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# Nietzsche on Realism in Art and the Role of Illusions in Life-Affirmation

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NIETZSCHE ON REALISM IN ART AND THE ROLE OF ILLUSIONS IN LIFE-  
AFFIRMATION

by

MARIE KERGUELEN LE BLEVENNEC

Under the Direction of Jessica Berry, PhD

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I investigate Nietzsche's views about realism in art, and use the resulting textual evidence to explain the connection between realism, health and life-affirmation. First, I show that Nietzsche's contrasting claims about artists like Flaubert and Stendhal reflect a distinction between two types of realism: the *unhealthy realism* of Flaubert, and the *healthy realism* of Stendhal. I then use this understanding of healthy realism in art to argue that for Nietzsche, healthy realism is vital for life-affirmation. Finally, I apply this evidence to a debate between Daniel Came and Bernard Reginster concerning whether Nietzsche thinks life-affirmation requires falsifying reality using illusions, especially *artistic* illusions, for the purpose of masking life's terrible truths. Against Came, I argue that Nietzsche's remarks about realism in art support Bernard Reginster's claim that Nietzsche abandons his emphasis on illusion in *The Birth of Tragedy* in favor of tough-minded realism about life's terrible truths.

INDEX WORDS: Friedrich Nietzsche, Realism, Art, Life-affirmation, Health, Illusion

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AFFIRMATION

by

MARIE KERGUELEN LE BLEVENNEC

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Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

2017

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2017

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout his work, Nietzsche consistently associates life-affirmation with various states and characteristics that he considers physically and psychologically healthy, strong and great. One of the traits that Nietzsche praises most often in this regard is being a realist. For example, Nietzsche claims that “what Zarathustra *wants*: the type of person he conceives of is the type that conceives of reality *as it is*: his type has the strength to do this [...] *this is the only way someone can achieve greatness...*” (EH ‘Destiny’ 5). Likewise, Nietzsche describes the early Modern scientist Lord Francis Bacon as “the first realist in every large sense of the word,” whose “strength for the most powerful reality of vision is not only consistent with the most powerful strength of deed, an atrociousness of deed — it even presupposes it” (EH ‘Clever’ 4). Finally, as part of his general admiration for the strength and health of ancient Greeks like Thucydides, Nietzsche singles out the “strong, strict, hard factuality that was a matter of instinct for the older Hellenes,” their “courage in the face of reality,” and their “bold realism” as particularly healthy and admirable (TI ‘Ancients’ 2-3).

Besides these claims about realism in general, in other places Nietzsche also discusses various artists and writers who are commonly considered ‘realists’ in some sense of the term, such as Stendhal, Goethe,<sup>1</sup> and Flaubert. I want to show that Nietzsche’s various remarks about these realist artists can shed light upon the general kind of realism that Nietzsche links to health and life-affirmation.<sup>2</sup> So, in this paper, I investigate Nietzsche’s views about realism as a feature

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Nietzsche explains that one of the qualities that makes Goethe one of the “great human beings” and a “spirit who has *become free*” is the fact that he is a “convinced realist” (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 49-50).

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper, I use the term ‘realism’ in two different senses depending on the context. The first is *Nietzschean* realism; this is the perspective of healthy, strong individuals who courageously face life’s terrible truths. One example of a ‘non-realist’ who lacks such a perspective would be the man of faith, who internalizes lies and illusions as convictions and ideals in order to hide terrible truths that he is too weak to face; I contrast the Nietzschean realist and the man of faith in detail in Part 4 of this paper. The second sense of ‘realism’ I employ is one that refers to an artistic movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that emerged partly in reaction to Romanticism, which put a greater (though not exclusive) emphasis on quotidian, contemporary, mundane themes and characters, and

of the perspectives of various artists, and use the resulting textual evidence to explain the connection between realism, health and life-affirmation. With such evidence in hand, I then explore its implications for various interpretations of Nietzsche's views about life-affirmation in the secondary literature. Most significantly, I will focus on a debate between Daniel Came and Bernard Reginster concerning whether or not Nietzsche encourages us to affirm life by falsifying reality using illusions, especially *artistic* illusions, for the purpose of masking or evading life's terrible truths.

This paper will be organized in the following way. I begin by explaining the debate between Came and Reginster. Reginster argues that while Nietzsche's earlier work (especially *The Birth of Tragedy*) did indeed give illusion a positive role in life-affirmation, his mature work abandons this position in favor of associating life-affirmation with "tough-minded realism" about life's terrible truths (Reginster 104). By contrast, Came contends that even in his late works, Nietzsche holds that life-affirmation requires our using illusions to mask life's terrible truths.<sup>3</sup> I will then focus on Nietzsche's discussion of *different forms of realism* as a feature of the perspectives of various artists. My claim is that Nietzsche's remarks about realist art and artists offer an underexplored source of evidence against Came's view and in favor of Reginster's interpretation. I focus on realism in art because Nietzsche's contrasting claims about artists like Stendhal and Flaubert actually reflect an important distinction between two basic

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portrayed them in a less overtly sentimental and stylized way than Romantic art. Some examples of the Realist style are the paintings of Courbet and the novels of Balzac. In contrast to this sort of realism, 'non-realism' would include the neoclassicist paintings of David, the symbolist paintings of Moreau, and the writings of Baudelaire, which differ from Realist art in subject matter and in technique. One of my arguments in this paper will be that, although Flaubert is a realist in the second sense, he is not a realist in the first sense, i.e., he is not a *Nietzschean* realist. However, being a realist in the second sense does not necessarily prevent one from also being a Nietzschean realist. For example, I will argue in this paper that Stendhal is a Nietzschean realist, but he is arguably a realist in the second sense as well.

<sup>3</sup> For more on why Nietzsche thinks that the truth can be terrible, see Leiter (Forthcoming). According to Leiter, these terrible truths consist in the inevitability of, for example, "manifestations of greed, lust, betrayal, vengeance, and spite, in matters banal and momentous," as well as the possibility that "we may all be destined for oblivion and misery and suffering" (Leiter Forthcoming, 4).



types of realism: (1) the *unhealthy*, selfless and nihilistic realism exemplified by Flaubert, and (2) the *healthy* realism exemplified by Stendhal. In order to use Nietzsche's claims about the latter as evidence, I must first show how they are different from his claims about the former. After extracting this distinction from Nietzsche's discussion of realist artists, I will argue that for Nietzsche, the healthy realist perspective *in art* is life-affirming as long as it avoids falsifying life's terrible truths by hiding, distorting, or evading them. In turn, this suggests that Reginster is correct when he makes his claim that in Nietzsche's later works, life-affirmation requires a tough-minded realist perspective *in general*. Lastly, I will show that Nietzsche's views concerning realist art also pose a problem for Nadeem Hussain's fictionalist interpretation of valuing and life-affirmation for Nietzschean free spirits.

## 2 REGINSTER AND CAME ON ILLUSIONS AND LIFE-AFFIRMATION

Came's argument is largely a response to Reginster's account of Nietzschean life-affirmation. According to Reginster, in his mature work Nietzsche ceases almost entirely to associate life-affirmation with illusion. Instead, as Reginster explains, Nietzsche associates life-affirmation with a *tragic Dionysian wisdom* which "regards suffering as desirable, and this makes it a life-affirming point of view. Furthermore, Nietzsche remarks that sufficient strength is a condition of the possibility of affirmation, whereas the life-negating condemnation of suffering is a contrivance of weakness" (Reginster 229). Finally, Reginster also points out that "Nietzsche is often anxious to distinguish a genuine affirmation of life from other attitudes that are only sham forms of it," including the "*concealment*" of suffering through illusion (*ibid.*).

In contrast to Reginster, Came argues that for Nietzsche, "both in the early and the later works illusion is a necessary condition of the affirmation of life" (Came 211). More precisely,

Came maintains that “one must falsify – whether by evasion or explicit falsehood – the horrors of life *to some degree* in order to affirm it” (*ibid.*). Came’s interpretation has two key components: (1) Nietzsche thinks that illusions, especially artistic illusions, are *required* for health and life-affirmation; and (2) for Nietzsche, art is *always* based on illusions. If Came is right, then either Reginster is wrong to claim that life-affirmation involves tough-minded realism, or even realism must involve illusions at some level. In particular, even life-affirming realist art would be life-affirming *only* insofar as it uses illusions.

To support his position, Came contends that Nietzsche “shares Schopenhauer’s view that if we saw life as it really is, we would not be able to carry on, and that we continue to exist only because of the hold that various forms of illusion have over us” (Came 212). To show that Nietzsche shares Schopenhauer’s view, Came appeals to Nietzsche’s claim that “*honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide” (GS 107), as well as Nietzsche’s assertion in *The Birth of Tragedy* that “the insatiable will always find a way to detain its creatures in life and compel them to live on, by means of an illusion spread over things” (BT 18).<sup>4</sup> According to Came, these passages show that for Nietzsche, illusions are needed to face life’s terrible truths in a healthy and life-affirming way.

Came then shows that Nietzsche distinguishes among three kinds of life-affirming illusions: “the Socratic love of knowledge,” the “metaphysical comfort that beneath the whirl of phenomena the eternal life flows indestructibly,” and “art’s seductive veil of beauty fluttering” before our eyes (BT 18). According to Came, it is the third kind of illusion, namely *artistic* illusion, that plays the most important role in health and life-affirmation, for two reasons. First,

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<sup>4</sup> Came contends that “all of Nietzsche’s published works, not just BT as is widely supposed, were written under the spell of Schopenhauer’s pessimism” (Came 212). That is why he takes evidence from *The Birth of Tragedy* as indicating that even in his mature period, Nietzsche thinks that illusions are necessary in order to face life’s terrible truths in a healthy and life-affirming way. I will address the plausibility of this controversial reading below.

certain truths are so terrible that they call for aesthetic counter-measures so that we can carry on existing. As Nietzsche maintains, “*we possess art lest we perish of the truth*” (WP 822), because “art makes the sight of life bearable by laying over it the veil of unclear thinking” (HH 151). In other words, art *conceals* and *distorts* life’s terrible truths, thereby making life bearable.

Second, Came argues that artistic illusions are required for *amor fati*, Nietzsche’s ultimate formula of life-affirmation (GS 341). To justify this claim, Came begins with Nietzsche’s assertion that *amor fati* demands that one “learn more and more to see as *beautiful* what is necessary in things” (GS 276). According to Came, *artistry* “is the activity best suited to present ‘what is necessary in things’ as beautiful” (Came 215-216). Not only is art *best suited* for this life-affirming role, but also, “presenting what is necessary in things as beautiful does not occur without artistic *reconstruction* and *interpretation*” (Came 216, emphasis added). That is, artistic reconstruction and interpretation are *required* for presenting what is necessary in things as beautiful, and are thus also necessary for life-affirmation in its ultimate expression as *amor fati*. Yet as we have seen, Came thinks that representing what is necessary in this way does *not* portray life’s terrible truths *as they are*, but rather distorts those truths into “a diluted and hence falsified image of reality” (Came 215). So, Came’s view is that artistic reconstruction and interpretation involve falsehoods and illusions, and these artistic illusions are required for *amor fati*. This means that Came interprets Nietzsche as holding that even those great spirits who affirm life, such as Goethe (see, e.g., TI ‘Skirmishes’ 49), must hide life’s terrible truths by falsifying them with artistic illusions.

According to Came, illusions are also an essential component of artistic representation as such. As Came puts it, “in Nietzsche’s mature work, artistic representation remains *essentially* tied to illusion: its role is to present reality in a transfigured and idealized form” (Came 216,

emphasis added). In fact, Came considers illusions to be an *essential* feature of art for Nietzsche, to the extent that “without that illusion it could not function” (Came 215).<sup>5</sup> As justification, Came argues that even the type of art that is closest to life’s terrible truths, namely tragedy, rests on illusion as well, and concludes that “the affirmation of life that tragedy produces, then, is not an affirmation of life at all – the object of affirmation is not unvarnished reality – but rather an affirmation of a diluted and hence falsified image of reality” (*ibid.*).<sup>6</sup>

*In fine*, Came advances two main contentions. First, illusions, and especially *artistic illusions*, are required for *amor fati* and life-affirmation in general. Second, even in his mature work, Nietzsche maintains that falsehoods and illusions are essential to art. If Came is right, then Regenster’s claim, according to which life-affirmation requires *foregoing* illusions about life’s terrible truths, would be implausible.

### 3 NIETZSCHE ON REALISM IN ART

Came’s view has a puzzling consequence for our understanding of Nietzsche’s views about realist art. For if Nietzsche holds that art requires illusions in the manner Came describes, then Nietzsche must also think that there is no genuinely “realist” art who confronts

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<sup>5</sup> Some of Nietzsche’s remarks seem to support Came’s account. For example, Nietzsche describes the life-affirming “gilding” that Homer engages in as “art, in which *lying* sanctifies itself and the *will to deception* has good conscience on its side” (GM III 25). Likewise, we have already seen that Came appeals to Nietzsche’s claim that “*honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide. But now our honesty has a counterforce that helps us avoid such consequences: art, as the *good will to appearance*” (GS 107). So, perhaps Homer is transfiguring reality in the manner Came describes. Nietzsche also seems to praise the Greeks for being “superficial - *out of profundity!*” because they “stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin” and “worship appearance” (GS P 4). If the superficiality that Nietzsche is praising the Greeks for consists in a falsification of reality through artistic illusions, then Came’s interpretation might be correct. Below, I will investigate the extent to which these passages actually provide evidence for Came’s interpretation.

<sup>6</sup> As Came puts it, “the tragic is a subspecies of illusion”; even though it is the case that “the tragic is much closer to the truth than the Socratic is – that the basic horror of things is at least partially transmitted by tragedy,” nonetheless there is “a veil of illusion (that) is draped over this truth” (Came 215). For Came, tragedy is close to the truth because it represents the fundamental mismatch between the way things are and our basic needs and desires. However, tragedy still uses “illusion in its character portrayal, symbolism, and in the clarity and beauty of its dialogue” (*ibid.*).

“unvarnished reality” and its horrors without hiding it using illusions. Yet this seems implausible given Nietzsche’s praise of certain realist artists. So, in this section, I will examine Nietzsche’s various claims about realist artists. By doing so, I will show that Nietzsche’s various claims about realist artists reflect a distinction between two kinds of realism, *unhealthy* realism and *healthy* realism, that can not only help us resolve how best to understand Nietzsche’s views about realist art, but also can serve as a useful source of evidence for interpretations of Nietzsche’s account of life-affirmation.

### 3.1 Nietzsche on Art, Artists, and Health

It might seem strange, *prima facie*, to use Nietzsche’s discussion of artists and their works in order to shed light on his views about life-affirmation, since he urges us explicitly not to conflate artists and their works (GM III 4). However, Nietzsche sees artistic works as *symptoms* of the artist’s psychological and physiological constitution, which express the unconscious value judgments and tastes of the artist.<sup>7</sup> That is, works of art express the physiologically-conditioned *perspective* of the artist. In fact, Nietzsche offers the following description of his use of artworks to understand artists:

If I have any advantage over other psychologists, it is that my vision is keener for that most difficult and insidious form of *backwards inference* with which the most mistakes are made – the inference from the work to the maker, from the deed to the doer, from the ideal to the one who *needs* it, from every manner of thinking and making to the commanding *need* behind it. (NcW ‘Antipodes’)

So, for Nietzsche, the *origin* of a work of art is a matter of the artist’s psychology and physiology, especially his needs. That is why Nietzsche states that “looking into the *origins* of a work [of art] is the business of physiologists and vivisectors of the spirit” (GM III 4). Likewise,

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<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Nietzsche’s claims that thoughts are “symptoms of certain bodies” (GS P 2), and that “opinions along with proofs, refutations, and the whole intellectual masquerade are only symptoms of a changed taste,” as well as changes in “lifestyle, nutrition, digestion ... in short, in [...] *physis*” (GS 39).

the artist's value judgments and "affective interpretations" are also symptoms of his physiological constitution (GM III 12). If an artist is unhealthy, his artwork will reflect this lack of health, whether or not the artist is consciously aware of it. It is in this sense that the artist is "in the end only the precondition of his work, the womb, the ground, in some cases the fertilizer and manure on which, out of which, it grows" (GM III 4). For these reasons, in what follows I will proceed on the presupposition that realism in art and literature is *a feature of the perspective of the artist*, and an indication of the artist's physiological health or lack thereof.

Nietzsche's general claims about art and its relationship to health provide important evidence against Came's assertion that for Nietzsche, the role of artists is to use illusions to hide the terrible truths of life in order to make life affirmable. To see this, we must consider Nietzsche's account of various ways in which art can serve as a *cure* for different types of artists:

every art, every philosophy can be considered a cure and aid in the service of growing or declining life: it always presupposes suffering and sufferers. But there are two types of sufferers: those who suffer from a *superabundance* of life — they want a Dionysian art as well as a tragic outlook and insight into life — then, those who suffer from an *impoverishment* of life and demand quiet, stillness, calm seas *or else* intoxication, paroxysm, stupor from art and philosophy. Revenge against life itself — the most voluptuous type of intoxication for people who are impoverished in this way! (NcW 'Antipodes')<sup>8</sup>

According to Nietzsche, artists who suffer from a superabundance of life discharge their will to power in a "Dionysian state" of intoxication, which is a "physiological precondition" that is "indispensable for there to be art or any sort of aesthetic action or vision" (TI 'Skirmishes' 8-10). Nietzsche elaborates that "the essential thing about [this] intoxication is the feeling of

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<sup>8</sup> To understand what Nietzsche means by a "superabundance" of life, we must look at his remarks about life and health. Nietzsche considers "life itself to be an instinct for growth, for endurance, for the accumulation of force, for *power*: where there is no will to power, there is decline" (A6). He also equates "happiness" with "the feeling that power is *growing*, that some resistance has been overcome" (A2). From these remarks, we can see that someone who *suffers* from a superabundance of life suffers because they do not feel their power growing or the overcoming of resistance; they are not discharging their will to power, and suffer because their need to do so is not satisfied.

fullness and increasing strength. This feeling makes us release ourselves onto things, we *force* them to accept us, we violate them” (*ibid.*). So, art in the service of growing life acts as a cure for artists who suffer from a superabundance of life because, by creating it, those artists overcome the resistance of a canvas, marble or bronze, the page, the audience, etc., to impose themselves and discharge their will to power.<sup>9</sup>

The problem for Came’s argument is that Nietzsche also says that artists who suffer from a superabundance of life and create art in the service of growing life have no need to hide from suffering or cover up life’s terrible truths. In the same passage from *Nietzsche contra Wagner* quoted above, Nietzsche associates superabundance of life with “the Dionysian god and man, [who] can allow himself not only the sight of what is terrible and questionable but also the terrible deed and every luxury of destruction, decomposition, negation; in his case, what is evil, nonsensical, and ugly seems allowable, as it seems allowable in nature, because of an overflow in procreating, fertilizing forces capable of turning any desert into bountiful farmland” (NcW ‘Antipodes’). In contrast, Nietzsche says that the artist “who suffers most and is poorest in life would need mainly mildness, peacefulness [...] as well as logic, the conceptual comprehensibility of existence even for idiots [...] in short, a certain warm, fear-repelling narrowness and confinement to optimistic horizons which allows for a *dumbing down*” (*ibid.*). This “dumbing down” carried out by sick, declining artists seems similar to the “diluted” image of reality that Came think is required for life-affirmation. Moreover, Nietzsche’s characterization of sick, declining artists seems incompatible with the Dionysian state of intoxication that he considers a physiological precondition for art. In fact, Nietzsche refers to sick, declining artists as “anti-artists” and “the starvation victims of life” (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 9).

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<sup>9</sup> This is what makes Dionysian intoxication distinct from the intoxication of the impoverished, life-hating artist, which Nietzsche associates with “paroxysm” and “stupor” (NcW ‘Antipodes’).

And if Nietzsche thinks that only degenerate anti-artists produce dumbed-down, diluted images of reality, then it becomes difficult to accept Came's view that precisely such images are vital to Nietzsche's account of life-affirmation.

All this suggests that artists who can allow themselves the sight of everything terrible in life are more likely to be tough-minded realists who exhibit and appreciate tragic Dionysian wisdom, as Reginster claims. However, to fully appreciate the importance of Nietzsche's views about art for the theme of life-affirmation, we must turn to Nietzsche's applications of these general claims about art to specific artists, especially in order to properly distinguish healthy realist artists from a kind of realist that Nietzsche considers unhealthy.

### 3.2 Unhealthy Realism: The Case of Flaubert

Nietzsche's discussion of unhealthy realist art is most evident in his remarks about Gustave Flaubert. He consistently refers to Flaubert as a sick, ascetic, life-denying nihilist. For example, Nietzsche calls Flaubert a "nihilist" for claiming that "*On ne peut penser et écrire qu'assis*," which should not be surprising given Nietzsche's association of impoverishment of life with the need for quiet, stillness, calm seas, mildness, and peacefulness (TI 'Arrows' 34).<sup>10</sup> Most damningly, Nietzsche uses Flaubert as his primary example of an unhealthy artist while making a "primary distinction concerning artists of every type":

is it *hatred* of life or *superabundance* of life that has become creative here? In Goethe, for instance, superabundance has become creative, in Flaubert it is hatred: Flaubert, a new edition of Pascal, but as an artist, based on the instinctive judgment: 'Flaubert est toujours *haïssable*, l'homme n'est rien, *l'œuvre est tout*' ... He tortured himself when he wrote, just as Pascal tortured himself when he thought — they both felt unegoistic... 'selflessness' — that principle of decadence, the will to the end in art as in morality. — (NcW 'Antipodes')<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 'One cannot think or write except while sitting down'.

<sup>11</sup> 'Flaubert is always hateful, the man is nothing, the work is everything'.



According to Nietzsche, Flaubert is decadent because he hates himself, and as a result adopts an unegoistic, selfless perspective. In fact, Flaubert was less than sanguine about his own existence. In a letter to Louise Colet, he stated that “the idea of bringing someone into the world fills me with horror. I would curse myself if I were a father. A son of mine! Oh no, no, no! May my entire flesh perish and may I transmit to no one the aggravations and the disgrace of existence” (Letter to Louise Colet, 11 December 1852).

Given this nihilistic attitude about his own life, it is unsurprising that in his work, Flaubert sought to free himself from his own subjectivity, i.e., to renounce any form of interpretation and to erase his own sentiments. In a letter addressed to George Sand, Flaubert explained that, for him, “great art is scientific and impersonal,” and that the artist should “not put one’s personality into the picture” (Letter to George Sand, 15-16 December 1866). For Nietzsche, such a desire not to express one’s own sentiments or put one’s personality into the picture must be a symptom of *bad conscience*. Flaubert must have felt guilty about his natural instincts, as “only bad conscience, only the will to self-violation provides the precondition for the value of the unegoistic” (GM II 18). In particular, Flaubert’s unegoistic, selfless perspective manifests itself as a quest for objectivity in his writing. For Nietzsche, this desire to erase one’s own sentiments for the sake of objectivity is “the incarnate will to contradiction and anti-nature” of the ascetic ideal (GM III 12), which fosters the will to the annihilation of the individual and is hostile to life.<sup>12</sup> That is why Nietzsche considers denying one’s own sentiments for the sake of objectivity to be a form of asceticism, and a sign of “the will to the end in art as in morality.”

Insofar as Flaubert is committed to selfless objectivity because he hates himself, he is a valet of

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<sup>12</sup> For more on Nietzsche’s perspectivism as an attack of the notion of ‘objectivity’ see Berry 2011, especially p. 113-115. Berry explains that “like the priest who takes pleasure in self-flagellation, against all prudential reason the seeker of knowledge engages in some self-flagellation of his own by maintaining his ideal [the epistemic ideal of objectivity] as the highest one and by persisting in his hopeless endeavor. This activity, like the priest’s, is what makes his life ‘self-contradictory’ and a ‘paradox’” (Berry 2011, 114).

the ascetic ideal (GM III 5), specifically its spiritualized form as the unconstrained will to truth that Nietzsche critiques (GM III 24). For these reasons, Flaubert, who “castrate[s]” his own intellect by trying to “turn off all the emotions without exception” in a vain quest for objectivity, exemplifies how realism in art can be symptomatic of an unhealthy body (GM III 12).

Moreover, Nietzsche holds that Flaubert’s detachment from his own sentiments and taste cripples his ability to portray characters with psychological depth.<sup>13</sup> As we have seen, Nietzsche considers the Dionysian state of intoxication an indispensable “physiological precondition” for art: “Without intoxication to intensify the excitability of the whole machine, there can be no art” (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 8). Most importantly, in the Dionysian state “the essential thing is the ease of metamorphosis, the inability *not* to react [...] It is impossible for a Dionysian to fail to understand any suggestion, he will not miss any affective signal, he has the most highly developed instinct for understanding and guessing, just as he possesses the art of communication to the highest degree. He enters into any skin, into any affect: he constantly transforms himself” (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 10). By cutting himself off from his own sentiments, Flaubert renders himself unable to experience the Dionysian state, which means that he cannot truly enter into the perspectives of others; ideas, logic, and conscious, dispassionate observation for its own sake are not adequate substitutes.

One manifestation of Flaubert’s unhealthy flight from his own sentiments is his general avoidance of expressing them in his narration or depiction of his characters. Consider Flaubert’s own description of his novel *L’Éducation sentimentale*:

Here I am, harnessed now and for the past month to a novel about modern life, which will be laid in Paris. I want to write the moral history of the men of my generation – or, more accurately, the history of their *feelings*. It’s a book about love, about passion; but passion such as can exist nowadays – that is to say,

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<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Nietzsche’s allusion to Parisian artists of his time as avoiding the portrayal of “psychological motivation [...] by replacing it with idiosyncracies... Very modern, right? very Parisian! very decadent!” (CW 5).

inactive. The subject as I have conceived it is, I believe, profoundly true, but for that very reason probably not very entertaining. (Letter to Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie, 6 October 1864)

In this letter, there is no mention of Flaubert's own sentiments regarding the feelings of the men of his generation. Rather, Flaubert says that he will simply portray how people are "nowadays," without exercising any selectivity, taste, or any other aspect of his own perspective, not even for the sake of producing a more "entertaining" work.

The effects of Flaubert's dispassionate approach can be seen in his portrayal of Frédéric Moreau, the protagonist of *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Frédéric is naïve, disorganized, idealistic, impulsive, and indecisive. In his romantic life, he constantly shifts his attention between three very different women as his feelings wax and wane; ultimately, he fails to win any of them, and ends up alone. Likewise, he is pulled between various political positions, social classes, occupations, and pursuits, without deeply engaging with any of them, making an impact, or being much influenced himself. Yet in portraying all this, Flaubert attempts only to show Frédéric as fully as possible, without expressing admiration, condemnation, or any other interpretation of Frédéric's life that Flaubert's perspective might yield. His project is simply to put on display the way average, mediocre Parisian men of Flaubert's time felt love and passion by writing a detailed "history" of it, as embodied in the story of Frédéric's life. And as we have seen, for Nietzsche such a project is a symptom of an unhealthy body.

Another symptom of Flaubert's unhealthy realist perspective is his artistic method, specifically, his imitation of scientific evidence-gathering by dispassionately accumulating vast collections of notes, facts, details, and first-hand experience to use in his novels. Nietzsche harshly criticizes this method:

Never observe *for the sake* of observing! This gives you a false optic, a squint, things become forced and exaggerated. Experiencing as *wanting-to-experience*

— that does not work [...] A born psychologist instinctively guards against seeing for its own sake; the same is true for a born painter. He never works ‘from nature’, — [...] But what happens when people do things differently? Like the Parisian novelists, for instance [...] Reality gets ambushed, as it were, and every night you take home a handful of curiosities. And just look at what happens in the end – a collection of blots, a mosaic at best, at any rate something patched together and fidgety, a screaming clash of colours. (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 7)

Here, Nietzsche seems to criticize Flaubert’s method of observation for two reasons.

First, when the desire driving your observation is simply your desire to perform the act itself, you force yourself to observe things that you never would have observed in the first place, had you instead been guided towards specific targets by your sentiments and taste. Second, when you observe for its own sake, you risk exaggerating the features, importance, or value of the object you observe in order to rationalize and retroactively justify to yourself your observing of it in the first place. For Nietzsche, both of these problems can be found in Flaubert’s writing, especially in his focus on mediocre, unexceptional protagonists such as Frédéric Moreau and Emma Bovary (see, e.g., CW 9).

In sum, Nietzsche thinks that Flaubert’s impersonal, objective artistic approach is just a sign that Flaubert is running away from his own sentiments due to weakness and bad conscience. He thinks that Flaubert’s “studies ‘from nature’ seem to be to be a bad sign: they show subjugation, weakness, fatalism, — this practice of lying in the dirt in front of *petits faits* is unworthy of an artist who is whole and complete” (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 7). That is, Flaubert’s devotion to an impersonal, selfless realism of *petits faits* is a denial of sensuality, an expression of his weak, life-denying body, and a symptom of exhaustion and nihilism. As Nietzsche maintains:

that will to stand still before the factual, the *factum brutum*, that fatalism of ‘*petits faits*’ (*ce petit fatalisme*, as I call it) [...] that renunciation of any interpretation (of forcing, adjusting, shortening, omitting, filling-out, inventing, falsifying and everything else essential to interpretation)—on the whole, this

expresses the asceticism of virtue just as well as any denial of sensuality (it is basically just a *modus* of this denial). (GM III 24)

In other words, Flaubert's will to stand still before *petits faits* is caused by his pathological desire for conclusions, which is really a nihilistic desire for activity (whether physical or contemplative) to come to an end. In turn, these psychological needs for conclusions and objectivity at the heart of Flaubert's unhealthy realism are merely symptoms of his exhausted physiology that requires stillness and peace.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.3 Healthy Realism: The Case of Stendhal

Like Flaubert, Stendhal is considered part of the literary realism movement. However, I contend that Nietzsche finds Stendhal's realism healthy and life-affirming, unlike Flaubert's unhealthy, self-annihilating 'objective' realism. Nietzsche calls encountering the works of Stendhal "one of the best accidents of my life," and praises Stendhal as "completely invaluable, with his anticipatory psychologist's eye and his grasp of the facts, a grasp that reminds you of that greatest facticity of all (*ex ungue Napoleonum*—); and finally, not least of all as an *honest* atheist, a rare species in France" (EH 'Clever' 3).<sup>15</sup> So, our task is to determine why Nietzsche treats these two realist artists differently, and how Nietzsche's treatment of these artists reflects a distinction between unhealthy and healthy forms of realist art. We will do so by examining Stendhal's conception of beauty, as well as his depiction of his character Julien Sorel in *Le rouge et le noir*.

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<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Nietzsche's claim that "familiarizing something unfamiliar is comforting, reassuring, satisfying and produces a feeling of power as well. Unfamiliar things are dangerous, anxiety-provoking, upsetting, - the primary instinct is to *get rid* of these painful states. First principle: any explanation is better than none" (TI 'Errors' 5).

<sup>15</sup> "From the claw, you can tell that it is Napoléon." Given Nietzsche's praise of Napoléon, it seems appropriate to take this remark as a compliment of Stendhal (see, e.g., GM I 11, GM I 16, BGE 199, and EH 'Case of Wagner' 2).

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche praises Stendhal's conception of beauty as "*une promesse de bonheur*" as a more astute alternative to the ascetic, sensuality-denying definition of beauty offered by Kant and Schopenhauer (GM III 6).<sup>16</sup> In contrast to Stendhal's definition of beauty, Nietzsche claims that under Kant's ascetic definition of beauty, "something is beautiful if it gives pleasure *without interest*"; Nietzsche notes that this means that for Kant "*even a naked female statue can be looked at 'without interest'*" (*ibid.*; see also Ak. 5:204-205). For Nietzsche, such contemplation without interest is just another form of the life-denying ascetic objectivity he critiques in the works of Flaubert. However, Nietzsche sees Stendhal's definition of beauty as opposed to the ascetic ideal, because it does not deny the sensual aspect of beauty; in Stendhal's definition, "*le désintéressement, is rejected and eliminated*" (GM III 6). Unlike Schopenhauer and Kant, Stendhal has no illusions about the fact that "sensuality is not suspended as soon as we enter the aesthetic condition" (GM III 8).<sup>17</sup> He is well aware of the sensual effect that beauty has on him, which is why he emphasizes "the *excitement of the will* ('of interest')" by beauty, rather than the *extinguishment* of the will, as Schopenhauer does (GM III 6).<sup>18</sup>

All this marks Stendhal in Nietzsche's eyes as "a no less sensual but more happily-formed nature than Schopenhauer" (*ibid.*). That is, Stendhal has a healthier psychology than philosophers giving ascetic definitions of beauty, as he does not "castrate" his intellect by

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<sup>16</sup> According to Nietzsche, philosophers like Kant and Schopenhauer are known for their "withdrawn attitude" and for denying their sensual nature (GM III 10). Nietzsche maintains that you can recognize a philosopher by his ascetic attitude; philosophers value "poverty, humility, chastity" (GM III 8) because these ascetic values enable the "most favorable conditions of higher intellectuality" (GM III 1) by acting to bridle their "wanton sensuality" (GM III 8).

<sup>17</sup> As my goal in this paper is not to evaluate the accuracy or plausibility of Nietzsche's interpretations of Kant and Schopenhauer, I will proceed without questioning them. However, this should be taken merely as description of Nietzsche's interpretations, not as my endorsement of them.

<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche claims that for Schopenhauer, "the effect of aesthetic contemplation [...] counteracts precisely *sexual 'interestedness'*" (GM III 6). Schopenhauer needs this escape because he is a "sensualist" who suffers from his strong sexual inclinations, and seeks an anesthetic "rather like lupulin and camphor" (GM III 6). For Schopenhauer, beauty functions as an escape from torture by "calming the will" (GM III 6). Schopenhauer's case exemplifies how adherence to the ascetic ideal makes philosophers understand beauty in a way that serves their psychological needs.

ignoring the emotions, and does not have an “irritation and rancor against sensuality” (GM III 7). In turn, this allows him to do what Flaubert cannot, namely, “enter into any skin, into any affect,” and thereby reveal the psychological needs driving the actions of his characters (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 10). For Nietzsche, it is precisely Stendhal’s enthusiasm for and insight into sentiment, passion, and pleasure that makes him a great psychologist.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Stendhal is healthy because, like Thucydides and Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*, Stendhal displays an “unconditional will not to be fooled and to see reason in *reality*,—not in reason [like Kant and Schopenhauer], and even less in ‘morality’...” (TI ‘Ancients’ 2). One might think that it is strange to associate Stendhal with this passage about Thucydides and Machiavelli’s most famous work, given that Stendhal is an artist whose craft deals with appearances. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that for Nietzsche “the fact that artists have valued appearance more highly than reality is not an objection to this proposition [that distinguishing between “true” and “apparent” worlds is merely a symptom of decadence]. Because ‘appearance’ here means reality *once again*, only selected, strengthened, corrected” (TI ‘Reason in Philosophy’ 6). In other words, the mere fact that Nietzsche claims that healthy, life-affirming art requires a “*good will to appearance*,” does not make Stendhal any less of a realist than Thucydides, nor his work any less realist than Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*, because the way that healthy artists like Stendhal craft their artworks does not *falsify* or *mask* life’s terrible truths (GS 107). That is, Stendhal’s good will to appearance is not dishonest.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Nietzsche’s claim that “as a contrast to the German inexperience and innocence in *voluptate psychologica*— which is not at all unrelated to the tedium of German company—, and as the most successful expression of a genuinely French curiosity and inventiveness in this realm of delicate tremblings, we can name Henri Beyle. This remarkable, anticipatory fore-runner ran with a Napoleonic tempo through his Europe, through several centuries of the European soul, as a pathfinder and discoverer of this soul. It took two generations to somehow catch up with him, to guess some of the riddles that tormented and delighted him, this strange Epicurean and question-mark of a man who was France’s last great psychologist—” (BGE 254).

<sup>20</sup> In turn, this suggests that when Nietzsche claims in the same passage from GS that “*honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide,” he does not mean to imply that the artistic “*good will to appearance*” is dishonest (GS 107). This

Most significantly, Stendhal's good will to appearance is not dishonest because Stendhal avoids denying his senses and emotions in the name of philosophical, moral, or religious *convictions*, unlike Kant, Schopenhauer, and Flaubert. This is significant because Nietzsche explicitly associates convictions with *lies*, calling lies "embryonic forms of convictions" that become convictions "after *not* being one for a long time, after *barely* being one for even longer" (A 55). Stendhal's lack of convictions means that he is not blinded by the lies and falsehoods of dogmatic systems of philosophy, morality, or religion, and does not deny his senses and emotions in the name of these lies. In particular, unlike Flaubert, Stendhal does not deny his senses and emotions in the name of the incoherent absurdity of impersonal, disinterested objectivity.<sup>21</sup>

Rather, Stendhal is a *healthy realist*, in the sense that he is not self-loathing or guilty about his sentiments and body, nor is he blinded by commitment to preconceived ideas and convictions about beauty and our affective responses to it. Stendhal, by not trying to erase his sentiments and taste, demonstrates the sort of "principle of selection" that Nietzsche associates with the well-turned-out person (EH 'Wise' 2), that is, the sort of selective artistic vision and "ruthless editorial eye" that Nietzsche praises in his paradigmatically healthy scientific investigator, Goethe (Berry 2014, 98-101). Unlike Flaubert, Stendhal does not simply accumulate *petits faits*, and his work is not simply "a barrage of undigested facts" (Berry 2014, 98). Instead of presenting disorganized mosaics of *petits faits*, Stendhal "leaves it to his instinct, his *camera obscura*, to sift through and express the 'matter at hand', 'nature', the object of the 'experience'" (TI 'Skirmishes' 7).

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would explain why Nietzsche claims that although "*honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide [...] now *our honesty* has a counterforce that helps us avoid such consequences: art, as the *good will to appearance*" (*ibid.*, emphasis added) The good will to appearance, in other words, is a counterforce to nausea and suicide *that itself stems from honesty*.

<sup>21</sup> For a general discussion of this point, see, e.g., Berry 2014, 98.



In particular, Stendhal's taste leads him to focus on characters who are, relative to their surroundings, *exceptional* in terms of intelligence, sentiment and conduct. The character Julien Sorel, in *Le rouge et le noir*, is an example of Stendhal's selective taste. Julien is ready to use *every* means to succeed in his social climbing. He manipulates 'good people' for personal gain, is a hypocrite, and constantly dissembles. For example, Julien exploits the abbot of his village's church by posing as a devoutly religious person in order to learn Latin, simply because he sees the priesthood as the best way for him to advance in the world. He also tries to manipulate the feelings of a number of women to make them fall in love with him, all for the sake of gaining social prestige. In all of these pursuits, one of Julien's primary tools is his hypocrisy and willingness to dissimulate. And despite Julien's moments of self-doubt and weakness regarding his own conduct, Stendhal finally admires him, as seen from the fact that Stendhal frequently praises the qualities that Julien displays; Stendhal describes them as "strength of character," which consists in "not caring about anything and pushing forward."<sup>22</sup> Stendhal does not moralize about Julien's manipulative, dishonest, and hypocritical behavior, nor does he simply present the fact of Julien's life in a disorganized mosaic, as Flaubert does with Frédéric Moreau. Instead, Stendhal portrays Julien in a way that selects, strengthens and gilds Julien's qualities as *strength of character*. Although both Stendhal and Flaubert strive to present detailed pictures of their society, only Stendhal is not afraid to choose a protagonist based on his own sentiments and taste concerning what is exceptional, beautiful, and a promise of pleasure.

Stendhal's lifelong Bonapartism and choice of Napoléon as the subject of a biography also reflects his selectivity and taste. In GM I 13, Nietzsche explains that weak peoples, such as

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<sup>22</sup> Stendhal, Journal, 18 mars 1805, in *Œuvres intimes*, I, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1981, p. 268, "Je suis d'avis que le caractère de la force est de se foutre de tout et d'aller de l'avant" (my translation).

the herd of Europeans, do not harm anyone, do not retaliate, are benevolent, are only asking little from life in general and try to appear as useful to the herd as possible. Those traits are an expression of their instinct for obedience, which is a slave instinct that Napoléon is precisely lacking. Instead, Napoléon possesses an instinct for command and a desire for combat and victories. That is why Nietzsche says that Napoléon embodies the opposite of this declining, depleted, and weakening modern European, namely, a noble type – i.e. one “who conceives of the basic idea 'good' by himself” (GM I 11). In fact, Napoléon surmounted the natural obedience of modern Europeans and the softness of post-revolution French people, to affirm his own values. For these reasons, Nietzsche affirms that Napoléon represents the “synthesis of *Unmensch* [inhuman] and *Übermensch* [overhuman]...” (GM I 16). By associating himself with *le petit caporal*, Stendhal became the defender of the “classical ideal” which Nietzsche praises Napoléon for having exemplified. This classical ideal consists in “the noble method of valuing everything,” the raising, the enhancement, the ranking and breeding upward of man (GM I 16). Stendhal’s *Vie de Napoléon* makes it clear that Stendhal appreciated these noble values. Stendhal even portrays his character Julien Sorel as an unwavering admirer of Napoléon. In contrast, Flaubert shows his lack of taste by choosing mediocre, unexceptional protagonists such as Frédéric Moreau, Emma Bovary, and Bouvard and Pécuchet, or he expresses his sickness, hatred, and nihilism through ascetic, life-denying Christian protagonists such as St. Anthony, St. Julien, and Felicité the servant-girl.<sup>23</sup> *In fine*, Stendhal’s choice of protagonists provides further evidence that he does not “castrate” his intellect by denying sentiments and pleasure, does not

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<sup>23</sup> See Flaubert 1983, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, and 2002. In fact, Flaubert’s choice of protagonists is sometimes determined by all of these psychological needs. For example, Flaubert described *Bouvard et Pécuchet* as “something in which *I will exhale my anger*. Yes, I will finally get rid of that which suffocates me. I will vomit on my contemporaries the disgust that they inspire in me, even if I have to break my chest; it will be large and violent” (Letter to Madame Roger des Genettes, 5 October 1872, my translation). That is, Flaubert’s choice of Bouvard and Pécuchet as protagonists is as much a symptom of his disgust with life and inability to affirm it, as it is a symptom of his lack of taste.

fear being selective in a misguided quest for objectivity, and does not hate life or take revenge on it in his work. All this makes him a *healthy* realist artist in Nietzsche's terms.

### 3.4 Unhealthy and Healthy Realism

The contrast between Nietzsche's accounts of two different artists, Flaubert and Stendhal, demonstrates that for Nietzsche, realism in art is not necessarily linked with decadence, nihilism, and an unhealthy dependence upon ideals and convictions. This makes it possible to distinguish between two kinds of realism in art. The first is *unhealthy* realism, characterized by a weak, life-denying artist's quest for selfless objectivity to alleviate the suffering caused by their lack of power and inability to overcome resistance (which Nietzsche calls "impoverishment"). The second is a *healthy* realism characterized by the artist's active engagement with suffering and life's terrible truths because of his superabundance of life, without trying to erase his own sentiments out of bad conscience and self-hatred.

The healthy realist artist has a perspective that is not blinded by ideas, convictions, and ideals that would trap him in a single dogmatic system of fixed, moralizing preconceptions. His perspective therefore does not compel him to portray reality "objectively." Consider that Thucydides, whom Nietzsche describes as "the most perfect expression of the [...] *realists'* culture" (TI 'Ancients' 2), did not attempt to provide a disinterested, non-perspectival objective account of the Peloponnesian War. Instead, Thucydides selected a collection of *perspectives* on the war and recorded them. He explains at the beginning of *The Peloponnesian War* that:

in recording the events of the war my principle has been not to rely on casual information or my own suppositions, but to apply the greatest possible rigour in pursuing every detail both of what I saw myself and of what I heard from others. It was laborious research, as eyewitnesses on each occasion would give different accounts of the same event, depending on their individual loyalties and memories (*Peloponnesian War* I 22).

So, one important aspect of Thucydides' realism is his having "a hand for switching perspectives."<sup>24</sup> As we have seen above, Nietzsche thinks that such a talent for psychological insight and entering into any skin and affect actively engages one's own sentiments, rather than trying to erase them in order to observe others dispassionately. Thus, unlike Flaubert, Thucydides is not unconditionally devoted to truth and objectivity, and his recording of various perspectives is not a dispassionate collection of *petits faits*. For example, Thucydides freely acknowledges that the various speeches recorded in his work, including Pericles' famous funeral oration, are not attempts to recreate the actual speech as faithfully as possible. Instead, Thucydides states: "my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said." (*Peloponnesian War* I 22). Rather than simply accumulating details and testimony, Thucydides crafts his record of the speeches according to his own tastes and sentiments concerning what sort of remarks would have best suited the situation and context in which the speech was delivered. This technique reveals how Thucydides' talent for entering into the perspectives of others actively engages his own sentiments and tastes. In contrast, Flaubert is devoted to an *ideal* of rigorous truth and dispassionate objectivity, which likely would have prevented him from portraying Pericles' funeral oration in the manner that Thucydides did.

Thucydides' realism also involves having "*courage* in the face of reality," in order to pursue every detail about the war, no matter how gruesome, unflattering, or terrible those details

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<sup>24</sup> See EH 'Wise' 1, where Nietzsche credits himself with having a "hand for switching perspectives," and also GM III 12. It might seem strange to associate Thucydides' realism with switching perspectives, as Nietzsche describes "Thucydides as the great summation, the final manifestation of that strong, severe, harsh objectivity that lay in the instincts of the more ancient Hellenes" (TI 'Ancients' 2). However, given Nietzsche's criticism of disinterested non-perspectival objectivity, it seems to me that the sense of objectivity that Thucydides and the ancient Hellenes have is *precisely* this hand in switching perspectives. Examining this issue in more details is beyond the scope of this paper.

may have been (TI ‘Ancients’ 2). In fact, Thucydides, as a healthy realist, has the strength and courage to reveal the true motives and nature of the people during the war; he has an “unconditional will not to gull oneself and to see reason in *reality* – not in ‘reason’, still less in ‘morality’” (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 2).<sup>25</sup> Here, we can see another element linking the perspectives of healthy realist artists like Stendhal and realists like Thucydides, namely, that they are part of the ‘Classical Realism’ tradition. Classical Realism involves “a certain hard headed, unromantic, uncompromising attitude which manifests itself in a brutal honesty and candor in the assessment of human motives and the portrayal of human affairs” (Leiter 2001, 245).<sup>26</sup> More precisely, a Classical Realist is an “experienced, honest, subtle, and unoptimistic interpreter” of human behavior who, rather than simply applying “an already defined scientific programme,” develops *his own* “informed interpretation of some human experiences and activities in relation to others” (Williams 68).

From all of this, we can see that for Nietzsche, the healthy realist perspectives shared by figures such as Stendhal and Thucydides consist in: (i) having a hand for switching perspectives by engaging with sentiments (rather than for selfless, dispassionate objectivity), which allows for deep psychological insight into other people and cultures; (ii) courage in the face of reality, including suffering; (iii) a lack of romanticism or fantasy in one’s assessment of the world; (iv) having selective vision and taste; and most importantly, (v) honesty about life’s terrible truths,

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<sup>25</sup> Raymond Geuss helpfully describes what Nietzsche admired about Thucydides’ historical work as follows: “*all* the characters in [Thucydides’] history are allowed to exhibit the highest possible intelligence, clarity, and rationality in pursuing their respective enterprises, regardless of the judgments representatives of conventional morality would make on them. Socrates, however, ‘dragged moralizing into science,’ and Plato followed in his wake. Such moralizing, Nietzsche thought, was a result of weakness, of a deepseated inability to bear looking the facts of the world in the face; it crippled Plato intellectually and prevented him from ever developing that most highly prized of Nietzschean traits: ‘*Tatsachen-Sinn*,’ a ‘sense for the facts,’ that steely realism that is so abundantly evident on every page of Thucydides” (Geuss 220).

<sup>26</sup> Similarly, John Skorupski characterizes the shared realism of Thucydides and Stendhal as “seeing people, feelings, and practices lucidly, no doubt with the help of whatever empirical findings we have, but not in terms of a fixed moralising perspective or a preconceived explanatory model” (Skorupski 1).

rather than concealing them with baseless ideas and convictions such as selfless objectivity or morality. Although Flaubert shares some of these characteristics to some degrees, Nietzsche thinks that his exhaustion and nihilism prevent him from manifesting them in the manner that healthy realists like Stendhal and Thucydides do.

All of these aspects of the healthy realist perspective are indications of the realist's *physiological* health. As Nietzsche points out when describing the realism of Thucydides, "Thucydides has control over himself—consequently he also has control over things..." (TI 'Ancients' 2). Here, it is unlikely that Nietzsche means control over oneself in the sense of conscious control through rational deliberation, since, as he maintains elsewhere, "states of consciousness, any sort of belief, such as taking something to be true, are (as every psychologist knows) trivial matters of fifth-rate importance compared to the value of the instincts" (A 39). Rather, Nietzsche is referring to physiological capacities and tendencies of the human organism that allow it to resist the power of the world around it and to exercise its own power in the world (i.e., control over aspects of the world). One such capacity could be the ability not to respond immediately to stimuli, the absence of which capacity, for Nietzsche, "is itself just another form of degeneration" (TI 'Morality' 2). That is, having a realist perspective, as Thucydides does, requires the physiological capacity to engage fully with the world without being overcome by it.

In sum, we can see that Nietzsche praises healthy realists for a number of reasons. First of all, Nietzsche praises healthy realists for the way their work, craft, and practices display honesty and courage about life's terrible truths, without degenerating into an unhealthy pursuit of truth above all else. While an unhealthy realist like Flaubert obsessively researches his subjects in an attempt to gather as many *petits faits* as possible through conscious, dispassionate observation, a healthy realist like Stendhal allows his instincts, sentiments, and tastes to guide his work.

Second, Nietzsche praises healthy realists for not trying to eliminate their own sentiments and judgments of taste in their creations. While Flaubert tries above all else to prevent his own sentiments from interfering with his depiction of what he thinks is the ‘truth’ concerning Frédéric Moreau, Stendhal cannot help admiring the strength of character he praises in his creation Julien Sorel, which is to his taste. Finally, we have seen that Nietzsche praises healthy realists for their overall perspective, with its connections to Classical Realism, as well as for the healthy physiological constitution underlying that realist perspective.

#### 4 HEALTHY REALISM AS LIFE-AFFIRMATION

In this part, my aim is to demonstrate that Reginster is correct that in his mature account of life-affirmation, Nietzsche abandons his earlier emphasis on illusion in *The Birth of Tragedy* in favor of tough-minded realism about life’s terrible truths. In order to do so, I will use Nietzsche’s claims about realist artists, which we examined above, to show that Nietzsche clearly prefers people who affirm life by confronting it out of strength, rather than weak people who hide life’s terrible truths with illusions. Then, I will argue that Nietzsche’s criticism of men of faith shows that having the strength to affirm life without illusions, as healthy realists do, is necessary for life-affirmation.

For Nietzsche, dealing with life’s terrible truths requires the strength to *confront* them. Despite the fact that ideals and illusions can give meaning to one’s suffering (GM III 28), the only way to achieve greatness is to face the truth, no matter how terrible it might be, or how much one may suffer from doing so. That is why Nietzsche says that “the service of truth is the hardest service” (A 50), and clearly shows a preference for people who have the strength to face

the truth, in contrast to those who blind themselves with illusions. Consider Nietzsche's remark that:

At this point and nowhere else, you need to make an effort to understand what Zarathustra *wants*: the type of person he conceives of is the type that conceives of reality *as it is*: his type has the strength to do this –, it is not alienated, removed from reality, it is *reality itself*, it contains in itself everything terrible and questionable about reality, *this is the only way someone can achieve greatness...* (EH 'Destiny' 5)<sup>27</sup>

Healthy realists, like Thucydides and Stendhal, are able to face life's terrible truths, whether they are truths about war and human nature, truths about the relationship between beauty and one's own sensual desires, or truth about the relationship between strength of character and readiness to violate Christian morality. For Thucydides and Stendhal, "freedom from every sort of conviction, being *able* to see freely, is *part* of strength..." (A 54). As a result, both are distinguished by "saying yes to life, even in its strangest and harshest problems" (TI 'Ancients' 5). For example, Stendhal has no illusions about Julien Sorel and his hypocritical, dishonest, and manipulative conduct, yet he still says 'yes' to Julien, because Stendhal is able to *affirm* the fact that, as Brian Leiter puts it, "reality fails to live up to our moral standards" (Leiter Forthcoming, 3), without concealing or distorting that terrible fact with illusions. This suggests that Came is wrong that for the post-*BT* Nietzsche, artistic representation remains essentially tied to illusions. The art of healthy realists like Stendhal portrays what is necessary in things as beautiful *without* using illusions to falsify or distort life's terrible truths, which makes it 'realist' precisely in Reginster's sense of the term.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Since Nietzsche's use of the term 'reality' in this section is from a work published in the same year as *Twilight of the Idols*, in which he dismisses the appearance/reality distinction, it seems to me that he must be using 'reality' here in a different sense than the sense involved in the appearance/reality distinction. Specifically, it seems to me that we can distinguish between an everyday, layman's sense of the term 'reality', which Nietzsche is using here in an ordinary way, and a more technical use of this term by philosophers, which Nietzsche clearly dismisses in *Twilight*. Saying more about this issue is, however, beyond the scope of my paper.

<sup>28</sup> This is reflected in Stendhal's choice of "La verité, l'âpre verité" ("The truth, the bitter truth") as the epigraph for Part I of *Le rouge et le noir*.



Nietzsche's preference for strong, life-affirming healthy realists like Thucydides and Stendhal stands in contrast to his harsh critique of the *man of faith*. The man of faith is characterized by "not *wanting* to know the truth" (A 52), and his resulting unhealthy dependence upon convictions:

Men of faith, the 'faithful' of every type, are necessarily dependent people, – the sort of people who cannot posit *themselves* as a goal, who are utterly incapable of positing goals from out of themselves [...] Every type of faith is an expression of self-abnegation, self-alienation . . . . (A 54)

The man of faith depends upon convictions because he is "utterly incapable" of affirming himself and his own life; "the 'man of faith' does not belong to *himself*, he can only be a means, he needs to be *used up*, he needs someone to use him up" (*ibid.*). Specifically, the man of faith belongs to his convictions and those who create them, usually priests or political parties. Even if the man of faith creates his *own* convictions, he is simply the slave of his own weakness, since his unconditional *need* and *desire* for convictions is caused by his "not *wanting*" to face life's terrible truths, and his inability to affirm them. Recall that for Nietzsche, convictions begin as *lies*. Nietzsche describes lies in the following way: "I call lies *not wanting* to see what you see, not wanting to see it the *way* you do" (A 55.). So, it seems to me that the man of faith's convictions are best described as illusions which *falsify* life's terrible truths.

We have already seen that Nietzsche considers Flaubert to be a life-denying nihilist whose convictions about objectivity and suppression of his own sentiments are symptoms of a weak, exhausted physiology too weak to affirm life. Flaubert's denial of his own sentiments and perspective is a symptom of his not wanting to see things the way that he sees them, precisely because he is too self-abnegating to posit himself as a goal. His devotion to the ideal of disinterested objectivity is thus devotion to a lie, and evidence that he is a man of faith who does not genuinely affirm life. In contrast, someone who does not deny his own sentiments and

perspective, like Stendhal, clearly has no problem seeing things in the way that he does.

Stendhal confronts life's terrible truths, says 'yes' to them, and does not "castrate" his intellect by denying sentiments and pleasure in a misguided quest for objectivity. A realist perspective like Stendhal's is life-affirming precisely because it does not hide or falsify life's terrible truths with illusions, including the illusion of dispassionate objectivity.<sup>29</sup> That is why Nietzsche considers Stendhal's realism healthier, more honest, and more life-affirming than Flaubert's realism.

*In fine*, it seems to me that under Came's account, life-affirmation through artistic illusion is actually just *lying* about life's terrible truths because you cannot stand to see them, or see them in the way that you do. Diluting or hiding life's terrible truths with illusions simply is lying about them. This makes someone who affirms life using illusions similar to the man of faith who depends upon convictions, and whom Nietzsche critiques in his later works. Since the man of faith does not 'affirm life' in the Nietzschean sense, someone who uses illusions in the way Came describes is not genuinely life-affirming either. To mask the harsh problems of life with illusions is to deny life, and signals that one is decadent and nihilist. Furthermore, Nietzsche's claims about healthy realist artists show that contrary to what Came argues, Nietzsche clearly considers healthy realism about life's terrible truths as necessary for life-affirmation. Thus, I think that Reginster is right when he claims that in his mature work, Nietzsche ceases to associate life-affirmation with illusions. In fact, the tragic Dionysian wisdom that Reginster associates with Nietzsche's account of life-affirmation involves precisely the *healthy realism* that has been the focus of this paper.

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<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche thinks that dispassionate objectivity is an illusion because it requires one "to think an eye which cannot be thought at all, an eye turned in no direction at all, where the active and interpretative powers are to be suppressed, absent, but through which seeing still becomes a seeing-something" (GM III 12). Having as one's ideal the pursuit of an impossible view on the world from no perspective at all is an illusion which falsifies the perspectival character of existence; adherence to such an illusion is, for Nietzsche, a form of nihilist self-abnegation.

Moreover, this distinction between unhealthy men of faith like Flaubert, and healthy realists such as Stendhal, can help us to understand why a crucial passage that Came might cite in support of his argument actually fails to support it. I have in mind here Nietzsche's praise for the Greeks being "superficial - *out of profundity!*" because they "stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin" and "worship appearance" (GS P 4). One way to understand this characterization of Greek superficiality and worship of appearance is as a falsification of reality through artistic illusions. If so, then at first glance, this passage seems to support Came's argument that for Nietzsche, life-affirmation consist in *falsification*, "whether by evasion or explicit falsehood," of the horrors of life using illusions (Came 211).

However, we have just seen that there is a significant difference between what men of faith do, and what healthy realist cultures and artists like the Greeks and Stendhal do. Unhealthy men of faith are too weak to face life's terrible truths; as a result, they do not become consciously aware of those truths. Rather, their bodies assimilate those truths in a distorted way by diluting and falsifying them with illusions and convictions, such that the unhealthy man of faith never actually confronts or becomes aware of them. In contrast, the Greeks Nietzsche praises in GS P 4 neither evade, nor explicitly falsify, the horrors of life, and neither does Stendhal. They do not assimilate life's terrible truths in a distorted way; in fact, these terrible truths are precisely the "reality" that Nietzsche claims healthy realist artists and cultures select, strengthen, and correct through their art, according to their own sentiments and tastes (TI 'Reason' 6). Not only does this require confronting those horrors in the first place, but it also requires *not* lying in Nietzsche's sense of "not wanting to see it the *way* you do". The healthy art of the Greeks is how they affirmed their way of seeing; the selecting, strengthening, and correcting that they performed is how they bravely confronted and affirmed reality. That is why

Nietzsche maintains that “the Greeks knew well and felt the terror and horror of existence...” (BT 3), and claims that the Dionysian tragic artist “affirms all that is questionable and terrible in existence” (TI ‘Reason in Philosophy’ 6).<sup>30</sup>

Even Homer does not fit Came’s interpretation, despite the fact that Nietzsche cites his epic poetry as an example of “art, in which *lying* sanctifies itself and the *will to deception* has good conscience on its side” (GM III 25). For as Nietzsche points out, although Homer used lies in his poetry, “in the end, it comes down to the *purpose* the lie is supposed to serve” (A 56). The unflinching manner in which Homer depicts the cruelty and brutality not only of the combatants in the Trojan War, but of the Greek gods themselves, supports the claim that the *types of lies* Homer employs in his art do not function to evade or explicitly falsify life’s terrible truths past the point of recognition.<sup>31</sup> So, whatever purpose Nietzsche thinks Homer’s will to deception actually serves, it clearly does not play the role that Came envisions, namely of evading life’s terrible truths by masking them, hiding them, or distorting them, which is relevant point for present purposes.<sup>32</sup> For all of these reasons, it seems to me that the Greeks Nietzsche praises in GS P 4 do not employ and do not need to falsify life’s terrible truths with illusions in order to affirm life. If I am right, then GS P 4 does not support Came’s argument after all, which would make it even more difficult for him to defend his view against Reginster.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See also, e.g., Nietzsche’s characterization of the Dionysian tragic poet: “saying yes to life, even in its strangest and harshest problems; the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest types – that is what I called Dionysian, that is the bridge I found to the psychology of the *tragic* poet” (TI ‘Ancients’ 5).

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., GM II 7, where Nietzsche claims that “the Greeks still knew of no more pleasant offering with which to garnish the happiness of their gods than the joys of cruelty,” and that Homer portrays “the Trojan wars and similar tragic horrors” as “*festival games* for the gods.”

<sup>32</sup> See also footnote 20 above, where I explain why Nietzsche’s claim in GS 107 that “honesty would lead to nausea and suicide,” which Came appeals to, does not support the notion that the appearances crafted by healthy artists are somehow dishonest.

<sup>33</sup> However, I did not discuss two other kinds of illusions that Came mentions in his article, namely (1) Socratic love for knowledge, and (2) a metaphysical belief in the flow of eternal life. I did not do so because the passage that Came appeals to in which Nietzsche mentions these illusions in relation to life-affirmation is from *The Birth of Tragedy* (specifically BT 18); as I have shown above Came’s contention that Nietzsche maintains his views about

#### 4.1 Hussain's Account of 'Honest Illusions' and Nietzschean Valuation

Even if *Came* is wrong, someone might claim that artistic illusions can still play a role in life-affirmation at least in some cases. Since for Nietzsche life-affirmation is closely tied to the question of values (avoiding life-denying and ascetic values, creating life-affirming values, etc.), it could be argued that if valuing involves the generation of illusions, then life-affirmation does as well. Nadeem Hussain pursues such a strategy, arguing that in Nietzsche's "recommended practice" for free spirits, valuing "involves the generation of '*honest* illusions'" (Hussain 166, emphasis added).<sup>34</sup> Hussain emphasizes that this is done primarily using artistic illusions, i.e., illusions that either are or function similarly to works of art: "what is special, for Nietzsche, about art is that it is honest about its use of illusion. Art is in the business of generating honest illusions" (Hussain 168). In turn, "the connection between art and valuing is that art allows us to see how we can regard something as valuable even when it is in fact not valuable, and we know that it is not valuable" (Hussain 170).

More precisely, Hussain explains that honest illusions "can be thought of as a form of make-believe, pretending, or [...] 'regarding ... as': S values X by regarding X as valuable in itself while knowing that in fact X is not valuable in itself" (Hussain 166). This pretense takes the following general form: S regards X as P, even though X is not in fact P. What makes the pretense an *honest* one for Hussain, is the fact that S *knows* that X is not P. This knowledge is needed in order to satisfy an important interpretive constraint upon Nietzsche's account of valuing for free spirits that Hussain identifies:

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illusion and life-affirmation from the *Birth of Tragedy* throughout the rest of his works is implausible. Investigating this fully represents a fruitful path to explore in the future.

<sup>34</sup> It is unclear to me why Hussain describes Nietzsche as *recommending* a practice. After all, Nietzsche says that he is not interested in giving advice, nor in providing prescriptions of values for his reader to adhere to. Nietzsche emphasizes that he is not trying to be "teacher" or "improver of humanity". See e.g., *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche claims that "The last thing I would promise would be to 'improve' mankind" (EH P 2). Likewise, he maintains that "it is not a 'prophet' who speaks, not one of those horrible hybrids of sickness and will to power people call founders of religions" (EH P 4). However, going deeper into this issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

We might think that perhaps Nietzsche's free spirits are simply supposed to have false beliefs. They are supposed to believe that things are valuable in themselves even though such beliefs are false. This would, perhaps, be an achievement, since after all, intentionally getting oneself to have false beliefs is, as we know, a delicate business that requires, so to speak, much skill. But I think this interpretation runs into [the] interpretive constraint [...] that Nietzsche's free spirits and higher men are distinguished by their ability to face up to reality (Hussain 165).

Here, Hussain seems to acknowledge that any explanation of Nietzschean valuation (and thus of Nietzschean life-affirmation) must account for the realist perspective and its role in Nietzschean value-creation and life-affirmation. And for Hussain, free spirits "face up to reality" because they *know* that things are not valuable in themselves. At first glance, this makes Hussain's claims about the role played by honest illusions more plausible than Came's assertions about illusions.

Despite Hussain's claims to the contrary, however, it seems to me that his accounts of these honest illusions, their connection to art, and their role in valuation are incompatible with the healthy realism which I have shown to be an important element of Nietzsche's account of life-affirmation. Although it is true that for Nietzsche some art, namely *healthy realist art*, is clearly connected to life-affirmation, this is not because healthy realist art consists of honest illusions. Rather, healthy artistic creation is life-affirming because it is a process through which the artist's tastes are expressed, and through which the artist's body selects, strengthens, and corrects the reality that he bravely faces. The healthy realist artist's work is thus a symptom of the courage he shows in the face of reality, i.e., of the physiological and psychological strength his body shows in being able to assimilate reality and its terrible truths, precisely *without* needing to hide them or mask them with illusions for the sake of survival. That is why Nietzsche says: "how much truth does a spirit *endure*, how much truth does it *dare*? More and more that

became for me the real measure of value. Error (faith in the ideal) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*” (EH P 3).

In contrast, Hussain claims that the honest illusions of Nietzschean free spirits involve regarding something as P, when it is not P. Knowing that  $\sim P$ , yet evading or ignoring this reality with illusions that enable “forgetfulness” or “self-deception” (Hussain 168), indicates that the organism in question is too weak to endure and dare the truth. Forgetfulness and self-deception through honest illusions thus cannot count as courage in the face of reality, and Hussain’s appeal to them violates his own interpretive constraint. This is the case even if Hussain appeals to the weakest of his proposed accounts of forgetfulness and self-deception regarding life’s terrible truths, namely:

there are certain truths that we can know and even in our cooler moments of reflection allow ourselves to dwell on; however, we cannot allow them to be the centre of our focus and still function in our daily lives. Here the issue is not quite self-deception but rather an issue of the centrality of certain thoughts to one’s conscious life. We can know certain truths some of the time but at other times we must learn to ‘forget’ them. The talk of forgetfulness in this sense suggests that perhaps they can still be in our memory ‘somewhere’ and recalled later, or just that we cannot dwell on them even if we have not in some stronger sense forgotten them. (*ibid.*)<sup>35</sup>

The people Nietzsche praises for their realism and courage in the face of reality, such as Stendhal and Thucydides, do not engage in this sort of forgetfulness. In fact, it is precisely the *lack* of such forgetting which makes healthy realism valuable to Nietzsche. Thucydides and Homer do not try “not to dwell” on the horrors of war and the realities of human cruelty – they select, strengthen, and correct them. Stendhal does not try “not to dwell” on the fact that reality

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<sup>35</sup> Here, it is worth noting an unrelated problem with attributing this sort of view to Nietzsche, in which the “issue of the centrality of certain thoughts to one’s conscious life” plays an important role in valuation, and thereby in life-affirmation and health. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche claims that “states of consciousness, any sort of belief, such as taking something to be true, are (as every psychologist knows) trivial matters of fifth-rate importance compared to the value of the instincts” (A 39). The fact that Nietzsche thinks this makes it unlikely that the centrality of certain thoughts to one’s conscious life plays an important role in some of the most important themes in Nietzsche’s philosophy.

fails to live up to our moral standards – he selects, strengthens, and corrects this, thereby producing the character of Julien Sorel. As Reginster rightly points out, affirming life means having sufficient strength to regard suffering as desirable (Reginster 229). This means that, contrary to Hussain’s claims, the types that Nietzsche praises, including free spirits, do not affirm life using illusions designed to help one forget life’s terrible truths and prevent one from dwelling on them (especially the terrible truth that nothing is intrinsically valuable) — even if these illusions are “honest” in Hussain’s sense.<sup>36</sup> The inability to face life’s terrible truths that Hussain attributes to Nietzschean free spirits is antithetical to the healthy realism that Nietzsche considers vital for life-affirmation.

Not only does the textual evidence fail to show that the types of people Nietzsche praises use honest illusions, but it also suggests that doing so would clearly be a symptom of what Nietzsche calls *bad conscience*. As I explained above, bad conscience consists in feelings of guilt about one’s body, natural instincts, self-interest, desires, etc.. Nietzsche specifies that one manifestation of this bad conscience is hatred of the natural world itself (see e.g., TI ‘Reason’ 1 and 4, and TI ‘Morality as Anti-Nature’ 1, 2, and 4). Evading the terrible truth that nothing is inherently valuable by using honest illusions in the manner Hussain describes seems like something that would be motivated precisely by this sort of hatred for the world (at least on an unconscious level). The bodies of those who use honest illusions to avoid dwelling on the terrible truth simply cannot cope with the fact that nothing is inherently valuable, and they resent the world as a result. Ignoring or masking reality with honest illusions because you do not

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<sup>36</sup> Moreover, consider that in *The Antichrist*, a work in which he vehemently criticizes priests and faith, Nietzsche says that “‘faith’ means not *wanting* to know the truth. The pietist, the priest of both sexes, is false *because* he is sick: his instinct *demand*s that truth be denied at every point” (A 52). Coupled with Nietzsche’s statement that the “real measure of value” for him is “how much truth does a spirit *endure*, how much truth does it *dare*?” (EH P 3), these remarks about faith suggest that even the weakest of Hussain’s proposed kinds of forgetting is too much a symptom of decadence to play an important role in valuation and life-affirmation.



want to see things the way that you do is a form of life-denial. And, of course, the free spirits, realists, and artists that Nietzsche praises display precisely the opposite attitude towards the world: courageous, hard-headed confronting of life's terrible truths. So, for all of these reasons, it seems that Nietzsche's free spirits and other healthy types do not affirm life using honest illusions as Hussain suggests — they are too strong and healthy to need honest illusions.

I hope by now to have shown that two forms of realism in art can be distinguished in Nietzsche's work: unhealthy realism and healthy realism. The latter is characterized by the fact that the artist is not blinded by commitment to preconceived ideas, convictions, and other illusions. I hope to have shown that this distinction and Nietzsche's broader remarks on realism in art and realist artists are relevant to the debate between Came and Reginster concerning the relationship between illusions and life-affirmation, as well as to Hussain's fictionalist interpretation of Nietzsche's account of valuation. The fact that for Nietzsche, realism about life's terrible truths *in art* can be healthy and life-affirming, as long as it avoids falsifying life's terrible truths with illusions, suggests that Reginster is correct when he makes his similar claim about the realist perspective, and that Came and Hussain are not correct about the role of illusions in life-affirmation.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Now that we have investigated the implications of Nietzsche's remarks about healthy realist artists for the question of how to interpret his views about life-affirmation, I will conclude by examining some additional implications of this evidence for how to understand various other important themes in Nietzsche's work. Doing so will underline the importance of Nietzsche's remarks about realist artists as a source of evidence about his views and his taste.

First of all, my discussion of Nietzsche's distinction between healthy and unhealthy realist artists has notable consequences for how to understand Nietzsche's stance towards science and its relationship to truth. We have seen that, unlike Flaubert, the healthy realist does not pursue truth at all costs, because he is not beholden to the self-abnegating "conviction" that "nothing is more necessary than truth, and in relation to it everything else is of only secondary value" (GS 344). For Nietzsche, the healthy realist is someone who not only has the courage to confront reality as it is, but also has the selectivity to strengthen and correct various aspects of reality in accordance with his own taste. Although in this paper I have focused on how this applies to art and artists, it also applies to science and scientists. Here again, it is important to remember Nietzsche's praise of Goethe not only as an ideal artist, but also as an ideal scientific investigator. For as Berry points out, Goethe "showcases his epistemic advantage," i.e., his own perspective, "in the way in which he is able to impose meaningful *form* on the raw data of experience" throughout his scientific investigations, by "working from an extensive familiarity with and careful attention to the details, and without losing his grounding in the real, empirical world and venturing off into speculative territory, but equally without losing himself so utterly in the details that he is [...] unable to see the forest for the trees" (Berry 2014, 106). In other words, Nietzsche thinks that healthy science, like healthy art, involves a realism which does not strive to eliminate the perspective of the scientist. Thus, Nietzsche's praise for the healthy realism in art that I have examined in this paper seems to support Berry's contentions about Nietzsche's attitude towards scientific investigation.

Similarly, my discussion of Nietzsche's views about healthy realism in general, including its connections to the classical realism of Thucydides and Machiavelli, has a number of important implications as well. For instance, since Nietzsche associates healthy realism with

the higher type that “Zarathustra wants,” we can use our understanding of healthy realism to shed light upon Nietzsche’s notion of ‘higher types’. We have seen that healthy realism consists in having a hand for switching perspectives, courage in the face of reality, having selective vision and taste, not concealing life’s terrible truths with baseless ideas and convictions, and not erasing one’s own perspective for the sake of some unattainable selfless objectivity. All of these are traits that the higher type must manifest, which requires that he lacks any of the physiological weaknesses and maladies that have as symptoms the “fixed idea[s]” and dependence upon convictions that characterize the man of faith (A 52). Moreover, as we saw above, for the higher type to manifest the realist perspective also requires that he possess physiological strengths such as the ability not to respond immediately to stimuli. In this way, my discussion of healthy realism can help explain what the higher type’s perspective is, in what sense it is a *realist* perspective, and what this realist perspective requires physiologically from the higher type, i.e., what the higher type’s *health* consists in.

Understanding Nietzsche’s account of the connection between realism, health and life-affirmation also helps to clarify why he is so interested in the Ancient Greeks, especially the impact of the “*culture of the Sophists*, which means the *culture of the realists*” (TI ‘Ancients’ 2). This is particularly important given Nietzsche’s claim that modern culture cannot become healthy by simply going back to the Greeks.<sup>37</sup> For if we can come to understand the specific traits that Nietzsche praises the Greeks for, such as “that strong, strict, hard factuality that was a matter of instinct for the older Hellenes” (*ibid.*), then we can use this understanding to help

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<sup>37</sup> According to Nietzsche, achieving health cannot be done by simply going back to the Greeks and recreating their physiological and psychological constitution. He explains that “a reversion, a reversal in any sense or to any degree is completely impossible. We physiologists, at least, know this” (TI ‘Skirmishes’ 43). Rather, according to Nietzsche, “we who are new, nameless, hard to understand; we premature births of an as yet unproved future – for a new end, we also need a new means, namely, a new health that is stronger, craftier, tougher, bolder, and more cheerful than any previous health” (GS 382).

determine what possessing such traits would amount to in the contemporary world, and what would be required physiologically in order to possess those traits. In this way, understanding Nietzsche's account of the healthy realism of the Greeks can help bring into focus the "new health that is stronger, craftier, tougher, bolder, and more cheerful than any previous health," which Nietzsche sees as the remedy for the decadence of contemporary culture (GS 382).

*In fine*, far from being a collection of scattered, stray remarks that are of little overall importance, Nietzsche's claims about realist artists like Stendhal, Goethe, and Flaubert are in keeping with his tastes and values, and help to illuminate what Nietzsche actually thinks concerning important themes, like life-affirmation, in his philosophy. Attending to this significant source of evidence, as I have begun to do in this paper, can also help to break through certain impasses in contemporary debates about Nietzsche's views, and block certain misinterpretations, especially the notion that Nietzschean life-affirmation involves lying, whether through distortion or by evasion, about life's terrible truths. For as Nietzsche says, "the only people motivated to *lie their way out of reality*" are "people who *suffer* from it. But to suffer from reality means that you are a piece of reality that has *gone wrong*" (A 15).

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