BEYOND BEAUTIFUL AND UGLY:
Non-dual Thinking and Aesthetic Theory

Not every end is the goal. The end of a melody is not its goal; and yet: as long as the melody has not reached its end, it also hasn’t reached its goal. A parable.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The self-conscious reference of this essay’s title to Nietzsche’s book, Beyond Good and Evil, might seem misplaced to some since this title is then connected with the notion of non-dual thinking. Is not Nietzsche’s work replete with dualities – master and slave morality, life-denying and life-affirming, active and passive, etc.? This same point, however, could be made regarding an entirely different tradition: Zen Buddhism. Despite the frequent appeals in Zen literature to become free from thinking in terms of dualities,¹ this very appeal brings in tow its own dualities – enlightenment and attachment, freedom and bondage, active and passive, etc. To address this apparent inconsistency we propose, in the following essay, to argue that for Nietzsche non-dual thinking entails affirming ‘that’ which cannot be reduced to being one side of an either/or (e.g., mind or body, appearance or reality, good or evil, sacred or secular, etc.), but is ‘that’ which makes such either/or thinking possible. The ‘that’ which is thought and affirmed by non-dual thinking is not opposed to or other than the realities affirmed by either/or thinking. To state this would be simply to repeat either/or thinking. Nonetheless, there is, as Nietzsche repeatedly makes clear, a difference between master and slave morality, or between what we call non-dual and either/or thinking. Nietzsche’s efforts to understand this difference without resorting again to either/or thinking are best exemplified by the way in which he employs aesthetics and art in

¹ An important early example is Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Zen and one of the more influential figures within the tradition. In The Sutra of Hui-Neng (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), he states that “Enlightenment and ignorance are seen by ordinary people as two, while the wise realize their essential nature has
order to circumvent the inevitable either/ors that are the stock and trade of traditional
metaphysics. In Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* the importance of art as an alternative metaphysics
is explicitly recognized: “I am convinced that art represents the highest task and the truly
metaphysical activity of this life…” In setting forth this interpretation of the role of aesthetic
theory in Nietzsche, we shall then be able to sketch two important implications. First, we shall
find a significant parallel between Nietzsche and Zen Buddhism, a parallel that has received little
attention; and secondly we will begin to see how Nietzsche’s implicit aesthetic theory is both
supportive and critical of other more traditional aesthetic theories.

I

The reason art, and especially music, emerges as such an important conceptual tool for
Nietzsche is that *becoming* is ‘that’ which makes either/or thinking possible, and ‘that’ which is
to be affirmed by non-dual thinking, a thinking beyond good and evil. Throughout Nietzsche’s
career he stressed the necessity and impossibility of thinking becoming, of reducing becoming to
being. In his early work, *Birth of Tragedy*, this is put forth as the necessity of imparting form to
the Dionysian, to the “artistic energies which burst forth from nature herself, without the
mediation of the human artist.” These energies are further identified by Nietzsche as the “pain
and contradiction” of the “primal unity,” what he will later refer to as the contradiction that is
becoming, and it is the impossibility of living this pain and contradiction that necessitates a
recasting of the “primal unity,” and in the *Birth of Tragedy* music is the form this recasting takes:

“Assuming that music has been correctly termed a repetition and a recast of the world, we may

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no duality” (p. 69), and earlier in the same work he encourages his disciples to attain “freedom from dualism” (p.
33).

say that he [the Dionysian artist] produces the copy of this primal unity as music.”4 It is only then, only when the “primal unity” has been recast as music, when one’s existence then becomes bearable. It is for this reason that a few pages later Nietzsche boldly asserts that “it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified.”5

This same sentiment is expressed in Nietzsche’s more mature work, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Here he argues that “it might be a basic characteristic of existence that those who would know it completely would perish, in which case the strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the ‘truth’ one could still barely endure.”6 This strength whereby the ‘truth’ can be endured comes to be referred to as “will to power,” and from the notebooks of this same period Nietzsche explicitly identifies this ‘will to power’ with the necessity to think becoming: “To impose upon becoming the character of being – that is the supreme will to power.”7 And this is necessary, as Nietzsche says in another note, because, “supposing everything is becoming, then knowledge is possible only on the basis of belief in being.”8

Moreover, this very effort to “know” becoming, to impart form and the character of being on becoming, is the work of art: “Art as the will to overcome becoming…”9 This art itself is, as Nietzsche understands it, a form of becoming, or as he puts it: “Knowledge and becoming exclude one another. Consequently, ‘knowledge’ must be something else: there must first of all

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3 Ibid., p. 38.
4 Ibid., p. 49.
5 Ibid., p. 52.
8 Ibid., p. 281..
9 Ibid., p. 331
be a will to make knowable, a kind of becoming must itself create the deception of beings.”

This “kind of becoming” is art.

This becoming that is the condition for the creation of beings, and hence for the “knowledge” one has of becoming, is itself a form of becoming that is inseparable from the forms and beings that come to be known. In short, for Nietzsche “being” is not something other than becoming, but rather it is inseparable from a form of becoming. This form, as art, is generally understood by Nietzsche in musical terms. For example, in a late note from 1888 Nietzsche argues that “in a world where there is no being, a certain calculable world of identical cases must first be created through appearance: a tempo at which observation and comparison are possible, etc.”

A strong case has also been made that in writing one of his last works, Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche composed the work in sonata form.

Nietzsche’s continual preoccupation with art, especially music, was not simply an expression of his own personal love of music (although he would not deny this), but more profoundly reflects Nietzsche’s effort to think non-dualistically. Rather than begin with a metaphysical either/or, becoming or being, Nietzsche argues that there is only becoming and that it is becoming which of itself gives rise to the fiction of beings. To conceptualize or think this becoming, Nietzsche finds that art is best suited to explain the process whereby becoming gives rise to beings. Music in particular is especially appropriate for music is both dynamic and chaotic, and, if done well, it entails an order or form that is inseparable from it. Put in other words, art as understood by Nietzsche cannot be reduced to a predetermining identity or being.

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10 Ibid., p. 280.
11 Ibid., p. 306 (emphasis mine).
such as the “truth” of beauty, rules for proper art, etc., and art is beyond the either/ors such beings make possible – e.g., it is either beautiful or it is not. At the same time, however, Nietzsche does not hesitate to differentiate between an art (as well as life, morality, etc.) that affirms becoming as the source of being and that which denies becoming by reducing it to being a form of being. Non-dual thinking is therefore the effort to affirm becoming in a way that allows for the creation of beings, or affirm a “form of becoming” that is not predetermined by any conceptual identities. Either/or thinking presupposes identity as an already established reality, a reality that founds the exclusivity of the either/or. For Nietzsche the identities that establish the mutually exclusive relationship of an either/or, e.g., an identifiable mind that is other than the identifiable body, are nevertheless made possible by a form of becoming, and a becoming that is inseparable from the beings and identities that are the work of becoming, or the work of art as Nietzsche develops it. Non-dual thinking is thus inseparable from the work of artistic creation.

II

Turning now to a comparison of Nietzsche’s aesthetic theory and Zen Buddhism, we should be able to clarify further the relationship between non-dual thinking and either/or thinking. This comparison should be fruitful precisely because the Zen tradition is quite explicit in its call for non-dual thinking. Moreover, Zen also emphasizes the importance and necessity of work and practice, much as Nietzsche emphasizes the work of becoming as art. In the West the

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13 This is where Nietzsche is most profoundly critical of Kant. Kant, as Nietzsche reads him, understands becoming in terms of the identity of the transcendental categories that predetermine the proper limits and identity of becoming.

14 In Part Four of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, this notion of work becomes especially evident. At the beginning of part four, Zarathustra leaves his cave and takes in the view. The animals who are at this point his companions ask him if he is looking for his happiness, to which he responds: “What matters happiness? He replied; ‘I have long ceased to be concerned with happiness; I am concerned with my work (in Portable Nietzsche, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann [New York: Penguin Books, 1982], p. 349). At the end of part four, as the book concludes and as
work and practice of Zen is primarily perceived to be the practice of meditation, but we must not overlook the significance of artistic work in the Zen tradition. In addition to meditative work and practice, artistic work is extremely important and evident. Painting, calligraphy, poetry, and gardens (rock gardens) are each significant artistic achievements that are not simply supplementary practices but are integral to the work of non-dual thinking.

What should perhaps be stressed first and foremost, however, is that we must be cautious in referring to non-dual thinking as “thinking.” If by thinking is meant the formulation of “concepts,” then Zen certainly does not promote non-dual “thinking.” Zen master Huang Po is quite forthright in his rejection of conceptual thought. Only when one has “put a stop to conceptual thought” can one then expect that “the Buddha will appear before them.” Moreover, “to make use of your minds to think conceptually,” Huang Po adds, “is to leave the substance and attach yourselves to form.”

By attaching oneself to form, Huang Po, in line with the Buddhist tradition generally, means the forms that arise through both thought and sensation, or the forms Nietzsche saw as the character of being that is necessarily imposed upon becoming. But for Huang-Po, once on attaches oneself to form, one is then inevitably caught in duality: “As soon as thought or sensation arises, you fall into dualism.” To avoid falling into dualism, or to think non-dualistically as we have been discussing it, Huang Po believes that one must grasp the “One Mind” that “transcends all limits, measures, names, traces and comparisons.” When one does this one transcends the “Three Worlds,” referring to the Buddhist theory of the three sources of attachment – i.e., desire, form, and formlessness - and in this transcending one rises

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Zarathustra comes to recognize the pity that motivated him to pursue the encounters that occupy part four, Zarathustra repeats this claim: “Am I concerned with happiness? I am concerned with my work” (p. 439).

16 Ibid., p. 58.
17 Ibid., p. 29.
“beyond the dualism of good and evil…For you also the Three Worlds will vanish if you can reach the state beyond thought.”

Non-dual thinking is therefore not conceptual thought, but a thought beyond thought and the either/or of this thought.

Nietzsche too would agree that the work of art that is non-dualistic thinking is not the work of conceptual thought. Conceptual thought, for Nietzsche, entails thinking in a manner that can be expressed verbally. Nietzsche’s turn to music was in large part motivated precisely by this effort to think beyond thought, to comprehend non-conceptually the process whereby becoming becomes beings. This motivation appears early on in Nietzsche’s career, as the following note from 1872 illustrates: “Music as a supplement to language: many stimuli and entire states of stimulation which cannot be expressed in language can be rendered in music.”

The inadequacy of language and concepts to express the non-dual condition (i.e., becoming) that makes conceptual thinking possible will continue to be an important theme throughout Nietzsche’s writings.

Despite the efforts of Nietzsche and Huang Po to think beyond “thought,” one should not be quick to dismiss conceptual thinking altogether. Rather, one must affirm the becoming inseparable from the beings becoming created. Concepts are not separate realities – they are “empty,” to borrow a term from Buddhism, of essential being – and yet these concepts in some sense are for they are what becoming becomes, what a “form of becoming” creates. The alternative to conceptual thought, therefore, is not nihilism – a point Nietzsche stresses repeatedly – but a thought that affirms becoming as the source of conceptual thought that is itself beyond conceptual thought. We can now see why Nietzsche claimed that “art represents the

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18 Ibid., p. 86.
highest task and truly metaphysical activity of life.” Art as the activity and work of becoming is the highest and “truly metaphysical activity” for it is the condition for the possibility of the conceptual categories and either/ors of metaphysics, the condition that is inseparable from these concepts and categories.

Similarly for Huang Po and Zen Buddhism, the move beyond thought is not a move to the denial of thought. Such a move would simply repeat the very type of either/or, dual-thinking that one is attempting to move beyond. Conceptual thinking thus comes to be understood as inseparable from the “one mind” that transcends and is beyond conceptual thought. Concepts are therefore understood to be phenomena, but phenomena that are empty of essential being. As Huang Po puts it, “All these phenomena are intrinsically void and yet this Mind with which they are identical is no mere nothingness. By this I mean that it does not exist, but in a way too marvelous for us to comprehend. It is an existence which is no-existence, a non-existence which is nevertheless existence. So this true Void does in some marvelous way ‘exist’. The great Japanese Zen master Dogen will echo these same sentiments some five hundred years after Huang-Po. In explaining the techniques associated with zazen (seated meditation), Dogen states that the purpose is, to restate Huang Po, “to put a stop to conceptual thought,” but in doing this one is not to become attached to “not-thinking.” What one should strive for instead is to affirm the very coming-into-being of thoughts without attaching identity or being to them. Stating this same point in more general terms, Huang Po offers this advice: “Do not permit the events of your

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20 The Zen Teaching of Huang Po, p. 108.
21 See Dogen, Moon in a Dewdrop, edited and translated by Kazuaki Tanahashi (New York: North Point Press). In his rules for zazen, Dogen gives the following directions: “sit in samadhi and think not-thinking. How do you think non-thinking? Nonthinking. This is the art of zazen” (p. 30). In other words, one is neither thinking since one is thinking non-thinking, nor is one to deny thinking altogether and become attached to not-thinking; rather, one is to allow thoughts to come without thinking them, or attaching intentions to them. This Dogen calls nonthinking.
daily lives to bind you, but never withdraw yourselves from them.”22 This is the work and practice of Zen.

Inseparable from this work and practice of Zen are the works of art that are a pervasive part of the Zen tradition. Dogen, for instance, wrote poetry, and many of the masters of the tradition also excelled in various other artistic practices. These practices, moreover, are yet another way of working to move beyond conceptual thought. If art is understood to be a practice and work that is not predetermined by an already established concept of what the work shall become,23 but rather as the work that gives rise to created identities, then artistic work is simply a different way of doing the work of non-dual thinking. To clarify further what this means, we turn now to discuss more traditional theories of aesthetics.

III

Our claim that artistic practice and work is an activity that is not predetermined by any concept of what the work shall become has an important place in modern theories of art. R.G. Collingwood, for example, bases much of his aesthetic theory upon the claim that art is an act of expression, an act that is not predetermined by any identifiable rule or technique. “Expression,” Collingwood argues, “is an activity of which there can be no technique,”24 and from this it follows for Collingwood that: “No artist, therefore, so far as he is an artist proper, can set out to

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22 The Zen Teaching of Huang Po, p. 131.
23 Huang Po will speak of “enlightened” action in much this way: “when all action is dictated purely by place and circumstance; when subjectivity and objectivity are forgotten – that is the highest form of relinquishment” (Ibid., p. 49). In other words, “enlightened” action entails acting without a predetermined rule or concept of how one should act, or how events should come to pass; instead one should, as with the artist, act “purely by place and circumstance,” responding to phenomena and affirming them without attachment. Only in this way will one, to rephrase Huang Po, relinquish the freedom of creativity.
write a comedy, a tragedy, an elegy, or the like.”\(^{25}\) In Collingwood’s variation of expression theory, an artist is one who expresses an emotion in such a way that no predetermining rule, technique, or concept can dictate the act of expression itself. Collingwood is nonetheless in line with more traditional expression theory, especially that of Tolstoy, and Tolstoy’s position that a successful artist is one who is able to evoke in another the \textit{same} feeling the artist once had themselves.\(^{26}\) Collingwood thus claims that the successful expression of the artist through an artwork leads to the disappearance of the distinction between artist and audience for “the hearer who understands him [the artist] has that \textit{same} thing in his mind.”\(^{27}\) The difficulty with this position is to clarify what this “same thing” is. Collingwood repeatedly emphasizes that what is expressed is a “given emotion,” an emotion that is “endowed at birth with its own proper expression,”\(^{28}\) and yet it remains unclear how the audience can be sure that they have gotten the proper expression. Presumably, the audience just “gets it” and knows that they have gotten it. To say how and why this happens would impose upon the activity of expression a predetermining set of rules and conditions, and Collingwood justifiably avoids doing this. Nonetheless, there remain problems with Collingwood’s position, most notably it confronts the well-known intentional fallacy that has, since Wimsatt and Beardsley put it forward, led many theoreticians to be, we believe, rightfully suspicious of Collingwood’s version of expression theory.\(^{29}\)

Nietzsche would be equally suspicious of Collingwood’s theory. Nietzsche, in fact, argues on a number of occasions that we can never be sure that the expressed “intention” of anyone has been successfully communicated, even to ourselves. In the \textit{Genealogy of Morals}, for

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 116.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 3118 (emphasis mine).
\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 294.
instance, Nietzsche argues that “we are necessarily strangers to ourselves…we have to
misunderstand ourselves…we are not ‘men of knowledge’ with respect to ourselves.” Then
again in Beyond Good and Evil Nietzsche, in an outright criticism of Kantian moral theory,
argues that the moral value of an action, and its aesthetic value too we would add, “lies precisely
in what is unintentional in it, while everything about it that is intentional, everything about it that
can be seen, known, ‘conscious,’ still belongs to its surface and skin – which, like every skin,
betrays something but conceals even more.” Consciousness, intentions, and the known are,
developing our earlier arguments, simply ways in which becoming is imposed with the character
of being; moreover, the imposed form that becomes consciousness, intentions, and the known is
a gross simplification of becoming, a skin that “betrays something but conceals even more.”

Nietzsche nevertheless believes, as we have also seen, that there is a form of becoming
that gives rise to the creation of beings (e.g., a conscious, intentional, and known “self”). Our
argument has been that music functions as the model for Nietzsche in understanding this “form”
that is itself a becoming that gives rise to beings, and it is likely for this reason that Nietzsche
was intrigued by Eduard Hanslick’s formalist theory of music as set forth in his book On the
Musically Beautiful. Hanslick, as is well known, was dismissively critical of any attempt to
connect the value of a musical work to its ability to express emotions. For Hanslick, aesthetic
theories of the musically beautiful have usually claimed that the role of music is to express
beautiful feelings and emotions, when in fact Hanslick argues that the musically beautiful is
independent of whether it elicits positive or negative feelings. As Hanslick puts it, “Beauty has
no purpose at all. For it is mere form, which, of course, according to its content, can be applied to

29 For Wimsatt and Beardsley’s argument, see “The Intentional Fallacy,” in Philosophy Looks at the Arts, edited by
the most diverse purposes, without having any purpose of its own beyond itself.”

Among the many purposes to which music can be put is to express emotions, or even to evoke pleasant or unpleasant emotions. If the beautiful and ugly, therefore, is understood to be nothing but the successful or unsuccessful evocation of emotions in the hearer, which is exactly how most theoreticians see it according to Hanslick, then the musically beautiful is “beyond” the beautiful and ugly. For Hanslick there is a purely musical object, the formal composition and tonal structure of music – that is either beautiful (well-formed) or not. It was for this reason that Schönberg claimed he wrote musical compositions rather than musical compositions, implying that they need not be musically beautiful, in the traditional sense of evoking pleasant feelings and emotions, to be a beautiful composition.

Clive Bell has set forth a more recent version of Hanslick’s theory, extending the application of its premises beyond music to art in general. Where Bell diverges, and significantly so, from Hanslick is in his acceptance of the role emotions play. Nietzsche too would diverge with Hanslick on this point for by calling for a musical idea or form as the proper musical object that is beyond the emotional experiences of those who hear the music, Hanslick in effect offers a Platonic theory. Nietzsche, however, is adamantly against any Platonist theory that proposes the transcendent reality of anything beyond the “known” realities of this life. Nietzsche accepts, as

31 Beyond Good and Evil, p. 44.
33 See ibid., p.28: “If now we ask what it is that should be expressed by means of this tone-material, the answer is musical ideas. But a musical idea brought into complete manifestation in appearance is already self-subsistent beauty; it is an end in itself, and it is in no way primarily a medium or material for the representation of feelings or conceptions.” Later we will present Nietzsche’s critique of the Platonic essentialism of this theory, an essentialism evident in the either/or statement (it is either beautiful, well-formed, or it is not).
34 Nietzsche is quite forthright. In Twilight of the Idols Nietzsche argues that “A condemnation of life by the living remains in the end a mere symptom of a certain kind of life: the question whether it is justified is not even raised thereby. One would require a position outside of life, and yet have to know it as well as one, as many, as all who
we have seen, the notion of a musical form of becoming that is beyond the “beings” that come to be known and identified, but used in this sense the musical form *beyond* the superficially “known” intentions of an artist is simply becoming as ‘that’ which exceeds and transgresses any predetermining identity (e.g., rule or technique). This is not, as with Plato, a beyond that is an identity *transcendent* to the identity of the beings that are known; instead; it is a beyond *immanent* to and inseparable from the identifiable beings that are known. This is, in short, a further example of non-dual thinking. For Bell, then, by claiming that “the starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion,” he could be interpreted to be rectifying the Platonism of Hanslick. With this change in place, Bell then defines what it is that provokes this peculiar emotion, and what it is that makes of this emotion a response to art: Bell claims it is the “significant form” of the object. The emotion evoked by this “significant form” is still, as with Hanslick, beyond common emotional reactions to the beautiful or ugly, but is instead a peculiarly “aesthetic emotion” and response. We do not have the time here to examine fully the argument developed by Bell to clarify the relationship between “significant form” and the other social and cultural factors that have a determinant effect upon aesthetic judgments. Let us simply say that Bell ultimately holds a watered down Platonism in that he takes there to be a “significant form” that is explicitly identified with being the essential property of all art objects, a property that is present despite other social, cultural, and individual

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36 Ibid.
differences regarding judgment and taste.\textsuperscript{37} Nietzsche would reject such an argument as a failure to affirm becoming, or to think, following the Zen tradition, beyond conceptual thinking.

When Nietzsche discusses art its social and cultural context is never far from his mind, and often it is at the forefront. One can see clear evidence of Nietzsche’s concern for the social and cultural context of art in his critique of Wagner. Just as Nietzsche’s early praise of Wagner in \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} came from a belief that Wagner’s music could lead to a badly needed revitalization of society and culture, so too does his later critique result from what Nietzsche sees as not only the failure of Wagner’s music to cure society of its decadence but as being a reinforcing symptom of the decadence of the time.\textsuperscript{38} For Nietzsche, therefore, to understand the value of art one must also understand its role within the broader social context. This places Nietzsche’s theory of art solidly within what has come to be called the institutional theory of art, and in two important ways. First, Nietzsche would agree with Morris Weitz’s claim, in contradistinction with Bell, that there is no essential property that any art object must have if it is to be art. Nietzsche might not accept Weit’z further, Wittgenstein-influenced claim that “knowing what art is is not apprehending some manifest or latent essence” but rather is being able to recognize the family resemblance of objects that come to be called “art objects.”\textsuperscript{39} We believe that a case could be made for interpreting Nietzsche’s theory along Wittgensteinian lines – especially if you develop Nietzsche’s statement that “seeing things as similar [family

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 269: “There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist…What is this quality? Only one answer seems possible – significant form.”

\textsuperscript{38} In \textit{The Case of Wagner}, for instance, Nietzsche says of of both Wagner and Victor Hugo that “they signify the same thing: in declining cultures, wherever the decision comes to rest with the masses, authenticity becomes superfluous, disadvantageous, a liability. Only the actor arouses great enthusiasm” (p. 179). This criticism echoes Nietzsche’s earlier statement from \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, in “On the Flies of the Market Place,” where Zarathustra says that “Little do the people comprehend the great – that is, the creating. But they have a mind for all showmen and actors of great things” (\textit{Portable Nietzsche}, p. 163). Wagner’s festivals in Bayreuth were thus for Nietzsche a symptom of a decadent culture, and a symptom that reinforced and encouraged the decadence of the culture by portraying itself as “great” art.
resemblances] and making things the same [essential property] is the sign of weak eyes— but this is not the place for developing such an argument. The second important way in which Nietzsche’s theory dovetails with institutional theory is in connecting the value of art, or the standards to be used in judging art – to the broader social context. Within aesthetic theory this argument is most commonly associated with the work of Arthur Danto and George Dickie. Dickie in particular explicitly ties the value of an art object to the existence of “some sub-group of a society [that] has conferred [upon it] the status of candidate for appreciation.” Nietzsche nowhere argues for the necessity of understanding the value of an art object as something dependent upon a particular sub-group of society – art critics for example. However, in turning to music and aesthetics to clarify the manner in which a form of becoming creates beings, Nietzsche does not tie this “form” to the creative activities of a self that is distinct from others and society. This would repeat dualistic thinking. The self, in fact, is for Nietzsche from the start social. As he puts it in Beyond Good and Evil when discussing the feeling of having a free, independent will, Nietzsche claims that “the person exercising volition adds the feelings of delight of his successful executive instruments, the useful ‘under-wills’ or under-souls – indeed, our body is but a social structure composed of many souls – to his feelings of delight as commander.” Moreover, among the many forces or “under-souls” that constitute the “commonwealth” that is the self, there are the interactions with others, including already established traditions as embodied by institutions. In an aphorism that reveals both Nietzsche’s recognition of the importance of social traditions while maintaining his effort to think non-dualistically, Nietzsche claims that “He who strays from tradition becomes a sacrifice to the

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40 Gay Science, p. 212.
extraordinary; he who remains in tradition is its slave. Destruction follows in any case.\textsuperscript{43} Art, then, and especially music for Nietzsche, is a form of becoming that is inseparable from the social traditions and processes that allow for this art to be identified as the type of art that it \textit{is}.

At the same time, however, Nietzsche clearly sees the value of art as dependent upon whether it is life-enhancing or life-denying. Nietzsche might argue that art has no essential property, that art neither \textit{is} nor \textit{is not} beautiful (either/or thinking). Nevertheless, Nietzsche does not shy away from his position that art is the manner in which existence is justified, or the process whereby becoming creates the beings of either/or thinking. From this perspective, Nietzsche will define the beautiful as that which affirms becoming, or, what is the same for him, affirms life, and the ugly will deny becoming.\textsuperscript{44} By affirming becoming art, as we have been arguing, provokes a thought beyond conceptual thought. This thought beyond conceptual thought is not a denial of thinking – it is not nihilism – but is instead a thought that is not predetermined by any conceptual identity. On this point we found Nietzsche to be in agreement with Zen Buddhism and Collingwood. This thought beyond conceptual thought, this non-dual thought, is still a \textit{form} of becoming, and it is this \textit{form} that gives rise, according to Nietzsche, to the beings that come to establish either/or thinking. On this point we found Nietzsche to be largely in accord with the formalist theories of aesthetics (Hanslick and Bell). And finally, Nietzsche is incessant in his recognition that the beautiful as he understands it, the beautiful beyond conceptual thinking (i.e., beyond being either beautiful or ugly), is a form of becoming that is by its very nature unpopular. Since much of the social activities of life require means-end thinking,

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, p. 26
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Human, All Too Human}, translated by Marion Faber (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 243.
\textsuperscript{44} See \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man (§20): “Nothing is beautiful, except man alone: all aesthetics rests upon this naïveté, which is its first truth. Let us immediately add the second: nothing is ugly except the degenerating man – and with this the realm of aesthetic judgment is circumscribed” (Portable Nietzsche, p. 526).
much of what is valued by society is for Nietzsche tied to its utilitarian function – that is, whether it facilitates the attainment of an already predetermined end. As an activity beyond conceptual thought, art that is new and truly creative does not produce works that will satisfy already established ends. For this reason common opinion, the opinions of the market place, will condemn such works. As Nietzsche puts this point in *The Gay Science*, “What is new…is always evil, being that which wants to conquer and overthrow the old boundary markers and old pieties; and only what is old is good.”\(^4\) Art that is new, therefore, may very well then be recognized to have the life-affirming value that it has by only a few, by a sub-group within the society. Nietzsche will thus agree with Dickie’s institutional theory in this regard, though he may not necessarily believe that art critics are indeed the proper sub-group to pass judgment. Whether recognized properly or not by art critics, life requires the creation of new values – “the ploughshare of evil must come again and again.”\(^5\) For Nietzsche, as we have seen, it is precisely art that best releases human creativity and allows for the emergence of new values, for new beings, and for this reason among many others Nietzsche concludes that “in art man enjoys himself as perfection.”\(^6\) This same sentiment was echoed some fifty years later by John Dewey, another thinker who is known for his efforts to establish a philosophy of non-duality. For Dewey, too, art is the non-dual process whereby humans can best engage with the world and with others; art is, as Dewey puts it, “the complete culmination of nature.”\(^7\)

\(^4\) *Gay Science*, p. 78.  
\(^5\) Ibid.  
\(^6\) *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 519.  