

2003

Remembrances of things past and future: memory and its significance for politics in Nietzsche, Sophocles, and Isaiah

Michael Henderson

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, mhender@lsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Henderson, Michael, "Remembrances of things past and future: memory and its significance for politics in Nietzsche, Sophocles, and Isaiah" (2003). *LSU Master's Theses*. 2317.

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/2317

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

REMEMBRANCES OF THINGS PAST AND FUTURE:
MEMORY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR POLITICS
IN NIETZSCHE, SOPHOCLES, AND *ISAIAH*

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Political Science

by
Michael Henderson
B.A., Louisiana State University, 2001
December 2003

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
The Resentful Self	10
The Memory of Friendship	48
The Transcendence of Memory	66
Conclusion	96
Bibliography.	104
Vita	107

Abstract

This thesis is an inquiry into memory and its significance for politics as described in three sources. Part of its task is to grasp Nietzsche's phenomenology of memory thought and to inquire into what understanding about politics emerges. Nietzsche speaks about memory with respect to the self, yet he offers little elaboration about intersubjectivity or transcendence for linking memory to justice. To further investigate his approach, this essay examines two other texts, *Philoctetes*, by Sophocles, and *Isaiah*, which set this discussion on a political stage. What emerges is an approach to how memory can have an impact on self, community, and politics in the search for justice.

Introduction

The role of memory has been fairly prominent in the history of political thought, yet the functioning of memory with respect to both the self and the community has not been treated in any great depth. Four notable examples illustrate the degree to which the issue of memory has been raised in intriguing and politically relevant ways while failing to elaborate more than tangentially. First, in his *Orestia* trilogy, Aeschylus treats the Furies as household gods whose power is memory of injustice. Although we are given a sense of the passionate force of that memory when Orestes goes mad with guilt, Aeschylus never develops in any significant way the mechanisms or functioning of this memory. Second, Plato's theory of education, perhaps his whole theory of knowing, is based upon memory or recollection. Yet, aside from Socratic inquiry and *eros*, or the yearning we possess to recall what is forgotten, there is little in Plato's works to explain how we either forget or remember truth. Third, G.W.F. Hegel's approach to Socrates envisions memory yearning for the community that has been lost in the emergence of the principle of subjectivity. For Hegel the entire subsequent history of politics is an attempt to recreate the home that subjectivity has destroyed. Nevertheless, Hegel does not elaborate on the functioning of memory with any focus. Finally, even in such an analytical thinker as Thomas Hobbes, the issue of memory is raised though mostly left unexplored. It seems that the legitimacy of the social contract is entirely dependent on the power of the sovereign. Yet, lurking in the background is the notion that this power remains impossible and impotent without the memory of how undesirable and violent life would be in the absence of the sovereign.

In political thought, then, memory functions in a variety of roles including conscience, knowledge, identification with community, and the recollection of the need for social organization. Nonetheless, the role of memory with respect to both the individual and the community, particularly the issues of what is to be remembered, what is to be forgotten, and how these tasks are to be accomplished, remain only provisionally established. Oddly, perhaps ironically, it fell to the nineteenth century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche to attempt an analysis of memory. At least with respect to the individual self, Nietzsche develops a phenomenology of memory in his *Genealogy of Morals*, primarily in his treatment of *ressentiment*. This essay considers Nietzsche's phenomenology of time, first exegetically then critically, for what it offers and what it fails to offer for an understanding of memory's role in politics. Part of the task of this thesis is to grasp and develop the phenomenology of memory in Nietzsche's thought and to inquire further into what understanding about politics emerges from his approach. While Nietzsche speaks extensively and persuasively about memory with respect to the self, he offers little elaboration with respect to the roles of intersubjectivity or transcendence in linking memory to justice. The further task of this thesis is to expand this discussion through an inquiry into two texts from antiquity. To shed light upon both the insights of Nietzsche's phenomenology and the severe shortcoming of his approach, I then turn to *Philoctetes*, by Sophocles, and *Isaiah*.

Nietzsche is significant for this inquiry for the alarmingly sophisticated, though scattered, phenomenology of memory he offers, perhaps the most interesting since Saint Augustine. For Nietzsche, memory involves more than simple recollection of the past. Rather, the act of remembering functions to situate the individual within temporality by

provoking a consciousness of time. Memory structures time in its modes of past, present, and future. Nietzsche chooses to elaborate upon the relationship of this structure to the present moment, which he privileges for reasons that follow. While remembering looks to the past and establishes it as past, it also draws this past into the present linking these two modes in the flow of time. Remembering also looks to the future. Nietzsche develops remembering-toward-the-future in the notion of promise making. Indeed, to make a promise is “to ordain the future in advance.... to see and anticipate distant eventualities as if they belonged to the present, to decide with certainty what is the goal and what the means to it.”¹ A promise is a projection toward the future made possible by the ability to remember the promise made. The past and future are discernible modes of temporality, but both are drawn into the present moment through memory. Memory, then, structures the individual’s relationship to time.

Correlated with the development of temporal consciousness, Nietzsche argues, is the development of selfhood in relation to the content and structure of time and experiences. Memory constitutes selfhood or identity simultaneously as it constitutes consciousness of temporality. Furthermore, as part of his project, Nietzsche reveals the psychological component of the structuring of time and selfhood that occurs in memory. It is within this structure that *ressentiment* poses its danger because it shapes what we are. The past, particularly a past of suffering, can overwhelm us to the point that in the present moment we are dominated by *ressentiment*. If the self exists in relation to time and if the past plays a constitutive role in the determination of self, then the present self may be determined as resentful through the memory of past suffering. This facet of memory

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kauffmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 58.

poses an obstructive danger to life in the present moment and may interfere with or distort this moment according to how past experience is incorporated into the self via consciousness of time.

It is in this context, as a palliative for *ressentiment*, that Nietzsche develops forgetting as an orientation toward the past. Forgetting is paired with remembering as functions of memory and postures toward time. As such, both operate within the construction of self. Rather than being unaware of temporality, according to Nietzsche's analysis, we need to establish intentional stances toward our temporality. Particularly, he advocates stances that make active selfhood possible. Therefore, remembering and forgetting are meant for the same goal of constructing the possibility of the self in the present. Forgetting is not an undoing of the past. Instead, it is a posture of existence in relation to the past as a mode of time. Nietzsche does not advocate a forgetting of all things. Indeed he calls for specific sorts of things, such as promises, to be remembered. However, if one's posture toward the past is that of *ressentiment*, it would be better, Nietzsche suggests, to take another posture in the form of forgetting.

Nietzsche rarely treats politics directly. Even so, his writings on *ressentiment* suggest some political consequences. *Ressentiment* can consume a people and the consequences may best be described as a politics of rancor. This sentiment leads particularly to self-loathing, ill will, and mindset geared toward revenge. In the same context, Nietzsche specifically cites nineteenth century German anti-semitism as an outburst of *ressentiment*.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche's treatment of memory is almost entirely psychological or strictly concerned with the self, leaving open the question as to its application in the

political world. Indeed, although Nietzsche thoroughly develops his phenomenology of memory in its components of both consciousness of time and selfhood, this most interesting point is also the weakness of his phenomenology. First, for the most part he neglects intersubjectivity and the phenomenon of community. While his emphasis on the psychological is to be admired for establishing a strong and vivid link between our understanding of time and its repercussions for selfhood, its great weakness is found in this absence of any developed account of the relationship of this self to the world. Second, in his urge to forget Western theological and philosophical grounding, Nietzsche forgets the whole issue of transcendence.

Interestingly, two ancient texts provide persuasive corollaries to Nietzsche's phenomenology of memory of the self and arguments for its extension. I will attempt to enrich this discussion by examining two famous narratives of the ancient world, namely the Greek tragedy *Philoctetes* by Sophocles and the Hebrew prophetic text of *Isaiah*. The ancients, both Greek and Hebrew, were preoccupied with similar concerns about temporality as Nietzsche was in a more modern era. They were particularly concerned with problems about what is to be remembered, what to be forgotten, and the consequences of this with respect to the individual and the community. These ancient texts set this discussion on a more directly political stage. In my treatment, these texts all together offer the reader a fuller perspective. What emerges is an approach to how memory can have an impact on the life of the self, the life of the community, and the politics of the community as it strives for justice.

Neither ancient tradition develops these concerns in any philosophical manner. Instead they address these concerns about temporality in a narrative fashion. Each in its

own way illustrates the strength and weakness of Nietzsche's account of memory. In this study I do not intend to elaborate extensively on interpretations of these works as independent texts. Rather, I will view them as texts that amplify the issue of the phenomenology of memory as developed in the first section. *Philoctetes* deals with the individual's narrative of temporal experience in the context of his relationship with the community. But whereas the narrative of the community lies in the background of the *Philoctetes*, in the ancient Hebrew text composed by the prophet Deutero-Isaiah, the narrative of the community's temporal understanding and identity is in the foreground.

In *Philoctetes*, Sophocles sets his discussion of resentment and memory within the context of a dramatic encounter between the individual and the community. He indicates the weakness of the approach of Philoctetes to community, an approach shaped by resentment. Philoctetes may have some moral justification for his anger toward the Greeks, however, his own resentment would prevent not only the success of the Greek community at Troy, but also his own healing. He is awash in negation. He can affirm nothing. Sacrificing his own place in the heroic tradition, he can no longer even affirm himself. He is overburdened with memory of past suffering. Sophocles shows that although Philoctetes's sorrow over his suffering has legitimate ground, his obsession with past wrongs prevents not only any development of authentic selfhood but also any reconciliation with community. Indeed, the pursuit of selfhood coincides with the development of a community founded upon friendship. This friendship ultimately develops between the characters Neoptolemus and Philoctetes, but hinges upon an act of remembrance embodied in the return of the legendary hero Heracles. Mutual healing comes through the reconciliation of the individual to the community, and both Philoctetes

and the community come to find healing in the notion of a politics that refuses to dispossess the sufferer. The healing of the individual depends as much upon the political community as the success of the political community comes to depend upon the individual's healing. The Greeks need Philoctetes, but so too does Philoctetes need the Greeks. Their mutual gain is prevented as long as the resentful psychology of Philoctetes leads him to a politics of rancor.

In Deutero-Isaiah's text, the narrative of the community comes to the foreground. This ancient Hebrew text is important to this inquiry into memory and resentment because through narrative it offers a temporal ordering of experience that makes identity and politics possible for the community. As a response to the Babylonian exile, Deutero-Isaiah speaks at length about memory and forgetting. The prophet reaches back in time in at least two ways. First, as a text, *Isaiah* spends considerable time identifying with the covenant past. Second, the Babylonian exile, the context of the prophet's work, parallels the experience of the wandering in the wilderness found in *Exodus*. When the prophet calls upon the people of Israel to remember the covenant with Yahweh, the suggestion is that the identity of the community depends upon structuring experience through time with memory. Remembering is a posture toward time that allows for an extension of the past into the present. It returns to the old traditions. In the context of a world that has crumbled before their eyes and in the midst of exile, the story of old is recalled as a source of resiliency. The prophet provides this contact with the power in memory that makes the life of the community possible.

And yet, the prophet calls upon the Israelites to

Remember not the former things,
Nor consider the things of old.

Behold, I am doing a new thing;
Now it springs forth, you will perceive it. (43:18-19)²

Forgetting is presented as another posture toward temporality that can help to make community possible. In this part of the text, forgetting is coextensive with projection into the future. Indeed the temporal modes of past, present, and future are not isolated moments. Rather, they are intertwined in the identity of Israel as composed in the narrative structure of Israel's history presented in this text. The prophet discourages obsession with resentment and revenge, for these postures block the possibilities for life in the present and projection into the future.

The first section will focus on Nietzsche. It will explore Nietzsche's philosophy of memory as an approach to consciousness of temporality and discuss the role of memory and temporality in the further development of selfhood in Nietzsche's thought. The second section will extend the discussion from the self-centered memory described by Nietzsche to the relationship of healing and intersubjectivity in *Philoctetes*. Finally, the third section presents the treatment of memory by Deutero-Isaiah, which emphasizes community and transcendence.

In conclusion, I use these sources to examine the extent to which Nietzsche's diagnosis of *ressentiment* and his application of forgetting apply to politics. Memory plays a crucial role in the development of identity. Furthermore, this identity shapes the possibilities for action – that is, what I remember affects how I can live. Memory might entail resentment and bring about bitterness and isolation. In this case it would seem forgetting presents a better alternative. However, an abandonment of the past threatens the very loss of identity, community, and justice. The approaches that emerge in these

² All biblical citations in this essay, except those featured within quotations from other authors, come from *Isaiah* in the *New American Bible*.

texts attempt to navigate between these dangers through the development and delivery of narratives that can gather past, present, and future. Furthermore, it is the Greek text *Philoctetes* and the Hebrew text composed by Deutero-Isaiah that can teach us more about these matters in relation to politics. These texts show the importance of memory in a similar fashion as to Nietzsche, yet they extend its application beyond the level of the individual psyche to life in the community and the life of the community. An approach to memory that arranges and draws from the past to project into the future may yield an entirely different politics than that of *ressentiment*.

The Resentful Self

With rich detail Friedrich Nietzsche treats memory not only as a feature of consciousness but also as a problem of life. As is typical for him, Nietzsche offers no systematic treatment of memory or time in his writings. Nevertheless, his approach to both may be discerned throughout scattered appearances in his works. In these various discussions, Nietzsche has a preoccupation with the present moment. His attention only leaves the present moment in order to draw attention back to it, discussing the past and the future in terms of their involvement in the present. For Nietzsche, as for Saint Augustine, time is a feature of consciousness. Consciousness allows for the perception of various modes of time: present, past, and future. As a feature of consciousness, the modes of time are variations of the present moment. Present, past, and future all have presence in consciousness. The modes of past and future are drawn into the present as the presence of the past and the presence of the future in consciousness.

When describing Nietzsche's approach to time Kathleen Higgins uses the analogy of music, a metaphor commonly used to present phenomenology of time. We experience a tone of a song in its immediacy, but its significance lies in the promise of the song as a whole. While the future does not determine the present tone, the tone's meaning lies in its pointing toward the future. Similarly, an apprehension of the past inheres in the presence of the tone. Thus, the present tone includes the future and past within itself, without reducing itself to a product of the past or its significance to a mere means toward the future. Other moments do not establish the meaning of the musical present, but the temporal whole is contained experientially in consciousness of the present tone.³

³ Kathleen Higgins "Nietzsche and Postmodern Subjectivity," *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra*. ed. Clayton Koelb (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 210-11. Higgins also makes two other points that

We exist temporally in the sense that we always exist in the present, but it is a present that includes a past through memory and a future through projection. We perceive time in the present as a consciousness. In large part this approach to time is not so different from that offered by Augustine 1500 years before. But Nietzsche is something of a hyper-momentist. We stand always at the gate named “Moment,” where two paths meet from the eternity of the past and the eternity of the future.⁴ These two paths contain each other, and all time is brought into the present with Nietzsche’s eternal return. Nietzsche places heightened emphasis on the present moment, not simply because this is the only moment which *is*, in the Augustinian sense, but because he is ultimately concerned with life. For him, the present is the moment in which we live.

We interpret our lives and experiences temporally. When we seek some understanding about time, we make an interpretation of ourselves. Nietzsche wants to rethink the whole problem of time as lived temporality rather than as increments of duration.⁵ Time is the experience of time. It is the experience of our consciousness of time. Nietzsche asks: what does it mean to live in the moment into which the past and future extend? In answering this question, he is not primarily interested in temporal existence as such. Rather, he is interested in the psychological effects of our relationship

have some relevance to later discussions in this section. First, she notes that any effort to return to previous tones would destroy our understanding of the present music tone. We lose the thread of the melody. Memory, it is suggested here, supports and reveals the present without dominating it. This is because of the second point. As with music, meaning in time is not comprehensive knowledge, but a continuing developing delight in what is present for Nietzsche.

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 168.

⁵ Charles R. Bambach, “History and Ontology: A Reading of Nietzsche’s Second ‘Untimely Meditation,’” *Philosophy Today* (Fall 2000): 259-272. Bambach makes this argument on pages 263-5. Nietzsche objects to the notion of time as an organic development out of past into present and future. See also Robin Small, “Nietzsche, Spirit, and Time,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 32 (January 1994): 85-102. Small makes the argument on pages 90-93. Time does not exist on its own. It is an abstraction that expresses what a given succession of events have in common. Our idea of time is bound up with our experience of a succession of different states.

to the modes of temporality that have presence in consciousness. He finds that the psychological effect of having a past and a future (existing in a present with a past and future) shapes the possibilities for life in the present.

This psychology offers important insight into the possible relationship of memory to life. There are psychological effects of the consciousness of time that we achieve through memory and that shape how we live. This psychology is part of the presence of the past or future. Remembering is a drawing of the past into the present as part of the story of the self. It involves a gathering together of a self (as a unity) from a multiplicity of past experiences. The experiences of the past are relevant for the present as possible modes of existence and components of the self. However, Nietzsche would add, it is also the gathering together of experiences that form the future as well. We project possibilities into the future and thus draw it into the present as part of the story of the self. The elements of the past and the future drawn into the present through memory allow for the self to exist in the present. Consciousness of temporality is a type of story-telling of the self, or as Nietzsche might say, a “giving style” to one’s existence. In this section, I interpret “giving style” to one’s existence as self-mastery accomplished through narrative memory.

Although Nietzsche’s psychology offers important insight into the relationship of memory to politics, any politically interested inquiry into Nietzsche must address interpretations of his political philosophy. Most accepted treatments of Nietzsche as a political philosopher concentrate upon his cultural critique and his announcement of the *Übermensch*.⁶ The *Übermensch* destroys, or overcomes, depending upon the

⁶ For a survey of various interpretations of Nietzsche as a political philosopher see Daniel W. Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1997). I will briefly address two of these broad

interpretation, the Western tradition to release the individual from any constraints these may place upon his creative capacities. For the most part, past philosophical and theological work is seen with a critical and dismissive eye. For the sake of the individual the groundings of the tradition are overturned and replaced. This approach has powerful implications for his political thought. However, it is Nietzsche's psychology of temporal consciousness - not the cultural critique of his political philosophy - that is of most interest for this inquiry. It is a contention of this chapter that Nietzsche's approach to

treatments. The first envisions the *Übermensch* as uprooting the ground of tradition and legislating new approaches to politics. Nietzsche writes from the modern tradition following Descartes in which man seeks to increase his mastery over nature and reduce the mastery of God. This is the source of nihilism in Nietzsche's thought, with nihilism understood as at least including an absence of ground upon which to base existence and values. For the clearest presentation of Nietzsche's political philosophy as radical nihilism see Stanley Rosen *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) and his *The Ancients and the Moderns* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). The summary of the interpretation presented here draws from *Nihilism*. According to Rosen's argument, Nietzsche's hero is a destroyer of old values, which he now sees as decadent. Indeed, Nietzsche launches a vigorous attack on what he considers the weakness and illness of the old world. The past is dissolving so we must hasten this project by destroying it. This dissolution paves the way for the new man and the new world. In Nietzsche's thought, the world is radical possibility without stability or boundary. His creativity begins with a destruction of metaphysics "in order to open the horizon for the possibility of a future revelation" (Rosen, 74). This new revelation is the *Übermensch*, who tears down the cultural dwelling of modern man and is unhinged from whatever it reveals. Destruction of the past is for rebirth. This rebirth is loss of memory. Ironically, the end result is not Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, according to Rosen: "at best he is condemned to relive the past rather than to transcend it. At worst, he may be said to have escaped history from the despiritualized eternity of a perpetual present" (Rosen 108). Rosen describes the practical consequence as "bestial violence" (Rosen 109). Thus, Rosen sees Nietzsche's notion of cultural critique as confusing even to itself; while memory alone serves perpetual sterility, radical forgetfulness leads to perpetual infancy without development or destructive beastliness (Rosen 109). Conway notes the paradox of advocating forgetting to a dying culture. If such a culture had the capacity to forget, he suggests, its members would be doing this. That prescription would yield the contradiction of remembering to forget (Conway 151). Instead, Conway suggests that Nietzsche argues that the philosopher must master cultural production of his interiority and turn it toward a better outcome (Conway 73). The philosopher engages in self-experimentation. This activity is not retrospective it is prospective, forging new selves. Conway agrees that Nietzsche advocates a radical departure from the traditions of metaphysics, Christianity, and Platonism and that the human as an incomplete animal must forge a further destiny as the *Übermensch*, the perfection of humankind (Conway 12-13, 24). However, the *Übermensch* is not the new lawgiver. Rather, he is the philosopher as exemplar, as model for the ethical life. Self-overcoming is the model for activity toward moral perfection (Conway 65). Philosophers are the legislators only insofar as they stand apart from their time. The scope of their legislation does not extend beyond this activity of enacting distinction (Conway 75). How this example affects the readers of this philosopher is how it exerts any political consequences (Conway 94). Whichever of these interpretations is preferred, some commonalities are apparent. In either case, Nietzsche offers the *Übermensch* as the source for revolutionary change in our understanding of human capacity and valuations as distinct and unhinged from metaphysical traditions. Also, in either case, he does apply his approach to memory to his cultural critique insofar as memory is understood as consciousness of both history and the revelations of tradition.

memory is interesting for its implications beyond his cultural critique, although I will return to its application within this critique near the end of this chapter.⁷ As it is applied, it will be shown how Nietzsche's phenomenology of memory seriously neglects intersubjectivity and transcendence to the detriment of his politics. Therefore, I investigate the phenomenology of memory that Nietzsche presents, the psychological implications of this phenomenology, and the possible implications of this psychology for politics. Indeed, this entire inquiry into memory begins with Nietzsche not for his politics, but because he offers an intriguing philosophical treatment of the psychology of temporal consciousness that addresses similar themes found in the works investigated in later chapters. Oftentimes, Nietzsche is at his best and most useful when pursuing psychological insights. The psychology investigated here reveals how we respond to experience, particularly the experience of suffering. As these experiences fall back from the present into memory, Nietzsche argues, they continue to affect how we live in ways that are worthy of note.

Nietzsche argues that being conscious of the past has a great deal to do with being a self. When we are conscious of time in relation to ourselves, we face a psychological crisis of identity: who are we? Memory is a process of association of the self as a work in progress. Many Nietzsche scholars recognize what he explicitly notes, his notion of the self as a multiplicity of selves.⁸ Oftentimes this multiplicity is interpreted as a constellation of drives and desires within a psyche. However, this notion can be extended

⁷ Even one of Nietzsche's sharpest critics, Rosen, suggests that not all specific elements of a philosophy are necessarily discredited by disagreement with what one understands to be its overarching meaning: "Although I regard the claim that a philosophy that terminates in nihilism to be a fundamental criticism, it does not follow from this that, if the claim is proven, one must repudiate all traces of the convicted teaching. A philosopher may have a defective conception of what he is doing generally, while nevertheless doing sound things in particular" (Rosen, 1).

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968) 270.

along a temporal dimension as well, so that the self includes all the selves that occurred in the moments of the past and might occur in the moments of the future. In other words, we are the person who lived each of our experiences and conducted each of our actions. Nietzsche himself suggests this temporal interpretation of the multiplicity of selves. He refers to “many mortal souls” within one subject and argues that, as time passes, different individuals evolve out of this subject and pass away.⁹ He also stresses that the subject is synonymous with his acts.¹⁰ Therefore, each of our acts and our experiences presents us with a self whom we have been. Each of these selves whom we have been present a possible mode of existence – a person we have been and can be again. Memory, as “the process of assimilation” allows us to perceive a unity throughout time.¹¹ It allows us to “assume ‘a soul,’ which, outside of time, reproduces, recognizes, etc.”¹² Yet, within this complex we must also face the character of each experience that lives on in the memory.”¹³ “Remembering as a process of classification and pigeonholing” draws forth a past self into the present subject.¹⁴ As we recall past experience we are “always in competition with former selves.”¹⁵

Arguing the multiplicity of selfhood, Nietzsche recognizes an interesting predicament of identity that we face: the despair of being determined by past experience, of living without the hope of renewal or redemption. Consciousness of the past engenders this predicament because of its relationship to selfhood. What is revealed in

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 218, 35.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 45.

¹¹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 289.

¹² *Ibid.*, 274.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹⁵ Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 16-17.

memory is not so much consciousness of time as it is consciousness of the self experiencing the events of time, to which consciousness of time is the background. As we engage in remembering we are concerned with the content of our recollections not with time itself except as the background to this content. We experience time in memory and it is with this experience we are concerned. This is the psychological baggage of having a past. Consciousness of the past, as an extension of the past into the present, can on occasion mislead us into thinking that identity is not only stable but also entirely fixed to the past. Consciousness of the past is consciousness of a self within a past experience. What Nietzsche calls “too much memory” is an adhesion of self-understanding to a particular experience of the past. Through memory we deliver ourselves over to that past.

It is the interplay of temporality and selfhood in the consciousness that arouses certain psychological consequences. Our consciousness of the past has a direct bearing on who we are and how we behave. Nietzsche discusses the effects of consciousness of the past generally when discussing history in the second of his *Untimely Meditations*.

Memory’s drawing of past experience into consciousness encumbers man’s present moment:

He also wonders at himself, that he cannot learn to forget but clings relentlessly to the past: however far and fast he may run, this chain runs with him. And it is a matter for wonder: a moment, now here and then gone, nothing before it came, again nothing after it has gone, nonetheless returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment. A leaf flutters from the scroll of time, floats away – and suddenly floats back again and falls into the man’s lap. Then the man says ‘I remember’ and envies the animal, who at once forgets and for whom every moment really dies, sinks back into night and fog and is extinguished forever. . . . Man, on the other hand, braces himself against the great and ever greater pressure of what is past: it pushes him down or bends him sideways, it encumbers his steps as a dark, invisible burden which he can sometimes appear to disown and which

in traffic with his fellow men he is only too glad to disown, so as to excite their envy.¹⁶

This is why Nietzsche refers to the past as the “melancholy” of the will.¹⁷ We respond in this way to our having a past not because it confronts us with the philosophical problem of time, but because it forces us to confront the experiences of the past, which we no longer determine but which threaten to determine us.

When one is over-conscious of past experience, the present self deteriorates into a “weakened personality.”¹⁸ Regardless of whether this past experience is positive or negative, whether it was a moment of glory or pain, the present self melts away before the claim a self of the past lays upon it. Nietzsche’s “pale criminal” is pale precisely because he is stamped in the present with the image of a former act. The past dominates him. This consciousness weighs upon him in the form of “the lead of his guilt.”¹⁹ His memory retains the self of his crime in the present moment and forms a single event as the essence of his life: “Now he always saw himself as the doer of one deed.”²⁰ Nietzsche does not deny the possibility for a coherence of self across time. Recognizing the psychological effects of consciousness of the past, he calls for subjective self-transformation through a change in the individual’s temporal orientation.²¹

More than any other topic in Nietzsche’s scattered writings on time and memory, *ressentiment* effectively illustrates his dire concern with a heightened consciousness of the past. Nietzsche provides the most detail in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, but he refers to *ressentiment* throughout much of his writing. In a condition of *ressentiment*, one is not

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 61.

¹⁷ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 251.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 83.

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 151.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

²¹ Higgins, 191-198.

merely primarily conscious of past experience; one is dominated by this consciousness. Indeed, the temporal modes of present and future, if they exist in the consciousness at all, are overshadowed by this back-weighted consciousness. This begins as inability of the consciousness to let go of past experience, but perpetuates itself as re-experience of the conditions of suffering in the psyche. It is through forgetting that we relieve ourselves of experiences and let them pass. Nietzsche is fond of the physiological metaphor in which the conscious processing of temporal experience is described in terms of the digestive system. A dysfunctional system is nothing less than illness: “The man in whom this apparatus of repression is damaged and ceases to function properly may be compared (and more than merely compared) with a dyspeptic – he cannot ‘have done’ with anything.”²² Because of this “indigestion,” this inability to forget, he cannot discharge it from consciousness and relieve himself of past experience.²³ He grows overfull of the past. This buildup, or extension, of the past in the psyche crowds the present and future out of consciousness. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche names two specific aids for holding onto the past in memory. Early in the work he comments that repeated experiences are difficult to forget.²⁴ Later, he also notes that pain is “the most powerful aid to mnemonics.”²⁵ Both of these occur in the resentful memory. The pain of initial suffering lodges deeply into consciousness, then this scarred consciousness perpetuates its own pain through the repeated acquaintance with the experience of suffering engendered by memory. In other words, living under the psychological domination of the past involves living in the experience of the past - living in the pain, the weakness, the shame, and the

²² Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 58.

²³ *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

rage of the past. In his analysis of *ressentiment*, Nietzsche diagnoses not only a turning away of consciousness from the present moment in favor of the past, but also the psychological manifestations of this consciousness as alienation from oneself and the world.

It is precisely a memory heavily conscious of past experience that makes man “*the sick animal*”²⁶ and alienates him from the world: “One cannot get rid of anything, one cannot get over anything, one cannot repel anything – everything hurts. Men and things outside obtrude too closely; experiences strike one too deeply; memory becomes a festering wound. Sickness itself *is* a kind of *ressentiment*.”²⁷ The illness is the accumulated psychological suffering that occurs as long as the experience that initiated the suffering is remembered in such a way that it is held in the forefront of consciousness and sees the present moment through it alone. The manifestations of this psychological torment are numerous: impotency, alienation, self-loathing, and vengefulness. They fill the resentful psyche, dominating all thoughts and actions. Working away on the mind, this festering stagnation wears down the resentful man:

Nothing burns one up faster than the affects of *ressentiment*. Anger, pathological vulnerability, impotent lust for revenge, thirst for revenge, poison-mixing in any sense – no reaction could be more disadvantageous for the exhausted: such affects involve a rapid consumption of nervous energy, a pathological increase of harmful excretions – for example, of the gall bladder into the stomach.²⁸

Life under these conditions becomes reactive. For the resentful, their suffering is perceived as the activity of the world played out upon them. They, however, are unable to act upon the world. *Ressentiment* involves the relative power differential between the

²⁶ Ibid., 121 Nietzsche’s emphasis.

²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 230.

²⁸ Ibid., 230.

resentful and someone or something in the world. It involves a sense of weakness and vulnerability. The resentful were vulnerable to the initial experience of pain that preceded *ressentiment*; likewise, they remain in that state of vulnerability as long as they are fixated on the past. The sense of weakness is perpetuated. The resentful are not merely aware of their affliction, they perceive the power differential and rage against it. However, the lack of power inhibits the expression and distorts the exercise of their response. Without this release, the resentful remain obsessive over their pain.²⁹

The “essence” of resentment is this need to direct the view outside against something instead of directing it back to oneself.³⁰ “It needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all – its action is fundamentally reaction.”³¹ The resentful espouses a negation, a “No,” against the external. This is all the creativity he can muster. He seeks out what is opposite of himself only to negate it. Nietzsche presents the resentful man in contrast to the noble spirit. The noble spirit affirms himself. When he seeks out his opposite at all it is only to make this affirmation.³²

The resentful man cannot make this affirmation because he hates himself just as he despises all things. The resentful man is not fundamentally inactive. Rather his capacities are twisted. He is turned back on himself. As his will is constrained into reactivity in the outside world, his unexpressed *ressentiment* twists back against him. His stare may be directed outside, but his activity is directed inside: “All instincts that do not

²⁹ Robert C. Solomon, “100 Years of Ressentiment: Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morality*,” in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994), 95-125. See also Rudiger Bittner, “Ressentiment” in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994), 127-137.

³⁰ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 36-7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

³² *Ibid.*, 36-7.

discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward*.”³³ When those who suffer see themselves as less than they should be, as failures, they become resentful even toward themselves.

The resentful man comes to hate himself:

The *sick* are man’s greatest danger; *not* the evil, *not* the ‘beasts of prey.’ Those who are failures from the start, downtrodden, crushed – it is they, the *weakest*, who must undermine life among men, who call into question and poison most dangerously our trust in life, in man, and in ourselves. Where does one not encounter the veiled glance of the born failure which betrays how such a man speaks to himself – that glance which is a sigh! ‘If only I were someone else,’ sighs this glance: ‘but there is no hope of that. I am who I am: how could I ever get free of myself? And yet – I *am sick of myself!*’³⁴

The resentful man neither forgives himself nor forgets his failure. Thus, in Nietzsche’s analysis, the victim of suffering becomes a wrongdoer as well, if not against others then at least against himself. It seems that those who inflict suffering in the first place commit a double wrong. They create an immediate experience of pain and initiate the long-term psychological suffering of “this nausea, this weariness, this disgust with himself.”³⁵ And yet, we cannot simply hate ourselves, so we look to release the pent up cruelty of our self-hate into the outside world.³⁶

In Nietzsche’s thought the actor and his actions are never far apart. Here, we move closer to understanding why Nietzsche has such distaste for *ressentiment*.

Nietzsche does not simply despise the weakness of *ressentiment*, after all even the resentful create, albeit in a twisted fashion. All creativity is shaped by its source:

It is on such soil, on swampy ground, that every weed, every poisonous plant grows, always so small, so hidden, so false, so saccharine. Here the worms of vengefulness and rancor swarm; here the air stinks of secrets and concealment;

³³ Ibid., 84.

³⁴ Ibid., 122.

³⁵ Ibid., 121.

³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 207.

here the web of the most malicious of all conspiracy of the suffering against the well-constituted and victorious, here the aspect of the victorious is *hated*.³⁷

The creation of *ressentiment* is revenge.

Ressentiment begins an “inner dissociation of will, a retardation between affective and active dimensions of the will.”³⁸ The active dimension is weakened as the forces of the external world supercede and act upon it. Nevertheless, the active dimension fails to dissolve. Instead, it turns back upon the affect left in the will, thereby producing pain. This introversion poisons the soul with a desire for vengeance. The active dimension, turned back upon the impressions of the past, concerned with the pain, impotence, and humiliation of the past, aches for compensation. It actively clings to the past, even as this past determines and shapes it, because there it finds its venom with which to face the outside world.³⁹

Because the resentful will is denied the “true reaction” of deeds, it turns to long-seated desires for revenge.⁴⁰ Although Zarathustra wishes his followers would grow weary of the word revenge,⁴¹ revenge is not bad in and of itself for Nietzsche. Indeed, Zarathustra even advocates revenge since “a little revenge is more human than no revenge.”⁴² According to Nietzsche, revenge itself is natural and can be properly executed in a healthy manner. Revenge is hardly noticed in the strong as it quickly passes: “*Ressentiment* itself, if it should appear in the noble man, consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*.”⁴³ The strong can

³⁷ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 122.

³⁸ Alphonso Lingis, “The Will to Power,” in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 52.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 36.

⁴¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 206.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴³ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 39.

process the desire and quickly move from revenge as a mode of reaction back into their normal mode of self-chosen action. In the weak, however, the desire for revenge festers. It becomes a condition that perpetuates itself. Weakness leads to frustration, and rage remaining unexpressed for a time, becomes vindictive.⁴⁴ It persists in the consciousness. This persistence of the vengeful desire is the poison that Nietzsche abhors: “To desire revenge and then to carry out revenge means to be the victim of a vehement attack of fever which then, however, passes: but to desire to revenge without possessing the strength and courage to carry out revenge means to carry about a chronic illness, a poisoning of body and soul.”⁴⁵

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche defines revenge as “the will’s ill will against time and its ‘it was.’”⁴⁶ A wrong irretrievably sits in the consciousness of a victim like a stone at the bottom of a well.⁴⁷ It is this dimension of a long-lasting desire for revenge as an unhealthy temporal consciousness that bothers Nietzsche most. This sort of revenge if enacted inflicts worse damage than a healthy response might. The resentful man wants to improve but because this stone is lodged in his consciousness he is unable to move beyond the past and the desire for revenge. His suffering makes him unable to develop.⁴⁸ Nietzsche wants the resentful man to be delivered from the desire for revenge because he recognizes the consequences of this desire, both the havoc it wreaks upon the psyche and the way it lashes against the outside world. It is not simply power issues that drive Nietzsche’s concern, but the dangers produced from stagnant consciousness.

⁴⁴ Solomon, 103.

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 42.

⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 252.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴⁸ Bittner, 130,133.

This obsession with one's own pain and weakness provides the origins for cruelty as it boils up from a sickened consciousness:

The suffering are one and all dreadfully eager and inventive in discovering occasions for painful affects; they enjoy being mistrustful and dwelling on nasty deeds and imaginary sights; they scour the entrails of their past and present for obscure and questionable occurrences that offer them the opportunity to revel in tormenting suspicions and to intoxicate themselves with the poison of their own malice: they tear open their oldest wounds, they bleed from long-healed scars, they make evildoers out of their friends, wives, children, and whoever else stands closest to them.⁴⁹

The resentful man turns to blame, which Nietzsche finds petty. For Nietzsche, these petty thoughts are worse than evil deeds: "An evil deed is like a boil: it itches and irritates and breaks open – it speaks honestly. 'Behold, I am a disease' – thus speaks the evil deed; that is its honesty. But a petty thought is like a fungus: it creeps and stoops and does not want to be anywhere – until the whole body is rotten and withered with little fungi."⁵⁰ The malice of *ressentiment* rots away the self as it boils against the outside world. *Ressentiment* involves dissatisfaction with oneself and the world. The resentful lack innocence – in the sense that they are not pure, no matter how blameless they may have been in their suffering. They become poisoned and venomous in their *ressentiment*. Thus, the resentful "know how not to forget" in two senses.⁵¹ Not only are their consciousnesses fixated on the past, but they apply this fixation to others, seeking to imprison them in their view of the past as well.

Nietzsche notes that neither a slave nor a tyrant can be a friend;⁵² the resentful man is both slave and tyrant. A vision of the hostility of the entire world emerges in the eyes of the resentful. They stamp the world in the mold of their consciousness of past

⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 127-8.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 201.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 38.

⁵² Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 169.

suffering: “But it can also be the tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tormented, and would like to turn what is most personal, singular, and narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, into a binding law and compulsion – one who, as it were, revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them branding them with it.”⁵³ Blaming others makes suffering bearable and offers some escape from one’s own hounding of oneself.⁵⁴ With bloodied eyes the resentful man blames the world. So he turns with cruel malice against the world regardless of who may be responsible for his suffering. He longs to extract the deepest compensation for his suffering: “how ready they themselves are at bottom to *make* one pay; how they crave to be *hangmen*.”⁵⁵ Sealed off from the present the resentful man remains closed off from others.

Instances of anger are worse in the resentful than the healthy because the resentful man has a more hostile view of the world. For this reason law attempts to restrict resentful revenge and instead institutionalize impersonal systems of punishment.⁵⁶ However, the “senseless raging” of rancorous grudges can emerge in the political community.⁵⁷ Nietzsche notes that a resentful culture results in a regressive people incapable of moving forward from the past.⁵⁸ Such *ressentiment* can manifest itself publicly in a variety of ways: “The scapegoat can be God – in Russia there is no lack of such atheists from *ressentiment* – or the social order, or education and training, or the

⁵³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 330.

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 400 and *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books 1989) 29.

⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 123.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 74-76.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

Jews, or the nobility, or those who have turned out well in any way.”⁵⁹ Nietzsche himself specifically mentions anti-Semitism, atheism, the French Revolution, the Reformation, and democracy as manifestations of *ressentiment*.⁶⁰ Although Nietzsche most frequently hounds Christianity with accusations of a rancorous culture of resentment, even he says it is only a “special case.”⁶¹ By no means do we necessarily have to equate Christianity with a culture of *ressentiment*. Indeed, setting his polemic against Christianity aside, Nietzsche’s notion of *ressentiment* would seem applicable to a political culture consumed by past wrongs, perpetuating grievances, and desire for revenge. With a “venomous eye” turned against the other, the resentful can bring the “most dangerous of all explosives” to the world of politics, which becomes more stark and violent.⁶²

There is much about *ressentiment* that Nietzsche finds repugnant. Most of all, however, he expresses concern over its self-perpetuating effects. Being pulled out of the present and always taking the vantage point from behind results in a sickness infecting the self and a poison afflicting others. The resentful are not a special case of humans. This is a reference to the human capacity for suffering generally. Humans are always susceptible to suffering and because we have impressionable psyches we are susceptible to resentment. What are we to do with our suffering, with our susceptibility to the scars that can linger and sour us against a life that seems inhospitable at times? When we cannot find a place for the past, our inability to deal with it forces us to continue bearing it. We are at risk of responding to suffering by carrying it around with us for a long time. Although *ressentiment* begins as a response of the wounded to the hurt of the past, it

⁵⁹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 400.

⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 54, 124 and *The Will to Power*, 400.

⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 231.

⁶² Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 40 and 126.

continues as psychological damage as we carry the past around with us. Nietzsche describes *ressentiment* mostly in terms of anger, but behind this anger is despair over being trapped in suffering and being sealed off from anything beyond it. Falling into *ressentiment* inhibits growth beyond pain and failure as the crippled will turns back on itself to poison the personality.

For Nietzsche, one needs strength to move beyond suffering. Instead of finding this strength, *ressentiment*'s focus on the past seduces the suffering into despising themselves and others, effectively cutting them off from openness to healing. As an over-extension of consciousness of the past, *ressentiment* leads to the perpetuation of itself. It becomes both pathogen and symptom. More than the pain of any experience, it is the illness of *ressentiment* that contrasts the "ill-constituted" to the "well-constituted," who, because of their psychological health, is capable of living life in the present moment.⁶³

In contrast to *ressentiment*, in which the past continually festers in the consciousness as a cruel hostile antagonism against all things, Nietzsche discusses the forgetfulness that leaves the mind unscarred by any trace of the past. Nietzsche first describes forgetting with some depth in his *Untimely Meditations* where he depicts it as freedom not only from particular memories but also from consciousness of time entirely. He uses the image of grazing cattle to describe the pleasant character of the experience of timelessness:

Consider the cattle, grazing as they pass you by: they do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, and so from morn till night and from day to day, fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure, and thus neither melancholy or bored. This is a hard sight for man to see; for, though he thinks himself better than the animals because he is human,

⁶³ Ibid., 44-45.

he cannot help envying them their happiness – what they have, a life neither bored nor painful, is precisely what he wants, yet he cannot have it because he refuses to be like an animal. A human being may well ask an animal: ‘Why do you not speak to me of your happiness but only stand and gaze at me?’ The animal would like to answer, and say: ‘The reason is I always forget what I was going to say’ – but then he forgot this answer too, and stayed silent: so that the human being was left wondering... Thus the animal lives *unhistorically*: for it is contained in the present, like a number without any awkward fraction left over; it does not know how to dissimulate, it conceals nothing and at every instant appears wholly as what it is; it can therefore never be anything but honest.⁶⁴

Nietzsche proceeds with a lengthy discussion on the uses and pitfalls of the study of history. However, this and other passages indicate that a component of his approach to history is an understanding of time. Therefore, the animal lives unhistorically in two senses. First, it lives without any understanding of the unfolding series of events that comprise the history of the species or herd. Second, and more importantly here, the animal’s mind remains oblivious of time. This mind exists with neither memory’s consciousness of the past nor the projecting consciousness of the future; it is simply “contained in the present.” This containment of life in the present is the experience of forgetting as the suspended consciousness of time.

Nietzsche considers this suspension necessary for human life:

Forgetting is essential to action of any kind, just as not only light but darkness too is essential for the life of everything organic. A man who wanted to feel historically through would be like one forcibly deprived of sleep, or an animal that had to live by rumination and ever repeated rumination. Thus: it is possible to live almost without memory, and to live happily moreover, as the animal demonstrates; but it is altogether impossible to *live* at all without forgetting. Or to express my theme even more simply: *there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing, whether this living thing be a man or a people or a culture.*⁶⁵

Several important points may be noted about this passage. Again, historical consciousness involves an awareness of not only history but also time; the latter is of

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 60-1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

more interest here. Also, Nietzsche deems unconsciousness of the past necessary, at least to a certain extent, for the carrying on of activity. This necessity has several components. First, human beings simply cannot hold the memory of every moment of their lives in their mind at all times. Something of the past will fade from consciousness. Second, forgetting is not only an inevitability but also a requirement. Dwelling on the past occupies the consciousness and inhibits life in the present. Third, this requirement of forgetting is, at least in part, a psychological necessity with emotional health implications. Nietzsche gives some attention to the first of these components later in the essay.⁶⁶ The latter two he develops in rich detail in his *Genealogy*.

There, too, he refers to man as the “animal which needs to be forgetful, in which forgetting represents a force, a form of *robust* health.”⁶⁷ The healthy man can will to forget:

Forgetting is no mere *vis inertiae* as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression, that is responsible for the fact that what we experience and absorb enters our consciousness as little while we are digesting it (one might call the process ‘inpsychation’) as does the thousandfold process, involved in physical nourishment – so-called ‘incorporation.’ To close the doors and windows of consciousness for a time; to remain undisturbed by the noise and struggle of our underworld of utility organs working with and against one another; a little quietness, a little *tabula rasa* of the consciousness, to make room for new things, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for regulation, foresight, premeditation (for our organism is an oligarchy) – that is the purpose of active forgetfulness, which is like a doorkeeper, a preserver of psychic order, repose, and etiquette: so that it will be immediately obvious how there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no *present*, without forgetfulness.⁶⁸

The will acts upon consciousness to dismiss reflection on the past and, in doing such, eliminates the presence of the past. Forgetting involves opening of consciousness to the

⁶⁶ In *Untimely Meditations*, 70-1, Nietzsche argues that since we inevitably must put some of our memory of history aside, we ought to do it in the most selective way.

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 58.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 57-8.

wider scope of temporality. This passage includes openness to both consciousness of the present moment and consciousness of the future. With forgetting we actively release the mind from the past and turn consciousness toward the present moment when activity can be taken up and a future can be projected. This passage describes the role of forgetting in consciousness's processing of experience through time. Further, it highlights the particular importance of forgetting for maintaining psychological health. As Jaspers described in his interpretation of Nietzsche, "forgetting is not simply an automatic memory-process, but a requirement of life for the success of psychic absorption of experiences."⁶⁹ Recuperation from psychologically damaging experiences necessitates turning the mind from the burden which the past presents.

Forgetting is a return of consciousness to a state free of this burden, to innocence. Innocence includes an absence of the psychological marks of experience to which we are susceptible, such as guilt or resentment. The return to this childlike innocence follows the release of consciousness from the past. Rather than dwelling on the past, the child lives fully engaged with the present moment:⁷⁰ "a child which, having as yet nothing of the past to shake off, plays in blissful blindness between the hedges of past and future."⁷¹ Unconscious of time and unencumbered by the past, the child is capable of creativity in responding to the moment: "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes.'"⁷² In other words, the child is open to his possibilities.

⁶⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to Understanding his Philosophical Activity*, trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1969) 137.

⁷⁰ Joan Stamborough, "Thoughts on the Innocence of Becoming," in *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, ed. Daniel Conway, (New York: Routledge, 1998) 398-9.

⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 61.

⁷² Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 139.

Just as *ressentiment* exhibits hostility toward the self and the world, with forgetting we release ourselves and our world from the weight of the past. Nietzsche argues that it opens us to happiness and kindness to others:

In the case of the smallest of greatest happiness, however, it is always the same thing that makes happiness happiness: the ability to forget or, expressed in more scholarly fashion, the capacity to feel *unhistorically* during its duration. He who cannot sink down to the threshold of the moment and forget all the past, who cannot stand balanced like a goddess of victory without growing dizzy and afraid, will never know what happiness is – worse, he will never do anything to make others happy.⁷³

Nietzsche's description of forgetting also reads much like forgiveness at times. Through forgetting we release others from their crimes against us:

To be incapable of taking one's enemies, one's accidents, even one's misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and forget (a good example of this in modern times is Mirabeau, who had no memory for insults and vile actions done him and was unable to forgive simply because he – forgot). Such a man shakes off with a *single* shrug many vermin that eat deep into others; here alone genuine 'love of one's enemies' is possible.⁷⁴

Being open to possibilities means being open to others and at all times prepared to forget past wrongs. Nevertheless, behind these effects lies Nietzsche's deeper concern for the health of the self. The noble spirit's healthy psyche of indifference toward wrongs, rather than a compassionate motivation toward forgiveness, prevents his dwelling upon the past.

Forgetting is "an apparatus of repression" that makes life possible.⁷⁵ However, the distinction must be made between repression in this sense and self-delusion. Indeed, self-delusion would be dangerously closer to *ressentiment* than to forgetting. As mentioned above, Nietzsche remains deeply suspicious of bottled up reactivity. Like *ressentiment*, these repressed sentiments, despite their masking behind self-delusion, eat

⁷³ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 62.

⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 39.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

away at the psyche before exploding against the world. Nietzsche refuses to conceal “ugly or boring content ... with so-called ‘beautiful form.’”⁷⁶

Nevertheless, scholars point out that in Nietzsche’s view we are always involved in some sort of self-deception or illusion.⁷⁷ Forgetting would allow us to exclude much of the past from memory and ensure that the image of our past remains agreeable. The difference it seems is the degree to which Nietzsche points to the willful self-conscious treatment of memory. Rather than ignoring the past, Nietzsche calls upon us to deal with it through consciousness even if that involves willing it out of mind.

Nietzsche does not dismiss the past entirely. He acknowledges the facticity of the past and of memory. Through memory we confront the undeniable existence of the past:

Yet its play must be disturbed; all too soon it will be called out of its state of forgetfulness. Then it will learn to understand the phrase ‘it was’: that password which gives conflict, suffering and satiety access to man so as to remind him what his existence fundamentally is – an imperfect tense that can never be a perfect one.⁷⁸

This ‘it was’ fetters the will which cannot effectively direct itself backwards in time:

Willing liberates; but what is it that puts even the liberator himself in fetters? ‘It was’ – that is the name of the will’s gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of the past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time’s covetousness, that is the will’s loneliest melancholy.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 166.

⁷⁷ Jaspers, 133, and Alexander Nehamas, “The Genealogy of Genealogy: Interpretation in Nietzsche’s *Second Untimely Meditation* and in *On the Genealogy of Morals*,” in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994), 272-3.

⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 61.

⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 251.

Although the past itself as an event is unchangeable, memory is malleable.⁸⁰ As such, it allows us to interpret the past in relation to the present – at times drawing upon it, at other times dismissing it from consciousness.

Looking to the past can be beneficial for the present and for projection into the future. Indeed, Nietzsche redefines the forgetful unhistorical mind, of which he so heartily approves. Rather than defining it as the unconsciousness of time seen among cattle, he turns to a more complete consciousness of time, which draws in the past and the future but gives primary deference to the present moment:

Let us call them historical men; looking to the past impels them toward the future and fires their courage to go on living and their hope that what they want will still happen, that happiness lies behind the hill they are advancing towards....They glance behind them only so that from the process so far, they can learn to understand the present and to desire the future more vehemently; they have no idea that, despite their preoccupation with history, they in fact think and act unhistorically, or that their occupation with history stands in the service, not of pure knowledge, but of life.⁸¹

This capacity to draw upon the past for the sake of the present is characteristic of humanity. Drawing an understanding from the past as it appears in consciousness proves essential for sustaining the present in a variety of ways. A handful of examples will suffice. We can recover inspiring moments of power.⁸² We can recover a sense of meaning and a feeling from our possession of a past.⁸³ Finally, we need a consciousness of the past in order to pass judgment; serving justice requires a suspension of forgetting.⁸⁴

Thus, a tension emerges in Nietzsche's writings on memory. Although Nietzsche never explicitly resolves this tension, some sense can be made from it. Forgetting

⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 80.

⁸¹ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 65.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 75-6.

appears in these texts in two ways. One, Nietzsche describes the experience of being unconscious of the past. Memory can provide possibilities but so too can it inhibit possibilities:

It is true that only by imposing limits on this unhistorical element by thinking, reflecting, comparing, distinguishing, drawing conclusions, only through the appearance within that encompassing cloud of a vivid flash of light – thus only through the power of employing the past for the purposes of life and of again introducing into history that which has been done and is gone – did man become man: but with an excess of history man again ceases to exist, and without that envelope of the unhistorical he would never had begun or dared to begin.⁸⁵

Worse still in Nietzsche's view, certain memories of past experience can exert an overwhelming power over us. Rather than drawing possibility from the past, in these cases we are drawn from the present to the experiences of the past. Nietzsche worries about the psychological effects of this stagnancy, of the sense that the defining moment lies behind us. We are better off, in Nietzsche's eyes, if consciousness is emptied of those dominating moments that seize us. For this reason he points to the advantages of forgetting not only our worst moments, but also our best and most favored, including those in which we have shown or received kindness:

There are occurrences of such a delicate nature that one does well to cover them up with some rudeness to conceal them; there are actions of love and extravagant generosity after which nothing is more advisable than to take a stick and give any eyewitness a sound thrashing: that would muddle his memory. Some know how to muddle and abuse their own memory in order to have their revenge against at least this only witness: shame is inventive.⁸⁶

Those who can forget the past have the capacity to stand beyond any single experience. Nietzsche advocates continued openness to the possibilities of the present, which may differ greatly from the molds of past experience.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 64.

⁸⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 50.

Yet, neither does Nietzsche, the most acerbic critic of the herd, desire that we become like the cattle he describes in his *Untimely Meditations*, with no consciousness of time. Rather, he has the keen psychological insight to grasp how we may long for the animal's ignorance of time and envy its contentment in the present moment, while at the same time recognizing the importance of memory: "The unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure."⁸⁷ Therefore, Nietzsche understands forgetting in a second sense, as a distancing of the consciousness from the past. This approach to forgetting proves to be more difficult as it involves internal struggle. In his *Genealogy*, Nietzsche introduces the notion of "pathos of distance." This pathos of distance refers to the distance between the noble and the lower social strata. The pathos of distance, as Nietzsche points out, may also occur in individual souls.⁸⁸ In the soul, which for Nietzsche is multiplicity, the higher selves have pathos of distance from lower selves. Just as the sight of the lower strata fill the noble with a sense of superiority, the soul looks upon itself to see what it can rise above and takes confidence in the strength of its higher possibilities. The pathos of distance within a human soul is part of the struggle with the self, which Nietzsche terms self-mastery. In the case of memory, the pathos of distance is the internal struggle for selfhood in the face of the experience of time in consciousness. We have a "plastic power" with which to shape our understanding of ourselves despite the experiences through time: "I mean by plastic power the capacity to develop out of oneself in one's own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what

⁸⁷ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 63.

⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 201.

is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken molds.”⁸⁹

Rather than being oblivious to time, the plastic power of the unhistorical mind involves a heightened consciousness of time and exercises form-shaping power within this internal struggle: “With the word ‘the unhistorical’ I designate the art and power of *forgetting* and of enclosing oneself within a bounded *horizon*.”⁹⁰ These horizons are key to the internal struggle with experiences through time. Through them we are able to understand identity and free ourselves of the burden of too much memory:

A living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon; if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself, and at the same time too self-centered to enclose its own view within that of another, it will pine away slowly or hasten to its timely end. Cheerfulness, the good conscience, the joyful deed, confidence in the future – all of them depend, in the case of the individual as of a nation, on the existence of a line dividing the bright and discernible from the unilluminable and dark; on one’s being just as able to forget at the right time as to remember at the right time; on the possession of a powerful instinct for sensing when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically.⁹¹

Recognizing the detrimental effects of reducing ourselves to any single experience of the past, Nietzsche present forgetting as a willful openness to possibility within the present moment. The present must have some freedom from past to exist at all. For life to be possible in the present moment, there are certain things which we simply must put out of mind and let go. Nietzsche sees this forgetful activity as part of the typical processing of experience.

Nietzsche also aims the faculty of temporal consciousness in the opposite direction and discusses the importance of the future for life in the present. This consciousness of future occurs as forward projection but functions in much the same

⁸⁹ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 62.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

manner as memory. Thus, projection is to be understood as a drawing of the future into the present via consciousness, rather than simply as an emptying of the present into the future. As with memories of past experience, projection draws possibilities for existence from an image of the future into the mind in the present.

Nietzsche provides his most thorough description of projection in his *Genealogy* alongside his discussions of memory and forgetting:

Now this animal which needs to be forgetful, in which forgetting represents a force, a form of *robust* health, has bred in itself an opposing faculty, a memory, with the aid of which forgetfulness is abrogated in certain cases – namely in those cases where promises are made. This involves no mere passive inability to rid oneself of an impression, no mere indigestion through a once-pledged word with which one cannot ‘have done,’ but an active *desire* not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real *memory of the will*: so that between the original ‘I will,’ ‘I shall do this’ and the actual discharge of the will, its *act*, a world of strange new things, circumstances, even acts of will may be interposed without breaking this long chain of will. But how many things this presupposes! To ordain the future in advance in this way, man must first have learned to distinguish necessary events from chance ones, to think causally, to see and anticipate distant eventualities as if they belonged to the present, to decide with certainty what is the goal and what the means to it, and in general be able to calculate and compute. Man himself must first of all have become *calculable, regular, necessary*, even in his own image of himself, if he is able to stand security for *his own future*, which is what one who promises does!⁹²

Here, the drawing of the future into the present is clearly presented in terms of the self.

As we posit a future self through our projects, hopes, or anticipations, we present that self to consciousness where it takes on reality as a possibility for existence, which we experience psychologically. The sovereign individual, who projects himself into the future, wills a self through time; this act of willing brings that self into the present as a possibility. Indeed, this individual exhibits “mastery over himself.”⁹³ Just as to remember is to draw in a possibility from the past with which to mold a self, to look to

⁹² Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 58.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

the future in consciousness is to draw in a possibility from the future with which to shape a self.

As willing a future brings the future into the present, the future is “already alive in anticipation.”⁹⁴ Projecting ourselves into the future actually develops the present moment:

Visions of future possibilities determine our present will, the more decisively, in fact, the more extensively the totality of possibilities operates....Through the medium of possibilities, the future, as that which we will, affects our present.⁹⁵

We turn our attention to the present in the form of “a decisive awareness of the present moment”⁹⁶ – the meaning of which we only become aware of in reference to something beyond it, i.e. future.⁹⁷ In terms of the understanding of selfhood, this consciousness of present and future allows us to move beyond simply thinking of ourselves in terms of an identity through time to living out this identity. Projecting a self, then, is part of becoming a self. We not only are attracted to these possibilities of future selves as to our hopes and goals, but also draw them toward us and experience them in consciousness as some part of who we are.

This understanding of projection provokes the “most dangerous point of view” that everything we do or fail to do in this moment is as vitally important for everything yet to come as all the great events of the past.⁹⁸ Interestingly, he develops this notion in the context of promise-making. Promises have content; to make a promise is to will a particular future. Furthermore, it is to will a particular self toward the future.

Nietzsche’s discussion of the capacity to make and keep promises highlights the

⁹⁴ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 95.

⁹⁵ Jaspers, 250.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁹⁷ Higgins, 211.

⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 213.

awakening of responsibility this projection engenders. The self that is drawn into the present via projection stands for a particular purpose. Just as forgetting indicated the negative dimension of freedom as freedom from the past, projection indicates the positive dimension of freedom as freedom for a purpose. It is not enough, then, simply to be free from the past. Rather, one must also be free for the present. Our goals and hopes make claims upon us in this moment. Coherence of self through time involves commitment. We commit ourselves to ourselves and to others with our promises. However, for Nietzsche, the commitment to others remains secondary to the commitment to oneself. The integrity to keep promises depends upon mastering oneself through time. If an ethical content emerges here, it is limited to keeping promises once made.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, it does appear that Nietzsche's well-known individualism is tempered by some sense of intersubjectivity. Although promises are made primarily for oneself in Nietzsche's account, they are made to others. In this context, and most especially in *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche writes of the healthy human as a being who is "strong and fruitful" only when "bounded by a horizon" that is drawn around itself but at the same time not "too self-centered to enclose its own view within that of another."¹⁰⁰ While Nietzsche does not develop this sense of intersubjectivity, it is nevertheless an acknowledgement of the existence and importance of others. Neither does Nietzsche develop the notion of "horizon." As I have argued, "being bounded by a horizon" constitutes a temporal understanding of the self but it also constitutes a narrative of the self with others. To choose a self in such a milieu, I argue, is tantamount to what Nietzsche calls choosing a style.

⁹⁹ David Owen, "Modernity, Ethics and Counter-Ideals: Amor Fati, Eternal Recurrence and the Overman," in *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments*, vol. 3, ed. Daniel Conway (New York: Routledge, 1998), 202-3.

¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 62.

Nietzsche places two constraints upon projection. First, the possibilities revealed in consciousness of the future must already be present in some way:

We do not believe that a man will become another if he is not that other already; i.e., if he is not, as is often the case, a multiplicity of persons, at least the embryos of persons. In this case, one can bring a different role into the foreground and draw 'the former man' back.¹⁰¹

No single past experience exhausts all of one's possible modes of existence, but Nietzsche adds that one cannot create what is not already in existence in some sense. Second, the present is not to be justified in terms of a future. Rather, the future is to be brought into the present to serve its purpose there. Turning from the self before us in the moment for the sake of living for a future goal evaporates the present.¹⁰² In other words, consciousness of the future is to empower life in the present rather than dominate it.

The healthy memory, then, is part of a narrative structure of temporal consciousness that includes past, present, and future dimensions. The dimensions of past and future occur in consciousness as presence of the past and presence of the future, drawing time into a structure that constitutes the consciousness of the present moment in which this narrative appears. These dimensions of time, which are drawn into consciousness, bring with them their content. Specifically, as part of the narrative of temporal consciousness, they draw upon presentations of experience and introduce them as potential components of selfhood in the present. They are components of selfhood in that these memories or projections present us with the possibilities through which we understand ourselves and engage our world.

In Nietzsche's analysis, forgetting operates alongside remembering and projection, in order to make life meaningful in the present. While we take possibilities

¹⁰¹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 211.

¹⁰² Stombough, 394.

form our pasts and projected futures upon ourselves, we are cautioned to preserve our narrative understanding because it frees us from domination by the past. Rather than appearing simply as the past, this moment can occur as a present with a past that is also directed toward a future. The past and the future in this case provide for the fullness of the present moment. This sort of narrative consciousness of time resists the evaporation of the present moment under the psychological burden of retaining the experience of the past in memory:

When the past speaks it always speaks as an oracle: only if you are an architect of the future and know the present will you understand it...It would be right to say that only he who constructs the future has a right to judge the past. If you look ahead and set yourself a great goal, you at the same time restrain that rank analytical impulse which makes the present into a desert and all tranquility, all peaceful growth and maturing almost impossible. Draw about yourself the fence of a great and comprehensive hope, of a hope-filled striving.¹⁰³

This “power to remind” our understanding of the past fails to undo the reality of the past: “everything bears witness to what we are, our friendships and enmities, our glance and the clasp of our hand, our memory and that which we do not remember.”¹⁰⁴ But we can move beyond the psychological damages of past experience.

By arranging this narrative of time in consciousness, we “give style” to a self. We provide for the unity of identity across the various possibilities of ourselves that emerge in the flux of fractured experiences.¹⁰⁵ In his study of Nietzsche, Thiele states “to stylize something is to give it an identity, form, coherence, and strength, to lend the appearance of unity to a plurality.”¹⁰⁶ As we are presented with the possibilities of ourselves that emerge from our consciousness of the past and future, we are faced with

¹⁰³ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 94.

¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 129.

¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 232.

¹⁰⁶ Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 64.

the prospect that we are never simply what we are at any moment without the potential of being something else. The narrative, which shapes our consciousness of these possibilities, is the present into which the past and future are drawn; we are in the present moment as a self insofar as we have consciousness of past experience and the expectation for future experience. We are products of the past and the future, but only insofar as we are products of the present into which they are drawn. From the narrative consciousness, the self who lives in the present recalling a past and acting toward a future emerges. To be sure, this consciousness exhibits a tensioned order in the struggle of all that one has been and might be.

Nietzsche's analysis of memory rises from his concern with the psychology of this struggle. The man of *ressentiment* has abdicated this struggle and relinquished the self entirely to the consciousness of the past. Indeed, the weak "hate the constraint of style."¹⁰⁷ In terms of understanding selfhood, forgetting is an element of this tensioned order that allows for the primacy of consciousness of the present even as it draws upon consciousness of past and future. The self that emerges from this reflects the arrangement of possibilities drawn from within this order rather than from idealized fantasies:

Nietzsche's final position involves affirmation of man just as he is with all his possibilities...The actual man is far superior to some man or other who is merely wished for or dreamed about – some possible ideal man...Still such affirmation does not mean contentment and passivity.¹⁰⁸

In contrast to *ressentiment*, giving style to an understanding of oneself through time also allows for self-satisfaction. Understanding oneself through formation of the narrative consciousness is an act of power that liberates from suffering and weakness.

¹⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 233.

¹⁰⁸ Jaspers, 126-7.

The noble spirit who forgets and the sovereign individual who remembers are both representations of temporal understanding as will to power.¹⁰⁹ Experiences do not simply hang around in a passive consciousness. As an exercise of will, consciousness of time is creative by default, not only retaining various images of the self but also actively constituting a self across these images. We triumph over our past moments of suffering and weakness through the struggle for the coherence of identity. If one can discover in the internalized pathos of distance the confidence and joy with oneself exhibited by the noble spirit, one can equally resist the temptations to *ressentiment*.

In this sense, consciousness of moments of the past that engender suffering when recollected opens the path to transformation by drawing itself into a narrative range beyond these single moments. These moments cease to appear as our ultimate reality.¹¹⁰ They are dealt with in relation to a broader experience of meaning that emerges from the narrative of our life. For Nietzsche, meaning is deeply involved in the narratives we live, rather than inhering in isolated events themselves. The experience of living in relation to some meaning in one's life can be engaged in the present moment as this narrative emerges. What emerges within the narrative has significance in relation to this meaning. It is something for the sake of which we can be willing to live and accept responsibility.¹¹¹

Consciousness situates past experience within the narrative understanding so that it has the context of meaning. This brings about what Nietzsche refers to as redemption:

¹⁰⁹ For further elaboration see Lingis, 37-63.

¹¹⁰ For further elaboration, see the discussion of suffering and transfiguration in Paul Vladier "Dionysus Versus the Crucified," in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 250.

¹¹¹ Nehamas, "The Genealogy of Genealogy: Interpretation in Nietzsche's *Second Untimely Meditation* and in *On the Genealogy of Morals*," 281-2.

To recreate all 'it was' into a 'thus I willed it' – that alone should I call redemption....All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident – until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I willed it.' Until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.'¹¹²

To be sure, this is a very restricted notion of redemption. It is not the Christian redemption of the soul or world. Instead, it is redemption strictly reserved to consciousness. It occurs as past experience is processed in the tensioned order of a narrative structure. The past cannot literally be erased. It is refashioned and repositioned within the consciousness. This recovery from past experience is made possible by having a story – an understanding of oneself in the present with a past and future.

Particularly since narrative involves projection as discussed above, narrative consciousness can recall or dismiss even the worst atrocities, but as it does so it opens us to further possibilities drawn into the present for which we are responsible. Rather than being consumed by the most painful memories of the past, we struggle to redeem the past in our accountability in the present for the each temporal dimension of our narrative.¹¹³

To experience temporality in this way is to experience the psychological transformation of *amor fati*, a love of fate:

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.¹¹⁴

This is not fatalism, which sees human life as entirely subject to the whims of the cosmos. Indeed, this is a turn of the psyche away from consciousness of what happens to it and toward consciousness of one's active experience of life. Psychologically, *amor fati* exhibits love of self and the world. In contrast, the man of *ressentiment*'s reactive focus

¹¹² Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 251.

¹¹³ Owen develops a similar argument. See page 203.

¹¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 258.

upon what is done to him manifests as hostility toward himself and the world. *Amor fati* is consciousness consumed with living in the present moment and for the present moment in all the richness of its narrative quality. This engagement with one's life is active in such a way as to draw attention away from concerns over what wrongs it suffers.¹¹⁵ Thus, *amor fati* reminds us of the noble spirit who lives free from the psychological burden brought upon by past suffering:

Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *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.¹¹⁶

Nietzsche's insight into the significance of memory for politics is that we understand ourselves through our memories and our projects. He recognizes the formidable power of resentment to corrode our psyches and experiences of the present. So too does he recognize the importance of forgetting, of letting go of those past experiences which gnaw away at our minds. Nietzsche does not want us to live without memory or fate. Rather he wants us to be able to live beyond them, to master them and give them meaning within the narrative of our lives. The created self is the understanding of ourselves which emerges from our stories.

Yet it is also a discovered self, for fate is in operation here. We are to love fate. Optimism is therefore as limited as the bounds of this psychological becoming are marked. Self-overcoming involves this recognition because it is precisely this recognition that engenders a struggle with the past, rather than a mere repression of it. Nietzsche notes that there is something already decided in who we are that limits the

¹¹⁵ See also Thiele's description of *amor fati*, 199-201.

¹¹⁶ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 223.

range of selves we can become. Self-overcoming requires a healthy understanding of fate. It is a process of creation and discovery.¹¹⁷

Resentment is a minimized and displaced horizon and requires a change of self-understanding. But problems remain with this analysis. How we are to decide what to remember and what to forget in order to surpass the past remains unclear. This weakness is a troubling shortcoming, for the limits are difficult to measure. What is to ground our horizons and toward what purpose do we shape them? When his approach to forgetting appears in his cultural critique, we are left with the threats of nihilistic groundlessness and solipsism.

These weaknesses emerge as a consequence of Nietzsche's overriding concern with the self, his self-centered approach. Nietzsche offers little in terms of a discussion of how we are to achieve the transformation of consciousness from resentment to *amor fati*. Psychology of memory shapes the possibilities we live. But if we are crippled and weakened in resentment, whence comes the power to project or make horizons? It appears the answer is an internal willing of consciousness. But this is insufficient. Where is the psychological strength for this willing to come from if we are in a state of resentment, shame, degradation, or weakness? Where is the confidence and self-love, which seem so necessary for health in this analysis, to come from if we are unhealthy? While Nietzsche fails to reject intersubjectivity entirely, he rarely addresses it. Furthermore, his rejection of transcendence leaves him unable to speak to questions of justice. For answers that Nietzsche cannot provide I turn to writings from classical

¹¹⁷ Conway points out several problems with self-creation alone: too near idealism, escape from the reality of empirical self, too voluntaristic, does not include limits of creative capacities, cannot become what one is only by an act of the will, confusion of cause and effect, and the possibility that self-creation may be an effect of the order of the soul rather than vice versa. He argues that Nietzsche recognizes these and attempts to avoid them (71-2).

Greece and ancient Israel, which also reveal the need for a transformation of consciousness but offer sources of this transformation beyond the horizon of the self. Specifically, I turn first to the drama *Philoctetes*, where Sophocles illustrates the phenomenology that Nietzsche discusses. The strength of the text, however, is its depiction of not only the devastation incurred by the failure to forget, but also the sense of intersubjectivity and the sense of transcendence as sustaining forces for overcoming this damage. Since Sophocles begins a more implied, rather than direct, development of transcendence, it will fall to *Isaiah*, where intersubjectivity and transcendence are interwoven in narrative form, to discuss the latter. For now, I turn to Sophocles to consider the former.

The Memory of Friendship

In his later plays Sophocles seems especially preoccupied with two aspects of human existence: unmerited human suffering and the transformative possibilities of that suffering. He subjects his heroes to the vicissitudes of fate, often horribly so; and then rescues them from their terrible suffering and transforms them from mere mortals to heroes or even immortals. Oedipus is, of course, the prototype for this preoccupation, but there is an even more interesting Sophoclean hero who experiences the pathos of human existence as well as the attendant transformation, namely Philoctetes. Granted, the Theban trilogy easily makes for the better drama and the better tragedy; but the *Philoctetes* presents us with a hero who not only suffers but who is shown to resent that suffering deeply. That resentment and its effect on Philoctetes is the focus of this chapter, in particular, because it provides an opportunity to see how Nietzsche's theory of resentment and memory illuminates our understanding of Philoctetes. In turn, the transformation of Philoctetes serves to illuminate, in both positive and negative fashion, Nietzsche's views on resentment and forgetting.

The story of Philoctetes, albeit not the play, begins with the first invasion of Troy or rather with the hero, Heracles, who led the Greek army to victory. Indeed the fates of Philoctetes and Heracles are uniquely bound together in this narrative. Born of an affair between a mortal mother and Zeus, Heracles was destined to a life of heroism complicated by the meddling and jealous enmity of the Goddess Hera, wife of Zeus. Indeed, not until Heracles has died and his mortal body burned in the funeral pyre is there a reconciliation between Heracles, now a god himself, and Hera. The funeral pyre is the site of the first encounter between Heracles and Philoctetes. In agony and rage from a

poisoned robe mistakenly given to him by his wife, Heracles wishes to die and builds a funeral pyre. In exchange for lighting the funeral pyre Philoctetes is given Heracles' famous bow and arrows.

The drama of Philoctetes as told by Sophocles begins in the tenth and final year of the second invasion of Troy. At the beginning of that invasion, Odysseus immediately informs the audience, Philoctetes, a Greek commander on his way to Troy, accidentally wandered into the sacred grove of Chryse and was bitten by a snake. The wound caused him so much agony and is so foul and disconcerting to his fellow warriors that, led by Odysseus, they have abandoned Philoctetes on the uninhabited island of Lemnos. Now ten years later, with Achilles and Ajax dead, and in need of Philoctetes and the famous bow, Odysseus, with the hoped for assistance of Neoptolemus (son of Achilles) has returned to retrieve Philoctetes or at the very least, his bow, so that Troy can be defeated. (A prophecy has revealed that Troy cannot be defeated without the bow of Heracles.)

True to his reputation for guile and rhetoric, Odysseus persuades Neoptolemus to enter into the deception whereby Philoctetes will be tricked into thinking that he is going to be taken home, when in fact he will be sailing to Troy. For his part, Neoptolemus is persuaded to join in the ruse, largely because he is motivated by yet another prophecy that he, the son of Achilles, should be involved in the defeat of Troy and he wants his rightful fame. Nonetheless he is disconcerted by Odysseus's deception.

Neoptolemus plays his part well. He and his fellow Greek sailors meet Philoctetes, pretend they do not know who he is and listen to his story of isolation and great suffering as well as Odysseus's complicity in it. Neoptolemus tells of his own pain, how Odysseus and the sons of Atreus (Agamemnon and Menelaus) have denied him

rightful ownership of his father's weapons and therefore of his rightful place in the coming defeat of Troy. Philoctetes is moved by Neoptolemus' telling; indeed they both agree that fate has been unkind and unjust to them. Philoctetes pleads with Neoptolemus to take him home to Greece and Neoptolemus agrees, although he has no intention of doing so. Their newfound kinship with one another is reinforced in the play by a member of the crew disguised as a merchant and sent by Odysseus who tells them of two separate plans to seize and force them to join the final expedition to Troy.

As he gathers his small store of belongings Philoctetes' wound causes him to suffer an intense seizure of pain, during which he gives his bow to Philoctetes for safe keeping. Neoptolemus is reminded by the chorus that this is a perfect opportunity to abandon Philoctetes once again, with the bow now in his possession. However, Neoptolemus has promised not to abandon Philoctetes yet again; moreover, he is of the opinion that the bow alone will not bring about the fall of Troy. Philoctetes is required.

The delay in the departure of the ships gives Neoptolemus sufficient time to contemplate his participation in the deception and the shame that it brings to an otherwise noble character. Thus, when Philoctetes awakens, Neoptolemus confesses his betrayal and Philoctetes responds in rage, demanding that his bow be returned. Odysseus appears and so long as Philoctetes is not in possession of the bow threatens to take Philoctetes to Troy by force and then seems satisfied with only the bow itself. Philoctetes retreats to his cave in sorrow, anger, and self-pity.

Neoptolemus cannot let this matter stand and in rebellion against Odysseus's wishes he urges Philoctetes to go with them to Troy. Understandably, Philoctetes is unwilling to trust Neoptolemus, even when his bow is returned to him, much to the

chagrin and fear of Odysseus. Indeed, Philoctetes attempts to kill Odysseus and fails only because Neoptolemus stops him. No amount of persuasion can convince Philoctetes to join the expedition to Troy; instead he pleads with Neoptolemus to take him home to Greece and Neoptolemus agrees

The departure to Greece is interrupted by the mysterious voice and appearance of Heracles who persuades Philoctetes that his true destiny is to be found in Troy, that a cure for his suffering is to be found in Troy. Shaken by the voice of the god and awakened from his self-pity, Philoctetes agrees to take his bow and to join the expedition with Neoptolemus.

As in all of Sophocles' plays, there is much to ponder in the *Philoctetes*. In this chapter attention, however, is drawn to the character of Philoctetes in general and to his bitter resentment over his suffering in particular. As indicated earlier, this analysis will proceed to examine that resentment in the context of Nietzsche's musings on resentment and memory.

Afflicted by the resentment of the goddess Chryse, Philoctetes has had time enough to build his own resentment over a long ten years. His exile is first and vividly described by the chorus of sailors from Neoptolemus' ship: "I feel sorry for him. No one to care for him, no companion to watch over him. Miserable and alone always, sick from his savage infection, bewildered as every new need rises, how does he cope? . . . He cries bitterly, but, far off, only Babbling Echo responds" (187-93, 206-07).¹¹⁸ What worse fate can there be, especially for a Greek, than to be exiled, separated from friends and family, and to be done so in the midst of physical pain and mental anguish? Sophocles makes it

¹¹⁸ Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, trans. Judith Affleck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Unless otherwise indicated all line references are to this translation.

clear that it is the isolation and the lack of care that afflicts Philoctetes as much as the wound itself. Indeed, Philoctetes himself expresses these thoughts as he remembers the day of his abandonment: “can you imagine what it was like for me, waking up here, after they’d gone? Getting up that day? Imagine the tears, the cries of anguish. Picture me, seeing the ships I had traveled with all gone and not a soul here: no one to help me; no one to ease the weariness of my affliction” (292-96). It falls to the chorus of Neoptolemus’ men to put to word the full anguish of Philoctetes’ exile and they do so in a mournful first choral song (*stasimon*) of the play:

I have never heard of
Or seen
Any mortal
Who has met with a more bitter fate
Than this man’s.

He harmed no one,
Cheated no one,
Was fair in dealing with others.
His destruction is unjust.

Wonder fills me.
How? How?
How has he held on to a life
So full of tears,
As he listened
Along
To the roar of the waves
Breaking around him?

He had no neighbour
Except himself,
Couldn’t visit
Because he couldn’t walk.
There was no one near to whom he could go
With whom he could share his troubles,
Weeping aloud,
Exchanging cries
For his gnawing,
Bloody pain.

When an attack came on,
His ulcerated foot,
Savage with pain,
Seeped hot, bloody pus;
But no one was there to offer relief
With soothing herbs
Gathered from the bounteous earth.

He would creep this way and that,
Crawling sometimes
Like a child without his loving nurse
To wherever he might get food,
When the soul-biting anguish loosed its grip. (664-702)

As both Sophocles and Nietzsche make clear, life in this condition becomes reactive rather than creative. As the later philosopher noted about the man of *ressentiment*, Philoctetes turns to his opposite, the continued strength of the Greek army, in order to negate it. He finds little within himself to affirm. Thus, his spirit turns to negation. Again, similar to the resentful man in Nietzsche's analysis, this negation fails to translate into self-affirmation; it is only a refusal, a resounding "No!" pronounced against the world. The "No" in Philoctetes takes many forms. Throughout all but the final scene of the play Philoctetes is adamant in his refusal to assist Odysseus and Neoptolemus in the war against Troy. He merely wishes to go home. In particular, he will not be persuaded by Odysseus, whom he regards as a "vicious, cruel man. . . . I'd as easily be persuaded to return from the dead to the light of day" (598-600). He is unconvinced by a chorus that tries to persuade him of the possibility of new beginnings in Troy. Even when that chorus invokes the gods in its pleading, Philoctetes responds in bitterness: "Never! Never! That is final. Not even if the fiery god of lightning, blazing in a thunderous flash should come at me" (1241-45). And, he is unwilling to be consoled or persuaded by Neoptolemus, in spite of the fact that Neoptolemus has admitted his

duplicity and, as an act of good faith and in defiance to Odysseus, has given back the sacred bow. Indeed, Philoctetes responds to this final entreaty in tragic resentment: “Hateful life! Why keep me alive any longer? Let me sink into the house of Death” (1414-15). It is this final negation that afflicts Philoctetes, a “No” to the self that is best reflected in earlier conversation with the chorus when he asks for a weapon. “A sword, Give me a sword, or an axe, any weapon you can find” (1253-54). “And what will you do with it,” asks the chorus. “Sever my head from my limbs with this hand. My mind is set on death. . . . I am nothing now” (1255-57 & 1268).

Bitterness is not uncommon among characters in Greek tragedy. While he does not specifically discuss Philoctetes, Voegelin explores the approach to bitterness among the tragedies in his study of Classical Greece.¹¹⁹ Voegelin lays out his argument with specific reference to Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Unbound*. Oceanus attempts to dissuade Prometheus from his bitterness against the new gods after his punishment. Instead he counsels Prometheus to “learn to know yourself and to acquire new ways.”¹²⁰ Voegelin argues that reflective self-knowledge generates an awareness of limitations and obligations that exist within an order within which the self is situated. Aeschylus situates Prometheus within an order in which Zeus has rulership and Prometheus’s challenge against this authority is self-willed. The order of the new gods never endangers the selfhood of Prometheus. Instead, his difficulties emerge from an absence of self in the Delphic understanding of self-consciousness.¹²¹ Prometheus, then, is called to understand himself within a broader context. His failure to do so and the bitterness that

¹¹⁹ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History Volume Two: The World of the Polis*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 259-61.

¹²⁰ As quoted by Voegelin in *Order and History Volume Two*, 259.

¹²¹ Voegelin, *Order and History Volume Two*, 259.

accompanies this failure are described within the drama as “no small madness” and “a sacred disease,” language familiar to both Nietzsche and Sophocles.¹²² This disease is related to his temporal stance. Self-understanding is not limited to knowledge of the past, but involves an awareness of new possibilities. According to Voegelin, Prometheus is contemptuous of the freshly emerging order. Prometheus can recall two previous tyrannical deities cast from power. Prometheus remains within this paradigm and fully expects a similar fate for Zeus. He fails to imagine the new order and remains resentful vindictive toward the new deities for their treatment of him. Voegelin argues that his healing can only take the form of a self-conscious submission to an order of broader scope than Prometheus’s current consciousness. For Voegelin, the struggle relates not only to the order of Prometheus’s soul, but also to order in civilization and history.¹²³

Philoctetes must undergo a similar transformation of consciousness from self-centered bitterness to a richer appreciation of context, although in this case it is more specifically temporal consciousness. He has had ten years to nurture his resentment and it has taken the shape of revenge, most especially against Odysseus and the sons of Atreus who caused him to be abandoned on Lemnos: “A curse on you,” he tells Odysseus. “This has been my constant prayer. But the gods have granted me nothing to give pleasure. . . . May your death be a painful one! . . . Land of my fathers, gods who watch on high, take vengeance. . . . My life is pitiable, but if I could see them dead, I could believe that I was rid of my infection” (1053-54, 1069, 1074-75, 1078). Once he learns of the deception against him, Philoctetes directs that spitefulness and need for vengeance against Neoptolemus as well. “Death take you all: the sons of Atreus first,

¹²² As quoted by Voegelin in *Order and History Volume Two*, 260.

¹²³ Voegelin, *Order and History Volume Two*, 259-261.

then Laertes' son – and you" (1350-51), he tells Neoptolemus. Indeed, once the bow is returned to Philoctetes, he tries to kill Odysseus, only to be stopped by Neoptolemus, who quickly tells him that "neither of us would win any honour" (1377) from the murder of Odysseus. Neoptolemus also remonstrates Philoctetes for allowing his malice to become a source of pollution. Early in the play Sophocles has Odysseus justifying the Greeks' exile of Philoctetes: "He kept filling the whole camp with his wild shouts and screams, offending the gods" (7-9). The sacramental worship of the gods was impossible so long as Philoctetes was part of the community. Yet, this pollution, and the wound that occasioned it, was not of Philoctetes' own making. Now, much later in the play, Neoptolemus makes clear that Philoctetes bears some responsibility for this new pollution he has brought to his fellows, namely a self-inflicted and self-destructive bitterness that threatens the community yet again. "Men must bear the fortune the gods give them," says Neoptolemus. "People who cling to self-inflicted injuries, like you, have no right to anyone's sympathy or pity. You have turned wild: you accept no advice, and, even when someone tries to offer a friendly word of warning, you are full of hate and assume he is your bitter enemy" (1388-94). The malice of Philoctetes' resentment not only rots away at the former hero and his vision of the world around him. As his own consciousness fixates on the past, Philoctetes condemns the world to this vantage as well.

Neoptolemus, in a case of the younger man teaching the elder, also provides Philoctetes with advice on how his poisonous resentment must be purged from his own psyche and from the community. This occurs, significantly, at the moment when Neoptolemus has restored his relationship with Philoctetes by admitting his participation

in the duplicity of Odysseus and by returning the bow to its rightful owner. Philoctetes recognizes this and tells Neoptolemus, “You have shown your true nature, child, the one you were born with” (1383). For his part, Neoptolemus vows on the name of Zeus to speak the truth and he tells Philoctetes: “Understand this, inscribe it in your brain. You are sick, and the source of your suffering is divine – you went near the guardian of Chryse, a snake who guards the roofless enclosure, watching over it from its hiding place. You will never find rest from this sickening affliction [and by inference neither will his Greek comrades] as long as the sun continues to rise and set where it does, unless you go of your own free will to the plain of Troy, meet with the sons of Asclepius who are with us there, and find relief from this disease; you, together with these weapons and my help, will be known as the one who sacked the citadel” (1395-1404). This prophecy, which Neoptolemus has heard from the Trojan prophet Helenus, assures Philoctetes of a proper hero’s role in the coming battle and it promises a cure for his wound. It is dependent upon his choice, his will, to place his resentment behind him and it echoes a more direct and perhaps clearer summons by the chorus in the second lyrical dialogue (*commus*) with Philoctetes, which occurs after Philoctetes has lost his bow and knows full well of the Odysseus’ plan to take him to Troy. Vowing not to leave Lemnos, Philoctetes is left alone with the chorus; and they offer strong advice. “A man should say what he thinks is right, but once he’s spoken, there should be an end to grudging, hurtful words” (1176-78). In short, enduring this suffering demands that Philoctetes accept the friendship offered him and engage in an act of willed forgetfulness.

Philoctetes has a keen sense of time, even though he is imprisoned in a past of suffering and a present of betrayal. Immediately after his bow has been returned and

Neoptolemus has told him of the honored fate that awaits him, he recognizes the young man as a person of honor and kindness and he is tempted to accept Neoptolemus' invitation to join the assault on Troy. In his ambivalence, Philoctetes speaks of his true fear: "It's not the pain of what's past that eats away at me; it is the prospect of what I can anticipate suffering at their hands in the future" (1422-25). More precisely, the sufferings and betrayals of his past not only dominates his present; they dominate his future.

Neoptolemus suggests a different vision of the future. Thus, Sophocles offers competing horizons of how past, present, and future intertwine; and he places before Philoctetes a choice of which to will. Significantly, Philoctetes remains embedded in his past until Heracles appears and associates his suffering with that of Philoctetes. "I endured much, passed through a sequence of labours, and now I have attained divine glory, as you can see. Know that a like experience awaits you: in exchange for your labours, a life of fame" (1494-97). We will have more to say later about the role of the divine in Philoctetes' decision. For now it is sufficient to emphasize that Heracles' empathetic vision of the future for Philoctetes is persuasive. He agrees to will a future that promises to release him from his past and to give him a present.

Nietzsche's theory of *amor fati* discussed earlier is surely taken from his knowledge of and affection for the Greek heroic tradition, the very tradition, of course, Sophocles is portraying in the *Philoctetes*. The meaning and significance of *amor fati* is marked ultimately in the play by the appearance of the mortal/god Heracles. He tells Philoctetes: "It is for your sake that I have come, leaving my seat in heaven, to proclaim Zeus' plans for you and to prevent the journey on which you embark. Heed my words" (1489-93). In his struggle with his past, Philoctetes has had to learn of the possibility for

transformation that exists in his refusal to be a victim of his past. That he has a fate of some promise is communicated to him by Heracles, who makes it clear that Zeus has plans for Philoctetes. That volition is a component of this fate is acknowledged by Heracles when he pleads with Philoctetes to “heed his words,” in other words to be persuaded by them. Moreover, this choice that Philoctetes has to make will give his identity a coherence, a style, that has been sadly missing in his life. Heracles spells it out for him in some considerable detail, both past and future, by telling his own story and indicating how Philoctetes may share a similar experience, if he makes the proper choice.

First, I will tell you of my own fortune: I endured much, passed through a sequence of labours, and now I have attained divine glory, as you can see. Know that a like experience awaits you: in exchange for your labours, a life of fame. Go with this man to the citadel of Troy; and first find respite from your grievous disease. For your valour, you will be judged the army’s champion. With these arrows of mine you will deprive Paris, the originator of these troubles of life. When you have sacked Troy you will send spoils to your halls taking first choice of the finest from all the army, taking them to the plains of Oeta, your homeland, and to your father, Poeas. And of the spoils that you receive from the army, take a dedicatory portion in thanks for my bow to my pyre (1494-1507)

Heracles is not the first to remind Philoctetes of the choice open to him. Early on the Chorus tells him: “But know this, and know it well. It is in your power to escape this death, which is eating away at you pitifully, sharing your life, but unable to teach you how to endure such suffering” (1204-09). Neoptolemus echoes the Chorus in that final attempt to persuade Philoctetes: “You will never find rest from this sickening affliction as long as the sun continues to rise and set where it does, unless you go of your own free will to the plain of Troy, meet with the sons of Asclepius who are with us there, and find relieve from this disease; you, together with these weapons and my help, will be known as the one who sacked the citadel” (1398-1404). Significantly, Neoptolemus puts the matter to Philoctetes in a manner very similar to Nietzsche’s “thus I will it” and he calls it

by the same name, redemption. “It’s time for me to stop talking and for you to get on with your life,” for the life you live now is a “life without redemption” (1465-66). As I have emphasized, for Nietzsche and for Sophocles, this is the redemption of having a story, an identity, a style. Yet, Sophocles goes beyond Nietzsche in constructing the context of that story – extending the horizon – and in so doing instructs Nietzsche and us on the failings of such a highly subjective conception of memory and identity.

Sophocles very simply but eloquently puts the matter in the departing voice of Philoctetes after he has been persuaded by Heracles to set sail for Troy, with Neoptolemus at his side.

Farewell, plain of Lemnos, surrounded by sea.
Send me on my voyage with a fair wind,
Giving no cause for regret,
Guided by the power of Fate,
The advice of friends,
And the all-powerful god,
Who has brought these things to pass (1534-40).

“Giving no cause for regret” and “guided by the power of fate” are indications of a past that has now been subsumed by a future that quickens the present; and these acts of forgetting and remembering are not oblivious of the power of fate. They are co-creators with that fate. This gives Philoctetes a very Nietzschean style of redemption. Yet, there is more. Philoctetes makes it clear that he is also guided by “the advice of friends” and “the all-powerful god” and thereby gives further and significant substance to that Nietzschean style of redemption. Sophocles emphasizes the community and the transcendent.

The theme of community, of the social nature of human beings and of the need for companionship is emphasized very early in the Philoctetes. Exile is the fate of

Philoctetes, a ten year long exile. This is not just a statement about the inevitable isolating effects of a bitter resentment that sets one apart from one's community. It is also a pronouncement on the profound healing effect of friendship and community. When Philoctetes first hears the strangers on his island of exile he wishes to hear them speak and to know if they are friends: "Speak, if you have come in friendship. Answer me. I have spoken to you – it is only fair that you should respond" (249-251). When Neoptolemus responds that they are Greeks, Philoctetes excitedly exclaims: "What sweeter sound! Think of it! After all this time, to be greeted by a fellow Greek" (254)! Philoctetes' isolation is broken by the sound, the language, of friends and the memory of home; and this is the context in which his healing, his forgetfulness, will begin. To be sure, this friendship will be sorely tested when Philoctetes learns that Neoptolemus has joined Odysseus in a duplicitous ruse designed to get him and his weapons to join the forces to Troy, but it is a significant beginning. Moreover, it is a significant statement on Sophocles' part that redemption, the style of redemption Nietzsche speaks of so eloquently, is more than a solipsistic willing of consciousness. It is a redemption embedded in the empathy of friends. Indeed, the subtext of Neoptolemus' conversion of honor, wherein he becomes increasingly uncomfortable with his role in Odysseus's' plan, reinforces the power of friendship and community in an interesting intersubjective fashion. If, on the one hand, Philoctetes' act of forgetting his bitterness needs the empathy of friends (community), on the other hand, those friends (that community) need to learn the power of an honorable empathy. As Neoptolemus says: "Everything causes disgust when a man forsakes his own nature and does something beneath him" (917-18);

and, of course, he eventually defies Odysseus and gives back the bow, thereby re-establishing his role as friend.

The bow itself reinforces the role of empathy. Its possession is associated with kindness and virtue. As Philoctetes tells Neoptolemus, when he lets him hold the bow: “You will be able to claim to be one of the only mortals who has touched this bow – because of your virtue. It was for an act of kindness that I once won it too” (647-50). When his disgust over his betrayal becomes unbearable, Neoptolemus’ shame causes him to give it back. Yet, the bow is also divine (as are the arrows) and its presence in the play signifies another significant addition to Nietzsche’s style of redemption, the role of the gods.

The gods figure prominently in the *Philoctetes*, but not always in a sympathetic manner. Indeed, Sophocles introduces the gods in the context of the question of unmerited suffering, in other words as a theodicy. Not surprisingly, it is Philoctetes who begins this inquiry. In the midst of his exile, he has time enough to ponder why he, a man of virtue, has been treated so badly while those who exiled him prosper. In this light he concludes in an early conversation with Neoptolemus (during which time Neoptolemus is engaged in a deception of non-recognition): “The gods must truly hate me! So no news of how things are with me has reached home, or filtered through to anywhere in Greece? The men who cast me out, breaking every law of god, hold their tongues – and laugh. Meanwhile my sickness thrives, and gains strength all the time” (273-78). Philoctetes elaborates on this with wondrous ambivalence when he learns that Achilles and Ajax and Antilochus have fallen in battle, while Odysseus still lives. “No, nothing bad every dies – the gods take care of that. They somehow take pleasure in

keeping crime and villainy from Death's door, but they're constantly dispatching the good there! What are we to make of this? We praise the gods, but find them wrong" (440-444). The Chorus is sympathetic with Philoctetes' view of the gods and his fate: "He harmed no one, cheated no one, was fair in dealing with others. His destruction is unjust" (669-72). Neoptolemus is given to agree as well. Yet, in the last moments of his final attempt at persuading Philoctetes to join them, with bow in hand, and in response to Philoctetes' wonderment about how he could ever join forces with Agamemnon and Menelaus¹²⁴, Neoptolemus says to Philoctetes: "What you say is fair, but I still want you to trust the gods and believe what I've said. Leave this land and come away with someone who cares for you" (1436-38). Quite apart from once again asserting the importance of friendship, and in spite of the unjust fate Philoctetes has suffered, Neoptolemus pleads with Philoctetes to "trust the gods."

The denouement of Sophocles' comment about the role of the divine in human affairs is not reached, however, until the appearance of one of those gods, Heracles. While the appearance of Heracles, along with the following conversion of Philoctetes, seems somewhat artificial in terms of the drama's development, two significant points suggest its importance. First, Heracles presence in the drama is not limited to this finale. He plays an important role at the drama's beginning as well, though he never appears on stage until the close of the play. The story of Philoctetes begins well before the drama opens. A Greek audience would have certainly known of the connection between Philoctetes and his relationship with Heracles. The appearance of Heracles at the end of the play is itself a remembrance. Second, Heracles's speech illustrates the strong

¹²⁴ Philoctetes' expresses that wonderment in a powerful query to the gods themselves: "O, vaults of heaven, who have witnessed all that has happened to me, how could you bear to see me in the company of the sons of Atreus, the very men who destroyed me" (1418-21)?

relevance of his own story in the life of Philoctetes. In a manner reminiscent of many sacred stories of beckoning, Heracles appears, calls Philoctetes by name, “child of Poeas,” and tells him of the plans Zeus has for him. He identifies himself, calling Philoctetes’s consciousness beyond his moment of suffering. He relates his presence to the decrees of Zeus, beckoning Philoctetes toward consideration of transcendence. He goes on to tell Philoctetes a story much like his own, a future-oriented saga of suffering and glory. Thus, his speech gives purpose to Philoctetes’s life and struggle.

As we know, Philoctetes is transformed and convinced. Yet, Heracles has one more word of divine caution. The battle at Troy will result in victory and it will be accompanied by health for Philoctetes and by fame and fortune for both him and Neoptolemus. Heracles adds: “But mark this: when you sack the land, show reverence to the gods. All other things take second place in the mind of our father, Zeus. Holy reverence outlasts man, neither in life, nor in death can it be destroyed” (1514-17). To be sure, there is mystery to contend with in the actions of the gods. Yet, as Philoctetes has made clear, the gods are praised in spite of that fact; and as Sophocles has made clear in this final scene, the gods are not to be ignored. Indeed, they are due “Holy reverence.” As we also know, Heracles is no ordinary god; he was a human who suffered, unjustly, and who was transformed, just as Philoctetes can be transformed. Philoctetes embraces the mystery of what Heracles represents, both as human and as immortal, and thereby embraces a fate beyond himself. He chooses; yet, he is chosen.

As Sophocles teaches, and Nietzsche confirms in masterful, phenomenological fashion, the power of resentment is formidable. It captures our psyches and turns us into vengeful creatures. Just so, the power of forgetting can transform us from being vengeful

victims of that suffering to co-creators of our fate. For Nietzsche this process of forgetting (and remembering) seems to have been reduced to a matter of internal psychology, where the individual, solitary act of self-creation has supplanted the political. Unlike Nietzsche, Sophocles understood that the transformative powers of forgetting and remembering are buttressed by the essential ingredients of friendship and community and by the sense that there is a purpose, a calling beyond the horizon of the self. Sophocles' world is no less tragic; but it offers the promise that in human suffering there is solace to be found in the common ties of compassion and wisdom to be discovered in the mysterious relationship between human beings and the gods that both beckon and limit.

The Transcendence of Memory

If Sophocles introduces the issue of transcendence and its relevance for human conduct almost as an afterthought through the mortal-immortal Heracles with his mysterious warning about the limits of vengeance, the treatment in *Isaiah* is central to the understanding of memory offered there. First, it is central because the prophet speaks in the name of transcendence. Second, it is central for the conceptions of justice and hope offered in the text. Memory is a powerful element throughout the books of the Old Testament. Perhaps more than any of these, the *Book of Isaiah*, particularly the part composed by the prophet who has since been named Deutero-Isaiah, offers a rich treatment of memory. This text speaks often about memory, reflecting on its role in the healing of a community in desperation. In addition to its employment of memory and its eloquence in addressing its role, the text visits the fascinating tension between remembering and forgetting seen in the writings of Nietzsche and Sophocles. In the forty-third chapter of *Isaiah* the prophet writes the words of Yahweh:

Remember not the events of the past,
the things of long ago consider not;
See, I am doing something new! (43:18-19)

Yet, shortly thereafter in the forty-sixth chapter the text again presents the words of Yahweh, but with a contrasting message:

Remember this and be firm,
bear it well in mind, you rebels;
remember the former things, those long ago. (46:8)

This is not simply a matter of two obscure verses selected at random and isolated from context to fabricate a contradiction within the book. Throughout Deutero-Isaiah, readers will find repeated calls for Israel to remember their heritage and relationship with

Yahweh. Meanwhile, the reader also finds repeated reference to a new action toward which the Israelites must turn their sights. The text often articulates these two approaches to memory.

Deutero-Isaiah ultimately reveals an interrelationship between memory and forgetting not unlike the treatments by Nietzsche and Sophocles outlined above. Yet the author goes beyond these two in exploring this relationship, particularly for its role in healing. Memory and forgetting emerge not as opposing polar forces but as elements of narrative understanding. Deutero-Isaiah repeatedly draws upon and moves between both. The Israelites can rely solely on neither the past nor the future. Deutero-Isaiah draws both the past and future into the present moment of crisis in which the Israelites find themselves. Through these elements of Israel's story as the chosen people of Yahweh, the prophet presents the reality of hope in the present without ever discrediting the force of the past. The prophet acknowledges that reality begins with what is imaginable in hope and that anguish must be honestly appreciated. To bring this message to the people of Israel he gathers the community around their story in the presence of Yahweh.

Prophecy itself is an interesting engagement with memory. Several important scholars discuss how prophecy reaches both backward and forward in time to reflect upon the significance of the past and future. Gerhard Von Rad understands the 'new thing' of Deutero-Isaiah as prophecy itself. Prophecy, he argues, differs from earlier Israelite theology that looked only upon the saving events of past history. The prophets look also to future events, even though they often present them as more or less analogous to Yahweh's saving acts in the past.¹²⁵ Walter Brueggemann basically agrees with Von

¹²⁵ Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Volume II: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1965), 117.

Rad's assessment of prophecy. Bruggemann concurs that prophecy is a call to tradition as well as "dynamic in moving beyond the old tradition."¹²⁶ Prophets draw upon the tradition as a source for the symbols used to reveal truth and dispel self-deception.¹²⁷ At the same time, however, the prophet offers a new image of the future. That is, prophecy both remembers and moves beyond the past. Voegelin expands upon this point and shows how prophetic memory shapes the present consciousness of its audience:

The people had to be reminded, first, of its origins in the response of the fathers to Yahweh's revelation through Moses and, second, of the fact that its continued existence depended on its continued response to Yahweh's revelation through the prophets. The recall of the past blends, therefore, into the call in the present. They both belong to the same continuum of revelation, which creates historical form when it meets with the continuum of the people's response. The historical form of the people unfolds in time; but it remains historical form only as long as the people, while lasting in time, lives in tension of response to the timeless, eternal revelation of God.¹²⁸

This is precisely what Israel is no longer capable of at the time of Deutero-Isaiah's call. There is need for "a radical newness in Israel's life, which can no way be derived from present circumstance."¹²⁹ They find this promise, and the hope it brings to the present, in the articulations of the prophets. To a great extent these promises themselves derive from Israel's memory, and yet they must enable present consciousness of hope through a vision of the future as well as the past: "The substance of the promises is derived from old memories, but the power to generate the newly promised reality is rooted not in what is old, but in what is fresh and alive about Yahweh."¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Walter Bruggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 36.

¹²⁷ Walter Bruggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed., (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 45.

¹²⁸ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History Volume One: Israel and Revelation*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 428-9.

¹²⁹ Bruggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 638.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 638.

The prophets, particularly Deutero-Isaiah, use poetic imagination to “liberate Judaism from a closed world of chaos in order to present the new world of Yahweh’s gift.”¹³¹ The visions of Deutero-Isaiah draw the future into the present, making it a present-with-a-future, opening space for possibility and hope. According to Claus Westermann, prophecy gives presence to the future and the past. It makes the present a present-with-a-past-and-future. From this inclusive vision, it can offer critical judgment and as well as hope.¹³² Deutero-Isaiah engages in just this sort of poetry, precisely in the movement from judgment to hope.

Much of these prophetic texts take the form of poetry, which presents an interpretive challenge when searching out exact determinations or doctrines in the texts:

Poetry is not discursive literature, which presents a self-evident theme or meaning. Rather, Hebrew poetry, with its various forms of parallelism as a constitutive hallmark, includes, as does poetry in many languages, a remarkable number of figures of speech. It is dense language. . . . In sum, prophetic poetry provides some inherent limitations to what we can discover about an individual prophet’s ‘message.’¹³³

It is important to remember that the *Book of Isaiah* is this sort of poetry. It is not a systematic treatise. The text offers religious poetry in which theology contextualizes psychology. Furthermore, it has multiple authors, and even more editors, working at different periods with different intentions.

The second part of the text, chapters 40 to 55, traditionally credited to an anonymous prophet to called Deutero-Isaiah, or Second Isaiah, is thought to have been composed around the middle of the sixth century. This section falls between the parts

¹³¹ Bruce C. Birch, Walter Brueggemann, Terence E. Fretheim, and David L. Petersen, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Nashville: Abingden Press, 1999), 368.

¹³² Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 9-10.

¹³³ Birch et al., 299.

credited to prophets called First Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah, or Third Isaiah. This last section, chapters 56-66, is thought to have been composed in the late sixth and early fifth centuries.¹³⁴ A long time passed between the compositions of chapters 39 and 40. Deutero-Isaiah follows in the traditions of the earlier portion, but the middle section was not written until around the end of the exilic period, about 540 BC.¹³⁵

While First Isaiah presents “a vigorous critique of Judah for not trusting in the God who was worshipped in its capitol” and anticipates “a severe response from Yahweh,” Deutero-Isaiah appears after the destruction of the capitol, when the Jews have been expelled from their homeland, and encourages the exiles toward homecoming. Trito-Isaiah draws from the traditions of the earlier texts in offering portrayals of the restoration of Zion and the creation of “a house of prayers for all peoples”(56:7).¹³⁶ Along with the shift in the circumstances of Israel between First Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah come shifts in messages of the prophets in this book.

Deutero-Isaiah speaks to Israel during the exile of the Babylonian captivity. Israelites have been scattered from their homes and resettled in a foreign land. However, Israel’s exile consists of far more than geographic dislocation. They are possessed with a mindset of impossibility. The Israelites live in a moment of deep loss and bear an overwhelmingly bitter sensation of abandonment. So removed from their heritage while living in the Babylonian world, they fail to even imagine new historical possibilities beyond their present moment.

Brueggemann points to the speech to the barren woman as a metaphor for the prophet’s task:

¹³⁴ Ibid., 311.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 362.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 435-6.

Raise a glad cry, you barren one who did not bear,
Break forth in jubilant song, you who were not in labor. (54:1)

Barrenness is the condition of Israel's consciousness in exile, incapable of giving birth to a future. The lack of children suggests a lack of a future and the painful sadness reflects the resulting hopelessness.¹³⁷ In the moment of crisis during which Deutero-Isaiah appears, after the demise of the nation of Judah, the Israelites no longer perceive a ground upon which to believe in a future. They are faced with a question that they fail to even formulate much less offer an answer to. To remain Israel, the chosen people of Yahweh, they must resolve how to order themselves in both religious and political terms.¹³⁸ Yet, despite its powerful significance and resonance, this is a question to which they cannot even envision answers. Exile presses this difficulty upon them – not only in a geographical sense, but in psychological and spiritual senses as well. The prophet's words describe the consciousness of the exiled community:

He gives strength to the fainting;
for the weak he makes vigor abound.
Though young men faint and grow weary,
And youths stagger and fall,
They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength,
They will soar as with eagles' wings;
They will run and not grow weary,
Walk and not grow faint. (40:29-31).

Israel has fallen. They are the faint and the weary. They are those who need to be sustained and healed. They no longer can envision the future with hope. This is the consciousness of exile.

Westermann notices the despairing community of Israel early in the text of Deutero-Isaiah, during the prophet's call:

¹³⁷ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 75.

¹³⁸ Birch et al., 422-3.

Because of the call ‘preach’ interposed into the stream of imperatives originating from ‘comfort,’ a human voice with the question ‘what (shall I) preach?,’ resists this mighty downward pounding of God’s gracious will, and with its words, so brief and so charged with emotion, perfectly gathers all of the vanquished nation’s lamentation and sheer despair. The person addressed is he who was commanded to cry, the unknown prophet to whom we give the name of Deutero-Isaiah. Verses 6ff. present his call with the minimum of detail. When he demurs with his counter cry, ‘What shall I preach,?’ he is only ‘one of the people,’ and he speaks as one whose own thoughts are those of the vanquished nation that no longer believes in the possibility of any new beginning.¹³⁹

The problem for Israel is not only their physical expulsion from the Promised Land, but more importantly a mindset that has given up:

The exiles’ greatest temptation – and the prophet speaks as one of their number – was precisely to be resigned to thinking of themselves as caught up in the general transience of all things, to believing that nothing could be done to halt the extinction of their national existence, and to saying, ‘just like the countless other nations destroyed before our time, in our time, and after our time, we are a nation that perishes: all flesh is as grass!’¹⁴⁰

Brueggemann goes further than Westermann, suggesting that Israel is not simply tempted but has already accepted the reality of exile. But in giving themselves over to that reality they live in despair and do not know other conceptions of reality beyond the hopelessness of exile.¹⁴¹

In contrast, the task of Deutero-Isaiah is to “imagine a new beginning,” which the exiled Israelites fail to do.¹⁴² To penetrate their despair, the prophet must offer symbols that threaten the hopelessness in which possibility remains unimaginable.¹⁴³ These symbols are not simply invented, which Brueggemann suggests would be “wishful thinking”:

¹³⁹ Westermann, 40-1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁴¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 95.

¹⁴² Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 61.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 63.

Rather, it means to move back into the deepest memories of this community and activate those very symbols that have always been the basis for contradicting the regnant consciousness. Therefore the symbols of hope cannot be general and universal but must be those that have been known concretely in this particular history. And when the prophet returns, with the community, to those deep symbols, they will discern that hope is not a late, tacked-on hypothesis to serve a crisis but rather the primal dimension of every memory of this community.¹⁴⁴

The call of the prophet itself becomes a template for his task. Deutero-Isaiah is called by Yahweh away from despair and charged to call Israel from the very same despair: “Resignation and despair constitute the spiritual state of the Israel to which the prophet is called to preach! He, the prophet, declares that he agrees with such thoughts; therefore even for him there can be no point in further preaching.”¹⁴⁵ Yahweh persists. He has a new saving act prepared for Israel. Israel, however, cannot conceive of a reality beyond life in exile. Deutero-Isaiah must prepare Israel for Yahweh’s new thing. He must convince them of the reality of possibility by penetrating the mindset of impossibility.

Yahweh calls his prophet and his people to a scope of consciousness that transcends this imprisoned memory. The answer to the prophet’s cry in verse six appears in verse eight:

Though the grass withers and the flower wilts,
The word of our God stands forever. (40:8)

From the perspective of the Israelites, things have come to an end, nothing more lies ahead to be accomplished. Preaching to this community, who cannot believe in any possibility because they find themselves at the closed doors of history, seems pointless to the prophet. Verse eight confronts the hopelessness of exile prevalent throughout Israel

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 64.

¹⁴⁵ Westermann, 42.

with the reality of Yahweh's word, which continues and persists throughout Israel's history and resists the inevitable demise of all things.¹⁴⁶

Israel needs to return to the perception of Yahweh's acts in an unfinished history, His plan for them as a chosen people. They need to become reacquainted with their continuing story that goes beyond the temporal scope offered by exile. As Brueggemann notes, the envisioning power of Israel's imagination must draw upon their heritage of symbols and experiences: "Imagination is not a freelance, ad hoc, operation that spins out novelty. Imagination, of the kind we are speaking, is a fresh, liberated return to the memory."¹⁴⁷ This is why Brueggemann refers to Israel's recollection of the past as "future-giving memory."¹⁴⁸ The crucial importance of the past is a means toward possibility in the present. Thus, for Brueggemann, Deutero-Isaiah calls Israel to engage not so much in forgetting, but instead in a battle against forgetting. The prophet is "reclaiming Israel's imagination" and "asserts a newness that is so old Israel had forgotten, but it is there in memory."¹⁴⁹

Forgetting is a risk, for Brueggemann. Its danger is a sacrifice of a source for the experience of possibility in the present moment. The past resonates. Instead of imprisoning the consciousness in bitterness and impossibility, it can free imagination and empower the present:

When we have completely forgotten our past, we will absolutize the present and we will be like contented cows in Beshon who want nothing more than the best of today. People like that can never remember who they are, cannot remember their status as exiles or that home is somewhere else. It takes a powerful articulation of memory to maintain a sense of identity in the midst of exile.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴⁷ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 102.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 112.

¹⁴⁹ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 70.

¹⁵⁰ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 102.

The implication of Brueggemann's arguments is that the Israelites are not living in true memory, but in an absolute moment. This is why the prophet calls upon the community to put the "things of long ago" behind them and prepare for new possibilities. The prophet calls the community from a fixated mindset to the memory of their full story, an ongoing narrative that includes more of the past and the future than the exiled Israelites recall.

Brueggemann calls this recollection of story "the narrative memory."¹⁵¹ The prophet can resurrect hope through storytelling: "He gives them back their faith by means of rearticulating the old story. He gives them the linguistic capacity to confront despair rather than be surrounded by it. And he creates new standing ground outside the dominant consciousness upon which new humanness is possible."¹⁵² A pattern similar to that of Nietzsche and Sophocles emerges: narrative allows the intricate and powerful connection of past and future in the present. The story recalls the past as a source for a vision of the future that serves as an inspiration in the present. The modes of time are intertwined, all bound together as functions of the present moment. The story of Israel breaks down those distinctions between past and future that might sever them from each other and turn present consciousness over to slavery, to a bitter resentment that refuses healing, or to escapist wishful thinking that refuses to acknowledge judgment or pain. Therefore, the prophet engages in narrative that embraces both past and future: "It becomes clear that the radically new thing is not completely discontinuous from Israel's old faith memories, for the old and the new are delicately and dialectically related."¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁵² Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 77.

¹⁵³ Birch et al., 363.

The experience of this story empowers Israel to hope. Birch et al. note the prevalence of this theme throughout the *Book of Isaiah*. The notion of Yahweh as the sovereign of the universe contains a claim of defined ethical order. As presented in the *Book of Isaiah*, Yahweh has “a comprehensive and comprehensible plan which involves all creation.”¹⁵⁴ The prophet is privy to this plan and called to proclaim it. Thus, the prophet describes the events of the past, present, and future as being established in this divine plan. In much of the *Book of Isaiah* as a whole, particularly that part credited to First Isaiah, this often takes the form of judgment, in which past violations against the divinely ordained order are condemned and punished. However, this plan also provides the fount of hope. The text of Deutero-Isaiah presents a theological investigation into the grounds for hope and rediscovers Yahweh for the people of Israel.¹⁵⁵

The prophet’s articulation of this narrative itself gives presence to hope and to memory – it draws them into present reality. As Brueggemann argues, “words, speech, language, and phrases shape consciousness and therefore reality.”¹⁵⁶ Recalling and expressing the story of Israel generates the presence of possibility over and beyond past devastation or present crisis.

This narrative does not evaporate the present moment into the past and the future. The experience of the narrative is an experience in the present moment of crisis. The story, including its visions of past and future saving acts, resonates for Israel in the present. It is this mode of temporality – the present moment – which dominates Deutero-Isaiah’s treatment of memory. He is concerned less with moments disconnected from the present than with moments drawn into the present via narrative. This narrative of Israel

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 312.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 312-17.

¹⁵⁶ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 64.

is not a random or haphazard sequence of disconnected events. The presence of the past takes the form of profound memories. The presence of the future takes the form of promise. Both take the form of calling.

This is the story of Yahweh's chosen people. It is a story with a purpose meant to be experienced in a certain way; that is, it is a present responsibility. Yahweh calls and expects an answer. Deutero-Isaiah calls the Israelites by name to Yahweh along with the memories and hopes this offers. He tells them specifically that they belong outside Babylon (43:1-5).¹⁵⁷ This is an important call that emerges from memories of past and future in the prophet's preaching. Deutero-Isaiah does not fixate solely on calling the Israelites back to the covenant – that is the work of the doom prophets. He must do more. He recalls the covenant forward to bring new life to the community of Israel.

Faith, as presented in the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah, is at least in part the answer to this call, the experience of this narrative. As Westermann puts it: "The call to have faith means bringing the nation's experience with God in history to bear upon the present... In Deutero-Isaiah's view, there is no such thing as faith divorced from history."¹⁵⁸ Eichrodt also describes faith as an experience of the present moment which draws the past and future into it to create visions of possibility. Eichrodt sees faith as a call that envisions the reality of possibility, emerging from the presence of Yahweh. The faith of Israel is a faith in Yahweh's possibility, a calling to the source of hope that extends throughout the full scope of time, which both remembers and transcends memory. It is a faith based solely on neither the past nor the future; rather, it is presence

¹⁵⁷ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 104.

¹⁵⁸ Westermann, 185.

within the narrative that draws upon both. This is how Deutero-Isaiah can call the people of Israel to remember and forget, to recall the past and to be open to possibility beyond it.

Therefore, remembering Israel's story as the chosen people of God is not just a reflection upon the past. It is reflection upon a narrative, a presence-with-past-and-future. This is a story that the community can gather around because it is the story of their founding moment in history as the people of Yahweh and because it is a calling forward to Yahweh. Yahweh invites Israel to a decision of hope, a decision against despair and exile.¹⁵⁹ The past is brought to bear directly on this faith, but it is not a past frozen or idolized. It is new and living.¹⁶⁰ With their story in mind, possibility and hope become as real and relevant to the Israelites as past and present suffering have been.

Much of Brueggemann's treatment of Deutero-Isaiah deals with memory, but behind this is a central theme of the text to which he frequently returns – the theme of possibility: "I submit that this poet engaged the memory in order to address the issue of possibility."¹⁶¹ Faith is the experience of the reality of possibility. It emerges in the text because the prophet is concerned not only with human possibility, but also, and more importantly, with what is possible for Yahweh. The prophet writes that Yahweh's power makes possible what is believed to be impossible.¹⁶² Westermann also acknowledges this appeal:

Israel requires to be shaken out of a faith that has nothing to learn about God's activity, and therefore nothing to learn about what is possible with Him, the great danger which threatens any faith that is hidebound in dogmatism, faith that has ceased to be able to expect anything really new from Him.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 66.

¹⁶⁰ Westermann, 185.

¹⁶¹ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 114.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁶³ Westermann, 129.

The new thing of which the prophet speaks is first the deliverance of Israel out of captivity in Babylon. However, it is also the transformation of the Israelites consciousness toward possibility. He beckons the imagination of the community toward possibilities beyond what seems possible in the present moment.¹⁶⁴ The future becomes present as the recollection of Yahweh's purpose. The vision of possibility takes presence by delivering and calling Israel. The deliverance itself is bound up in the calling. Yahweh's release of the Israelites must be lived out. Thus, the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah is not only commentary about an ending but also an articulation of the beginning of a 'new thing'.

Therefore, Deutero-Isaiah presents a picture of the future, drawing this future into the present, just as he does with the past. Possibility is more than mere projection; it has reality in present consciousness. Westermann points out another feature of the prophet's writing which establishes the presence of future possibilities: "Its essence is the proclamation of an event regarded as already having come about."¹⁶⁵ The visions that the prophet proclaims are future events, but they are spoken of as if already accomplished. It is an event of the future that has past and, most importantly, presence in its articulation during a moment when all speech of this sort is unthinkable. The hopeful future is made present; that is, the future is possible and that possibility exists as possibility now.

Israel's whole story offers perspective for any single moment and opens consciousness to possibilities beyond those single moments, or, as Von Rad argues, the significance of events becomes clear when seen within the context of the saving history

¹⁶⁴ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 114-5.

¹⁶⁵ Westermann, 11.

in which the prophet places it.¹⁶⁶ However, it is not just narrative itself that generates consciousness of possibility for Israel. Rather, the particular narrative of the community of Israel presents two powerful themes that provoke consciousness of possibility among Deutero-Isaiah's audience. The first theme – homecoming – emerges right out of Israel's condition of exile. The canonical reading of the *Book of Isaiah* suggests that the 'new thing' of Deutero-Isaiah is a counter theme to the judgments pronounced in First Isaiah.¹⁶⁷ Deutero-Isaiah's text is organized around the theme of homecoming, "a metaphor that makes sense only to those who read their context as exile."¹⁶⁸

Thus, the prophet beckons Israel to a journey that is both a march forward and a return home. As Westermann suggests, the imperative to forget the things of the past must be interpreted within this context. That passage recalls Israel's earlier exodus just before calling the community to set that journey's memory aside and begin an exodus from bondage:

Yet, this very thing, God's initial act of deliverance, 'the former thing', 'the thing of old,' is, verse 18 appears to say, to be forgotten, so tremendous and overwhelming is the new thing which Yahweh is now on the point of doing. This, too, is the preparation of a way: 'I make a way in the wilderness.' And, just as God's new act corresponds to his earlier one, so do its results: the new Exodus corresponds to the original one. But does Deutero-Isaiah really mean this utterance to say that God's new act and the new Exodus which is to be its result are so much to overshadow his past act and the first Exodus as to cause them to be forgotten, obliterated by the new thing shortly to be expected? It would be very strange if he did. More than any other prophet, Deutero-Isaiah holds his nation to their traditions. Over and over again he most emphatically reminds them of God's mighty acts in their past.¹⁶⁹

The theme of homecoming allows for the simultaneous calls to memory and forgetting. Israel is to recall that their home is elsewhere and to look forward beyond the

¹⁶⁶ Von Rad, 246.

¹⁶⁷ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 91.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁶⁹ Westermann, 127.

exile of the present. The Israelites are not to be imprisoned within a memory of the past so limited that it refuses new possibility. They are called from the mindset of exile in which they have taken a posture toward the past that cripples the present:

What is the meaning of ‘remember’ and ‘consider’ in verse 18?... The structure of the proclamation of salvation leads us to expect it to start with an allusion to a community lament. The part of the latter to which the allusion is made may vary. Verse 16 and 17 could conceivably correspond to that part of a community lament known as the review of God’s former acts of salvation. Now, in extant community laments we do in fact find mention of the deliverance at the Red Sea. A particularly striking example is found in Isaiah 63:11-14, in the community lament 63f., which was very probably written in some time after 587. But if in vv. 16f. Deutero-Isaiah relates himself to this part of the lament, then by the term ‘remember’ in v.18 he does not have the mere remembering of God’s original act in mind, but the expostulation made in laments reproaching God with the contrast between his present attitude towards his chosen people and the great thing he did for them in the former days. Thus, Deutero-Isaiah had not the slightest intention of saying that the old traditions are abrogated, and that a new act of God is impending. What he wants to say is rather, ‘Stop mournfully looking back and clinging to the past, and open your minds to the fact that a new, miraculous act of God lies ahead of you!’.... The new thing which God proclaims himself to be about to do is the new thing which Israel has ceased to expect, hope for, or believe in. As her laments show, she thought that God’s saving acts were now a closed chapter. What is now springing up is anew thing, which means that it is shortly to appear as a reality which Israel herself will experience.¹⁷⁰

The story of Israel as a journey homeward is both memory and forgetting. The homecoming liberation recalls Israel’s saga. As Westermann points out, the new thing and the old thing, the new exodus and the old exodus, correspond in two ways. First, although through a new way of doing so, it is the same Yahweh acting as Israel’s liberator. Second, the new deliverance is given effect and becomes reality through a journey through the wilderness, during which the people are transformed, just as in the old exodus.

The recollection of the exodus has important implications. Michael Walzer presents the journey taken through the wilderness by the Israelites as a transformative

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 128.

unlearning. In the wilderness the Israelites must unlearn the exilic mindset and have their consciousnesses awakened to new possibilities.¹⁷¹ Walzer goes on to say several interesting things about exodus that may be applied to Deutero-Isaiah. While the Israelites unlearn the slavishness of exile, so too is the vision of the Promised Land, which Israel receives from Yahweh, at risk of being lost in the wilderness experience. This vision of future possibility must be nurtured.¹⁷² This journey parallels the experience of pain, in which visions of the possibility of restoration are threatened by the experience of suffering.

There is another risk. The pain of suffering might become so entrenched that it becomes vengeance. To address this second risk, Deutero-Isaiah discourages reflection focused solely upon the past. Thus, Deutero-Isaiah's proclamations ring soundly different from those of First Isaiah, who spoke extensively of judgment against sins. After the process of transformation of consciousness that Deutero-Isaiah embarks upon, Israel once again envisions promises of community, as expressed in the writings of Trito-Isaiah. The third portion of the *Book of Isaiah* paints images of healing, joy, justice, community, and "a house of prayers for all peoples" (56:7).

According to Walzer, in their exodus journey Israel must not only resist the risk of resentment, but also learn that they have a destiny beyond the slavishness of exile. This homecoming journey is a transformation of consciousness. Walzer emphasizes this journey of consciousness. The vision toward which Israel marches is just that – a vision, not a reality achieved in the concrete. Thus, Walzer argues that Israel must recognize that they remain on the way to the Promised Land. The community never arrives at the

¹⁷¹ Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*, (Basic Books, 1985), 41-70.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 41-70, 99-130.

reality of this vision achieved. If Israel becomes convinced otherwise they might fall into complacency. They are in danger of believing that possibility is exhausted, that nothing remains to hope for or toward which to move:

The 'door of hope' is still open; things are not yet what they might be – even when what they might be isn't totally different from what they are. This is the central theme of Western thought, always present though elaborated in many different ways. We still believe, or many of us do, what the Exodus first taught, or what it has commonly been taken to teach, about the meaning and possibility of politics and about its proper form:

- first, that wherever you live, it is probably Egypt;
- second, that there is a better place, a world more attractive, a Promised Land;
- and third, that 'the way to the land is through the wilderness.' There is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching.¹⁷³

Deutero- Isaiah re-teaches this message to Israel. The vision of the Promised Land is once again an unfinished reality. The belief that the journey is over is symptomatic of exile. The Israelites' journey continues; they must once again embark upon the trek toward the Promised Land. This is a difficult call to bear. Facing the concrete experience of exile, the Israelites must struggle to contemplate a place that is perpetually unmet. The temptation is to give up – either to portray the present as the vision complete or disregard the vision altogether and descend into hopelessness. In contrast, a narrative of homecoming allows for a vision of possibility without despair or complacency. In this narrative of homecoming, the vision of the Promised Land is a continual reality in the present beckoning and invigorating the weary Israelites. The presence of this possibility permeates the story of Yahweh's chosen people: "the end of the Exodus story, the Promised Land, was present at the beginning as a hope and an aspiration without that there could have been no beginning."¹⁷⁴ In this sense, the Israelites of Deutero-Isaiah are very much in the same situation as those of the earlier exodus. Babylon is a concretized

¹⁷³ Ibid., 149.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 101.

place and a moment of consciousness in which the Israelites remain fixed; they need to get back on the way. Deutero-Isaiah pushes the consciousness of the Israelites beyond the voice of the Psalmist who weeps by the rivers of Babylon and of the prophet Jeremiah who calls on the Israelites to plant their seeds in Babylon.

Deutero-Isaiah recalls a story that awakens consciousness toward the reality of possibility and hope. The people of Israel are not to end in the smoldering embers of resentment. Rather, despair is to be passed through and addressed in a healthy way. It is to be neither succumbed to nor denied. *Isaiah* envisions possibility even from within resentment and despair. On this point the text differs from Nietzsche, who sees possibility only beyond and apart from these. He fully recognizes the reality and consequence of them, but in his solution Nietzsche wishes to banish them, to will them away. The prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah, however, offer a fuller depiction of a movement of consciousness that begins in resentment and despair only to proceed beyond them.

As Westermann notes, the theme of homecoming links a second important theme in Deutero-Isaiah, the continued presence of Yahweh, which also emphasizes the reality of possibility in the present moment. In the several trial speeches that appear throughout the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah, Westermann sees the first conceptual expression to what had actually been in existence as early as *Exodus*, that “God’s deity is shown to be such by the continuity of his action in history.”¹⁷⁵ Thus, the motif *Exodus* recognizes not only the homecoming journey but also Yahweh’s presence. Deutero-Isaiah proclaims to Israel that Yahweh remains present in their moment of exile as He had been in their journey out of Egypt. The presence of Yahweh as an emphasis on presence is no mere play on words. The prophet calls Israel to the present moment when the encounter with

¹⁷⁵ Westermann, 85.

Yahweh is to be found. This spiritual encounter empowers consciousness to find possibility in the present moment. In discussing Yahweh's spirit, Eichrodt shows that spirit is the medium by which Yahweh's presence among his people becomes reality:

No longer are its operation seen only in the great saving acts of the men of God in the past; no longer is it only in the age of salvation to come that the spirit is expected to consummate God's rule by the inner transformation of men's hearts. Instead it is the spirit which, in the past, present, and future, is the true governor of Israel, and in which the transcendent God, dwelling in light unapproachable, in very truth draws near to his people. Hence a quite new awareness of the spirit's leading sounds through the national lament [of] Isa. 63:11ff.¹⁷⁶

The presence of Yahweh is not itself new. In fact, the writers of the Old Testament often point to Yahweh's presence throughout various past moments in Israel's history and proclaim that He has made his presence known in the world in public historical forms. Nevertheless, in Deutero-Isaiah there is newness, a newness of presence that empowers the community to pass through suffering. Before the prophet's proclamations, the Israelites are no longer conscious of their own story and are no longer conscious of Yahweh's presence in their current situation. They recognize Yahweh's power and presence in previous saving acts, such as the exodus from Egypt, but they have lost the experience of possibility beyond exile.

The prophet takes a tone of "pastoral attentiveness" when expressing Yahweh's will toward his people.¹⁷⁷ Early in Deutero-Isaiah's text, Yahweh calls out reminding His people of His presence:

Fear not, I am with you;
be not dismayed; I am your God.
I will strengthen you, and help you,
And uphold you with my right hand of justice. (41:10)

¹⁷⁶ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament: Volume One*, trans. J.A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 61.

¹⁷⁷ Birch et al., 365.

It is this recognition of Yahweh's presence that is to comfort Israel: "[The] utterance of Yahweh intends to counter and defeat all the negatives of exile – the fear, danger, loss of memory and rootage, and sense of hopelessness."¹⁷⁸

In contrast to his countrymen, Deutero-Isaiah discerns that Yahweh is deeply involved in the historical process in a way that has not ceased. Indeed, this is a predominant theme throughout all three sections the book. For this theme, Deutero-Isaiah draws upon the tradition of his predecessor. In First Isaiah the saving acts of the past are still valid, and Yahweh's coming is linked to the images of David and Zion. In the text of Deutero-Isaiah, Yahweh reenacts his former deeds. He works to accomplish a new exodus. The prophet writes to persuade Israel to look away from that event that had been the basis of faith and to look forward to a fresh event in which to place their faith. This is the sharp distinction between the new and the former things, which are those acts already accomplished in the history of Israel from the call of Abraham to the destruction of Jerusalem. It is on this ground that the prophet tells the community to forget the former things. Von Rad recognizes this transition, but he also adds that these are differences of degree. For him, both First and Deutero-Isaiah acknowledge that the hope of Israel rests upon Yahweh's actions in history.¹⁷⁹ In other words, both compositions look for the experience of Yahweh's presence. Nevertheless, Von Rad overlooks an important difference between the prophets. Much more than his predecessor, Deutero-Isaiah recalls Israel's consciousness to the presence of Yahweh, as well as the power and consciousness of possibility this invokes, in current history, rather than just in past events or distant futures. This explains the repeated references in the text to the power of

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 365.

¹⁷⁹ Von Rad, 117-8, 246-7.

Yahweh to foretell events and accomplish His word. Yahweh's presence is not limited to the events of past and future. Instead, Yahweh's presence permeates all time, including the present moment, when His activity draws the past and future into consciousness. In the accomplishment of His word, be it past, present, or future, Yahweh is present.

Deutero-Isaiah's references to Yahweh's word highlights the ongoing nature of Israel's narrative. The prophet reaches back into the past often, not in the sense of 'it *was*', but in the sense that 'Yahweh *is* the one who did'.

Faith's affirmation, as suggested in 48:9-11, rests upon Israel's present experience of Yahweh's past acts and reliance on His present and future purpose:

For the sake of my name I restrain my anger,
for the sake of my renown I hold it back from you,
lest I should destroy you.
See, I have refined you like silver,
tested you in the furnace of affliction.
For my sake, for my own sake, I do this;
why should I suffer profanation?
My glory I will not give to another.

These verses reveal the importance of recognizing a scope of time that extends from the past and future into the present. It is neither the past nor the future alone that is to be grasped but the whole story, which might be perceived through them in the present. The following verses, 48:12-13, present a proclamation of deliverance based upon divine action in history "viewed in its entirety,"¹⁸⁰ forward and backward, from the present moment:

Listen to me, Jacob,
Israel, whom I named!
I, it is I who am the first,
and also the last am I.
Yes, my hand laid the foundations of the earth;
my right hand spread out the heavens.

¹⁸⁰ Westermann, 186.

When I call them,
they stand forth at once.

Isaiah 48:20-21 goes on to show that the proclamation of salvation achieves its goal with sustained openness to possibility, a forward glance to the results of the new exodus:

Go forth from Babylon, flee from Chaldea!
With shouts of joy proclaim this, make it known;
Publish it to the ends of the earth, and say,
‘The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob.
They did not thirst
when he led them through dry lands;
Water from the rock he set flowing for them;
he cleft the rock, and waters welled forth.’

This is not a final event, after which Yahweh will no longer deal with his chosen people. The chosen people sing the praises of Yahweh. This praise only has meaning in so far as history continues. There are those remaining whom Israel will tell about the act.¹⁸¹ Thus, the narrative of Israel as the chosen people of Yahweh continues. This is the ongoing possibility of possibilities – the present full with future and past. Neither the bitterest memories nor the most fantastic future projections dissolve this present. Rather, this moment draws in the past and future to sustain the *presence* of possibility. The result is the reality of hope. In this context, memory transforms consciousness about what is believed to be possible: “The memory makes available to Israel in exile models, paradigms, and concrete references about old impossibilities which linger with power.”¹⁸² That is, memory functions to disclose the potential power of Yahweh’s promise in the

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 129.

¹⁸² Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 115.

present.¹⁸³ Similarly, the memory of Exodus is a source for possibility only insofar as the eyes of Israel do not remain fixed upon it as a closed deal.

Memory, then, plays an important complex role in the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah. After all, it is important to remember that as a whole the Book of Isaiah calls its audience to recollection. It is also of great importance that Deutero-Isaiah does not undo First Isaiah with forgetting. Instead, the prophet takes the next step; he calls Israel beyond the judgments of the past into future possibilities for healing. The relationship of the texts that make up the *Book of Isaiah* reflects the nature of memory presented in Deutero-Isaiah. The past is never undone. Indeed, judgments are recognized and suffering is given voice. However, the past itself does not become an idol; it is not given full power that exhausts all possibility:

Such remembrance of the former things does not, however, mean a clinging to them. If Israel is serious as she remembers God's former acts, then she expects fresh action from him (cf. 43:19). Thus, acceptance of God's activity by the hands of Cyrus can be based on a remembrance of the past in which God wrought miracles.¹⁸⁴

Against such idolization of the past, the future is preserved. The present emerges as reality that draws upon both of these. In this context, the imperative to forget the former things is a call for openness to possibilities and the realities of consciousness they may create for the present.

Brueggemann agrees:

It is the loss of historical perspective, our reduction of everything to the present moment that results in hopelessness. . . . Options disappear and dominant definitions of reality appear to be the only available ones. Thus, the practice of memory serves to open options in the reading of present reality.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Ibid., 118.

¹⁸⁴ Westermann, 185.

¹⁸⁵ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 121.

Nietzsche would probably argue that Brueggemann emphasizes remembrance of the past too much. Yet, it appears that Deutero-Isaiah's text recognizes a great significance of remembering, more than Nietzsche suggests. However, it is important to recognize what sort of memory is revealed in the text. To borrow Brueggemann's phrase, it is "narrative memory," which evades the frozen picture of the past that Nietzsche and Deutero-Isaiah find so distasteful.

By the end of his text, Deutero-Isaiah provides the community of Israel with a vision of grace after his proclamation of a release from the weight of the past, of an unlearning of exile, and of comfort for the suffering:

All you who are thirsty,
 come to the water!
You who have no money,
 come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost,
 drink wine and milk!...
Yes, in joy you shall depart,
 in peace you shall be brought back;
Mountains and hills shall break out in song before you,
 and all the trees of the countryside shall clap their hands (55:1,12).

The people of Israel are summoned to Yahweh and their sins are forgotten. Openness exists on both sides and a new moment emerges, a moment carried over and expanded upon in the writings attributed to Trito-Isaiah where the imagination is released to envision future possibilities that empower the present. In 63:7, the prophet quickens the memory of Yahweh's deeds in the past:

The favors of the Lord I will recall,
 the glorious deeds of the Lord,
Because of all he has done for us;
 for he is good to the house of Israel,
He has favored us according to his mercy
 and his great kindness.

It is important to notice that this is more than a mental process of recollection. As a hopeful appeal to the grace that accomplished previous saving deeds and is prepared to perform them, the prophet articulates Yahweh's presence.¹⁸⁶ In other words, this is no psychological trick to distract the mind from pain and bitterness. It is recollection of the full scope of Israel's narrative that transforms the present from a moment of pain to a moment of possibility.

In 63:11-15, Israel's mindset appears turned away from possibility – from Yahweh's possibilities and from their own. They recall the stories of old, but can find no place for their newness in present reality:

Then they remembered the days of old
and Moses, his servant;
Where is he who brought up out of the sea
the shepherd of his flock?
Where is he who put his holy spirit
in their midst;
Whose glorious arm
was the guide at Moses' right;
Who divided the waters before them,
winning for himself eternal renown;
Who led them without stumbling through the depths
like horses in the open country,
Like cattle going down to the plain,
the spirit of the Lord guiding them?
Thus you led your people,
bringing glory to your name.
Look down from heaven and regard us
from your holy and glorious palace!
Where is your zealous care and your might,
your surge of pity and your mercy?

They have no experience of the present except as a present buried by consciousness of the past. They do not hear Yahweh calling to them. They have become so dysfunctional that their only perception of the presence of Yahweh's action is as action against His

¹⁸⁶ Westermann, 387.

people. The god they once knew as a friend they now see as turned against them.¹⁸⁷

Their remembering clings to this picture and disallows the perception of an end to exile and the possibility of homecoming. Thus, the prophet quickens the imagination as described above. These verses imply the great importance of the past, but also recognize its limitations.¹⁸⁸ For this reason the prophet neither erases the past nor clings solely to it. Rather he places it within the narrative of Israel.

It comes as no surprise that the most eloquent speeches about the community of Israel appear in Trito-Isaiah after the call from exile. The prophet speaks of peace and justice in the community. However, to properly understand the emergence of these visions, interpretations must look not only to Trito-Isaiah, but also to First Isaiah. The judgments of First Isaiah indict Israelite society and culture with prophetic voice; that is, the prophet offers social critique. The speeches of First Isaiah offer insight into what is out of sync in the community: exploitation, oppression, and deception. Perhaps the most significant appears in verse 4:20:

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil,
who change darkness into light, and light into darkness,
who change bitter into sweet, and sweet into bitter!

The prophet denounces those who have turned from the grounding for justice that emerges from the recognition of transcendence. Throughout the text, the prophets' normative judgments are based on his notion of transcendence. They offer sustained visions of what is wrong and what is right; that is, they offer a much more detailed content for justice than the vague warnings of Sophocles. In the context of all this, there is a vision of hope. Two elements of transcendence are given: judgment and hope.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 388-9.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 393-4.

Taking the text as a whole, the movement from injustice involves judgment and healing, followed by the pursuit of justice. Memory's significance emerges in this movement: recalling the transcendent order, judging against its violation, reorienting consciousness toward further possibility, and healing for renewal.

Yet, a further question remains: How does Deutero-Isaiah prepare the exiled consciousnesses of Israel to receive this narrative and the hope it evokes? Surely, the text never implies that the victims of suffering can simply change their minds from despair to hope. As Brueggemann notes, "Despairing people do not anticipate or receive newness."¹⁸⁹

Yahweh is about to intervene in the life of the universe to do a new thing, yet Israel must be prepared for this possibility. To believe again in possibility, Israel needs to be comforted. The suffering community is to be reached out to and given solace rather than being perpetuated. Deutero-Isaiah has a new call, to reach out to his community and comfort the people of Israel: "Those not comforted can hardly believe such a thing can be uttered (Is. 43:18-19). But clearly they will have no personal joy, no public justice, no corporate repentance, and no family humaneness until the community receives a newness it cannot generate for itself."¹⁹⁰ This marks perhaps the greatest distinction between Nietzsche's and Deutero-Isaiah's treatments of memory. Deutero-Isaiah readily and explicitly acknowledges that the suffering need help to recover. For the prophet, this help comes in the form of an encounter with the other – with the prophet, the community, and transcendence.

¹⁸⁹ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 60.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

Deutero-Isaiah reaches out to a hopeless people to announce the possibility of homecoming. His message of comfort is not an appeal to persuade Israel into complacent acceptance of the rule of Babylon, but to cast exile as what it is and begin the movement home.¹⁹¹ The comfort of giving a future requires also the comfort of embracing the suffering, a prominent theme in Deutero-Isaiah shown in the prophet's call and, perhaps most poignantly, in the images of the suffering servant:

The way to newness in the historical process is through suffering taken on by some for others, whether the Jewish community or Jesus. This poet has seen that such embraced suffering does indeed break the vicious cycles of alienation and permits well-being. In the end, what counts here is not the identification of the servant, but the affirmation that the vicious cycles of displacement can be broken and healing made possible – but not without cost!¹⁹²

The prophet neither rejects the people of Israel for their despair and weakness, nor explains away their torment. Instead, the prophet comforts them. Deutero-Isaiah calls a new gathering of the people around their story, an ongoing story of the present that draws the past and future into consciousness. The prophet recalls the community to the story of their pain and their vision as well.

The text of Deutero-Isaiah reveals the awakening of consciousness toward new possibility. Yet, this awakening necessitates something beyond the individual sufferer's consciousness. New comfort must be spoken to the suffering; their pain must be embraced and given voice. The intersubjective encounter releases consciousness from suffering and toward imagination.

Israel is called to believe again in Yahweh's power and presence in their current situation, not just in the events of the past. The prophet delivers this call to Israel through a recollection of the story that brings possibility in present. Hope emerges as the present

¹⁹¹ Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 107.

¹⁹² Birch et al., 367.

consciousness of possibility which in turn emerges from having a past and future in the present. The narrative of Israel as the chosen people of Yahweh awakens this openness. However, Deutero-Isaiah does not accomplish this message by lashing out with a bitter tongue. Instead, the prophet effects transformation of consciousness by giving voice to the suffering. He returns them to the encounters with community and transcendence. Faith, in this context, never explains or makes objective sense of suffering. Yet, it was never charged with this task. Nevertheless, the prophet reaches out to the consciousness of exile in a way that makes healing possible.

The text of Deutero-Isaiah highlights the importance of both closing acts and new beginnings. The text sets suffering in this context. These ends and beginnings are intricately connected, interwoven so that the end is itself the source of the new beginning. The past that is put to rest also provides the source for future possibility in the present. The prophet limits the unbridled power of the past. The prophetic tradition expressed throughout the Old Testament resists cheap dismissal of the past, particularly of past suffering. Yet while it gives voice to the pain of suffering, it seeks to overcome despair. The call of Deutero-Isaiah to comfort the people of Israel portrays this further step, voiced as an expression of possibility and hope, which emerge from despair rather than in spite of it.

Conclusion

Deutero-Isaiah recognizes the experience of tension in humanity's temporal existence. Although time may not exist in any tactile sense, man's consciousness forces him to recognize the passage of moments in a stream of what has been, what is now, and what may be in the future. These modes of temporality of which we have consciousness are referred to as past, present, and future. Existence, which always occurs in the present, is in tension with the passage of time. We live in this tension and we experience it, often all too intensely. In Deutero-Isaiah this experience is eloquently articulated and poignantly addressed. When the prophet wrote, the Israelites were in a geographic exile as well as an exiled condition of consciousness. Hope no longer seemed possible as in the former days of Yahweh's activity. At this prophet's suggestion, the Israelites are to recall the past, drawing upon it as a source for present existence, and yet, at the same time, they must move beyond past experience. The past exodus is remembered, and thus brought into present consciousness, but it is not intended to encompass the present and eliminate the possibility for a fresh exodus. Deutero-Isaiah avoids this sort of reduction and preserves the experience of tension with a narrative approach to memory, rearticulating the story of the community as the chosen people of Yahweh. Within this story, the people can recall past saving acts while imagining a future justice and experiencing hope in the present.

Without careful attention to the details offered in this portrait of temporal consciousness, it would be tempting to fall into a simple dichotomy in which Deutero-Isaiah offers remembrance while Friedrich Nietzsche offers forgetting. Such an interpretation might initially leap to mind with any comparison between the texts of

Ancient Israel and a radical German thinker of the nineteenth century such as Nietzsche. Indeed, Nietzsche is widely recognized for the way he jettisons much of the Western tradition in his philosophy of the *Übermensch*. Perhaps, the bridge is easily crossed from his psychological arguments about forgetting into his cultural critique. Nevertheless, the suggestion that Nietzsche strictly propounds forgetting the past while Deutero-Isaiah strictly proclaims remembering it can be based only upon superficial readings of the relevant texts. It is far too simple to say that Nietzsche forgets as the prophet recalls. Despite Nietzsche's radical phrasing, his recognition of the power of forgetting and his call toward it are not particularly new. As revealed in this study, the call to forget can be found in both Classical Greece and the Hebrew Old Testament. Against a simple dichotomy between Nietzsche and Deutero-Isaiah, but more importantly against such a dichotomy between remembering and forgetting, this paper suggests that forgetting and remembering are not polar opposites at all, but treated in the texts of Nietzsche, *Philoctetes*, and *Isaiah* as elements of a narrative understanding about memory.

Most directly, these texts address the challenge of human existence in tension with memory of the past and in each case it is treated through this narrative approach. These authors never use the specific term 'narrative,' but for all three recommend that consciousness of the past operate within the context of a narrative understanding in which present and future may also be preserved. To avoid the sickness of *ressentiment*, Nietzsche's healthy man constructs horizons of consciousness that allow both past experience and future promise so that he may possess a love of fate in the present moment. Philoctetes is reminded of past glory and approaching victory so that these memories and projections can empower him to reject his bitterness in the present. When

faced with scope of their story, Israel finds herself in the presence of Yahweh, an experience of possibility from which hope emerges and calls them from exile. For all, with differences of degree, past and future are not exclusive opposites to be chosen between. Instead, these authors emphasize the present and address how a narrative consciousness, a present-with-consciousness-of-past-and-future, offers escape from the mindset of exile. In the mindset of exile, the experience of the present moment evaporates and becomes the continued re-experience of the past. Narrative encompasses memory and imagination, giving presence to past and future without fixing any particular moment as the end of possibility. There is no need to tear down all of the past to have a future, but the mind must be open to possibility. Narrative memory preserves the consciousness of the unfinished-ness of human experience and draws the awareness of possibility within its horizons. Narrative allows the preservation of tension among past, present, and future, truths that may not otherwise be comprehensible. This is the narrative consciousness revealed in all three studies of this paper.

Yet if memory is to be a narrative, the question as to what enters the story remains. What are we to remember? What are we to forget? This is a critical question with far reaching implications. As Voegelin suggests, our answers to these questions can shape the social world in which we live: “Amnesia with regard to past achievement is one of the most important social phenomena.”¹⁹³ To understand the answers offered by Nietzsche, Sophocles, and Deutero-Isaiah, it is important to also understand their shared task. All three desire an awakening of consciousness from exile within a memory of the past. This exile promotes a disbelief in possibility. In contrast, these authors write of a more extensive scope of experience. While this awakening involves the choice of what

¹⁹³ Voegelin, *Order and History Volume One*, ix.

to remember and what to forget, it is important to understand the complexity here. None of these authors establish a checklist of those things to forget and those things to remember. Rather, they are concerned with the stance of consciousness toward possibility, which involves consideration of temporality and our relationship to it through memory. The state of consciousness they awaken is one of openness, one that perceives the unfinished-ness of human experience.

Remembering is a gathering together of an identity, a story from the past. These authors agree insofar as they note that this gathering draws upon the future as well. For them, forgetting is this openness to the future as source for awakening consciousness toward possibilities beyond those already exhausted. In this sense, it involves openness to the past as well. Forgetting is the resistance against the reduction of life's possibilities to any single past or present experience that claims the end of history for itself. Forgetting is the release of consciousness from this claim. Remembering risks slipping into inauthenticity when it reduces human existence to a single moment.

The experience of hope depends upon a change of mind toward this awareness of possibility beyond a single experience. Therefore, it involves something of an unlearning of the power of that particular experience. Forgetting for these authors is less an unlearning of specific events than an unlearning of the state of consciousness, of the exile, brought about from those events. For example, the community of Israel during the age of Deutero-Isaiah has a functioning memory in the sense that they have tabulated the past as series of occasions, such as the founding of the covenant with Yahweh. Yet, at the time of the Babylonian exile, they need to unlearn the belief that the covenant is restricted to a previous era when their life amidst Yahweh was more readily apparent.

They need to unlearn their disbelief in the continued presence of Yahweh and his covenant. Rather than forgetting the covenant and the first exodus, they are to become open to the possibility of experiencing these in the present. Thus, what is to be remembered is this unfinished-ness of experience – what Nietzsche calls becoming, what Deutero-Isaiah calls the homecoming journey. Through the presence of this possibility, a presence in consciousness, hope and healing emerge.

Hope emerges and presents an empowering call to purpose in the present. For Nietzsche it is the story of having a self. The call of Nietzsche's promise-making is a pledge to the self, an affirmation of the self, a willing of the self. For Sophocles it is the call to friendship and the community of Greek heroism that emerges from that. For Deutero-Isaiah it is the call for the community to gather in Yahweh's presence that emerges from the story of Israel's relationship with transcendence. Clearly, the sources and content of these hope-giving stories differ. Nevertheless, while this hope manifests quite differently among these three authors, it emerges in a strikingly similar pattern - memory and forgetting together turn consciousness toward hope.

These authors neither ignore nor repress the experience of pain. They readily acknowledge and seek to address it. For them, however, the experience of pain and the memory of suffering can give way to hope through forgetting as the lived narrative of consciousness. This transformation offers more than a simple mind trick or delusion. It offers itself as path to be traversed, a call to be lived. The transformation of consciousness from bitterness or hopelessness to healing involves an engagement with and through suffering. In other words, while they do not deny suffering, they firmly hold

the belief in the possibility of overcoming and healing. The authors steadfastly work to move beyond a mindset of suffering that might descend into hopelessness or resentment.

However, it is in this movement, from a psyche sick from suffering to a restoration of healthy consciousness, that the differences among these authors become most apparent and most significant. Nietzsche's cultural critique speaks judgment much as the prophet of the first part of *Isaiah* spoke judgment against the culture of Israel. As with the movement offered in the canonical interpretation of the *Book of Isaiah* noted above, in which the passage from judgment into exile and then kingdom is made clear, Nietzsche wants to pass from judgment to a new vision. In other words, he proceeds from the mode of cultural judgment of First Isaiah to a release of the imagination as Trito-Isaiah. However, he fails to move toward the healing pursued by Deutero-Isaiah. He hastens quickly from his metaphor of sickness to his metaphor of health without including the language of healing.

Ultimately, Nietzsche never offers a way out from the bitterness of resentment other than a willed transformation of consciousness. On the other hand, Sophocles and Deutero-Isaiah recognize that psychological damage of suffering must be healed as part of the transformation of consciousness. Therefore, the earlier authors differ from the nineteenth century philosopher not only in the specific content of memory in their texts, but also, and perhaps most importantly, in the manner by which the transformation of consciousness proceeds. For Sophocles and Deutero-Isaiah there is a far greater emphasis upon what Nietzsche only occasionally and vaguely mentioned – intersubjectivity. Furthermore, for these authors the transformation necessitates comfort as well as will. The pain of the suffering is embraced. The other, manifest variously as

friend, community, or transcendence, plays a powerful role in bringing comfort to the suffering. For Sophocles and Deutero-Isaiah, it is not enough to will a story and expect release from bitterness or hopelessness. Rather, the will must be empowered through comfort brought to the afflicted. While Nietzsche emphasizes self-will with some slight reference to intersubjectivity as the source for the hope-giving story, Sophocles emphasizes the intersubjectivity of friendship and community. Deutero-Isaiah emphasizes community and particularly transcendence as the sources for narratives of possibility.

The treatments of memory offered in these texts face the question as to whether healing and justice can come into conflict. The authors suggest that when justice is reduced to resentment, conflict emerges. However, none of these writers, not even Nietzsche, abandons justice to resentment. Indeed, all three denounce such reduction. Yet, beyond this Nietzsche offers little in terms of what form justice will take. The conspicuous absence of an articulation of justice in the writings of Nietzsche, despite his direct critique of the 'genealogy' of the Western notion of justice, may be an inescapable result not only of his rejection, or forgetting, of much of tradition, but also of the self-centered emphasis in his treatment of memory. In contrast, the other two texts, which bring intersubjectivity and transcendence into play, develop notions of justice offered in their imaginations of the future. Sophocles has Heracles offers a pronouncement of justice in his directive for the Greeks to limit their reprisal against their enemies. Deutero-Isaiah's healing message culminates in a vision of grace and forgiveness, which clear the way for the imaginations of justice and community of Trito-Isaiah. Their depictions of memory lead into their visions of justice that include both judgment and

healing. The narratives they offer do not abandon memory of the order that allows them to pronounce judgment, and yet they offer visions of life beyond the decay of the psyche brought upon by suffering and exile.

Bibliography

- Bambach, Charles R. "History and Ontology: A Reading of Nietzsche's Second 'Untimely Meditation.'" *Philosophy Today*. Fall, 2000.
- Birch, Bruce C., Walter Brueggemann, Terence E. Fretheim, and David L. Petersen. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingden Press, 1999.
- Bittner, Rudiger. "Ressentiment." *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, edited by Richard Schacht. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
- Conway, Daniel W. *Nietzsche and the Political*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Eichrodt, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Volume One*, translated by J.A. Baker. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961.
- Higgins, Kathleen. "Nietzsche and Postmodern Subjectivity." *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra*, edited by Clayton Koelb. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990.
- Jaspers, Karl. *Nietzsche: An Introduction to Understanding his Philosophical Activity*, translated by Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1969.
- Lingis, Alphonso. "The Will to Power." *The New Nietzsche*, edited by David B. Allison. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.
- Nehamas, Alexander. "The Genealogy of Genealogy: Interpretation in Nietzsche's *Second Untimely Meditation* and in *On the Genealogy of Morals*." *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, edited by Richard Schacht. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, edited by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, translated by R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, translated by Walter Kauffmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Untimely Meditations*, edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*, edited by Walter Kaufmann, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.
- Owen, David . “Modernity, Ethics and Counter-Ideals: Amor Fati, Eternal Recurrence and the Overman.” *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments*, volume 3, edited by Daniel Conway. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Rosen, Stanley. *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969.
- Small, Robin . “Nietzsche, Spir, and Time.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 32. January, 1994.
- Solomon, Robert C. “100 Years of Ressentiment: Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morality*.” *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, edited by Richard Schacht. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.
- Sophocles. *Philoctetes*, translated by Judith Affleck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Stamborough, Joan . “Thoughts on the Innocence of Becoming.” *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments*, volume 2, edited by Daniel Conway. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Thiele, Leslie Paul . *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Vladier, Paul. "Dionysus Versus the Crucified." *The New Nietzsche*, edited by David B. Allison. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

Voegelin, Eric. *Order and History Volume One: Israel and Revelation*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994.

Voegelin, Eric. *Order and History Volume Two: The World of the Polis*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986.

Von Rad, Gerhard . *Old Testament Theology, Volume II: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, translated by D.M.G. Stalker. New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1965.

Walzer, Michael. *Exodus and Revolution*. Basic Books, 1985.

Westermann, Claus. *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, translated by D.M.G. Stalker. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969.

Vita

Michael Henderson was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and attended high school at McKinley Senior High School. After graduating in 1996, he attended Louisiana State University, from which he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. He began his graduate studies in political science in the spring of 2002 at Louisiana State University. He will receive his Master of Arts degree in December of 2003.