplicity and a formal cogency in the construction of the artwork's component parts. To this simplicity Nietzsche, drawing once again upon the teachings of classical antiquity and on the ancients' ingenuous, almost crude conception of nature, sometimes gives the name of "nudity" [*das Nackte*]: "N.B. In terms of psychology I possess *two senses*: firstly, the sense for the naked; and then: the will to the *grand style* (few main clauses and all these in the strictest connection with one another; no *esprit*; no rhetoric)" (NF-1886,7[23]). With evident polemical intent vis-à-vis Wagner, Nietzsche warns his readers:

The greatness of a musician is not measured by the beautiful feelings to which he gives rise; this is the kind of thing that women believe—rather, this greatness is measured by the tensional force of his will, by the certainty with which chaos obeys his artistic command and becomes form, by the necessity which his hand introduces into a whole succession of forms. The greatness of a musician, in short, is measured by his capacity for the grand style [...]. To master the chaos that one is; to compel one's chaos to become form; to become necessity in form: logical, simple, unequivocal; to become mathematics; to become *law*. [...] Why is it that no musician has yet constructed in the same way as that architect who created the Palazzo Pitti? (NF-1888,14[61]. See also NF-1888,16[49]).¹⁶

That late form of romanticism that was Wagnerianism came to constitute the very antipodes of the “grand style.”¹⁷ Wagnerianism’s choice of renouncing the formal logic of composition and of operating rather in the sphere of the indistinct amounted, Nietzsche suggested, to an aesthetic decline or descent from *tanzen* into *schwimmen*: “Richard Wagner aspired to another *motion of the soul* more affined, as we have said, with swimming or floating” (VM-134).¹⁸ This “swimming,” which results from the dissolution of all compositional forms, proves in turn to be the consequence of one of the most fatal failings that can occur in the aesthetic realm: a failing which is, in its turn, the expression of a specific cultural defect. This is *the decline in the sense for how measure and moderation are to be maintained*: “Barbarians showed that maintaining measure and the proper mean in things was not something that came naturally to them. [There thus came to be lost] the *delight* that the aesthetic nature takes in measure and moderation. The *pleasure* which such a nature takes in *that which is beautiful per se in these latter things* came to be *overlooked* or even *denied* [...]” (NF-1884, 25 [348]). The “grand style,” then, becomes, as it were, the theoretical standard that Nietzsche raises above the forces he assembles to do battle against barbarism—a barbarism that can be traced back, indeed, to a whole series of different historical moments but that first emerges on the stylistic level, Nietzsche suggests, with Plato (GD-Alten-2) and against which Nietzsche, significantly, appeals to the Aristotelian μέσον (NF-1888, 15[89]).

This conception of barbarism was to flow entirely into one of the most characteristic elements of Nietzsche’s cultural-philosophical analyses once he had encountered the appropriate term and notion for this latter: namely, *décadence*. Nietzsche had already, indeed, spoken of this phenomenon under other designations (*Verfall, Niedergang, Auflösung, Zerfall*). But, as scholars have already noted, it was only after his encounter with the writings of Paul Bourget that *décadence*, written out regularly now in its French form, became one of Nietzsche’s most important philosophemes. The “grand style,” consequently, came to be specified in its turn as the antithesis and the inverted mirror image of *décadence*, namely, as that which opposes itself to every “*impoverishment* of the organizing powers” (NF-1888, 16[77]).¹⁹

The famous definition of *décadence* that Nietzsche takes from the chapter on Baudelaire in Bourget's *Essais de Psychologie contemporaine*²⁰ is directed by him, in the first instance, against the "*decadent style* [*Stil des Verfalls*] in Wagner: the single turn of musical phrase becomes *sovereign*; the subordination of such phrases, and their incorporation into the whole, becomes something casual and peripheral" (NF-1883,24[6]) and is then used in one of the central passages of *Der Fall Wagner*.²¹ This characterization of *décadence* does no more, indeed, than reiterate, at a higher level of complexity, those points pertaining to the loss of a sense of measure, of proportion and of compositional logic that we have already touched on above and that serve, as we have seen, as counterpoints to all the distinctive characteristics of what Nietzsche calls "the grand style."

This accrual of significance to the parts at the expense of the whole, and this lack of harmonious coordination between human creations' various constitutive elements, tends to give rise, both on the aesthetic and on the cultural level, to those monsters whom Nietzsche calls "inverted cripples" [*umgekehrte Krüppel*], or "men who lack everything, excepting that they have too much of just one thing" (Za-II-Erloesung): an image that denounces in the most vivid possible way that pathological deformation whereby *décadence* disfigures the model of the "grand style."

III. The Nietzschean concept of *décadence*, however, is not confined to the Wagnerian aesthetic. Although it comprises this latter it also extends far beyond it, since for Nietzsche Wagnerianism represents only the most extreme case of a general, historical phenomenon that is very much broader. For this reason, the notion of "the grand style" too tends to expand far beyond the aesthetic sphere, acquiring as it does, in the course of Nietzsche's work with it, applications ever vaster and more comprehensive, parallel to the expansion also of the range of meanings ascribed to the notion *décadence*.

If the style that this latter produces consists in a disharmony that privileges the part at a grave cost to the whole, this means that it also provokes the shattering of organic relations, of the balance of the formal totality, and of the vital organization of this latter. For Nietzsche, therefore, every manifestation

of *décadence* proves to be a falsification, something unnatural, “against life.” Considered from this perspective, then, the “grand style” can be understood as a highly original, anti-Platonic interpretation of the classical formula of the *imitatio naturae*. Not, indeed, in the sense of any directly naturalistic conception of this formula but rather, on the contrary, in the sense of that which “nature” meant for Nietzsche specifically: namely, *Wille zur Macht*.

In contrast to our current epoch of *décadence* Nietzsche points to a coming epoch “in which *naked nature*, in which *quanta of power*, are simply conceded to be the *decisive* factors (to be determinative of the order of rank) and in which the ‘grand style’ arises once again [...]” (NF-1887,9[75]). “The highest feeling of power and sureness finds expression in that which has a *grand style*” (GD-Streifzuege-11). It is only through understanding the link that Nietzsche establishes between conception of nature, will to power, and “grand style” that it is possible to clarify what a constant and consistent relation this latter notion maintains vis-à-vis the ancients and their world. The “grand style” does not represent a “classicism” in the sense of a nostalgic yearning for a return to the aesthetic forms of the past. It is rather a trans-historical projection that points up as expressions of the “grand style” certain manifestations emanating ultimately from an interpretation of nature peculiar to the pre-Christian and pre-Socratic world.

The highest type: the *classical* ideal—as the expression of a ‘having-turned-out-well’ of *all* the principal instincts—and within this, in turn, the highest style: the *grand style* as expression of the “will to power” itself [...]. (NF-1887,11[138])

“The highest sense of power is concentrated in the classical type” (NF-1888,14[46]). The ancient, “classical” world is the very demonstration of the conception of nature that underlies “the grand style.” In this ancient world “the grand style (was) no longer merely art but rather something which had become reality, truth, *life*....” But “overnight this became no more than a memory!” (AC-59). All this was erased by the ascent [*Heraufkunft*] of Platonism and Christianity, with which there began the long history of *décadence* and of nihilism. The notion of the will to power finds its conception in a project that

aims precisely at reconquering a vision capable of overcoming and reversing the values characteristic of nihilism: a vision that can find expression again through the "grand style."²² "What does nihilism mean?—That the highest values become devalued" (NF, 1887, 9 [35]). If *décadence* produces this effect of annulment and devaluation, the will to power takes on the form precisely of the ability to posit values [*Wertsetzung*], the ability to carry through a "transvaluation of values." In other words, the will to power brings about a transition from *Entwertung* to *Umwertung*. The "grand style" puts in place precisely this transvaluation of values: it is a matter of what Ferruccio Masini has called the "overcoming by overthrowing"²³ practiced by Nietzsche.

In the following note from 1887 we can find a further indication of what "grand style" means to Nietzsche. "One must have a *criterion*: I distinguish the 'grand style'; I distinguish activity and reactivity; I distinguish the *superfluous* beings, the *prodigal* beings, and the beings of suffering and passion" (NF-1887, 10[111]). Nietzsche here states that grand style can exist only where superfluity [*Überschwang*, *Überfluss*] obtains. Superfluity can be defined as the being rich enough to give away, even to the point of a "squandering." A life characterized by superfluity belongs, physiologically, to the "grand style" and manifests itself as such, i.e., as an alternation of activity and reactivity. On the contrary, *décadence* takes the form of impoverishment and diminishment [*Verkleinerung*] and is capable only of reacting. Given the link between will to power and grand style, the following note from 1888 can be used to further clarify the nature of this latter. "That the will to power is not a being, not a becoming, but is rather a *pathos*—this is the most elementary fact which must be given in order for any becoming, any acting, to ensue" (NF-1888, 14[79]). Action originates from will to power, which Nietzsche describes as a *pathos*, i.e., a tension. This tension, in turn, originates from coordinating together a multiplicity of quanta of force relating with each other in different—and always changing—ways. The multiplicity of forces is chaos; the imposition upon it of some formal organization is "will to power as art," is "the grand style." Grand style can be thus defined as the capacity to create according to the principle of a unity that comes into being only as the result of a multiplicity of forces organized and mastered

artistically. This is why Nietzsche repeatedly refers to the sense of mean and measure, the sense of formal totality that is central to the thought and experience of Greek antiquity as an example of “grand style.”

The only possible way in which the term “beautiful” can find any relation to the “grand style” is in the multiplicity of configuration that one can generate from chaos, precisely as nature does. Nietzsche explains this in the following note from 1875:

Because what is beauty, if not the mirror image briefly glimpsed by us of the extraordinary joy felt by nature at a new, fruitful possibility for life’s having been discovered? And what is ugliness, if not nature’s discontent with itself, nature’s emerging doubt as to whether it still truly understands the art of seducing into life? (NF-1875, 6 [48]).

“Ugly,” then, impoverishes, depresses, restricts the multiplicity of the possible configurations. In other words, “ugly” is every phenomenon that belongs to *décadence* (see NF-1888,14[17]; NF-1888,16[40]). As Proust once wrote, “Beauty is a sequence of hypotheses that ugliness cuts short by barring the way that we could already see opening into the unknown.”²⁴

IV. To sum up, in the formulations given to it by the mature Nietzsche, the “grand style” presents itself as the most consummate artistic expression of the will to power. Grand style marks the products of human culture in those eras in which culture binds itself indissolubly to nature (NF-1888,14[165]). The measure of the strength of a will to power proves to be how far it is capable of holding together the maximum number of different perspectives, in a great multiplicity of simultaneously adopted ways of looking at things, without thereby disintegrating under the centrifugal force of the apparent contradictions to which such an extreme perspectivism seems to have to give rise. This capacity is exemplarily represented by the “hundred-eyed Argus,” which is the protagonist of aphorism 223 of Assorted Opinions and Maxims (VM-223).²⁵

When Nietzsche speaks of *strength*, he means with it the ability to maintain cohesion while creating new configurations of will to power: “To

compel one's chaos to become form; to become [...] logical, simple, unequivocal; to become mathematics; to become *law*." Such an ability is exemplarily represented by the *Gewaltmenschen* of the Renaissance. According to Nietzsche, those men had proven most capable of practicing the "grand style." It is precisely for his incapacity of strength that Wagner, Nietzsche says, had never succeeded in making the Renaissance his own.²⁶ Grand style can be defined also as "strength in moderation." Indeed, in the famous "Lenzerheide Fragment" entitled *European Nihilism* (NF-1886,5[71] §15) Nietzsche argues that it is the most moderate who prove in the end to be the strongest (NF-1886,5[71] §15). He concludes this fragment with the words: "The grand style [...] scorns all pleasing and persuading tends to slip its mind. It commands. It *wills*" (NF-1888,15[118]).²⁷ Furthermore, Nietzsche defines the grand style also as the becoming-explicit of the augmentation of power. It displays thereby dynamics much more closely affined with those of Spinoza's *conatus* than is willingly recognized by those exegetes of the philosophy of this latter who are content to let interpretation find its term at the *conatus sese conservandi*, thus neglecting that *laetitia* which is in fact much more salient and significant within the argument of the *Ethics* inasmuch as it is the emotional precipitate of the augmentation of power occurring through psycho-physical action (*E* III, P11 e s.). For Nietzsche too (NF-1884,25[378]) the feeling of power [*Gefühl von Macht*] has in joy, in cheerfulness [*Heiterkeit*] and in pleasure [*Lust*] the signal of its own augmentation [*Steigerung*]. According to Nietzsche joy and augmentation of power are the characteristics of the expression of will to power as creativity [*Erdichten, Erschaffung*] or, in other words, of "the grand style," as opposed to all the sad and resentful passions characteristic of *décadence*.

Nietzsche does not provide any further technical-objective details regarding just what belongs to the "grand style" and what does not, since, given the perspectivistic and relativistic nature of the will to power, the products of this latter cannot be limited and enclosed within a canon. "My judgment is my own judgment. It would be a difficult thing for anyone other than myself to acquire the right to it [...]. Whatever can be held in common

has always had but little worth” (JGB-43). The “grand style,” then, draws its life from tones that are necessarily personal. One further precious aspect of the notion is unveiled; indeed, in this it is always referring back implicitly to the concrete, individual person. It is revealed here also to comprise an element of mytho-poetic nature: a philosophical pointing toward the need for, and real possibility of, that highest autocracy which consists in self-creation. “What makes the *grand style*: becoming *master* both of one’s *happiness* and of one’s *unhappiness*” (NF-1885,35 [74]). We see here, then, an invitation—at once aesthetic and existential²⁸—extended not just to the artists but to every one of Nietzsche’s readers to form and mold themselves in accordance with a form of life [*Lebensform*] that is at once moderate and prodigal, and as such ascending: a form of life, namely, that shows and expresses through joy and serenity the growth of one’s own psycho-physical power. An invitation, in short, to make ourselves, in our own persons, living examples of “the grand style.”

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Notes

¹ Translated from Italian by Alexander Reynolds. All the quotations from Nietzsche’s work are taken from the website NietzscheSource.org and translated from German by Alexander Reynolds.

² Nietzsche tends to alternate one with the other the two possible German orthographies of this adjective: *grosse* and *große*. The former is found more often in the published works, the latter in Nietzsche’s own private notes.

³ Carlo Gentili, “‘Os gregos aprenderam aos poucos a organizar o caos.’ *Os conceitos de estilo e de cultura na Segunda consideração extemporânea de F. Nietzsche*,” in *Cadernos Nietzsche* 27 (2010), 51-69; see especially 67-69.

⁴ Letter of Nietzsche to Carl Fuchs, presumed to date from mid-April 1886 (no. 688). Regarding the association of the Palazzo Pitti with “the grand style” see also NF-1888,14[16].

⁵ Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone. Eine Einleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens* [1855], in Id., *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. IX, Basel, Schwabe, 1958, V. 1, 149.

⁶ NF-1881,11[197], (KSA IX, 11[197]). This must also all be taken into account in order to appreciate the deep disappointment felt by Nietzsche at the coldness of Burckhardt's response when he sent him a copy of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "The drollest thing that I've experienced recently has been the evident embarrassment suffered by J. Burckhardt at *having to find something to say to me* about my *Zarathustra*. He was able to come up with nothing more substantial than the enquiry as to whether I 'planned perhaps also to have a go, one day, at writing something in the *dramatic line*'" (Nietzsche's letter to Köselitz, 25 July 1884). The reference to Burckhardt's *Gewaltmensch* was to recur several times in Nietzsche's writing of this period: see NF-1884,25[117;164]; likewise the reference to the Palazzo Pitti: NF-1885,39[13].

⁷ NF-1882,1[109]. See the letter to Lou Salomé bearing the dates "8th-24th of August, 1882" and also NF-1882,1[45].

⁸ Letter to Erwin Rohde, 22 February 1884.

⁹ On this expression in *Ketten tanzen* see Giuliano Campioni, *Les lectures françaises de Nietzsche* (Paris: Puf, 2001), 18.

¹⁰ NF-1878,30 [65].

¹¹ "To improve the style—this means to improve the thought, and absolutely nothing more or other than this! If someone does not concede this point immediately, it will never be possible to convince him of it" (WS-131; See also WS-87; and Colli, *Dopo Nietzsche* (Milan: Adelphi, 1974), 27.

¹² L. Borges, *A Universal History of Infamy* (Penguin Books, 1975, 11 (Preface to the 1954 edition).

¹³ See also: "The same amount of talent and assiduity that makes the classic artist makes, where it is applied *a little too late*, the baroque artist" (NF-1878,30 [107]).

¹⁴ "The 'grand style' in music continues to be lacking. And our age has taken measures to ensure that it will not arise in it!" (NF-1884, 26[21]).

¹⁵ It should be borne in mind here how little has been done in the course of recent decades to build on the distinction and recognition that Adorno, a pupil of Alban Berg's and perhaps the greatest musician among all the philosophers, paid respect to Nietzsche when he wrote that "it was Nietzsche, of all men, who, to this day, (had) made the greatest contribution to the social cognition of music" and proven to have "more flair than anyone for the social aspects" of this latter art. Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 65 and 168. To gain some idea of the extraordinary anticipative capacities of Nietzsche as regards the music of the century that followed his death, see also Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

¹⁶ For considerations remarkably consistent with Nietzsche's concept of the "grand style" in music see Arnold Schönberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950).

¹⁷ "There is no doubting that Wagner's art has an effect, nowadays, even on the masses. Should this fact alone not tell us something about the nature of this art? There are three good things in art for which 'the masses' have never had any sense: namely, nobility, logic and beauty [...] not to speak of an even better thing: the *grand style*" (NF-1885,41[2,VI]). On this topic see a recent Italian edition of Nietzsche's *Götzendämmerung*: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Il crepuscolo degli idoli*, introduzione, traduzione, e commento di Pietro Gori e Chiara Piazzesi (Carocci, 2012), n. 11, 225-26; see also Luca Crescenzi, "Grande stile e autoparodia" in *Ottocento tedesco. Da Goethe a Nietzsche*, ed. G. Catalano, E. Fiandra (Napoli: La città del Sole, 1998), 343-69.

¹⁸ See also: "*Endless melody*—one loses sight of the shore, abandons oneself to the waves" (NF-1877,22[2]); "The flowing, billowing, oscillating quality in *all* of Wagner's music" (FP-1878,30 [129]).

¹⁹ This is a theme which will return, in the form of a specific accusation against the Wagnerian aesthetic and all those who position themselves at the opposite pole to the "grand style," in the *Second Postscript to The Case of Wagner*: "That which Wagner and 'the others'

have in common, let me count it off as follows: the decline of all organizing power; the abuse of traditional methods without the ability to *justify* this misuse [...] excessive vitality invested in the smallest details; emotion at any price; extreme refinement as expression of impoverished life; ever more nerves in the place of actual flesh" (WA-Nachschrift2).

²⁰ "Un style de décadence est celui où l'unité du livre se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la page, où la page se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la phrase, et la phrase pour laisser la place à l'indépendance du mot" (Paul Bourget, *Essais de Psychologie contemporaine* [Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1883], 25.)

²¹ "What is it that characterizes every *literary décadence*? That life no longer dwells within the whole. The individual word becomes sovereign and springs out of the sentence; the sentence infringes upon and obscures the meaning of the page; the page acquires its vitality only at the expense of the whole—so that the whole, indeed, is no whole at all any more" (WA-7).

²² On this see the seventh chapter of Karl Löwith's *Gott, Mensch und Welt in der Metaphysik von Descartes bis zu Nietzsche*, in *idem.*, *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. IX, *Gott, Mensch und Welt in der Philosophie der Neuzeit—G.B. Vico, Paul Valéry* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1999).

²³ Ferruccio Masini, *Lo scriba del caos. Interpretazione di Nietzsche* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1978), 49.

²⁴ Marcel Proust, *In The Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, Volume Two of *In Search of Lost Time* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 318.

²⁵ See Giuliano Campioni, "Verso qual meta si deve viaggiare," Lettura dell'aforisma 223 da *Opinioni e sentenze diverse di Friedrich Nietzsche*, in *Studia Nietzscheana*, www.nietzschesource.org/SN/campioni-20147, Paris: Nietzsche Source, 2014.

²⁶ "One particular form taken by Wagner's ambition was that of placing himself in relation to the great men of the past: to Schiller-Goethe, to Beethoven, to Luther, to Greek tragedy, to Shakespeare and to

Bismarck. It was only to the Renaissance that he failed to find any such relation” (NF-1874,32[58]). For a deeper exploration of this theme see Giuliano Campioni, *Il rinascimento in Wagner e nel giovane Nietzsche*, in *Rinascimento*, XXXVIII (1998), 81-121; more generally still, see Chapter IV of Campioni’s *Nietzsche e lo spirito latino* (Milano: Mimesis, 2022).

²⁷ On these notions of strength and will to power, the reader may perhaps usefully consult my own text: S. Busellato, “Nas origens da vontade de potência: Anaxágoras, in *Cadernos Nietzsche*,” Vol. XLII, No. 2 (2021), 105-24.

²⁸ See Luca Lupo, “‘Ma ecco! Torino!’ Fisiologia del quotidiano nell’ultimo Nietzsche,” in *Etiche e filosofie della vita. Studi in onore di Giambattista Vaccaro*, ed. Ines Crispini e Luca Lupo (Napoli: Guida, 2018), 115-28.

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