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*Manuel Dries (Ed.)*

# NIETZSCHE ON CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE EMBODIED MIND

MONOGRAPHIEN UND TEXTE  
ZUR NIETZSCHE-FORSCHUNG

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Manuel Dries (Ed.)

**Nietzsche on Consciousness and the Embodied Mind**

# Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung

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# **Nietzsche on Consciousness and the Embodied Mind**



Edited by Manuel Dries

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# Contents

## Note on Texts, Translations, and Abbreviations — VII

Manuel Dries

- 1 Introduction to *Nietzsche on Consciousness and the Embodied Mind* — 1**

## Part I: Embodied Cognition and Eliminative Materialism

Christa Davis Acampora

- 2 Nietzsche and Embodied Cognition — 17**

Manuel Dries

- 3 Early Nietzsche on History, Embodiment, and Value — 49**

Helmut Heit

- 4 Becoming Reasonable Bodies: Nietzsche and Paul Churchland's Philosophy of Mind — 71**

## Part II: Consciousness and Freedom of the Will

Mattia Riccardi

- 5 Nietzsche on the Superficiality of Consciousness — 93**

João Constâncio

- 6 Nietzsche on Will, Consciousness, and Choice: Another Look at Nietzschean Freedom — 113**

## Part III: Mind, Metaphysics, and Will to Power

Friedrich Ulfers and Mark Daniel Cohen

- 7 Nietzsche's Panpsychism as the Equation of Mind and Matter — 145**

Frank Chouraqui

- 8 On the Place of Consciousness within the Will to Power — 163**

## Part IV: Consciousness, Language, and Metaphor

Lawrence J. Hatab

- 9**      **Talking Ourselves into Selfhood: Nietzsche on Consciousness and Language in *Gay Science* 354 — 183**

Benedetta Zavatta

- 10**     **The Figurative Patterns of Reason: Nietzsche on Tropes as Embodied Schemata — 195**

## Part V: Towards Naturalism

Anthony K. Jensen

- 11**     ***Selbstverleugnung—Selbsttäuschung*: Nietzsche and Schopenhauer on the Self — 217**

Christian J. Emden

- 12**     **On Natural Beings: Nietzsche and Philosophical Naturalism — 235**

## Part VI: Ethics and “Life”

Maria Cristina Fornari

- 13**     **“Shadows of God” and Neuroethics — 261**

Charlie Huenemann

- 14**     **Nietzsche and the Perspective of Life — 273**

## Part VII: *Redlichkeit* and Embodied Wisdom

Vanessa Lemm

- 15**     **Truth, Embodiment, and Probity (*Redlichkeit*) in Nietzsche — 289**

Keith Ansell-Pearson

- 16**     **When Wisdom Assumes Bodily Form — 309**

**Index — 329**

**Notes on Contributors — 349**

# Note on Texts, Translations, and Abbreviations

## German texts of Nietzsche referred to are:

- KSA Nietzsche, F. (1980): *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari. Munich, Berlin and New York: DTV and De Gruyter.
- KGB Nietzsche, F. (1975–): *Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, established by G. Colli and M. Montinari, continued by N. Miller and A. Pieper. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.
- KGW Nietzsche, F. (1967–): *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, established by G. Colli and M. Montinari, continued by W. Müller-Lauter and K. Pestalozzi (eds), Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.

Contributors cite Nietzsche using standard acronyms for his works, usually followed by a Roman numeral for a part or chapter (if any), with separately numbered or named sections, e. g. GM I 1, or BGE 19, or EH Clever, or Z III Tablets. For Nietzsche's *Nachlass* (NL), if a note is included in *The Will to Power* (a selection not made by Nietzsche but by later editors, English translation by W. Kauffmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York: Random House, 1968) the contributors often cite it as WP, followed by its number, as WEN (Nietzsche, *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, ed. R. Geuss and A. Nehamas, trans. L. Löb, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), followed by page numbers, or as WLN (Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. R. Bittner, trans. K. Sturge, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), followed by page numbers. For all notes from NL, they further provide the year and KSA volume number, followed by notebook number, and in square brackets the note number, e. g. WP 626 = NL 1883–4, KSA 10, 24[10]. Translations of Nietzsche's works and notes are either by the contributors, who have consulted and amended existing translations, or as noted separately in each essay.

## The following abbreviations are used for the titles of writings by Nietzsche:

- A The Antichrist  
AOM Assorted Opinions and Maxims  
BGE Beyond Good and Evil  
BT The Birth of Tragedy  
CW The Case of Wagner  
D Daybreak  
DS David Strauss  
DW The Dionysiac Worldview  
EH Ecce Homo

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## VIII — Note on Texts, Translations, and Abbreviations

GM	On the Genealogy of Morals
GS	The Gay Science
HH	Human, All Too Human
HL	On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life
NL	Nachlass (Nietzsche's Posthumous Notebooks)
PTAG	Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks
RWB	Richard Wagner in Bayreuth
SE	Schopenhauer as Educator
TI	Twilight of the Idols
TL	On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense
UM	Untimely Meditations
WS	The Wanderer and His Shadow
Z	Thus Spoke Zarathustra

### ***Abbreviations used for works by other authors***

#### **René Descartes**

Med.	<i>Meditationes de prima philosophia</i>
PP	<i>Principia philosophia</i>

#### **Immanuel Kant**

CPR	Critique of Pure Reason
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#### **Arthur Schopenhauer**

WWR	The World as Will and Representation
WWV	Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung

Manuel Dries

# 1 Introduction to *Nietzsche on Consciousness and the Embodied Mind*

This collection of essays aims to widen our understanding of the possible contributions Nietzsche can make to current debates on consciousness and the mind, both of which he conceived as fundamentally embodied. Nietzsche's philosophy has at times been brought into fruitful dialogue with a large number of different disciplines, such as anthropology, history, neuroscience, biology, psychology, and linguistics, to name just a few. His rich and unsystematic treatment of consciousness and the body cannot be reduced to any single discipline and has the potential to speak to all of the above, and more. In the famous note at the end of the first essay of GM, Nietzsche proposes an interdisciplinary research programme for the study of morality, and moral values in particular. His recommendation is to study morality from all possible perspectives, with the wider goal of better understanding human flourishing. His investigations into consciousness and the embodied mind are also not free-standing philosophical analyses but should be seen as part and parcel of what we could call his larger ethical concerns. We learn from Nietzsche's sympathetic and yet always critical perspective on the natural and other sciences (I am thinking here, for example, of GM III 23) that he supports specialized scientific enquiries (and presumably this would include research into consciousness and the mind e.g. by contemporary neuroscience) never merely as an end in itself, but rather guided by broadly ethical concerns. This volume offers a treatment of Nietzsche's philosophy of mind from a number of different analytic and continental perspectives and aims to show its connection to Nietzsche's broader ethical concerns.

It is commonly accepted that Nietzsche regards the body very highly. No passage better captures Nietzsche's admiration and shift towards a more correct, adualistic embodied self-conception than the well-known passage from Z:

the knowing one says: body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something on the body. The body is a great reason, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, one herd and one shepherd. Your small reason, what you call "mind" is also a tool of your body, my brother, a small work- and plaything of your great reason. "I" you say and are proud of this word. But what is greater is that in which you do not want to believe – your body and its great reason. It does not say I, but *does* I. (Z I Despisers)

What is perhaps still less well established, despite a lot of excellent work that has been done on the subject in recent years (cf. e.g. Schlimgen 1999, Abel 2015 [2001], Emden 2005, Richardson 2004, Constâncio et al 2012 and 2015, Leiter 2015, Gemes/Le Patourel 2015, Katsafanas 2016), is Nietzsche's position on reflective consciousness or self-consciousness. Nietzsche does not differentiate explicitly between the many different types of consciousness that we currently distinguish in contempo-

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rary philosophy of mind (cf. Riccardi 2016). His remarks are mostly focused on what we call today reflective consciousness or self-consciousness (cf. e.g. Katsafanas 2005 and 2016, Riccardi (this volume)). At first sight, much of what he says about self-consciousness is quite clearly deflationary, part of a sustained attempt to debunk the supreme importance that humankind, and in particular philosophers, have attributed to the self-conscious, rational parts of the human mind (cf. Deleuze 1983 [1962]: 39). As he famously put it in GS:

The problem of consciousness (or rather, of becoming conscious of something) first confronts us when we begin to realize how much we can do without it [...] For we could think, feel, will, remember, and also ‘act’ in every sense of the term, and yet none of all this would have to ‘enter our consciousness’ (as one says figuratively). All of life would be possible without, as it were, seeing itself in the mirror; and still today, the predominant part of our lives actually unfolds without this mirroring of – course also our thinking, feeling, and willing lives, insulting as it may sound to an older philosopher. (GS 354)

I want to emphasize that, just because there is “much” that can be done without self-consciousness, and just because “predominant parts of our lives” may indeed happen without self-consciousness, this by no means commits Nietzsche to a conception of self-consciousness that strips it of all importance and function. In the same passage, Nietzsche presents what I want to call his developmental thesis of social self-consciousness. He regards self-consciousness as a late development and addition to the human being, an animal that could up to that point rely exclusively on her animal drives and instincts (cf. Constâncio 2012a). His hypothesis is that consciousness was adaptive, arising due to the increased need to communicate, under circumstances of early group formation. This is how Nietzsche puts it:

I may go on to conjecture that consciousness in general has developed only under the pressure of the need to communicate; that at the outset, consciousness was necessary, was useful, only between persons (particularly between those who commanded and those who obeyed); and that it has developed only in proportion to that usefulness. Consciousness is really just a net connecting one person with another – only in this capacity did it have to develop; the solitary and predatory person would not have needed it. That our actions, thoughts, feelings, and movements – at least some of them – even enter into consciousness is the result of a terrible ‘must’ which has ruled over man for a long time: as the most endangered animal, he needed help and protection [...]. (GS 354)

It is clear that Nietzsche seeks to give an account that aims to debunk many of the features commonly associated with self-consciousness, e.g. that it has been permanent, reliable and transparent, the cornerstone of the individual rational capacities of our own and of other minds. A hypothesis like Nietzsche’s can help us to make sense of the overwhelming evidence that conscious reports are far from reliable, are often biased, and at times are mere confabulations. In D, well ahead of today’s experimental evidence, Nietzsche already asked if “all our so-called consciousness [is] a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable,

but felt text?” (D 119). But, again, what do we make of the “more or less” in this passage? Just because something has only developed “in proportion to its usefulness,” primarily with a social function, does this necessarily limit its entire scope?

In GM II, to give another example, Nietzsche describes the development of bad conscience (*schlechtes Gewissen*) among early humans: under the imposed order of early violent rulers, they were no longer allowed to express freely their natural drives, such as cruelty, enmity, or joy (in pursuit, in attack, in change, in destruction) (cf. GM II 16). Instead of being guided by their drives, Nietzsche conjectures that early humans were forced to turn against themselves to repress their drives, at the hands of their oppressors, who forced them into early forms of society. As a result, some human animals began to feel, and eventually to think, negatively about many of its antisocial drives and instincts. Nietzsche believes that these developments weakened the motivational force of the drives that had hitherto guided action “more or less” unselfconsciously, and increasingly “disengaged” them. It is from then on, Nietzsche thinks, that humans had to rely more and more on their most “error-prone” organ, their self-conscious minds, which were, from very early on, pitted against the “great reason” of their drive-driven bodies. It is clear that Nietzsche thinks this development of increased reliance on self-consciousness had far-reaching psycho-physiological consequences. He writes in GM:

Just like the things water animals must have gone through when they were forced either to become land animals or to die off, so events must have played themselves out with this half-beast so happily adapted to the wilderness, war, wandering around, adventure – suddenly all its instincts were devalued and “disengaged.” From this point on, these animals were to go on foot and “carry themselves”; whereas previously they had been supported by the water. A terrible heaviness weighed them down. In performing the simplest things they felt ungainly. In dealing with this new unknown world, they no longer had their old leaders, the ruling unconscious drives which guided them safely – these unfortunate creatures were reduced to thinking, inferring, calculating, bringing together cause and effect, reduced to their “consciousness,” their most impoverished and error-prone organ! (GM II 16)

Nietzsche’s primary purpose, as already mentioned at the start, is to debunk humankind’s deeply held illusions. Misconceptions regarding the scope and function of self-consciousness is one of them. An illustration of what we could call this superlative metaphysical view of self-consciousness can be found in A:

People used to see consciousness, ‘spirit’, as proof that humanity is descended from something higher, that humanity is divine; people were advised to become *perfect* by acting like turtles and pulling their senses inside themselves, cutting off contact with worldly things and shedding their mortal shrouds: after this, the essential element would remain, the ‘pure spirit’. We are more sensible about all this too: we see the development of consciousness, ‘spirit’, as a symptom of precisely the relative *imperfection* of the organism, as an experimenting, a groping, a mistaking, as an exertion that is sapping an unnecessarily large amount of strength away from the nervous system, – we deny that anything can be made perfect as long as it is still being made conscious. (A 14)

Again, it seems as if Nietzsche wholeheartedly criticizes self-consciousness. And as far as self-consciousness is taken as evidence for one of humanity's self-aggrandizing fantasies, he clearly is. And yet, in the second half of A 14, which culminates in what I will call Nietzsche's unconscious perfection hypothesis, does he not leave ample room for self-consciousness to be—or, perhaps better, become or develop into—a very important tool, if correctly understood? Let's take the well-known example of the pianist who, whenever she makes a mistake, starts reflecting on what it is that she actually does with her fingers on the keyboard. The natural flow of the play needs to be interrupted in order to figure out the best fingering combinations for mastering a certain complex musical sequence. Once this has happened, it will take a while until she eventually becomes habituated to the new fingering and it no longer demands her conscious attention. The pianist will have reached the kind of unconscious perfection that Nietzsche describes only once she can play the piece without error and without any self-conscious, reflective monitoring. Perfection, in the sense Nietzsche uses it in A 14, cannot coincide with the slow, self-conscious working out of the fingering combination. But who would want to claim that self-consciousness did not play a vital role in the process?

The problem with self-consciousness, then, in the 'acquirement reading' I only hint at but won't try to defend here, is not that it is necessarily deficient. Many of Nietzsche's remarks are consistent with a reading that aims to debunk the superlative metaphysical conception of self-consciousness (as "higher," or "divine," "fully transparent," "error-free" etc.) but without succumbing to the kind of fallacious inversion that Nietzsche identifies in his well-known debunking of "'freedom of the will' in the superlative metaphysical sense" (BGE 21). Just as he regards the inference to an utterly "un-free will" as pure "mythology," he may well regard the inference to the inefficacy or epiphenomenality of consciousness as "mythology" (BGE 21) (on the question of epiphenomenality, see e. g. Leiter (2015: xi, 72–74) on Katsafanas (2005) and Riccardi (this volume), and Katsafanas 2016; for an expressivist account, see Pip-pin 2015; on intention and action, see Nehamas 2018). Just as it may be better to think of willing not as some sort of faculty, that is either free or unfree, but as something that comes in degrees, it may be better to think of self-consciousness as something that has developed under specific circumstances, to a certain degree, and awaits further acquiring. This thought is actually quite clearly expressed in GS where Nietzsche asserts:

Since they thought they already possessed consciousness, human beings did not take much trouble to *acquire* it—and things are no different today! (GS 11, my emphasis)

Nietzsche often seems to privilege what he calls "becoming" over "being" – that is, he assumes non-teleological evolutionary and historical development, rather than the existence of any ahistorical essences that can be discovered once and for all. It is consistent with this commitment that Nietzsche leaves ample room for self-consciousness to develop further, i. e. that quite possibly once the human animal came

to understand its complex embodied nature better, it could come to acquire, augment, and shape its self-conscious capacities as well as appreciate its unconscious strengths and weaknesses.

Nietzsche conceives of self-consciousness not only no longer in isolation and as anything privileged, he quite clearly sees it as part of a larger, dynamic, embodied and embedded system of drives, affects, and unconscious and conscious mental states (with nonconceptual and conceptual content). Paul Katsafanas (2016) has recently proposed an account that is committed to Nietzsche's drive psychology and allows room for conscious thoughts and values as causally effective. Another account that has yet to receive the attention it deserves is Rex Welshon's (2014 and 2015). Welshon also offers an account that combines Nietzsche's strong commitment to the drives and leaves room for the efficacy of self-conscious intentionality. One of the crucial passages on which Welshon's account is based is found in GS 360, on the "*Two kinds of causes that are often confused.*" (see also Constâncio (this volume)). Nietzsche distinguishes here between "driving causes" (drives) and "directing causes" (intentions). This is how Nietzsche puts it:

This seems to me to be one of my most essential steps forward: I learned to distinguish the cause of acting from the cause of acting in a certain way, in a certain direction, with a certain goal. The first kind of cause is a quantum of dammed-up energy [the driving cause, MD] waiting to be used somehow, for something; the second kind, by contrast, is something quite insignificant, mostly a small accident in accordance with which this quantum 'discharges' itself in one particular way: the match versus the powder keg. Among these small accidents and matches I consider all so-called 'purposes' [the directing cause, MD] as well as the even more so-called 'vocations': they are relatively random, arbitrary, nearly indifferent in relation to the enormous force of energy that presses on, as I said, to be used up somehow. The usual view is different: one is used to seeing the driving force precisely in the goals (purposes, professions, etc.), in keeping with a very ancient error; but it is only the directing force – one has mistaken the helmsman for the stream. (GS 360)

In *Nietzsche's Dynamic Metapsychology*, Welshon interprets this passage as follows:

Reflective goals and purposes may therefore be causally efficacious, not as driving or implementing causes but as directing causes. A reflective goal's causal efficacy consists in constraining, structuring and shaping—directing—rather than being the propelling force, which, of course, no goal has. Hence, in the counterfactual absence of a particular goal, our various drives would continue to impel us to be active across the various domains over which the drives act, although the constraining and shaping associated with the goal would not occur. (Welshon 2014: 181)

What makes Welshon's reading attractive is that, like Katsafanas' different reading, it preserves two of Nietzsche's philosophical commitments. First, Nietzsche's philosophical commitment to a "soul" as a—often less, but ideally more—unified system of drives. And, second, it preserves the everyday phenomenology of a human animal that senses room for *further acquiring* and shaping of its complex embodied and embedded self.

We have only just started to take Nietzsche's reflections on the self and the mind seriously. Much further work is needed to allow us to see Nietzsche as a fruitful interlocutor for interdisciplinary contemporary research into the embodied conscious and unconscious mind, without losing sight of what I see as his primary commitment to questions of value. It is one of the aims of this volume to contribute to the beginning of this task.

## The Chapters in *Nietzsche on Consciousness and the Embodied Mind*<sup>1</sup>

The first chapter of this volume is devoted to the question of how much a dialogue with Nietzsche may contribute to current debates on consciousness and the embodied mind. In "Nietzsche and Embodied Cognition," Christa Davis Acampora reviews resources in Nietzsche's philosophy that potentially contribute to alternatives to brain-centred views of cognition—specifically, contemporary work in embodied cognition and extended mind. Acampora surveys these positions and argues that while Nietzsche's philosophy is to some extent compatible with, or even prescient of, some contemporary views, she actually sees the real value of a dialogue with Nietzsche's work in what she calls "indirect critical engagement" (p. 17). She does not, however, rule out that Nietzsche's philosophical contributions could also "be used to vindicate theories of embodied cognition" (p. 44).

In "Early Nietzsche on History, Embodiment, and Value," I argue that already in his early texts, embodiment in Nietzsche's philosophy of mind is best understood via the central category of the drive. I propose that, as early as HL, Nietzsche uses his drive model of the mind. The "historical sickness" that is central to HL is diagnosed as failures of embodiment and drive control. In my analysis I focus on a largely neglected passage that contrasts the medieval *memento mori* with a modern *memento vivere*, arguing that Nietzsche took the former to function as an embodied mechanism of willing and self-control. In the final section I draw on recent research in embodied cognition to identify two plausible causes—"overload" and "semantic embodiment"—of the modern "historical sickness" that, in Nietzsche's view, undermines his contemporaries' ability to flourish.

In "Becoming Reasonable Bodies: Nietzsche and Paul Churchland's Philosophy of Mind," Helmut Heit situates Nietzsche within today's debates regarding the metaphysics of the mind. He compares non-dualist and non-reductionist philosophies of mind and argues that both eliminative materialism and Nietzsche are to be distinguished from Platonic views on cognition and knowledge. Heit then embarks on a comparison of Churchland and Nietzsche: the former's naturalized explication of mental states and the development of human minds on the basis of neural network

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<sup>1</sup> This section is based on abstracts of the chapters initially provided by the contributors.

studies and Nietzsche's understanding of the body as a dynamic living organization reveal at first sight significant similarities. In a similar vein to Acampora, Heit argues that Nietzsche's project directs both scientists and philosophers to go beyond scientific realism, which Nietzsche sees as only weakly justifiable. In his own philosophy of mind Nietzsche gestures toward a more subtle and self-reflexive perspectival epistemology. Nietzsche's "naturalistically inclined agnosticism" must, due to his own methodological constraints, remain open to alternative constructions that self-reflexively enquire into the values that guide the metaphors—cultural and scientific—by which we live. As Heit puts it, Nietzsche's goal is to

rearrange our set of metaphors in a more appropriate way as far as "cultural progress", "art" and "life" are concerned. Under such conditions, we should make up our mind regarding the kind of world we would like to live in, and albeit we might have good reasons to choose the current scientific world, we are not obliged or determined to do so. (p. 88)

In "Nietzsche on the Superficiality of Consciousness," which has already become a seminal contribution, Mattia Riccardi addresses the question of what exactly Nietzsche means by some of the contentious claims he makes about consciousness, namely that it is in some significant and hitherto neglected sense both 'superficial' and 'falsifying.' Nietzsche famously writes that "consciousness is a surface" (EH Clever 9). Riccardi makes sense of this 'superficiality'. He focuses on two further claims that he believes substantiate Nietzsche's assertion. The first claim is that consciousness is superfluous—the "superfluousness claim" (SC). The second claim is that consciousness is the source of some deep falsification—the "falsification claim" (FC). Riccardi first considers Nietzsche's notion of consciousness and argues that it should be identified with (a version of) self-consciousness. He then addresses the two claims. Regarding FC he proposes that, for Nietzsche, the content of (self-) conscious mental states is falsified by virtue of being articulated propositionally. Regarding SC, he argues that it is best read as a weak version of epiphenomenalism about conscious causation. In arguing for weak epiphenomenalism, Riccardi does not want to deny that consciousness plays an important functional role. This is how he puts it:

consciousness plays a fundamental role in our *acquisition* of public or cultural representations in general. Moreover, it is undisputable that such representations have an enormous impact on what we think and do. Nonetheless, I cannot see how this point should rule out the relevant kind of superfluousness [...] For the fact that consciousness plays a crucial role in our acquisition of a wide range of representations is compatible with the physio-psychological causal role of those representations being independent from consciousness. (p. 107–8)

João Constâncio's "Nietzsche on Will, Consciousness, and Choice: Another Look at Nietzschean Freedom" contributes to recent scholarly discussions that have been trying to make sense of Nietzsche's conception of will and willing. His point of departure and main textual focus is Nietzsche's well-known analysis of willing in BGE 19.



Here, Nietzsche presents his conception of willing in terms that involve his drive psychology and his conception of human consciousness as a mere “surface” of unconscious power relations. Constâncio argues that, on this basis, Nietzsche rejects not only human “free will,” but also, and more generally, our usual overestimation of choice. On the other hand, the chapter also aims to show how Nietzsche’s hypothesis of “the will to power” allows him to develop new, positive conceptions of “will” and “freedom.” Finally, the chapter argues that these conceptions entail the need to re-interpret the polemic figure of the “sovereign individual” in terms of self-creation, and no longer in terms of freedom of choice.

Ulfers and Cohen’s contribution, “Nietzsche’s Panpsychism as the Equation of Mind and Matter,” is premised on the claim that “Nietzsche’s ontology of becoming” can, in its full radical tenor, be appreciated only when viewed in the context of his largely overlooked and, when noted at all, misinterpreted stipulation: his panpsychism. For Nietzsche, they claim, panpsychism constitutes an attribution of psychical aspects to what he calls the “essence of material things”—specifically, the attribution of “feeling” (*Empfindung*) and “memory” (*Gedächtnis*). In making this postulation, Nietzsche treats matter as something not entirely distinct from psyche, mind, or experience in their most general and rudimentary sense. Nietzsche’s further assumes an ontology of a quantized universe, a universe in which space, time, and events occur in quanta, or “atoms.” It is a conception of reality as event-like, rather than stabilized into substantial objects: a process ontology of becoming rather than being.

In his “On the Place of Consciousness within the Will to Power,” Frank Chouraqui also argues that it is important to take into account the hypothesis of the will to power in any account of Nietzsche’s views on consciousness. Nietzsche’s insistence on the strategic importance of ideas and acts of consciousness for his task bestows on consciousness an importance that many naturalistic accounts fail to justify. Not unlike Ulfers and Cohen, Chouraqui proposes a characterization of the will to power that is based on a rejection of the categorical distinction between the mental and the physical. He first discusses Nietzsche’s conception of agency in order to determine what the will to power is intended to explain. He then moves on to characterize will to power as a psycho-physical principle that is not intended as some sort of synthesis of the mental and the physical but instead is better understood as a weakening of both concepts (and of their incompatibility). The final section of Chouraqui’s chapter explores how Nietzsche’s new conceptions (of the mental and the physical domains) allow him to do away with causation, and to propose an alternative account of interactions within the will to power.

Larry Hatab shifts the focus to the important relation between consciousness and language. In “Talking Ourselves into Selfhood: Nietzsche on Consciousness and Language in *Gay Science* 354,” Hatab seeks to extend Nietzsche’s well-known critique of the idea of atomic individualism. Nietzsche’s subversion of consciousness and its storied role in defining individual selfhood offers another critical perspective. In GS 354 Nietzsche claims that consciousness is not an essential property of human experience and that it arises primarily out of the social network of linguistic commu-

nication. With words conceived as commonly understood signs, Nietzsche concludes that self-consciousness can never be truly individual or unique but is usually an appropriation of what is shared or “average.” In his chapter Hatab shows that Nietzsche’s claims find support in developmental psychology: that self-awareness seems to be an internalization of socially formed speech. He then poses some questions about Nietzsche’s analysis on its own terms: (1) How far does Nietzsche take the equation between consciousness and socially-based language? (2) Is self-awareness nothing more than a linguistic-communal phenomenon? (3) Is language nothing more than a communal network that averages out experience? (4) Given the possibility of creative language in Nietzsche’s thought (and hinted at in GS 354), would such a possibility have to be distinguishable from the consciousness–language connection? (5) What sense can be made of unique experience and selfhood in the light of Nietzsche’s analysis?—In attempting to answer these questions, Hatab draws on passages where Nietzsche speaks of a kind of immediacy in language and experience, which helps provide more subtle answers to the above questions.

Benedetta Zavatta’s chapter maintains the focus on the close relation between consciousness and language. In “The Figurative Patterns of Reason: Nietzsche on Tropes as Embodied Schemata,” Zavatta shows that Nietzsche rejects the idea that there is a purely denotative discourse that simply represents reality, which in some cases and for some purposes can be enriched with tropes and figures. He claims instead that all discourse is constructed through rhetorical strategies and that tropes are not to be conceived as an embellishment of an already formed discourse. Rather, they should be regarded as unconscious procedures through which human beings organize perceptual data into an image of the world (*Weltansicht*). Examining Nietzsche’s considerations of rhetoric and tropes from the point of view of cognitive science reveals a surprising continuity in his thought from the Basle years to his later writings.

Anthony K. Jensen’s “*Selbstverleugnung—Selbsttäuschung*: Nietzsche and Schopenhauer on the Self” traces a key transition in Nietzsche’s thinking about the self against the backdrop of Schopenhauer’s dual-aspect theory. Jensen argues that an essential element in Nietzsche’s departure from Schopenhauer’s theory of self involved Nietzsche’s transformation and eventual rejection of the key Schopenhauerian notion of *Anschauung*. Nietzsche’s mature position on the self should be understood within this framework. Despite the clear differences between their respective conceptions of self, Jensen argues that

[f]or both Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, the self in normal circumstances is neither a subsistent thing nor an intellect nor any sort of causally efficacious kernel of being; it is the designation for a stream of drive-processes of which the individual material body is the material concomitant. All empirical forms of cognition must take place through the filter of the subjective facticities of the embodied will. (p. 230)

While Schopenhauer sees the self's embodied nature as an obstacle from which he derives both aesthetic and ethical conclusions, Nietzsche "embraces and affirms the body as the condition of life" (p. 230).

In "On Natural Beings: Nietzsche and Philosophical Naturalism," Christian J. Emden argues that Nietzsche's epistemological position is best understood by reference to philosophical naturalism. And yet, not unlike Heit, he argues that such a naturalism should not be construed as entailing physicalist reductionism. The central question of Nietzsche's naturalism, rather, is: how can we obtain an understanding of normativity without appealing to normativity as a standard that is separate from the agency, affects, conceptual commitments, and also cells and organs, that make us natural beings? Emden shows that Nietzsche's position emerges within the context of the nineteenth-century encounter between philosophy and the new life sciences. He further shows that philosophical naturalism is of crucial importance for the project of genealogy: Nietzsche's naturalized conception of normativity implies that the meta-ethical distinction between moral realism and moral anti-realism is only of limited relevance since both entail metaphysical commitments that Nietzsche is unwilling to share.

Maria Cristina Fornari's chapter "'Shadows of God' and Neuroethics" probes the close connection between Nietzsche's naturalist philosophy of mind and contemporary ethics. Much of present-day research into the origins of morality in the neurosciences attributes to human beings a moral disposition, broadly understood as the capacity to formulate moral judgements and apply them to behaviour. This disposition is increasingly considered as an evolutionary consequence of specific brain structures, combined with determining epigenetic factors. What is notable, however, is how in the work of at least some writers in these fields, this disposition takes on a subtly normative form. Nietzsche, Fornari argues, was an acute critic of the naturalistic fallacy, and identifies similar tendencies in the work of his contemporaries (e.g. Herbert Spencer). The chapter examines Nietzsche's engagement with the debates among his contemporaries over the existence of moral faculties, in the context of the development of certain new evolutionary and biological theories, particularly those of a Spencerian kind. It then considers whether Nietzsche's criticisms of naturalistic fallacies in his contemporaries' positions can also illuminate difficulties in some of our own contemporaries' research into the origins of morality. Fornari shows that the details of the debates may have changed but Nietzsche's criticism of Spencer that the *value* of altruism cannot be established as a "result of science" still stands. Instead, Nietzsche argues, "*the prevailing instinct (Trieb) of the day* induces men of science to believe that science confirms the desire of their instinct" (NL 1880, KSA 9, 8[35]). Fornari then contrasts explanations that appeal to nature in order to explain "the existence of cooperative attitudes and genuine altruism despite the Darwinian struggle for life" (p. 269) with Nietzsche's proposed alternative: his appeal to equilibria of power tracked by the embodied mind (p. 270).

Nietzsche's idiosyncratic conception of life emerges as an important concept for anyone who wishes to make headway in understanding Nietzsche's philosophy of

mind. And yet, what his conception of life consists of is hardly ever spelt out in much detail. Charlie Huenemann addresses this head on in his “Nietzsche and the Perspective of Life.” His chapter provides what Huenemann sees as one technical way of making sense of a theoretical entity (called “Life”), which has values and a perspective. He turns to Nietzsche’s perspectivism and explains why, for Nietzsche, Life’s perspective should always be privileged. He explores how trying to live from this—Life’s—perspective would force us to change our values—and, in particular, to disown the value we have placed on truth (for its own sake) and traditional morality. Huenemann also concludes that to understand Nietzsche’s conception of Life we need to acknowledge the close connection it has with his conception of power. As he puts it:

Overall, it seems that [Nietzsche’s theoretical conception of] Life encourages us to see individuals as loci of power, and to feel obligated to do what we can to strengthen that power. If, as Nietzsche presumes, an individual’s power is strengthened by placing it in opposition to other forces or powers, then Life encourages us to seek out opposition for the sake of our power’s advancement. Life urges us to face both our fears and the values and perspectives with which we disagree, so that we strengthen in response to them. (p. 284)

Huenemann is careful to distinguish truth (for its own sake), which Nietzsche famously criticizes if it is valued above all else, from a conception of truth that Nietzsche clearly values.

Vanessa Lemm’s “Truth, Embodiment, and Probity (*Redlichkeit*) in Nietzsche” argues that, for Nietzsche, the concept of truth that enhances life is a conception of truth that can be better understood as *Redlichkeit* (probity). *Redlichkeit* makes possible a conception of philosophical life that is actually political through and through and yet that stands in critical tension with the conventional conception of truth that lies at the basis of social and political forms of life. Lemm’s chapter first presents the relation between truth and embodiment in Nietzsche. She then distinguishes between what she calls “philosophical truth” and conventional or political truth. The goal is to show that these two conceptions of truth actually reflect two types of embodiment, which represent two different conceptions of political life and of society with others. Whereas political or conventional truth lays the ground for a form of social and political life based on an equalizing domination of the other, philosophical truth produces a form of social and political life that is characterized by openness to the other. This openness to the other takes the form of an agonistic friendship that favours a “probing” pursuit of philosophical truth. It is the life-enhancing idea of embodied philosophical truth that is exemplified by Nietzsche’s conception of truth as *Redlichkeit*.

The idea of an embodied conception of truth is central also to Keith Ansell-Pearson’s “When Wisdom Assumes Bodily Form.” He focuses on the ways in which Marx and Nietzsche illuminate, in different ways, the character of an Epicurean enlightenment. Ansell-Pearson is especially interested in Nietzsche’s insight into wisdom assuming a bodily form in Epicurus. He first examines Marx, before considering

Nietzsche, highlighting both similarities as well as differences between them. He shows that, for both, Epicurus is an important figure in the history of philosophy on account of his doctrine of liberation from religious fear and superstition: Epicurus' philosophy is one of practical freedom. Ansell-Pearson further shows that, for Marx, Epicurus's teaching contains an incendiary political dimension, whereas for Nietzsche the significance of Epicurus is that he is an ethical reformer. Nietzsche's appropriation of Epicurus, by contrast, is more poetic and lyrical, centred on the needs of an ethical reformation, and it adopts the model of social withdrawal offered by the 'garden.' The contrast with Marx enables Ansell-Pearson to show the extent to which Nietzsche is primarily an ethicist and not a political thinker, at least as far as his middle period writings are concerned.

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## **Part I: Embodied Cognition and Eliminative Materialism**





Christa Davis Acampora

## 2 Nietzsche and Embodied Cognition

*Along the guiding thread of the body. —*

Supposing that ‘the soul’ was an attractive and mysterious idea which philosophers, rightly, gave up on with reluctance—perhaps what they’re now learning to exchange for it is even more attractive, even more mysterious. The human body [*menschliche Leib*], in which the whole most distant and most recent past of all organic becoming regains life and corporeality, through which, over which, beyond which a tremendous, inaudible river seems to flow: the body [*Leib*] is a more astonishing idea than the old ‘soul’. (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[35])<sup>1</sup>

This chapter reviews resources in Nietzsche’s philosophy that potentially contribute to alternatives to brain-centered views of cognition, specifically, contemporary work in embodied cognition and extended mind.<sup>2</sup> After surveying these positions, I mention some ways in which Nietzsche’s philosophy is compatible with and, to some extent prescient of, these views. I then focus on how his broader philosophical projects might offer some indication of how to orient further research and possibly address some apparent unsavory consequences of contemporary theories. I conclude with the suggestion that it might be that the significance of Nietzsche’s work for this growing area of research could be best realized through indirect critical engagement rather than direct contribution.

There are at least four ways one might try to put Nietzsche in dialog with contemporary research in the area of embodied cognition. (1) One could focus on the importance of the body for Nietzsche, which is clearly evident in his work, and the attention he gives to the various sciences that study the body.<sup>3</sup> (2) One could examine the way in which features of our embodiment, for Nietzsche, give rise to and supply forms for how we think about the world and the concepts we generate or discover

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**1** Translated in Nietzsche (2003). I have corrected an italicization that was inconsistent with the German original.

**2** There are many different approaches to developing alternatives to brain-based views of cognition and a variety of names given to such alternatives, including situated cognition, embedded cognition, extended cognition, and others. I do not purport to deal with all of these views and will, perhaps unfairly, lump them together in my discussion since, as I elaborate below, I am largely looking at how Nietzsche’s views might contribute to framing or orienting such lines of research rather than directly contributing to them. Further, I consider how Nietzsche provides some resources for addressing certain unfortunate consequences of some of these views (some of which may or may not follow for the whole lot). A very helpful overview of the varieties of alternatives to brain-based theories of mind and cognition can be found in Wilson and Foglia. I am grateful to the authors of this article for orienting my initial research into these areas and providing me with a wealth of sources to consult. A classic discussion of some of these views by an active contributor to the area can be found in Clark (1998 and 1999). For a clear and succinct overview of embodied cognition specifically, see Shapiro 2012.

**3** There are a variety of approaches of this sort: see, for example, Emden (2005), Blondel (1991). On Nietzsche and the sciences, see Moore (2002).

(that is, how features of embodiment give rise to certain cognitive structures).<sup>4</sup> (3) One could consider the ways in which Nietzsche is (or is not) prescient of particular theses in contemporary embodied cognition by focusing on his epistemological views and the causal role of the senses, including Nietzsche's sensualism, itself a contested topic.<sup>5</sup> And (4) one could survey and mine conceptual resources in Nietzsche that are relevant for dealing with some of the particularly challenging difficulties confronted in and by the positions of embodied cognition. The latter might be sorted into two different general kinds: what might be called the labors of embodied cognition—that is, what advances their own philosophical agendas and, in some cases, involves paradigm shifting and searching for a more adequate conceptual vocabulary, and means of addressing some problematic consequences that follow from these views.<sup>6</sup> The main purpose of this chapter is to lay a foundation for further exploration of the fourth of these approaches. To a great extent, I think the resources for this are already developed in the scholarly literature on Nietzsche. Thus, the bulk of this chapter involves attuning the audience to some of the major concerns in theories of embodied cognition with suggestions for how current interpretive insights from Nietzsche's works might be applied (sections 2.1–2.3). In the concluding section, I suggest that however interesting it might be to demonstrate how Nietzsche himself advanced a philosophical agenda with affinities to those of embodied cognition theorists, future research along these lines might be more productive if focused on how Nietzsche's ideas can be used to critically engage them.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.1 Embodied Cognition

A focus on what is called “embodied cognition” is often presented as an alternative to brain-centered views of human cognition and how these bear on considerations of

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<sup>4</sup> An approach of this sort might well examine how Nietzsche's philosophy is relevant to a particular line of research that falls under the heading of embodied cognition found in the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Riccardi is, to my knowledge, closest to this line of thought, and has published an intriguing analysis of Nietzsche's sensualism, sorting through the positions and disagreements of Hussain and Clark and Dudrick, particularly with respect to how to interpret and reconcile apparent inconsistencies in Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. See Riccardi (2011) and below.

<sup>6</sup> Günther Abel has helpfully outlined the ways in which Nietzsche potentially provides conceptual resources that might be used to critically and constructively engage with contemporary problems in philosophy of mind. He largely focuses on the views that are the subject of critique in explorations of embodied cognition. My chapter aims to extend these ideas to this other, specific domain of philosophy of mind, pointing out where Nietzsche contributes to the further development of these ideas and where embodied cognition might be advanced by further consideration of some of Nietzsche's views.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout, I point out exemplary passages from Nietzsche's texts, but the interested reader would do well to consult the wealth of interpretive scholarship that already exists, which I document along the way. The intended contribution of this chapter is to frame future research (and perhaps discourage what might be less productive) and not to provide a novel interpretation of Nietzsche.

moral psychology. Generally speaking, brain-centered views identify and examine the brain structures and processes that make possible cognitive activity, broadly construed to include perception, the development of preferences, emotions, and decision-making.<sup>8</sup> Proponents of embodied cognition, minimally, argue that brain-centered views are too limited either because other parts of the body and its various systems essentially contribute to these very same processes or because cognitive activities themselves are more expansive so as to include or require (proximally or distally) participation in the world and interaction with other entities. While there is great variety in forms of embodied cognition, just as one finds variety among mainstream brain-based approaches, there is general agreement among those holding views that fit under the umbrella of embodied cognition that *sensation* and *action*—our sensory processes and motor systems—are vitally important for cognition. In embodied cognition theories (ECTs), cognition is more than abstract information processing for which the sensorimotor systems provide input but make no other essential contribution: the body is more than a practical necessity for human cognition, and incorporating that fact has theoretical relevance.

For the reader who worries about a false dilemma right from the start in the distinction between embodied cognition and brain-based views (after all, “the brain” is involved in virtually everything “the body” does, and the brain itself is surely *part of* the body), it might be helpful to identify the specific targets of criticism that ECTs make. Generally speaking, philosophers of embodied cognition focus on alternatives to computational and representational models. For my purposes in this chapter, I will take these as representative of a group that has at least as much variety as the views on which I am focused. To some extent, embodied cognition defines itself, at least in part, through contrast with the research agendas of cognitive science, which model human cognition in terms of computational manipulation of abstract symbols. Many ECTs also challenge the emphasis on the representational powers of mind that is often the focus in philosophy of mind. Some, though certainly not all, oppose eliminative materialism, the view that all mental states can be explained by a completed science of the brain. Additionally, defenders of embodied cognition often differ from their counterparts with respect to *what* they think is the nature (or character) of cognition along with *how* (or where) it happens, although virtually all cognitive theorists, regardless of orientation, acknowledge that very much of what counts as “cognition” happens in the background, so to speak, and is not (normally) part of conscious experience.

Minimally, ECTs emphasize features of human embodiment in addition to the brain as crucial sources for cognitive processing and activity. Proponents of embodied cognition, obviously, place significance on the body. But just what counts as “body” and “embodiment” and their role in cognition are the subject of considerable disagreement. In many versions of ECT, “the body [is] a piece of the cognitive process

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<sup>8</sup> See Prinz (2009).

itself rather than [...] a link in a causal chain that extends further upstream to cognition” (Shapiro 2013: 129). For some, somatic features, experiences, and processes contribute to (or determine) concept formation and the relations among concepts. That is to say that at least some of our basic concepts are linked with features of our embodiment, such as up and down, front and back, etc. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999). How we understand the world and the conceptual material that forms the basis of our cognitive activities is shaped by the kinds of bodies we have.<sup>9</sup>

For other ECTs, human bodies acquire their significance and meaning insofar as they are known in relation to others and by means of our involvement in the world. A difference here concerns whether simply having the particular kind of bodies that we do shapes our cognitive activities and products and/or whether it is bodily interaction (with other bodies and entities in the world) that has these effects.

Still other ECTs prioritize involvement of the body because they wish to reformulate our conception of cognition, shifting it from a purely mental process to a kind of activity (Clark 1997) that crucially depends upon a certain kind of agency (O’Regan and Nöe 2001, Nöe and O’Regan 2002). For some of these theorists, human agency is realized first and foremost through active engagement in the world (Nöe 2009). The relevance of this work and the conceptions of agency that seem to logically follow from the major theses of embodied cognition also lie at the heart of concerns some critics raise about the consequences of such views, as discussed below.

While not categorically true, it may be a fair general observation that contemporary ECTs lie out of the mainstream and often construct their views in a reactionary way. That is, they take brain-based models as the norm and define their own terms in relation to these views. This makes for interesting but challenging comparison with Nietzsche’s views, because the sciences of the brain were nascent in his day. In the nineteenth century, the brain-based view of cognition was itself an emerging alternative to a norm that assumed that whatever cognitive activity may be, it must be the product of mind, which is formally distinct from the material substance of the body. Indeed, one can find passages in Nietzsche’s works, particularly in his notes, that suggest he inclined toward the emerging brain-based views precisely because they represented alternatives to the dualism that results from the Cartesian conception of mind as mental substance. This is not to say that Nietzsche is an eliminativist materialist. His views about history and culture, particularly art, led him to strive toward a reconceptualization of the spiritual rather than its elimination. But, this tension in Nietzsche’s thought makes taking sides in the contemporary debate over embodied cognition a challenge if we simply focus on Nietzsche’s statements that appear to be immediately relevant to topic. However, this difficulty need not bother us too much for several reasons. Brain-based models have developed much further since the days of Helmholtz and other pioneers in the area that Nietzsche read with admiration. Moreover, the views to which *they* were opposed—such as those reliant on

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<sup>9</sup> Experimentally tested by Boroditsky and Ramscar (2002). See discussion by Shapiro (2013: 127).

speculation about spiritual substance—are all but absent today, and in this respect, Nietzsche, brain-based theorists, and embodied cognitivists are united in rejecting such approaches.

Concern to orient cognitive science and philosophy of mind and consciousness toward a framework of embodied cognition is motivated by the observation that brains, as necessary as they are for cognition, are biological entities that are part of larger biological systems, interacting and immersed in a complex physical world. While this particular observation is largely uncontroversial, proponents of embodied cognition argue for *prioritizing* the fact of embodiment,<sup>10</sup> claiming that it shifts the theoretical framework in ways that are truer to the facts and promises to avoid certain errors at the same time that it solves other intractable problems. Chiel and Beer point out that “continuous feedback between nervous system, body and environment are essential for normal behavior” (1997: 554). Clark puts it this way: “attention to the roles of body and world can often transform our image of both the problems and the solution spaces for biological cognition” and “understanding the complex and temporally rich interplay of body, brain, and world requires some new concepts, tools, and methods—ones suited to the study of emergent, decentralized, self-organizing phenomena” (1998: 506). It is worth recognizing the two different emphases here. Some, though not all, proponents of embodied cognition believe that the shift in prioritizing the embodied nature of our cognitive capabilities will be truer to the facts of our biology. In this case, the biological basis for cognition is a first principle. A second concern, again not universally foremost but generally shared, pertains to conceptual adequacy and ingenuity. The claim is that traditional cognitive science, proceeding as it has, has left us with an inadequate conceptual repertoire. In views that are regarded as more radical, these theorists believe that we simply will not make progress in understanding the nature of human cognition (and consciousness, though these are obviously not synonymous) without a new set of conceptual resources and analytical tools, which ECTs seek to supply.

That the entities that are the subject of investigation have a biological basis might not need any further explanation even if justification concerning precisely *how* the biological features support and give rise to cognition certainly does. The latter is one of the main problems in philosophy of mind stretching back to the dawn of the modern period and is the crux of the problem with the dualistic view that regards body (and brains) as one kind of substance and the mental (or spiritual, in earlier times) as substantially different. How do the facts of our biology play a role in the what, where, and how of human cognition, broadly conceived? This concern is shared by virtually all cognitive theorists, and ECTs in particular. When we begin

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**10** The precise role that the body plays is also hotly contested by ECTs. This disagreement gives rise to differing theses concerning whether the body limits, regulates, or distributes cognitive activity. Brain-based views more or less avoid this problem by holding that cognition somehow supervenes on the physical or that the particularities of the physical body beyond the brain are somehow causally remote from (and somewhat accidental to) cognition itself.

to investigate this further with any degree of seriousness, ECTs claim, we confront a number of challenges that must be addressed and for which traditional views do not provide obvious or ready solutions rather than stubborn assumptions. For example, where do we draw the line with respect to what is required for cognition? Is it *in the skull* (as Clark and Chalmers 1998 ask), or is it the brain plus (plus, the CNS, plus the sensorimotor system)? Additionally, human development theory and neurophysiology tell us that cognition and the brain structures that organize and support it are not fully formed at birth; moreover, it appears that the organization of the brain is *plastic* and such plasticity stretches throughout a lifetime. The objects of our inquiry, then, are emergent, and so our conceptual schemes and analytic tools need to account for these facts.

Related to emergence is the fact that significant cognitive development appears to depend upon a variety of environmental factors and, crucially, *interactivity*.<sup>11</sup> What role or roles does environment play? To what extent are environmental factors and interactions essential? If and when such features are essential, does it make sense, then, to think they are somehow part of the cognitive system itself? The latter concern is largely associated with extended mind theses, which are not necessarily varieties of embodied cognition theories, although ECTs might draw on similar patterns of reasoning in motivating their accounts of the relevance of the body insofar as they extend cognition out of skull.

If it sounds highly implausible (if not ludicrous) to think that the human cognitive system might extend not only beyond the skull but also potentially beyond the body so as to include nonhuman objects and, potentially, other beings, then we might consider one further feature of cognition that emboldens ECTs to press for a more robust conceptual architecture for their domain of inquiry, namely *portability*. A feature of human cognition on which there is general agreement is that we have the ability to offload cognitive tasks. This happens in a variety of ways, but two that are frequently discussed are our use of instruments and tools and memory devices, discussed further below.

Developments in philosophy of mind, psychology, and neuroscience have led to changes in conceptions of cognition, knowledge, and the role of the body. The variety of cognition that is often the subject of discussion in the current literature is cognitive activity oriented toward action. This particular focus is perhaps related, at least in part, to the fact that most modeling for cognition has been computational. Artificially reproducing it has been the subject of active research in robotics. Programming and reproducing human action is incredibly complex, much more so than Watson-like replication of encyclopedic knowledge retrieval (setting aside impressive advan-

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<sup>11</sup> For the view that consciousness is not merely interactive, involving multiple entities, but is itself better conceived as realized only *in activity*, or *enactive*, see O'Regan and Nöe (2001).

ces in identifying relevant context).<sup>12</sup> Current research in robotic AI focuses on “routines for interacting with the environment,” which drastically reduces the need for producing complex internal representations and abstract calculations (M. Wilson 2002: 625).<sup>13</sup> The work of Beer (1989) and Brooks (1991) lends support for the view that cognition requires far fewer representational resources than what are assumed in other cognitive models in order to plan for action. Beer considers the example of programming a robot to successfully navigate an obstacle-laden, dynamic environment (a busy office with people coming and going and objects moved to different locations) to accomplish the relatively simple (for a human) task of picking up empty soda cans. It turns out that the greatest success was achieved by minimizing the representational resources. The robot was most successful when it relied on a set of layered activity patterns, creating a dynamic system with feedback from the environment rather than continually consulting a master plan, mapping out the office, and scanning and sensing changes and obstacles. This difference leads some to suspect that cognition required for human action might be better conceived in terms of connections of “stimulus to an action without the need of intervening representations” (or rules) (Shapiro 2013: 136). Such views potentially shrink one area (what’s in the skull) at the same time they expand the number of components to include more of the body outside of the skull and entities in the environment.<sup>14</sup>

While not all ECTs hold all of the views that could be ascribed to extended mind theses, they share some related views insofar as they seek to extend cognition beyond the brain/skull boundary, and this extension implies involvement in a larger

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**12** Watson is the name of a computer technology developed by IBM, the signature features of which are that it appears to have a significant rate of success in parsing natural language and “learns” from user feedback and response to improve accuracy.

**13** Wilson 2002 identifies and evaluates six major claims of ECT, which appear to have overlapping agreements among the variety of its adherents. These include the views that: cognition is situated (1) and time-pressured (2), oriented toward action (3) and includes “offloaded” tasks (4), some of which are bodily based (5) (as in gestures) and physical (e.g. diagramming for problem-solving), and others that are separable components in the environment (6) (e.g. tools, instrument panels, memory storage devices). Wilson considers these in a different order, but she does not attribute any special significance to the order she sets up. Her article provides a helpful entry to the study of embodied cognition, and she offers useful evaluation of each of these major claims.

**14** There are many different formulations of just what kind of representations are required and the extent to which they are necessary. One position to which ECTs are inclined is that representations, when relevant or appropriate for understanding mental objects, are robust (in contrast with the view that they are highly abstract and symbolic, which then need the subject to add, through computational production, the richness of the world). The robustness includes some of what the cognitivist model would have as the product of cognition. In other words, the world brings cognitively salient information, the world has cognitive salience. Unsurprisingly, then, some ECTs also look not only to phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty for some of their theoretical orientations and inclinations but also Gibson and his theory of affordances. The latter is discussed at length in Shapiro (2013).



system or organization.<sup>15</sup> Clark and Chalmers are the best-known advocates of the extended mind thesis, arguing that cognition is distributed across the traditional subject and the environment. They call their view *active externalism* because it entails not only that the environment is involved in or influences cognitive activity but also that it *participates*, actively:<sup>16</sup> the hard and fast “skin/skull boundary” is unjustified. In support of their claims, Clark and Chalmers point to studies that identify and describe the distribution of tasks and reliance on “environmental supports” in various cognitive activities. Such tasks are not merely practical representations or rehearsals, rather carry epistemic import, what Clark and Chalmers, following Kirsh and Maglio, call “epistemic action.” That is, such environmental interactions and manipulations “augment cognitive processes” and do not merely provide data to be processed in the mind of the subject. Clark and Chalmers focus on thinking of cognition in systematic terms, a system with distinct “coupled” parts: “In these cases [of active externalism], the human organism is linked with an external entity in a two-way interaction, creating a *coupled system* that can be seen as a cognitive system in its own right,” which can be evaluated in terms of “systematic behavioral competence” (2010: 29). The question naturally and rightly arises as to where and how we draw the line with respect to such couplings. Why are some connections more essential than others so as to create something ontologically, efficaciously, distinct? Given that contextual relations can be reconfigured in a variety of ways according to fields of concern, what makes some couplings essential and others occasional? Thus far, answers to these questions have not yet convinced critics of these views.

For Clark and Chalmers, the emphasis on coupling allows them to meet and overcome a charge originally aimed at the externalism of Putnam and Burge, namely that their arguments only show that *content* is externalized not the processing or real activity of cognition, the “causal or explanatory role in the generation of action” (2010: 29). By contrast, in their view: “The external features in a coupled system play an ineliminable role—if we retain internal structure but change the external features, behaviour may change completely. The external features here are just as causally relevant as typical internal features of the brain” (2010: 30). This idea, while not one Nietzsche specifically held, is relevant to his conception of agency and the multiplicity of agential powers he envisioned as a more adequate description of how agency is realized (BGE 12). As I shall point out in the next section, Nietzsche’s views also incline him to shift away from pinpointing a causal seat or center in subjectivity and

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<sup>15</sup> The importance of interactivity in this model leads some to look to dynamical systems theory for further resources.

<sup>16</sup> Clark and Chalmers try to draw interesting distinctions between what they regard as the *passive* externalism of Putnam and Burge and their own *active* variety, claiming that in the earlier views, “the eternal features [...] are distal and historical, at the other end of a lengthy causal chain [...] not present [...] the relevant external features are *passive* [...] Because of their distal nature, they play no role in driving the cognitive process in the here-and-now” unlike their own example (2010: 30).

to focus instead on articulating a scope of activity or domains of action as the basis for realizing agential powers for which one might be responsible.

Clark and Chalmers acknowledge the difficulty with the coupling notion they suggest. Coupling implies the possibility that at least some elements or features might be *decoupled*, as mentioned above, and this suggests a need to discover and identify “the constant core of the system” (2010: 31). Nevertheless, Clark and Chalmers hold that “contingency of coupling does not rule out cognitive status” (2010: 31). But this seems to be just an assertion rather than a solution to a challenge, and the basis for their claim requires something of a science fiction like imaginative projection to a future time when we might be able to plug in and unplug parts of the brain. They try to shift the focus to assessment of *reliable* (and regular, though they do not put it this way themselves) *coupling*. Other views that regard the brain as the seat of cognition and among an assembly of parts, which non-externalists are inclined to do, too, also support the coupling notion and thesis and would, theoretically, seem extendable.

Clark and Chalmers believe their position is supported by research in situated cognition (Suchman 1987) and real-world robotics (Beer 1989), dynamical approaches to child development (Thelen and Smith 1994), and research on collective agents (Hutchins 1995). They maintain that “cognition is often taken to be continuous with processes in the environment” (2010: 30). The notion that cognition might be found in a spectrum of phenomena is highly relevant to Nietzsche’s own inclinations (e.g. GS 110; BGE 36, BGE 213), but it is not necessarily compatible with how Clark and Chalmers characterize organisms as extended via additional components. I shall elaborate these ideas below. Even if it should turn out to be the case that this is not the best description of cognition, thinking of it in this way, they maintain, opens up new and different avenues for investigation. Different explanatory methods might very well lead to different discoveries even if the overarching theoretical construction that initially motivated the new method later stands in need of revision (2010: 30).

To illustrate their claims, Clark and Chalmers offer a thought experiment that is the subject of much discussion in subsequent critical response to their work: Imagine Otto and Inga, both of whom want to go to the Museum of Modern Art. Inga recalls her belief about the location of the museum from memory whereas Otto, an Alzheimer’s patient, retrieves his belief from a notebook that replaces his deficient memory. “Otto *himself*,” Clark and Chalmers claim, is best regarded as an extended system, a coupling of biological organism and external resources” (2010: 39). But this might sound absurd, or at the very least, it holds a residual sense of *the real* Otto, as discrete organism, hooked together, or, in Clark and Chalmers’ terms, *coupled* with his notebook so as to result in an “extended system.” A shift of thinking from *things*—entities conceived as units of being—to fields or organizations might help to overcome some conceptual resistance to this way of thinking. This would allow us to, as Clark and Chalmers put it, “see agents themselves as spread into the world” (2010: 39), something with which Nietzsche might well agree (e.g. GS 110; BGE 12;

NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[38]; NL 1885, KSA 11, 38[1]; NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79]). As for how far it should go, just how far we might extend the mind, Clark and Chalmers do not have a hard and fast answer, but the ambiguity and uncertainty of the *extent* and *range* of the extension should not lead us to reject the notion of extension altogether. Trust, reliance, and accessibility, they claim, can still be found in these arrangements and used as criteria for assessing integrity of a distinctly conjoined cognitive system.

This particular theoretical orientation also makes it possible to conceive of social extension, a collective mind, so to speak. Those inclined toward this view often suggest that language makes this not only possible but likely.<sup>17</sup> This notion is also shared by Nietzsche, as others have discussed at greater length (GS 354; see especially Abel 2001 and 2015, Katsafanas 2005, and Emden 2005).<sup>18</sup> But one need not focus on individual language speakers to develop this position. The idea that cognition might be dispersed socially is developed at length by Hutchins (1995). For my purposes, Hutchins offers the most extensive development of the idea that cognition is realized in larger systems rather than individual brains in skulls. He uses navigation (on a ship) as a metaphor for exploring and specific example revealing features of large, distributed, complex intelligent systems, and argues for “a coherent account of cognition and culture as parts of a larger system” (1995: 353). Hutchins elaborates how culture is “a human cognitive process that takes place both inside and outside the minds of people” (1995: 354), and he highlights the dangers of preserving the inside/outside opposition with respect to identifying a *location* of the seat of cognition.<sup>19</sup>

For Hutchins, cognition is significantly cultural. By this he means that it is produced and circuited through culture, not just influenced by culture.<sup>20</sup> There are certainly some obvious problems with conceiving of cognition in this way, not the least of which is that this could well be a variety of the extended mind thesis run amok insofar as it might expand or extend what counts as cognition indefinitely to a

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**17** Language “serves as a tool whose role is to extend cognition in ways that on-board devices cannot. Indeed, it may be that the intellectual explosion in recent evolutionary time is due to much of this linguistically enabled extension of cognition as to any independent development in our inner cognitive resources” (Clark and Chalmers 2010: 39).

**18** Abel (1999) offers some extended discuss of Nietzsche’s views about consciousness as developing under the pressure to communicate, making consciousness public, shared, and extended. He emphasizes the centrality of language in creating the network of conditions that makes this possible and the role of consciousness in stabilizing social systems. Brief mention of this larger work appears in his 2001 and 2015 articles in the context of contemporary discussions of philosophy of consciousness and mind.

**19** “Another cost of failing to see the cultural nature of cognition is that it leads us to make too much of the inside/outside boundary or to assume the primacy of that boundary over other delimitations of cognitive systems” (Hutchins 1995: 355).

**20** It is for this reason that Hutchins thinks that among the analytic tools we have for studying cognition, we should include ethnography (1995: 371). His elaboration of the navigation of a ship is not intended as analogical or metaphorical. He takes it as a specific and definite manifestation of a cultural cognitive process.

point that it simply disappears as anything in particular. Moreover, the fact that cognition *may* be realized in larger systems does not prove that human cognition *must* be reducible to this or emulate it—if accurate, it would only show that it is reproducible. Many brain-based theories are compatible with that idea. But contemplating Hutchins' views (rather than simply adopting them) does have several advantages, including gaining a better appreciation for an *organizational* model as opposed to one that retains the *organismic* framework, and challenging us to broaden our perspective on where cognition happens and how it is realized. One need not think that *individual* minds include one's calculator, hard drive, and datebook to see value in recognizing that these tools and artifacts are part of a larger cognitive system, one that, in some cases, makes individual cognitive activity possible, and that there is value in shifting the unit of analysis to the systematic level.

Hutchins' main theoretical point is that the computational model of mind as conceived by Turing, for example, assumes (or worse, mistakes) the operations of a system for the model operations of the manipulation of symbols in the environment (1995: 361). "The properties of the human in interaction with symbols [in the world] produce some kind of computation. But that does not mean that computation is happening inside the head" (1995: 361). Computation occurs within the system as a whole and is not isolated in or limited to one particular part.

Thinking in this way produces some interesting results, such as when, for example, Hutchins takes up the case of Searle's Chinese room thought experiment. It is true that Searle himself in the Chinese room fails to speak and comprehend Chinese just by virtue of competently applying the rules for use of the language, but if we see the room itself as a cognitive system, we recognize that *it* realizes "speaking Chinese" even if any one of its parts does not independently do so. The symbols and operations we perform with them that are parts of cognitive activity are not merely "inside the head," the prerogative of a "cognitive inner sanctum" (1995: 366) in which "the physical is an implementational detail" but rather are the products of systematic cultural currency (Hutchins 1995: 365–366). The computational model of mind and cognition inclines us to make an erroneous assumption that is shared with folk psychology in "mistaking the properties of the sociocultural system for the properties of a person" (1995: 366).

But, if we extend cognition and mind this far, in what sense do we still have independent, individual selves? For Clark and Chalmers, "these boundaries may also fall beyond the skin" (2010: 39). This blurs the boundaries of our conception of agency, something I have argued elsewhere that Nietzsche was keenly interested to do,<sup>21</sup> and I shall elaborate further below. Clark and Chalmers say they are resisting "the hegemony of skin and skull" so as to "be able to see ourselves more truly as creatures of the world" (2010: 39), a goal that is surely consonant with Nietzsche's own (e. g. GS 109, Z III, BGE 230).

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<sup>21</sup> Acampora (2008; 2013a, ch. 4).

Theorists of embodied cognition further argue that our conception of cognition itself requires expansion. This would change the object of investigation and how the phenomena are isolated, and, in turn, what tools are appropriate for capturing and analyzing its most salient features. Thus, leaders in this area of research, such as Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1995), argue for a shift away from regarding cognition largely as problem-solving to one in which cognition is a form of sense-making, “‘cognition in its most encompassing sense consists in the enactment or bringing forth of a world by a viable history of structural coupling’ (1995, 205)” (cited in Shapiro 2012: 123). It is *world-making*, an activity, rather than (exclusively) *world-modeling*, the production of abstract representations. In terms of the kinds of activities taken as paradigmatic of cognitive activity, and so forming the basis of the objects observed in the lab or speculatively described, they are most frequently activities that are not part of everyday experience: solving mathematical equations, playing games such as chess, and working puzzles (Shapiro, Hutchins). ECTs argue that these distort the conception of cognition by magnifying just one form it takes. To more fully appreciate cognition, we need to observe it, “in the wild,” as Hutchins (1995) puts it, and this will require more tools than those brought to bear in the lab; we shall also need resources available in work in anthropological fields broadly construed.

When we take into account *extension* (including interactivity), *plasticity*, *emergence*, and *portability*, are our traditional philosophical concepts of mind and cognition adequate for analysis of our object of inquiry? Some have argued that they are not. For example, it might be more helpful to think of cognition as realized in emergent decentralized organizations, “a result of the interplay of a variety of forces spread across brain, body, and world” (Clark 1998: 507) rather than a property or function limited to discrete organisms. The adequacy of the basic concepts that organize the study of cognition, thought, and mind is a topic to which I will return in section 2.4, since it is here that Nietzsche might offer promising contributions. But before turning to those ideas, it is worthwhile to review a couple of aspects of Nietzsche’s views that might be thought to have immediate relevance to the topic of embodied cognition, since Nietzsche is widely regarded as giving greater priority to the body than some of his predecessors, and because he is skeptical about conceptions of cognition in the history of philosophy and the role these have played in conceptions of philosophical anthropology.

## 2.2 Nietzsche, the Body, and Cognition

Although I think the most productive use of Nietzsche’s philosophy with respect to its possible contributions to theories of embodied cognition will be found in the alternative conceptual resources and theoretical orientations available in his work, his views about the body and, in particular, the sensorimotor system, as they relate to cognition are important to note. A theory of mind that might be imputed to Nietzsche

might also be relevant. So, I will briefly sketch in this section some of these points of contact, ideas that are developed more extensively by others.

### 2.2.1 Body and Language

The importance of Nietzsche's views about the body have been the subject of numerous serious studies of his work in which "body" is taken in a variety of senses, including as a metaphor with cultural force (Blondel 1991) and as evident of his anti-idealism (if not empiricism) and his interest in naturalizing philosophy, either from an evolutionary or anthropological perspective (Richardson 2004, Abel 2001 and 2015, and Emden 2005). Nietzsche's interest in and emphasis on the body follows from his interests in the natural sciences, including varieties of evolutionary theories (Moore 2002), and is continuous with his broader project of revaluing values and overcoming pernicious polar oppositions (Abel 2001 and 2015). His efforts to revalue the body are aimed at not only highlighting our material constitution but also overcoming its denigration as inferior to spirit or soul (see Z; NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 5 [56]).

Discussion of Nietzsche's views concerning the importance of the body and their relevance for contemporary theories of mind has developed along at least two different but related tracks: through reflection on the nature and status of our sensory organs and information provided by senses, the topic of focus in the next section, and in his ideas about the metaphorical nature of language and thought and processes of metaphorical transference from bodily experiences to mental ones. It is along these lines that Nietzsche's views might be thought to most closely resemble those of one particular strain of embodied cognition theory, that developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 1980), in which features of our embodiment loom large in shaping the specific basic concepts we employ in our understanding of the world.

Johnson argues that "abstract conceptualization is based on metaphorical extensions of body-based concrete concepts and sensory-motor capacities" (2006: 53). For example, "patterns of sensory-motor experience (e.g. containment, balance, forced motion, iteration, motion along a path, increase/decrease in intensity, and verticality) structure both our concrete and abstract concepts. These image-like patterns of body-based meaning (called image schemas) are then metaphorically elaborated to define abstract concepts" (2006: 52). That Nietzsche holds similar ideas has been demonstrated and developed by numerous others (especially Abel 2001 and 2015, Emden 2005), although direct comparison with Lakoff and Johnson is uncommon and could still yield fruitful and productive comparison.<sup>22</sup> The idea that concepts

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<sup>22</sup> There is also a wealth of literature addressing Nietzsche's views about metaphor, metaphorical transference, and the relation between the body and metaphor, including the body *as a metaphor* and the body *as interpreting* (and thereby providing the basis for metaphorical production). In addi-

are derived in a way that involves a metaphorical transference from one domain (bodily movement in space and time) to another (abstract conceptual formations unrelated to those original activities) is evident throughout his writings, and one could look to Nietzsche's texts to add to the examples that Lakoff and Johnson analyze (e.g. BGE 3, BGE 21, BGE 22). For Nietzsche, these processes can have cultural and historical influences (e.g. Western culture's tendency to substantialize; or the multifarious meanings of the body itself as evident in Blondel 1991 and 2006) as well as biological and morphological origins (e.g. our conceptualization of the future and time as moving forward in the direction of our usual line of sight, or the prevalence of visual metaphors for insight and knowledge as the result of the dominance and primacy of our visual sensory system).<sup>23</sup>

Emden (2005) explores how Nietzsche thinks consciousness, cognition, and language are *all* linked with metaphorical structures and processes: metaphorical transfer or translation occurs between and among domains of cognitive and sensual awareness. Both metaphors and metaphorical processes stem from bodily experiences and physiological, morphological structures. So, Nietzsche would affirm certain key ideas about the relevance and significance (even primacy) of the body for consciousness, as ECTs might argue, both in terms of its objects and its form.<sup>24</sup> That is, some of our fundamental concepts that we regularly use to understand ourselves and the world are the result of metaphorical notions of the body (that is, they are the production of metaphors themselves). And the process of translating our sensual experiences to so-called spiritual ones can be described as metaphorical transference or translation. Some might protest that this stretches the notion of metaphor too far so as to confuse it with analogical thinking. This might be fair, and the defenders of metaphor theory might owe the challenger a response. But it is less relevant whether it is appropriate or not to describe this process as metaphorical than to note that Nietzsche repeatedly focuses on the process of applying or transferring one domain of experience, whether it is that of sensation, as the case may be for embodied cognition theorists, for example, to another domain, in the case in question, that of cognition.<sup>25</sup> That this might inform both conscious and unconscious thought is a topic to which I shall return below, but first, I wish to highlight some features of Nietzsche's

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tion to Abel and Emden, cited above, see also Moore (2002), Blondel (1991 and 1998), and Kofman (1993).

**23** For extensive development of the latter in the history of philosophy, see Levin 1993. On Nietzsche's preference for auditory and olfactory metaphors, see Blondel (2006: 70–71).

**24** More discussion of Nietzsche's ideas about the relevance of the study of the body for our understanding of consciousness and psychic life more generally appears in section 2.4 below.

**25** Emden explores a possible relation between Nietzsche's interest in forces and a dynamic view of life and the shift in eighteenth-century physics from celestial bodies and forces to forces such as electricity and magnetism. Emden notes that this resulted in "a fundamental epistemic shift away from static conceptions of nature." Nietzsche utilizes theories of nerve stimulus transference for a speculative theory of transference of sensory stimuli and language, which involves the "leaping" from "one sphere to another" (2005: 99).

views about the senses and some contemporary efforts to link these ideas with concerns shared by theorists of embodied cognition.

### 2.2.2 Senses and Sensualism

Further research into the extent to which Nietzsche himself develops views that are prescient of or potentially still valuable for contemporary research and development of a framework for embodied cognition will likely contend with questions about the role of the senses in Nietzsche's views of cognition—to the extent that he has such—and the nature of our cognitive powers more generally. While views about the strength and adequacy of our representational powers to support our epistemological claims are germane to an assessment of whether Nietzsche anticipates certain key ideas found in ECTs, I am not sure that they would be terribly relevant for actually promoting or advancing contemporary research in this area; that is, I doubt such would possibly yield *contributions* to this area.

A broader view of cognition that also includes unconscious cognitive activity is evident in contemporary discussions and is arguably among Nietzsche's concerns. And such research may or may not focus on whether or not the senses themselves *lie* (that is, generate misrepresentations or distortions of reality). Our sensory *organs* and systems appear obviously linked with the body, and reference to them appears in Nietzsche's perplexing claim about sensualism in *Beyond Good and Evil* (e.g. BGE 15). Thus, what he says about the senses there might appear germane for research into Nietzsche's own views about what we now call *embodied cognition*. I remain skeptical about the potential value of bending Nietzsche's ideas on this topic to fit this framework, but I introduce them here so as to acknowledge this strain of work in the relevant scholarship and suggest some avenues for its further development.

One reason I find this approach problematic is that while Nietzsche was very interested in contemporary theories about sensation and their relation to mental representations (Moore 2002, Richardson 2004, Emden 2005, Riccardi 2011), he had neither special knowledge nor insights about this, and I find that he never achieved a developed view about the actual relation between the two. Drawing on some of this interest, however, Riccardi (2011, and this volume) has scouted what he calls Nietzsche's interest in "ecological cognition," something he notes that he contemplated calling *embodied cognition*, and so it is worth reviewing a few of the details here.

Riccardi (2011) examines the role of the body, in particular the sensorimotor system, with respect to debates in the Nietzsche literature concerning cognition, especially the reliability of our representational powers, or what Nietzsche scholars call "the falsification thesis," the view that our representations necessarily falsify what we observe or the objects of our assertions (see Clark 1990, Hussain 2004, Clark and Dudrick 2004). The concern among Nietzsche scholars and others who



look to Nietzsche for insight into human psychology and its cognitive powers, is that if we cannot help but falsify reality in our representations and cogitations about it, then the possibility for real knowledge—knowledge of the world *as it truly is*—would seem to be in doubt, if not an impossibility.<sup>26</sup> Riccardi makes an admirable attempt to examine this concern in the context of related discussions among Nietzsche’s contemporaries as well as in light of current debates in philosophy of mind concerning the character and relevance of sensorimotor processing and data for knowledge and action in the world.<sup>27</sup>

The upshot of this for Riccardi is that Nietzsche holds a view about the role of the senses in cognition that is *ecological*: “This means that cognition is something we can make sense of only by considering the relation between organism and the environment” (2011: 247). While this might sound much like the enactive view mentioned above, that is not exactly what Riccardi seems to mean. Instead, he explains “[e]very organism [...] is the focus of its own representational world, shaped by the concrete, embodied configuration of its perceptual apparatus” (234). In the “ecological understanding of perception [...] our sense organs work as a representational interface between us and the outer world” (235); “our representational world is an ecological construal which depends on the way in which we are embedded in the environment” (236). This seems to be both specific and immediate—our local environment—and historical and developmental—the result of our evolution. What Riccardi links with the “ecological” in Nietzsche is less about a special interest Nietzsche might have in the role of the environment *per se* in our cognitive functioning than it has to with qualifying the context, extent, scope, or range of our cognitive abilities.

Something that is less developed in Riccardi (2011) is the nature of what he calls the “physical grounding” or the data generated by the senses (specifically, the sensory organs), and its connection with Nietzsche’s power ontology, his view that what exists is better characterized in terms of *organizations of forces* than as *substances*.

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**26** There are a host of concerns and different angles that lend subtlety and complexity to this matter, and they are not always sorted out so carefully in the literature. For example, one might consider whether, if it is really the case that Nietzsche holds something like a falsification thesis, he thinks this is true about any and every claim (that the formulation of claims falsifies that which they are about; the process of conceptualization or formulation itself perhaps misforms its object), or whether this applies chiefly or exclusively to empirical claims, claims generated on the basis of our observations (in which case it might be our senses that falsify thus leading us to hold false beliefs). In other words, is the concern about falsification directed toward (and advanced on the basis of insights about) our observational powers, or does it primarily indicate something about our cognitive limitations? How does this view stem from and stand in relation to Kant’s distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal? And just what is Nietzsche’s standard for falsification? What is the status of a fabrication, a lie, or a misrepresentation, and how does that affect our epistemic projects? Riccardi entertains a number of these distinctions and examines them in relation to published works of Nietzsche’s contemporaries with whom he had some acquaintance. Clark (2018) has more recently clarified her view of the scope of the falsification thesis.

**27** In particular, Riccardi (this volume) stretches Nietzsche’s views to claim that he holds a position much like Papineau’s, particularly his notion of “sensory templates” (see Papineau 2007).

Riccardi recognizes that Nietzsche's power ontology is relevant, particularly what he calls the *Machtquant* theory, and this plays an important role in his examination and elaboration of Nietzsche's views about the senses. Riccardi concludes that Nietzsche holds that "sense organs are causally efficacious [...] in being the 'devices' by which power exchanges between organisms and environment are modulated; senses 'do not lie' [...] because their outputs are 'physically grounded' responses to environmental inputs" (2011: 239), but I think this stretches the textual evidence too far to make it fit with contemporary discussions. Further research could continue to pursue a related line of thought by focusing less on the extent to which this creates problems of compatibility and consistency with Nietzsche's purported epistemological views and more on the kinds of conceptual structures and logical relations Nietzsche anticipates as following from his ontological hypotheses and speculations. More on these prospects appears in the final section of this chapter.

My focus is on cognition rather than consciousness, even though consciousness is obviously a relevant concern in any theory of mind that also wishes to comment on cognition. Several papers on Nietzsche's views of consciousness are relevant for those examining the extent to which Nietzsche's views are immediately informative for a theory of embodied cognition (Anderson 2002; Katsafanas 2005; Riccardi 2011, and this volume). In addition to the body—its priority and its relevance and involvement in cognitive activities—views about representations, their nature and their necessity, stand out as particularly important in ECTs, as mentioned above. And finally, the extent to which mind, and particularly what might be called consciousness, is causally efficacious (or must be conceived as such in a theory of mind) crops up in the discussions of the views summarized in section 2.1 of this chapter. So, whether Nietzsche has anything special to contribute to that line of inquiry might also be worth pursuing.

### 2.2.3 Consciousness and a Theory of Mind

The idea that "consciousness is not an essential property of the mental"—namely, the view that much of mental life is *unconscious*—is a view that Nietzsche shares with contemporary cognitive scientists and philosophers of mind (e.g., GS 354 and GS 357). This includes the conception of cognition. Cognitive activity is not necessarily conscious, for Nietzsche; indeed, very much of it may be unconscious, as suggested above in the discussion of metaphoric transference from one domain to another in our sense-making and world-making mental activities.

In constructing a theory of mind from Nietzsche's remarks about consciousness, unconscious mental life, and cognition, Nietzsche scholars have tended to focus on the question of whether or not consciousness is epiphenomenal or causally efficacious. (This, in addition to ruminations about what views about representation can be attributed to Nietzsche.) There is a fair amount of discussion in Katsafanas (2005) of some standard fare topics in philosophy of mind applied to reading scat-

tered remarks in Nietzsche's texts, including those about perception, representation, what it means to have a concept, and the distinction between what is conscious from what is unconscious.<sup>28</sup>

Again, while this is an admirable exercise that helps to focus contemporary concerns, this strikes me as also stretching Nietzsche's views primarily to fit these discussions rather than to illuminate Nietzsche's own views. An exception to this general observation is when Katsafanas arrives at the intriguing conclusion that, for Nietzsche,

conscious states causally interact with unconscious states, altering the unconscious states in a variety of ways; but, since the conscious states are already simplified versions of the unconscious states, this alteration of the unconscious states often results in unconscious experience coming to represent the world in inaccurate ways. (Katsafanas 2005: 2)

Katsafanas is able to show how this makes sense of Nietzsche's analysis of *ressentiment* and the work of the bad conscience, and it is possible to see how there could be a number of other useful applications of this insight. The nature of this kind of interaction, between the unconscious states and conscious states, is characterized in terms of "differing conceptualizations of an underlying unconscious state creat[ing] profound changes in that unconscious state, as well as in the mental economy as a whole" (2005: 19). The ways in which the "mental economy as a whole" can be affected by concepts that are realized in and organize conscious mental thought is a fecund area for further research, not only in Nietzsche studies but also in philosophical inquiry more generally.

There are numerous points of shared concern between Nietzsche and embodied cognition theorists, including the idea that cognition is situated (historically, culturally) rather than strictly and solely a formal, rule-based manipulation of abstract symbols. Both Nietzsche and ECTs emphasize the complexity of thinking, so as to include action (thus, both have sympathies with a phenomenological tendency to cast perception as a kind of activity, or at the very least resembling activity (e. g. NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[38])). Both regard cognition as realized or evident in something the body *does*, not just what a mind (or brain) *knows* or *thinks*. In both sets of views, we find resistance to the notion that higher order thinking (conceptualization, rationalization, etc.) is *different in kind* from the sort of thinking that is necessary for sensation, emotion, and action (e. g. NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4]).

However, as I have already indicated, I think Nietzsche might not be a direct contributor to theories of embodied cognition. This does not mean that his work is irrelevant to the advancement of such views. Indeed, quite the opposite is true. I think there are some important respects in which Nietzsche's philosophy is especially useful for philosophers of embodied cognition to take heed, as I elaborate in the next

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<sup>28</sup> Katsafanas (2016) develops these ideas in a sustained way. Unfortunately, its publication occurred after this text was finalized with the publisher.

section. Nietzsche is especially concerned to examine the relation between our basic assumptions or interpretative starting points and frameworks and the kinds of investigations and conclusions these facilitate (e.g. BGE I, especially §§12 and 20). One frequently discussed in the literature is our tendency to adopt an atomic conception of reality, to see things as comprised of discrete or separable atomic substances. A related and more contemporary conceptual formation that organizes a field of research that was the subject of intensive investigation in his day is the concept of the organism (as biology rapidly developed toward a complete science). Nietzsche's power ontology inclines him toward the perspective of thinking of things in terms of organizations of power relations rather than as discrete organic (organismic) substances (e.g. NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4], 38[1], 43[1]; see also NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79]; NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 7[2]).<sup>29</sup> The distinction between an organism and organization, and the limitations and opportunities that are afforded by these different conceptual structures, has been examined in Nietzsche's works by several scholars, who have also used this alternative to bridge Nietzsche's work with contemporary research in philosophy of mind and language. I think this is particularly promising for Nietzsche scholars interested in *embodied cognition* and likely a more fruitful path to pursue than looking for his own views on the matter, so following a review of some criticisms of embodied cognition, I shall return to resources in Nietzsche's works that might be available in formulating responses to critics of ECTs and thereby potentially furthering development of that line of inquiry.

## 2.3 Critics of Embodied Cognition

There are a variety of criticisms made against embodied cognition theories, including but not limited to the role that sensorimotor systems play in their views, the status of information supplied by the senses, the relevance of perception to cognition, the involvement and relevance of feedback “from the world,” and the necessity of representation for cognitive function. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to review all of these lines of challenge and attack. Instead, I want to focus on just a few concerns critics have about the consequences of such views for our moral psychology, a domain to which Nietzsche is widely regarded as making significant contributions at the same time that he leaves us with even more difficult challenges.

The most moderate critics of ECT might very well agree with the starting point of such views, namely that cognition, whatever it may be, is surely embodied: without the body, especially but not only the brain, we could have no cognition.<sup>30</sup> Certain idiosyncrasies of the human body—the number of cone receptors in the eyes, for exam-

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<sup>29</sup> Extensive discussion and documentation of Nietzsche's power ontology can be found in Richardson (1996).

<sup>30</sup> I take Jesse Prinz as one “moderate” of this sort.

ple—surely affect what we perceive, and such perceptions at least inform our cogitations about *what there is, and what there is to be done* in the world. There is an even fancier theory about what is gleaned from the environment in terms of affordances, but I won't deal with that here.

Whether or not self follows mind is the subject of debate among ECTs and is a fault line of criticism by others (R. Wilson 2004, Churchland and Suhler 2009). In addition to concerns about identity, integrity, and competence of the agent, following these models, there are worries about the implications of these views for identifying the center of causal responsibility and, ultimately, moral responsibility (Anderson 2002, Prinz 2009). One might argue that even an organization of interactive parts still has distinctive elements and that the ECTs mistake the interacting parts with the real seat of cognition. But many ECTs regard cognition as an activity or process rather than merely an assembly of elements (or any particular element therein).<sup>31</sup>

One significant concern revolves around the status of an agent whose cognitive powers are thought to be distributed throughout a network or system. Given that at least some aspects of cognition are involved in deliberation about action, weighing moral choices, and anticipating consequences, to what extent are the traditional concepts of moral psychology and responsibility compatible with ECTs? To meet this challenge, some might be inclined to identify the morally relevant causal center in such extended systems. But if such can be isolated, one must wonder whether the extensions that are not part of the causal center are really integral and essential after all. Even if some agreement could be reached about this, and I suspect it would be difficult if not impossible, this solution might generate problems of its own.

Dempsey and Shani (2013) argue that the eliminativist solution to the mind-body problem (reducing everything to material substance and eliminating the spiritual substance) simply repeats another one of Descartes' errors in "treating persons as self contained, and, as it were, atomic units which are in some fundamental sense detached—or detachable—both from the body proper, and the environment in which they are embedded" (2013: 591). In other words, the search for the "causal center," while possibly providing a basis for addressing the 'Frail Control Hypothesis' and concerns about competence and responsibility, might nevertheless be irreconcilable with a major organizing idea behind theories of embodied cognition, namely that related aspects of cognition (body, interactivity in the world, extended components) are *essential* rather than merely accidental. In short, the very notion of a causal center, convenient for addressing other concerns, might be problematic itself.

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**31** Concern to address this but in a different context (in relation to bodies and identities) is found in Sullivan (2001). It is the form of the relation, a way of conceptualizing what occurs in mutually informing interactive systems, the co-constitution of body and mind in a very different way from the ECTs discussed here. Sullivan's book includes some discussion of Nietzsche that is not particularly relevant to my topic, along with discussion of Dewey (and his conception of 'body-mind'), to whom a number of ECTs refer.

Ciano Aydin includes this very concern in his own critique of extended mind theses. Aydin 2013 claims extended mind theses still retain an inner/outer distinction even as they claim to have overcome it. The problem would seem to be potentially shared among ECTs in “ascribing to cognition an original starting point in an internal biological core, an inside that utilizes the outside world [or extra-brain body] in order to fulfill certain cognitive tasks that it has set for itself” (2013: 2).<sup>32</sup> Aydin observes that in Clark’s view, for example, the brain continues to be regarded as “the driver’s seat” (Clark 2008: 122, Aydin 2013: 8). And, thus, such views fail to recognize evidence of reciprocal formation in which “socio-cultural practices can reshape certain cortical areas of the brain or transform the brain’s representational capacities” (Aydin 2013: 8). By including artifacts, material objects in the world, in our conception of mind, according to Aydin, we come to appreciate that “our thinking is not pre-given or naturally present in a presumed inside world but that it unfolds itself by virtue of and through objects and artifacts (cf. Wittgenstein 2001, §16). It is crafted and shaped by physical things” (16). “From an artifactual perspective, thought is located in a world of objects, which are no less mental for being ‘out in the open,’ and no less real for being mental” (16). On this view, cognition is expansive and self-organizing without any particular part being internally responsible for the organization as a whole.<sup>33</sup>

I doubt that Nietzsche has anything new and meaningful to contribute to the debate between those making the case for extended functionalism, for example, and those claiming that human cognition and consciousness are not platform-neutral and are significantly and distinctly shaped by bodies and their particular characteristics—that is, I doubt that one could find in Nietzsche something positively new rather than simply evidence that he shares a general inclination toward this view. But the underlying motivation here to see persons as more than just their operating systems is potentially undermined by the very same reasons ECTs marshal against brain-based views: they simply expand the operating system to include entities outside the skull to the point that they risk erasing any meaningful form of individual identity, personal responsibility, and accountability.

On this front, ECTs are subject to some of the same kinds of criticisms Nietzsche is. This is hardly a virtue, so my pointing it out lends no support for either view, but it does suggest a similar orientation. In light of this, it might be worthwhile to consider how one might address concerns about the implications of Nietzsche’s views resulting from his alternative conceptions of agency (some of which stem from his views about the body and the nature and extension of agential powers). In the redress of concerns about the implications of Nietzsche’s views, we might find resources for responding to challenges along these lines mounted against ECTs. At the same time, I

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<sup>32</sup> Aydin doesn’t propose we jettison these theories but rather that we should look to Peirce’s “artifactual” notion of mind to help address this.

<sup>33</sup> Aydin refers to Clark (2008) and Wittgenstein (2001).

expect, the Nietzschean responses will apply additional and new pressures on ECTs with the result that putting Nietzsche in dialog with theories of embodied cognition productively replaces some challenges with new ones.

## 2.4 Nietzschean Contributions

Recall that ECTs present cognition in ways that raise problems with respect to our usual conceptions of extension (including interactivity), plasticity, emergence, and portability. A repeated concern they express is that our traditional philosophical concepts of mind and cognition may be inadequate for analysis of our objects of inquiry. One finds in Nietzsche a similar abiding concern about the relation between overarching theoretical orientations and our conceptual formulations for capturing and analyzing our objects of interest. But in proposing alternatives, ECTs might reiterate some of the very views they purport to challenge, as discussed in the preceding section, and they could create some new problems of their own. In this section, I isolate a few of these worries and indicate how Nietzsche might offer some useful resources for clarifying and/or addressing them.

I focus on three related ideas: 1) conceiving the activity under investigation in terms of a *process*, 2) shifting concern from identifying *components* involved in the activity to seeing it as an *organization*, and 3) regarding the nature of what is sought as *emergent* from a *continuum* rather than a discrete activity or phenomenon. These very same features in Nietzsche's philosophy have been brought to bear by Günter Abel (2001, 2015) in considerations of philosophy of mind of the traditional sort, but this work has not been widely reviewed by English-language audiences, and, with very few exceptions, it has not yet been applied to theories of embodied cognition specifically. However, it is in the formulation of such alternatives to the traditional approaches and assumptions of philosophy of mind that we might expect such views to have the widest audience and potentially the greatest effects.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Abel's work is not mentioned in Katsafanas (2005), which elaborates Nietzsche's philosophy of mind with respect to key ideas he holds concerning consciousness, language, and nature (in this context, brain function). His work comes the closest to elaborating what Nietzsche's views of embodied cognition might be if we were to examine his philosophy under this rubric. Abel's article was published in 2001, and many of the developments summarized in the first section of this chapter proceeded that publication. Additionally, Abel's work is focused more on Nietzsche's potential contributions to philosophy of mind more generally, and in this respect Abel puts *mainstream* philosophy of mind in dialog with a critical alternative, the very role that some ECTs adopt for themselves. In some respects my chapter here argues that the general approach of Abel's work can be fruitfully applied even in ECTs and that this is perhaps the most significant contribution Nietzsche's work could make to that field. Taking up his challenges, ECTs would be further strengthened as a viable alternative to the views they oppose. Abel's 2001 text has now been published in a somewhat condensed and updated form in Dries and Kail (2015).

### 2.4.1 From Things to Processes

A significant preoccupation in ECT is ascertaining and challenging both traditional and brain-based views of *where* cognition occurs. If the statement of this concern is jarring—*where* may seem an inappropriate way of putting it—this is indicative of our unsettled views about the nature of the very phenomenon we are seeking. Does cognition, whatever it may be, occur in the brain, in a brain interacting with a body, or in some combination of or conjunction with brain, body, and world?

While virtually everyone can agree that the three elements artificially distinguished here—brain-body-world—are somehow *involved* in most, if not all, cognitive activities, there is very much disagreement as to wherein lies the *causal center* in these relations such that the most essential component might be identified and its means of relation clarified. It is clear from Nietzsche's notes, and inferable from other published remarks, that he does not come down on the side of those who give the brain this pride of place (e.g. GS 39, GS 110; NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4], NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 5[56]). Be that as it may, it is not clear on what grounds we could take Nietzsche as an authority on these matters. Instead of focusing on which team to which Nietzsche might be recruited, we could take up the more abundant evidence he mounts against the larger concern to which this is related—namely, the quest for the causal center. Focusing on this theoretical orientation can draw our attention to a whole constellation of interests that, taken together, might very well give us different answers as well as different questions to further pursue.

Nietzsche repeatedly observes that whenever we take an object for investigation, we risk undermining ourselves insofar as we extract it from the conditions of its existence, rendering it lifeless (literally or metaphorically, depending on the inquiry), and we potentially import, inappropriately, a host of metaphysical assumptions in hypostatizing what it is that we seek to understand (e.g. GS 110 and GS 354). This concern is not a manifestation of the so-called falsification thesis, mentioned earlier, but rather stems from Nietzsche's views about language as providing a template for thinking, or at least the kind of thought in which we engage when doing research, and the idea that grammar significantly structures, if not determines, the basic relations among ideas that we bring to our investigations. An example of this that is repeatedly discussed in the Nietzsche literature involves the subject-object relation, and our assumption that actions must have subjects that undertake them. Thus, even if a theory of embodied cognition could successfully mount the case that cognition is better conceived as an activity, there might still be a need to account for *what* is active, and which components are the essential ones in the causal chain, that which is responsible for the *doing*. But what matters on Nietzsche's expressivist account of action is *the doing*. The supposition of a doer behind any doing not only adds nothing to an explanatory account, it also solves nothing since it merely relocates the problem (or even multiples it), resulting in the need to account for the nature of the causal relation between the doer and deed, and to provide an adequate



account of the nature of the *doer* such that its causal efficacy can be established (see GM I 13; cf. BGE 3, 6, 12, 32).<sup>35</sup>

There are some who find the extended mind theses ludicrous because of the extent and range of what is construed as “external” but essential. How far does “mind” extend in such cases if in fact it escapes skulls? Such objections can lean toward *reduction ad absurdum* and slippery slope fallacies. But, if we shift the focus from the causal center and the dilemma of determining what is “in” or “out,” internal or external, perhaps some of these more undesirable prospects could be avoided or at least softened if not dissolved.

Recall that one feature of the family resemblance among the different versions of embodied cognition theory is the view that cognition is more adequately conceived as an activity than a set of operations or patterns of symbolic representations and manipulations. Put another way, cognition is not a *property* of mind. This notion would clearly seem to be compatible with Nietzsche’s views, and we could push it even further by thinking of this activity as realized in processes rather than things.<sup>36</sup> Abel puts it this way: “The Nietzsche-world is a world of process objects” in which “[t]he physical identity of individual objects over a stretch of time is based on the type-identity of the events involved” (2001: 13). Nietzsche considers the possibility “subjectless processes” (discussed in Abel 2015: 8; see NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[21] and 36[22], and especially NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[151]).<sup>37</sup> The world thus conceived presents us with “highly complex dynamic interactions of many lively and intelligent organizations of forces” (Abel 2001: 12). This way of thinking also extends to our conception of subjects and is related to Nietzsche’s interest in “force points” (*Kraft-Punkte*) and “quanta of power” (*Machtquanta*) (e.g. BGE 12; NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[69]; NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79]) as alternatives to a substance metaphysics (e.g. HH 18; GS 109 and GS 111; TI Reason 2 and 5; NL 1885, KSA 11, 35[35]).<sup>38</sup> Another area that could be productively explored at greater length is the conceptual adequacy

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**35** This idea is important in Katsafanas’ analysis of the passages Leiter cites as evidence of Nietzsche’s view that consciousness is epiphenomenal and not causally efficacious, in which Katsafanas shows that Nietzsche is not arguing that consciousness itself can be no cause but rather that the Ego, as conceived in philosophy, does not exist. Some have looked to Nietzsche’s expressivism as inspiration for situated and embodied cognitive theoretical views (e.g. see Gallagher 2009: 56). I discuss these passages from Nietzsche in the broader context of his works in Acampora (2013b).

**36** I focus here on the general fact that Nietzsche is inclined to see cognition in terms of an event or process. A more elaborate account of *why* Nietzsche thinks this might also explore the relation Nietzsche describes between consciousness and language, evolving in the context of the demands of socialization and the need to communicate to achieve cooperation to meet environmental challenges and pressures.

**37** Abel provides brief but helpful discussion of whether a process model requires an agent to engage in or direct the activity and the compatibility of this idea with the notion that consciousness has a subject (Abel 2015: 8). Translations of Abel (2001) are my own, aided by the translation available in the abbreviated and updated English presentation in Abel (2015).

**38** It is important to note that the Nietzsche does not think there is a single, unified process of the world as such (NL 1887–88, KSA 13, 11[74]).

of the *subject* of embodied cognition. This distinction is relevant for characterizing relations among different entities and accounting for their interactions, for which an organizational model might be more adequate.

## 2.4.2 From Organisms to Organizations

Related to the idea of replacing our conception of *things* with *processes* and how this bears on the subject of cognition is the idea that our concept of the organism (generally construed as a *thing*) is in need of reform. Some have argued for replacing the concept of the *organism* with the model of a functional *organization* (Aydin 2007; see, for example, NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[87]).<sup>39</sup> There is a current of sympathy for this view running through ECT, although the organismic concept continues to creep in. Johnson 2006 discusses the virtue of the organizational model in relation to the ideas of James and Dewey, and I think we could add Nietzsche to the mix as well (see also NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[21]). Johnson emphasizes the significance of thinking of mind as a functional achievement, a process, rather than a *seat* of causal activity.<sup>40</sup> The activities of mind and cognition in particular are thus seen as emergent psychophysical processes that are based on complexity and continuity, realized in a functional organization (e.g. BGE 16, BGE 17, BGE 19; NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4] and NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 5[56]).

On this view, self-consciousness and all other mental states are to be regarded as “emergent properties and consequences of diverse and highly complex interactions of the many continuents making up the organization and guaranteeing its functionality in which the overall system results” (Abel 2001: 17; 2015: 10). Mental life, thus, is the “result of highly complex organization and dynamism of entire complexes,” “assemblies” of neural activities (Abel 2001: 18; 2015: 10), rather than the bearers of properties or the products of something caused in a particular part or region of the brain.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Aydin provides ample textual evidence of this interest in Nietzsche’s work, including discussion of how organizations emerge, transform, and degenerate. See also Abel’s discussion of this theme (2001: 17 ff.; 2015: 10–13).

<sup>40</sup> “To say that I have a ‘mind’ is to say that I am an organism whose potential for very complex interactions has risen to the level where I can share meanings, engage in various modes of inquiry and reasoning, and coordinate activities with other creatures who have minds, using symbols that have meaning for us. [...] Once we understand that mind is a functional achievement, it ceases to be surprising that mind is always continuous with body and could not exist without body.” (Johnson 2006: 50)

<sup>41</sup> Abel makes a connection at this point with Dennett’s conception of multiple drafts, a view that might be especially congenial to Nietzsche, particularly given his perspectivism and interest in interpretation and hermeneutics. Thus, the literary metaphor is apropos. But I am not sure this is entirely helpful, since we tend to think of writing and revising in terms of the execution of authorial intent. The metaphor suggests there is an author or subject, a doer behind the deed, which is problematic. I

This idea could be useful for reforming certain insights found in the work of Clark and Chalmers. Insofar as they preserve the organismic notion of human existence, they set themselves up for another skeptical challenge. If we think of *organisms coupled with other external components in a system*, then, the components would seem to be potentially severable. And if the latter, this raises concerns about whether the external components are really essential and therefore not truly identifiable with the cognitive activity in question.

To be clear, this is not an argument in favor of active externalism. I do not think Nietzsche himself held such a notion, even presciently. Rather, I'm suggesting that Nietzsche's general philosophical inclinations and orientations might be useful for countering some of the arguments against externalism, and that these reflect limitations in our own thinking, not necessarily fuel for the position in question. In short, active externalism might still be false, but not necessarily because it suffers the limitations or failings its critics charge. These same conceptual shortcomings are present in and diminish the competing views, too.

Aydin 2007 similarly argues for replacing the concept of the organism, which is potentially self-contained, with the concept of the organization. The former conjures associations with something that is fixed and discrete, while the latter are more easily conceived as contingent and malleable, which might be truer to the facts of human existence and the phenomena of human experience. Moreover, because it is easier to conceive of organizations as overlapping and subject to reconfiguration, its concept includes less rigid distinctions between what is internal and what is external. In this case, the blurring of boundaries need not be pernicious, and it shifts the focus of concern to the bases of organization rather than causal centers.<sup>42</sup>

The organizational conceptual model crucially facilitates conceiving of how cognition might be embodied, or perhaps better, not *em*-bodied, but *bodied*. This provides us with further insight concerning not only mental existence but also the nature of bodily existence insofar as the body is part of the organizational structure one is and perhaps is paradigmatic. Indeed, Nietzsche imagines that investigation of the organizational structure of the body and the ways in which it manages to bind together an incredibly complex multiplicity of living beings might serve as “a guiding thread” for insight to the nature of mental or psychic life (see especially NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4] and NL 1884, KSA 11, 27[27]).<sup>43</sup> The body and bodily experience entail “high-

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am not suggesting Abel advocates that view—quite the contrary, and he acknowledges this is a limited step forward. The important point for him is “it depends mainly on the processes of the highly complex interaction of the involved subsystems” (2001: 19; 2015: 10–11).

<sup>42</sup> Müller-Lauter's (1999) discussion of Nietzsche's ideas about integration and *disgregation* (and decadence) are highly relevant here, as this shifts the focus from ontological status to one of organizational integrity and functional unity. In Nietzsche, see TI Untimely 35; CW 7; A 9; NL 1885, KSA 11, 43[2]; NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[83]; TI Errors 2; NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[219].

<sup>43</sup> See also NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[374] and 26[432]; NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[35], 39[13], and 40[15]; NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[68], 2[70], and 2[91].

ly complex and dynamic interplay of multifarious small intelligent processes” (Abel 2015: 17; cf. BGE 19). Just as the concept of the thing is altered, so too is the idea of the body shifted away from a thing or inert substance to a complex dynamic of many smaller processes for which the concept of an organization is more apt. In this case, the body is a manifestation of interpretative nature itself (Blondel 2006; see NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4]).<sup>44</sup> The body is thereby conceived as an organizational complex in which there is a dynamic relation of many smaller processes.<sup>45</sup> From these complex and overlapping organizational relations, cognition emerges within a continuum of activities that constitute and characterize human existence.

### 2.4.3 Emergence and Continuum

One of the particular attractions of embodied cognition theories is that they offer a glimmer of hope for escaping what have been intractable dilemmas in philosophical thinking between *either* body *or* mind as the seat of cognition (even though some views of embodied cognition might be thought to eliminate mind in the interest of resolving the dilemma). Nietzsche shares an interest in overcoming this dilemma. And although he neither gives us a testable theory of embodied cognition nor assesses (to any great extent) their particular theses, he does have general theoretical orientations that are compatible with such views. This includes his interest in avoiding the false dilemma of mind or body (or even introducing a third alternative), and his inclination to regard his objects of inquiry as emergent from and locatable on a spectrum rather than consisting in discrete polar oppositions.

Repeatedly, Nietzsche challenges our habit of thinking of things in terms of absolute dichotomies that are radically distinct (e.g. BGE 2), replacing that view with one of an essentially related continuum so that superficially apparent opposites<sup>46</sup>—such as material or physical and mental or spiritual, inorganic and organic—admit of a *scale* much as our values do (see Abel 2015: 4 ff.). Nietzsche writes: “what forces us at all to suppose that there is an essential opposition of ‘true’ and ‘false’? Is it not sufficient to assume degrees of apparentness and, as it were, lighter and darker shadows and shades of appearance—different ‘values,’ to use the lan-

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<sup>44</sup> Blondel elaborates how the body, for Nietzsche, is “an interpretative constellation,” described in terms of “drives [*Trieb*], which unceasingly try to increase their own power and to absorb or digest each other” (2006: 72).

<sup>45</sup> Some ECTs do strive toward this organizational model over the organismic one. For example, see Wilson (2002), in which the conception of constituents of cognition includes what “are affected by their participation in the system. Thus, the various parts of an automobile can be considered as a system because the action of the spark plugs affects the behavior of the pistons, the pistons affect the drive shaft, and so on” (2002: 630). Functional relations that are integral must be durable. This focuses attention on the relation of the parts and the relative degree of closure of the system.

<sup>46</sup> In this light, Abel reads Nietzsche’s naturalism (BGE 230) as involving “naturalizing beyond the dichotomy of transcendent metaphysics and reductionist physicalism” (2015: 5).

guage of painters?” (BGE 34). This idea of “degrees of apparentness,” for Nietzsche, applies as much to our sense of what exists as it does to what we hold to be true and good. An advantage of the continuum model is how it diminishes the “explanatory gap” by bridging relationships between separate areas of inquiry (Abel 2001: 8; 2015: 1–2, 21–22), and such a bridge could prove particularly useful for theorists of embodied cognition who are striving to explain how something that we might recognize as cognitive activity emerges and becomes apparent from the overlapping domains of the mental and the physical. We view its structure and the relationships that comprise its organization retrospectively, as emergent and arising from out of these relations. Nietzsche’s emphases on the scalar and spectral potentially facilitate the development and advancement of concepts that will allow us to more adequately capture *what* cognitive activity is and *how* it is continuous with the many different activities that constitute the phenomenon of human living.

## Conclusion

What difference do these alternative characterizations make, just how philosophical-ly relevant are these descriptive metaphors—replacing *things* with *processes*, *organisms* with *organizations*, and so forth? I have argued that they are relevant because they open the possibility for developing the ideas in different directions, raising different questions, identifying different salient features and concerns. This is not to suggest that Nietzsche’s philosophy will, or could, be used to vindicate theories of embodied cognition. Some argue that body consciousness is clearly not an either/or situation: it is neither all in the head (i. e., brain) nor *out of the head* and distributed elsewhere in the body or, even more problematically, in the environment and *not* also in the brain! More conciliatory views, combining ECT and brain-based views, might be possible, and a number of theorists of embodied cognition recognize precisely that, and that the way forward might not be simply abandoning brain-based views but rather drawing on the resources of both views.

Recall that pioneers of the extended mind thesis, Clark and Chalmers, claim that one of the more important contributions of their work, even if it should turn out to be false, is that it reorients and reframes key questions and concerns about the nature of cognition and human existence more generally. A parallel point could be made with respect to what Nietzsche suggests about the richness and variety that opens for us when we overcome the radical opposition of good/evil to replace it with a spectrum of values between good and bad (evident in BGE and GM), or with an alternative conception of soul (BGE 12). In this case, then, more and different conceptual possibilities are open to us as well as different possibilities for characterizing and analyzing the relevant relations, some of which have momentous implications and real-world applications.

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Manuel Dries

## 3 Early Nietzsche on History, Embodiment, and Value

Your knowledge does not perfect nature, but only kills your own nature. Just measure the wealth of your knowledge against the poverty of your abilities. (HL 9: 147)<sup>1</sup>

Previously this “*memento mori*,” called out both to humanity and to the individual, was always a terribly painful goad and the pinnacle, as it were, of medieval knowledge and conscience. The phrase with which the modern age answers this call, “*memento vivere*,” still sounds, to be quite frank, rather timid; it has no resonance, and almost seems to be insincere. (HL 8: 139)

After all, the strongest peoples—that is those strong in both deeds and works—lived differently and educated their youth differently. (HL 8: 138)

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a new perspective on Nietzsche’s important early text *On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life* (HL). The centrality of the embodiment of mind, self, and values for the later Nietzsche is widely acknowledged, but I here argue that the “historical sickness [*die historische Krankheit*]” that is the central concern of HL is diagnosed already in this early text as a failure to understand the embodied nature of human values. In section 3.2, I show that a precursor to Nietzsche’s figure of “the last human” is already the target in HL. In section 3.3, following recent research, I offer working definitions for terms such as “drives,” “affects,” and “values” that are crucial for understanding Nietzsche’s diagnostic framework: Nietzschean selves are best understood as complex, embodied systems of drives with affective orientations, as well as embodied unconscious and conscious values. While this picture of selves as embodied self-systems of drives and affects emerges fully only in Nietzsche’s later writings, I propose that it can be identified and applies already in HL. In section 3.4, I focus on a neglected passage that contrasts the medieval *memento mori* with a modern *memento vivere*. I interpret the *memento mori* as an embodied mechanism of willing and self-control, which Nietzsche claims the moderns have been unsuccessful in replacing. In the final section (3.5), I draw on recent research in embodied cognition to illuminate two hypotheses—I label these “overload” and “semantic embodi-

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was first published in JNS 48.1 (2017), pp. 29–55. It is reprinted here in amended form with permission of Penn State UP. Throughout this chapter, HL, DS, and RWB are cited by section number, followed by page references to the Stanford translation of the KSA. I have consulted and at times amended the following translations of Nietzsche’s works: *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life*, in *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray (Nietzsche 1995); *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Nietzsche 1997); *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Nietzsche 2006); *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Nietzsche 2001).

ment”—that Nietzsche considers as causes of the moderns’ “historical sickness” that undermines their flourishing.

### 3.2 The “Last Human” and Lastborn “Firstlings”

Many of Nietzsche’s later writings are driven by his concerns over what he calls “nihilism,” in which the formerly highest values are in the process of devaluing themselves, leading to despair over their loss, and to disorientation regarding humanity’s future direction. The later writings seek not just to analyze and overcome nihilistic disorientation and despair but also to avoid another scenario, what Nietzsche describes in *Z* as the scenario of “the last human [*der letzte Mensch*].” It is important to distinguish “the last human” from the nihilist.<sup>2</sup> The last human does not deny that there are values and likewise does not lack them. The last human experiences neither despair over the loss or unavailability of some set of formerly held highest values, nor does she experience disorientation due to the unavailability of evaluative orientations or the overwhelming number of available, seemingly equipollent, evaluative orientations. The last human clearly has values that guide her actions (among them equality, pleasure, comfort, and security) and lives by those values, but in Nietzsche’s deprecating description in *Z*, they are the opposite of inspired and just as great a danger to humanity as the nihilist:

The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. [...] Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same. [...] One has one’s little pleasure for the day and one’s little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health. “We have invented happiness,” say the last men, and they *blink*. (*Z* P:5)

In *HL*, the second of his *Untimely Meditations* and a much earlier text than *Z*, Nietzsche already fights what we could see as the precursor of the later text’s last human. In *HL* 9 he contemptuously likens the modern European, who has replaced religion and tradition with science and an obsessive occupation with history, to animal “firstlings.” When overlooking what they take to be the entire process of world history, these modern “lastborn” firstlings announce: “We have reached our goal; we are the goal; we are nature perfected.” Nietzsche’s response is ridicule and outright condemnation. He calls his contemporary Europeans raving mad: “raving, delirious! Your knowledge does not perfect nature, but only kills your own nature” (*HL* 9: 147). In his judgment, which resembles his depiction of the world of the last human, their “excess of history” actually makes their world self-centered and very small:

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<sup>2</sup> On nihilism, and in particular on the modes of disorientation and despair, see Reginster 2006, and also Gemes 2008 as well as Katsafanas 2015a. According to Katsafanas, what the last human lacks is “higher values.” Ken Gemes also views the last man as nihilistic due to his lack of ultimate higher values and, following Pippin, lack of erotic desire; see Gemes (forthcoming).

He then retreats from an infinite horizon into himself, into the tiniest egoistical realm, and is doomed to wither there and dry up. [...] He compromises, calculates, and accommodates himself to the facts; he does not show any emotion, he merely *blinks* [...] the world would be [...] redeemed if it were redeemed of these men. (HL 9: 157)

The last human and the “lastborn firstlings” of HL both “blink”! Why this emphasis on the smallest of reflexes? Does Nietzsche seek to portray them as tired? Are they trying to free their eyes from some uncomfortable obstacle? Or to shut out that which is trying to reach their senses? Is a mere “blink” the only emotional expression they are still capable of? Is this how much the world still affects them? Or are they betraying insincerity? This is not the place to come to a considered view on how to interpret Nietzsche’s use of the image of “blinking.”<sup>3</sup> But this much is clear: their blinking is not regarded as a virtue. The Nietzsche of HL conceives of the moderns as mere “aggregates” of humanlike qualities (HL 10: 166), semblances of human beings that lack an organized self and character.

This brief analysis shows that, already in this early text, Nietzsche aims at a different type of agent who does more—is more engaged—than those who merely “blink.” Nietzsche addresses them in HL as the “hopeful young people.” The goal he has set himself is “their redemption from the historical sickness, and hence their own personal history up to that point at which they will, once again, be healthy enough to pursue history anew and to make use of the past in the service of life” (HL 10: 165–166). Such new agents have to achieve something that, according to Nietzsche, Greek culture had achieved only “gradually,” by reflecting on and discovering their true needs:

“Know thyself.” [...] The Greeks gradually learned how to *organize this chaos* by concentrating—in accordance with this Delphic doctrine—on themselves, that is, on their genuine needs, and by letting those pseudo needs die out. They thereby took possession of themselves again [...]. (HL 10: 166–167)

Much of the picture Nietzsche paints of what he takes to be a more accurate conception of human selves and values emerges only in his later writings, among them D, GS, Z, BGE, and GM. The picture that emerges, from his attempt to “translate humanity back into nature” (BGE 230), incomplete as it is, is one that conceives of human beings as embodied self-systems composed of drives, affects, and values that are inscribed in them both by humanity’s evolutionary history and by the forces of socialization. While this picture emerges fully only in Nietzsche’s later writings, I propose that it can be identified and is already being worked out in HL. Before I can show

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<sup>3</sup> Heidegger interprets the “winking [*blinzeln*]” of the last human as a deliberate action, a kind of wink by those, for those, who have made themselves comfortable in a present-at-hand world, in thrall of a technical, calculating forgetting of being: “das Verabredete.” See Müller-Lauter 2000: 118 n. 256, 140–141.

this, however, it is necessary to introduce some of the key concepts underlying Nietzsche's diagnostic framework.

### 3.3 Drive Heuristic and Historical Sense

As early as HL, Nietzsche makes arguments that presuppose the existence of drives as a heuristic that is much more familiar from his later writings. What I mean by "heuristic" or "heuristic technique" is a strategy or model that, while imperfect, works for approaching certain kinds of problems. We have a wealth of textual evidence that Nietzsche uses such a strategy. He approaches a great number of traditional philosophical problems and questions—What is a self? What is the soul? What is willing? What are values?, etc.—by reframing them using a drive-based model of the (unconscious and conscious) mind. He believes that, if successful, the problems themselves undergo changes, and the solutions (if still required after such redescriptive therapy) turn out to be different. This is part of his broadly naturalistic strategy guided by the assumption that the human being is no more, but also no less, than a complex animal, thereby challenging, as Peter Kail recently put it, "the false dichotomy between humanity and other animals."<sup>4</sup>

In the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche repeatedly makes use of the concept of drives in expressions such as the "drive for knowledge" (DS 4: 24), "life drives" (HL 10: 165), "drive for culture" (SE 3: 193), and "drive for truth" (SE 6: 225). In HL, the "historical sense" (HL 3: 105)—also referred to as the "heightened historical need" (HL 8: 139)—functions like a drive that has developed pathologically and poses an "immediate danger" to the flourishing of individuals and the culture as a whole. When the drive is active, saliences are affected, and "anything ancient and past that enters into this field of vision is simply regarded as venerable" (HL 3: 105). This introduces, Nietzsche argues, a problematic orientation or bias against anything new and not yet available for assimilation by the drive. The result is that "whatever is new and in the process of becoming is met with hostility and rejected" (HL 3: 105). Such an excessive historical sense, Nietzsche argues, is no longer adaptive but instead detrimental to flourishing. It "no longer conserves," that is, keeps alive the past for further future use, as it would if the drive functioned normally; rather, it kills both the future and the past—it "mummifies it" (HL 3). The individual and the culture that is driven by a pathologically excessive historical drive "dies an unnatural death" (HL 3) as it merely preserves what is dead. In relativizing each and every one of their beliefs and traditions to their historical origin, individual and culture lose their grounding such that Nietzsche likens them to a great tree: "eventually the roots themselves commonly perish" (HL 3). I hope this provides a first understanding of what Nietzsche means by the modern "historical sickness." The historical

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<sup>4</sup> Kail 2015: 214.

sense functions like a drive and is used to explain why certain features of one's environment and culture become salient, liked, and valuable, and why other features come to be excluded, disliked, and seen as disvaluable. But what exactly are these "drives"?

The later Nietzsche's frequent use of the psychological categories of drive and affect is now better understood than only a few years ago. Rather than adding to the discussion regarding their status in Nietzsche's philosophy here, I will draw on recent work by Paul Katsafanas and John Richardson. According to Katsafanas, drives as they occur in many of Nietzsche's texts have four key features:

- (1) they are dispositions that generate affective orientations;
- (2) they admit an aim-object distinction;
- (3) they dispose agents to seek their aims, rather than their objects; and
- (4) they are constant.<sup>5</sup>

I would like to add that "disposition" has to be understood in a weak and wide sense, including inborn instincts just as it includes culturally acquired, habituated tendencies.<sup>6</sup>

While the aim, the characteristic activity of a drive, is more or less constant, the object of a drive is variable. Drives are not just desires. When the hunger drive is active, I will experience positive affective orientations toward "drive objects" such as different types of "food" that become salient as they may enable my hunger drive to express its characteristic activity. While a mere desire to visit Yunnan province, or to taste a 1980s sheng pu'erh tea, may be satisfied once and for all, a drive is a disposition or tendency that is relatively constant and recurring. It may be temporarily sated but will awaken again in the not-too-distant future.

According to Richardson's suggested terminology, Nietzschean drive selves have "animal" or "body values" in virtue of their basic drives.<sup>7</sup> If I am an angry and aggressive person, due to my having a strong aggressive drive or disposition, I "body value" (i. e., I experience positive "affective orientations" toward) objects that poten-

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<sup>5</sup> Katsafanas 2015b: 165. See also Katsafanas 2013 and 2016. In this section I follow Katsafanas's account, which is, in important respects, a development of John Richardson's account in *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (Richardson 2004).

<sup>6</sup> I believe it to be perfectly acceptable to attribute to Nietzsche theoretical philosophical views, for example in epistemology and metaphysics. It is clear from many passages that Nietzsche does not believe these views are any more than heuristics that challenge traditional explanations of the same phenomena, explanations that may require changing in light of new evidence or recalcitrant phenomena. Nietzsche may not have a scientific theory of drives, but this does not prevent him from very frequently relying on arguments and inferences based on his heuristics of drives, and drive-theoretic assumptions.

<sup>7</sup> This is John Richardson's terminology in Richardson 2013: 767. He distinguishes between "body values" and "agent values."

tially allow me to vent my anger and engage in aggressive behavior.<sup>8</sup> In Richardson's view, in addition to "body values" there are also our linguistically articulable and communicable "agent values." These are the values a person consciously holds, at least in principle.<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche frequently attacks such values as designed by our own "prehistoric"<sup>10</sup> but also current cultural processes, stating that they often serve either the basic drives, the causally effective but often unconscious "body values," or the ends of the agent's social group or society. Nietzsche thus concludes that the human animal has been tamed and domesticated with little inkling of the provenance of its values and its actual organizational nature and needs as an individual self-system. Human beings have been, and still are, in the dark about what Nietzsche calls "the great reason of the body" (Z I Despisers), by which he means precisely the self-system's complex structure of drives and affects, the embodied nature of the human's animal and social values.

It is important to note that, based on Katsafanas's account of value, neither drive-based affective orientations (close to Richardson's "body values") nor "agent values" that have been "bred" into us by socialization and culture are as such sufficient to count as ethical or moral values *proper*. For something to count as a value *proper*, it must be an affective orientation of which an agent "does not disapprove."<sup>11</sup> The weak-willed pie eater who experiences a strong affective orientation for the piece of pie in front of him, while clearly "body valuing" the piece (and salivating accordingly), can reasonably claim, licking the last drip of cream off his lips, that he disapproves of this recurring affective orientation, and that he did not act on his values *proper*, such as "health" or long-lasting physical strength, which he consciously regards as more important than the short-term "pleasure" he has just experienced.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to emphasize that, for Nietzsche, drive-induced affective orientations and thus unconscious and conscious values are "built into" human beings by

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**8** I will not try to distinguish here between drives and instincts. One useful way to distinguish drives and instincts is that instinct denotes a drive that has been "strengthened" such that it has become a more or less permanent feature of a self-system.

**9** On Nietzsche's different conceptions of consciousness, see Riccardi 2016, and for a defense of the view that Nietzsche's critique of consciousness targets primarily propositionally structured self-conscious mental states, see Riccardi (this volume).

**10** Richardson 2013: 768. I summarize Richardson's position here.

**11** Katsafanas (2015b: 175): "An agent values X iff the agent (1) has a drive-induced positive affective orientation toward X, and (2) does not disapprove of this affective orientation."

**12** While this (Frankfurtian) picture of valuing may not strike us as Nietzsche's, he nevertheless often relies on it. For example, when he describes the six different ways to combat drives in D 109, the entire discussion is premised on the idea that humans often do consciously disapprove of being in the grip of some drive. This is what motivates Nietzsche's discussion of how one may deal with such recalcitrantly recurring drives. This raises the familiar question of the causal efficacy of such conscious disapproval or approval. Is the reflectively conscious state of disapproval also merely caused by some other drive? Suffice to say here that Nietzsche's attempt to replace a Cartesian conception of the self with a drive model does enable taking different attitudes to drives once identified. On conscious aims and purposes as "directing causes," see note 43.

evolution *and* acculturation, but that this does not fix their expression in action. D 38 provides a good example of a Nietzschean analysis of this kind: depending on the moral or cultural context, a drive, while in itself indeterminate, can be “transformed by moral judgement” and express itself negatively as “cowardice” or positively as “humility.” Also, both strengthening and weakening of a drive’s expression in action are, in Nietzsche’s account, possible. D 109 famously discusses six different strategies of drive-control.<sup>13</sup> As should by now have become clear, the drive heuristic Nietzsche often employs sheds light on his image of the self being embodied (*leiblich*) and, since he conceives of drives as related to and functioning as part of a more (or less) organized whole, a “societal construction [*Gesellschaftsbau*] of many souls” (BGE 19). It is thus often helpful to conceive of Nietzschean selves as complex functional systems, with different subsystems of drives and affects, and related conscious and unconscious beliefs, capable of self-regulation and self-preservation.<sup>14</sup> In Nietzsche’s evolutionary account, the living human being is the inheritor of an evolutionary success story. And yet, precisely because we know only the success story, as Welshon puts it, human beings “project onto the current function of systems and organs that they were once *designed* to perform that function.”<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche does not tire of warning against such projected purposes and ends, and neither does he rule out that one remains in the dark about one’s motivations.

Even in an early work such as HL, Nietzsche is already critical of teleological conceptions of history. He analyzes what he sees as a culture of excessive collecting of theoretical-historical knowledge, for (mummified) knowledge’s rather than (lived) life’s sake. It is an activity that is carried out by increasingly one-sided, impoverished and enfeebled self-systems, driven by a historical drive that has become so hypertrophic that it threatens to become a liability, both for the self-system itself and for the entire culture. Nietzsche already assumes that self-systems and cultures can either flourish or fail to flourish, and that the historical sense, a drive to historicize that has become dominant, could either contribute to or undermine flourishing. If the historical sense is acculturated too early, and rules “uncontrolled” (HL 7: 131), then it “robs existing things of that atmosphere in which alone they are able to live” (HL

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**13** See D 109, where Nietzsche identifies six methods of drive-control.

**14** This is especially appropriate since we now know that much of his account is based on scientific literature, in particular on physiology (Roux) and on biology (Rolf). On Welshon’s recent account, Nietzsche understands selves and “human physiology ... as a dynamic causal coupling between various non-linear systems and sub-systems that comprise an individual organism. Of course, the organism thus comprised is, in turn, dynamically (but non-constitutively) coupled with its surrounding environment” (Welshon 2014: 56).

**15** Welshon 2014: 62. Welshon relies on the account developed by Richardson. The example he offers is the kidney that was selected and sedimented in the organism due to its providing the function of blood cleaning. The general formulation of the functionalist account is this: “a functional explanation of some property F is one that explains an organism O’s having F as O’s tendency or disposition to acquire or produce F because F enhances O’s fitness and has been selected for in the past.”



7: 131). It is to Goethe that Nietzsche attributes the insight that excessive historical education is problematic:

it is precisely in the greater and more highly developed historical person [Goethe] that we find an awareness [...] just how much incongruity and superstition are inherent in the belief that the education of a people must be as predominantly historical as it is today. (HL 8: 138)

He immediately adds that “the strongest people—that is, those strong in both deeds and works—lived differently and educated their youth differently” (HL 8: 138). But why? What exactly is the problem with a predominantly historical education and an excessive amount of historical knowledge?

Nietzsche holds that it somehow leads to an inability, a disability even, to see history as an “incentive” for action (HL 8: 142). In contrast, “true historical natures” see historical data not as an “is,” theoretical knowledge, but instead as practical, as an “ought”:

the true historical natures [are] precisely those who were little troubled by the “That’s how it is,” but instead pridefully followed a “This is how it should be.” It is not the burial of their generation, but the founding of a new one that drives them unrelentingly forward. (HL 8: 146)

Nietzsche is certainly not putting forward the thesis that all youth can be educated to become “true historical natures,” or Goethes. His diagnosis is that, like compulsive eaters who suffer from a digestive disorder, his contemporaries display a very strong and dominant historical drive, and lack something that prevents them from relating to history and engaging with it in the right way.

What is it that prevents them from digesting history in the right way? Before we look at two hypotheses that Nietzsche considers, I wish to turn to one short passage from HL 8 where Nietzsche contrasts, rather enigmatically, a medieval *memento mori* with a modern *memento vivere*. My hope is that this passage will shed some light not only on what function history is supposed to serve, but also on what it is that previously served this function and that history is (supposed to be) replacing.

### 3.4 *Memento Mori*: Medieval “Mechanism” of Willing

In HL 8 Nietzsche mentions in passing the medieval *memento mori* as the medieval’s “goad” and “conscience.” It is worth recalling the passage in full:

Previously this “*memento mori*,” called out both to humanity and to the individual, was always a terribly painful goad and the pinnacle, as it were, of medieval knowledge and conscience. The

phrase with which the modern age answers this call, “*memento vivere*,” still sounds, to be quite frank, rather timid; it has no resonance, and almost seems to be insincere. (HL 8: 139)<sup>16</sup>

To medieval conscience, I take Nietzsche to claim here, *memento mori* (“remember that you have to die”) plays an important motivational function, for individuals and for the culture as a whole. Through constant reminders in word and image of one’s mortality, the *vanity* of earthly desire, and, as is well documented, a divine Last Judgement, the *memento mori* played a pivotal role in the functioning of the medieval conscience that guided people’s actions. It is helpful to look at an example of how the *memento mori* featured in medieval culture. For example, here are some stanzas taken from *Ad mortem festinamus* (“To death we are hastening”) from the *Llibre Vermell de Montserrat* (*The Red Book of Montserrat*), a collection of medieval songs from 1399 AD:

Vita brevis breviter, in brevi finietur, mors venit velociter quae neminem veretur. Omnia mors perimit et nulli miseretur.	Life is short, and shortly it will end; Death comes quickly and respects no one, Death destroys everything and takes pity on no one.
Ad mortem festinamus peccare desistamus.	To death we are hastening, let us refrain from sinning.
Ni conversus fueris et sicut puer factus, et vitam mutaveris in meliores actus, intrare non poteris regnum Dei beatus.	If you do not turn back and become like a child, And change your life for the better You will not be able to enter, blessed, the Kingdom of God.
Ad mortem festinamus peccare desistamus. [...]	To death we are hastening, let us refrain from sinning. [...]
Vile cadaver eris, cur non peccare vereris. [...]	You will be a worthless cadaver: Why do you not avoid sinning? [...] <sup>17</sup>

As we have seen above, Nietzsche often views beliefs as expressions of embodied values (body and agent values) that serve a function within the individual self-system and, often unknown to the individual, within the individual’s social group and culture. I suggest therefore a functional interpretation of the *memento mori*. It provided conscious and unconscious content, words and images, for self-systems to run what I have elsewhere described as “mental simulations” that motivate action.<sup>18</sup> Contemplating their death and the consequences of sinful actions would motivate medieval agents, utilizing their deeply embodied affects such as fear and hope, embedded in its culture, to:

- (1) curb the expression of certain drives;

<sup>16</sup> The context of the passage shows that Nietzsche believes the historical drive is not yet fully developed and has turned out to be pathological because it has not yet replaced what I call the medieval *memento mori* “mechanism” (HL 8: 139).

<sup>17</sup> *Llibre Vermell de Montserrat*, folios XXIV–XXVIIr (Altes i Aguilo 1989)

<sup>18</sup> Dries 2015a: 153.

- (2) practice and express other drives; and
- (3) live by and express their (at least for some) consciously endorsed values.

Its function is to enable medieval agents to “refrain from sinning” and it motivates them to “change their lives for the better.” But exactly how did the *memento mori* function as the medieval mechanism of willing?

In a famous passage from GS 127, Nietzsche describes willing as a “mechanism”<sup>19</sup> that is so well practiced that it “almost escapes the observing eye.” Criticizing Schopenhauer, he argues that willing is nothing “simple” and “immediate,” rather,

willing is actually such a well-practiced mechanism that it almost escapes the observing eye. Against him I offer these propositions: first, in order for willing to come about, a representation of pleasure or displeasure is needed. Secondly, that a violent stimulus is experienced as pleasure or pain is a matter of the interpreting intellect, which, to be sure, in most cases [*zumeist*] works without our being conscious of it [*uns unbewusst*]; and one and the same stimulus can be interpreted as pleasure or pain. Thirdly, only in intellectual beings do pleasure, pain, and will exist; the vast majority of organisms has nothing like it. (GS 127)<sup>20</sup>

It is necessary here to emphasize Nietzsche’s debt to Schopenhauer’s analysis of willing, a debt that he fails to acknowledge. In Schopenhauer’s analysis, most fully developed in his *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*,<sup>21</sup> willing in animals and human beings depends on two factors: (1) the unknown but empirically observable character (the distinctive dispositions and traits, the will of the agent); and (2) the motives

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**19** In many passages, Nietzsche is opposed to mechanistic explanations. In this case he uses the term “mechanism” against those who see willing as a mysterious, supernatural faculty by which purely mental items can somehow start causal chains that result in physical changes and action. The “mechanism” Nietzsche refers to is ultimately the body; i.e., willing is the result of highly complex (but not mysterious) embodied processes that—this is Nietzsche’s claim—happens often automatically, hidden from reflective self-consciousness. It does not follow that something that *often* happens without consciousness *always and necessarily* happens without consciousness. See also notes 12 and 43.

**20** Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer in including animals in the class of intellectual beings. Schopenhauer distinguishes between intellect (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*). Both animals and human beings have a brain, sense perception, and therefore the ability to represent the world (mostly unconsciously). Since animals have intellect, and represent or model the world, they also have knowledge according to Schopenhauer, but of a narrower, nonlinguistic, nonconceptual kind. While both animals and human beings share intellect, human beings alone have reason (again, in Schopenhauer’s sense of the term). Schopenhauer argues (consistently with his rejection of the traditional conception of free will) that for human beings there is such a thing as “deliberation” and “a complete elective decision,” which again distinguishes them from animals. For the latter “a choice can take place only between motives of perception actually present; hence this [animal] choice is restricted to the narrow sphere of its present apprehension of perception” (WWR I:55 [volume and section numbers], Schopenhauer 1969).

**21** See Schopenhauer 1999.

(mental representations of objects of desire or aversion) represented in the intellect (mind/brain). From character and motive, willing or action follows necessarily.

To give an example, an animal with a brain has “understanding” or “intellect” (*Verstand*) and can represent several different sources of food. Its mind, which Schopenhauer calls the “medium of motives,” can represent all of them with varying degrees of desirability. But just which one will trigger the action of eating will depend on the “fit” between the animal’s nature or character and the motive. Whatever the strongest motive will trigger the action. Human beings likewise have a character that is both inborn and partly acculturated. In Schopenhauer’s model, willing is more complex for humans than it is for animals. In addition to “character” and “understanding,” human beings also have “reason” (*Vernunft*), by which Schopenhauer means, roughly, “abstract knowledge in concepts,”<sup>22</sup> that is, having a language, the ability to form words and concepts, reason abstractly, entertain thoughts and even ideals. For human beings, it is not just a piece of pie or the fear of perceived danger but also a thought such as “my community expects me to go to war” that can become a motive, which, when it is the strongest motive, triggers action.

The phenomenology of deliberative choice, according to which we survey and deliberate about possible motives for actions and then “freely” will one of them, is, Schopenhauer argues, false. This phase of deliberation is better characterized as the *wishing phase*. I can *wish* or *imagine* that I can do a great number of things, because introspectively, from the first-person, conscious perspective, they all seem possible motives for acting. But, Schopenhauer argues, it will always be the strongest motive, given the agent’s character, that determines what she ends up *willing*, that is, *doing*.<sup>23</sup> For both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, an actor really finds out what her will is only when she sees how she acts. Deliberative choice that is *causa sui*, independent of character (Schopenhauer) and the embodied system of drives (Nietzsche), is, while recalcitrant phenomenologically, philosophically and empirically an implausible picture of agency.

Returning to the passage from GS 127, wherein Nietzsche claims that Schopenhauer’s account needs revising or at least supplementing, for Nietzsche the mechanism of willing works precisely with affective orientations. I do not just see a piece of cake; I see it in an affectively loaded way. This is what I take Nietzsche to mean by representing some content “as pleasure or displeasure.” When you find yourself in the presence of a lion as you briefly leave the Jeep, you do not just see a lion, reflect on your current unfavorable situation, and then decide that the right thing to do, all things considered, would be to jump back into the Jeep. You see the lion, immediate-

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<sup>22</sup> WWR I:23.

<sup>23</sup> This is why Schopenhauer thinks it is quite common for us to find out only empirically, over time, who we are, what our character is, through observational knowledge of how we tend to act in given circumstances. It is a common phenomenon, discussed in the literature on weakness of will, that people often do not know how they will act, despite the fact that they know how they would like to act.

ly affectively framed—most likely a displeasurable representation of danger—and, with a rush of adrenaline, flee in the direction of the Jeep.

According to GS 127, the intellect plays an important function. We do not necessarily have to eat a piece of pie when we see one, even if it is in our nature or character—evolutionarily and from habituation—that we experience pleasurable affective orientations in regard to sweet and fatty things. In addition to affective drive orientations that are built into the self-system, humans can also acquire “values” of which they consciously approve, such as “health.” The same piece of pie that, only a second ago, looked mouth-wateringly appealing may now be represented “displeasurably” as unhealthy. While Nietzsche is clear that interpretive processes that result in representational content are, “in most cases [*zumeist*],” carried out automatically and unconsciously, he clearly leaves room for cases in which such processes are, or become, conscious.<sup>24</sup> If I engage in a mental simulation of eating the pie and I imagine the consequences of eating the pie or, as we know from many self-control experiments, if I adopt a general conscious rule about pie eating,<sup>25</sup> my affects may change when my interpreting intellect represents the piece of pie negatively: despite my initial, immediate pro-pie attitude, if I am able consciously to follow a no-pie rule, my mental simulation may well enable me to refrain from eating the pie and opt for fresh salad instead.

We can now return to the passage and interpret the *memento mori* as a mechanism functioning along the lines explored in GS 127. With the aid of a mnemonic device, the medieval self-systems were able to incorporate and affectively motivate the implementing of rules. They thereby controlled their first-order drives through an effective reframing of their affective orientations. This enabled them to act on their moral “agent values” rather than their more basic “body values.” Through negatively and positively charged images and teachings, by means of conscious and unconscious reminders, that could be used in “off-line” simulations of eternal punishments or eternal rewards,<sup>26</sup> the medieval *memento mori* could function as a conscience—“goading” the self-system in the right directions.<sup>27</sup>

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24 In “Nietzsche on the Superficiality of Consciousness” and “Nietzsche’s Pluralism about Consciousness,” Mattia Riccardi defends the view that “conscious” refers to self-conscious mental states with propositionally articulated content. For a response, see Katsafanas 2016, chap. 3. On the question of the role of consciousness, see note 43.

25 There is significant empirical evidence that the adopting of conscious rules increases levels of self-control.

26 An “off-line” simulation uses one’s own embodied cognitive system to simulate another person’s or one’s own mental states and actions in a given situation without generating any output actions. On off-line simulation in reading other minds and one’s own mind, see Goldman 2005. For a discussion of, among other things, *enactment imagination*, see Goldman and Jordan 2013, chap. 26: “To E-imagine a state is to recreate the feeling of a state, or conjure up what it is like to experience that state—in a sense, to enact that very state. To E-imagine feeling embarrassed involves using one’s imagination to create inside oneself a pretend state that phenomenally feels somewhat like embarrassment.”

27 On Nietzsche’s critique of conscience, see Dries 2015b: 31–33.

Preceding the *memento mori* passage (HL 8: 139), Nietzsche speculates that, while there has been a significant change in culture, the historical need is actually an adaptation of the *memento mori*. Already in HL, Nietzsche disapproves of religions that are life-denying and that focus on eternal rewards, writing dismissively of “a religion that regards the last hour of a human life to be the most significant one, that predicts the end of life on earth and condemns all living things to live in the fifth act of a tragedy” (HL 8: 139). However, he does approve of self-systems that were able to achieve a certain control and organization of their drives, who embodied practical knowledge (developed a “conscience”) regarding what they can and cannot do without endangering their organization.<sup>28</sup>

The moderns of whom Nietzsche disapproves, according to the diagnosis in HL, no longer have, no longer are “goaded” and guided by, any such functioning conscience as the *memento mori* mechanism. They have replaced their religious conscience with quasi-religious faith in, among others, historical and scientific knowledge, thereby possibly compromising both. The result is “a profound sense of hopelessness [...] that historical tinge with which today all historical education and cultivation is gloomily darkened” (HL 8: 139). World-denying and hopeful imagery were both deeply embodied in the medieval mind, situated and extended in a culture that aided their organization in accordance with their culture’s values of which they consciously approved.<sup>29</sup> There is, it seems, no simple transition from the medieval to a modern, replacement mechanism of willing; after all, the modern *memento vivere*,<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche claims, still “lacks resonance.” Why are moderns unable to make

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**28** Many ideas on the latter, I believe, Nietzsche may have found, underdeveloped, in the famous conversations between Goethe and Eckermann. I do not have the space here to explore the significance of the Goethe–Eckermann conversations for Nietzsche’s arguments in HL. They are mentioned explicitly only twice in HL, but it seems to me these conversations were of profound importance to Nietzsche. They are concerned with the organization of individuals and the cultivating of the right attitude to “data” that “perturbs” individual selves. There is evidence for an ‘overload thesis’ as well as a ‘semantic embodiment thesis’ in the Goethe–Eckermann conversations. In the opening chapters, Eckermann discusses the need to control the influx of data, to what one is exposed. More importantly, he argues for the possibility of creative integration as a criterion of data selection. In an anecdote about his own creative integration of a specific poet, he hypothesizes that he only “resonated” with him precisely because of a shared set of profound, embodied experiences.

**29** Needless to say that Nietzsche does not approve of these values that are for him part of “morality in the pejorative sense” (Leiter 2015: 59).

**30** *Memento vivere* is often translated “think of living” or “remember living.” Nietzsche is likely referring here to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. The protagonist Wilhelm finds the epigram “Gedenke zu leben!” written on a scroll held by a marble figure sitting on top of a sarcophagus (Book 8, Chap. 5). Goethe then describes Wilhelm’s living relationship with the past: “Wilhelm konnte sich nicht genug der Gegenstände freuen, die ihn umgaben. ‘Welch ein Leben’, rief er aus, ‘in diesem Saale der Vergangenheit! man könnte ihn ebensogut den Saal der Gegenwart und der Zukunft nennen. So war alles und so wird alles sein! Nichts ist vergänglich, als der eine der genießt und zuschaut.’” A discussion of the *memento vivere*, possibly a commentary on Goethe, is also found in one of Emerson’s journals of 1832. Emerson writes: “‘Think of living’ I do not believe in the justice

use of history as their “goad,” as their conscience? What causes the modern historical sickness?

### 3.5 “Overload” and “Semantic Embodiment”

In this final section, I would like to turn to two passages where Nietzsche offers two hypotheses regarding the causes of the moderns’ historical sickness. In HL 7, Nietzsche argues that

*the massive influx of impressions is so great; surprising, barbaric, and violent things press so overpoweringly—“balled up into hideous clumps”—in on the youthful soul; that it can save itself only by taking recourse in premeditated stupidity. Wherever a more refined, stronger consciousness existed, a new sensation most likely occurs: nausea. (HL 7: 134–135)*

This passage offers what I call the *overload hypothesis* as one explanation of the modern historical sickness. The reason why history fails as a replacement and guide for the modern’s life is “overload,” a “massive influx” of historical data that is simply too much to handle (HL 8: 135). As the historical drive becomes increasingly hypertrophic and pathological, it generates much more data than can be processed by the self. These data are no longer embodied or, to use the term that Nietzsche often uses, can no longer be “incorporated.” “Overload” means that the self-system reaches the limit of what Nietzsche famously calls its “shaping power [*plastische Kraft*]” (HL 1: 89). This results in different kinds of self-system failure, and one of two things happens: the self loses its ability to act and becomes an inactive observer; “in melancholy apathy,” the modern simply “lets opinion after opinion pass him by” (HL 8: 135). Alternatively, the self-system, when it can no longer cope, switches to a primitive mode, a mode of only basic functionality, “taking recourse in premeditated stupidity” (HL 8: 135). When the wealth of history is no longer interpreted by some set of higher values that provide a filter or schema for its selective incorporation, human

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of the Don’t tell me to get ready to die [Emerson’s paraphrase of *memento mori*, M.D.] I know not what shall be. The only preparation I can make is by fulfilling my present duties. This is the everlasting life. To think of mortality makes us queasy—the flesh creeps at sympathy with its kind. What is the remedy? to ennoble it by animating it with love & uses. Give the Soul its ends to pursue & death becomes indifferent. It saith[,] What have I to do with death?

The vice of Calvinism has been to represent the other world whole different from this. So that preparation to live <here> in this was all lost, for that. A true teaching shows that true fitness for this, is an education or development of the soul, & therefore so much accomplishment for all its theatres [.]

I do not think that people are rightly urged to a good life because their future well being depends on it, for, that which is not wholly desirable now, I may well doubt if it ever will be. / But a good life hath a perfect motive evidence now and we say it always will be because it is perfect now.” (Emerson 1964: 40–41).

cultural development collapses into a mere “continuation of the history of animals and plants” (HL 9: 147). Both types of self-system failure, which are not mutually exclusive and could occur together, severely affect a self-system’s health. Rather than *gaining* abilities proportional to the increase in historical knowledge, Nietzsche diagnoses the opposite: “Your knowledge does not perfect nature, but only kills your own nature. Just measure the wealth of your knowledge against the poverty of your abilities” (HL 9: 147). The overload hypothesis—the inability to harness history due a hypertrophied historical drive that generates more data than can be incorporated—is not the only hypothesis Nietzsche considers in HL. A second comes just before the passage I cited earlier. There, Nietzsche writes the following:

Young people are whipped onward through millennia: *young men who understand nothing about war, about diplomacy, or about trade policy are presumed worthy of an introduction to political history.* But we moderns run through art galleries and listen to concerts in just the same way that young people run through history. (HL 7: 134–135, emphasis mine)

In order to illuminate what Nietzsche might mean here, it is helpful to turn to the contemporary literature on embodied cognition. The *overload thesis* of the “massive influx” passage could be viewed as an early version of what cognitive science and the philosophy of mind now call the “frame problem”: what counts as a fact that is *relevant*, that *matters*, and how are the masses of historical data related to the beliefs we already hold?<sup>31</sup> The beginning of the “young people” passage just cited, however, seems to point to a more complex problem of how meaning is grounded: how is it that selves know their environment in the meaningful way they do, that certain symbols and words are meaningful and not others, that when thirsty they immediately turn to the water bottle in front of them, or spend time in front of a work of art in the hallway—how have these meaningful relationships come to be grounded? For those who endeavor to replicate or build artificial cognitive systems, the concept of embodiment has been seen as one solution to such problems.<sup>32</sup> I think the way

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**31** What is known as the frame problem originated within classical artificial intelligence and was, roughly speaking, concerned with what remains unchanged in light of an action or, put differently, which propositions or beliefs need updating in light of an action. So-called frame axioms were appealed to in order to avoid running through innumerable propositions held by the system that did not need updating. In the philosophical literature starting with Dennett, Fodor, Dreyfus, and Wheeler, the frame problem was seen not just as a computational and logical problem but rather as a wider epistemological and metaphysical concern with context-sensitive relevance and “common sense inertia.”

**32** That cognitive systems of the relevant kind are embodied, i.e., that they interact with their environments and thereby acquire knowledge, is often seen as a solution to framing problems and now underpins embodied cognitive science. See, for example, Pfeiffer and Scheier 1999, 91. For a recent discussion that questions the evidence for embodied cognition and proposes “grounding by interaction,” see Mahon and Caramazza 2008: 67–69.



current embodied cognitive science describes cognitive systems may help us get a better grasp of Nietzsche's hypotheses.

Above we saw that Nietzsche is critical of self-systems that are mere "aggregates" (HL 10: 166) in danger of "perishing in a flood of things alien and past, of perishing of history" (HL 10: 166). In his view, Greek culture successfully answered a similar challenge through the identification and organization of their "genuine needs" and "pseudoneeds"; in Nietzsche's view, they "gradually learned how to *organize this chaos*" (HL 10: 166).<sup>33</sup> Modern embodied cognition distinguishes between the *organization* of a system and the *structure* of a system. The structure of a system is variable due to it *being coupled with* its environment. When the environment changes, the system's structure changes. However, its organization, if it is a strong system, remains the same despite external changes. In "When Is a Cognitive System Embodied?," Alexander Riegler argues that, while many different structures can support or instantiate a particular organization, a structure can undergo variation "without losing its constitutive character for the organization." Variations, he argues, are often "caused by perturbations to the system."<sup>34</sup> It is only when these "perturbations" exist between a self-system and its environment that a system can be said to be embodied in its environment. Drawing on Maturana and Varela, in "The Essence of Embodiment," Quick, Dautenhahn, Nehaniv, and Roberts define a minimal notion of embodiment as follows:

A system X is embodied in an environment E if perturbatory channels exist between the two. That is, X is embodied in E if for every time t at which both X and E exist, some subset of E's possible states have the capacity to perturb X's state, and some subset of X's possible states have the capacity to perturb E's state.<sup>35</sup>

If perturbations can occur between system and environment, then a system counts as *structurally coupled*.<sup>36</sup>

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**33** It is important to appreciate that there are illuminating parallels here with the later Nietzsche's figure of the "decadent." On this point I have profited from conversations with David Hurrell. For an account of unity of the self that emphasizes the contribution of drives and conscious thought, see Katsafanas 2016, ch. 7.

**34** Riegler 2002: 341.

**35** Quick, Dautenhahn, Nehaniv, and Roberts 2000, cited in Riegler 2002: 341.

**36** The system at issue here is a cognitive system. In itself structural coupling does not distinguish between cognitive and noncognitive systems. Granite outcrop and the arctic tundra can be said to be structurally coupled, as the outcrop is perturbed by the wind and vice versa. On different notions of embodiment in the literature, see Ziemke 2003. On Nietzsche's philosophy of mind, see, in particular, Abel 2015 and Welshon 2015. On a Nietzschean conception of embodiment, and the distinction between an "effectively embodied" mind that largely lacks "phenomenal embodiment," i. e., the awareness that it is effectively embodied, see Riccardi 2015. On the question of how Nietzsche can be related to the contemporary embodied cognition literature, and how he might contribute to certain problems that arise within it, see Acampora (this volume).

From the perspective of embodied cognition, the information pickup of such systems is seen as “schema-driven,” precisely opposed to a picture of cognitive systems that are “exposed to information overload as a result of processing the entirely available information.”<sup>37</sup> As we saw in section 3.3, Nietzschean selves are not blank-slate, disembodied minds, empty buckets or containers for information. Embodiment in Nietzsche—this is crucial—denotes both a self-system’s incorporated drives and affects as well as its integration and embeddedness in its environment or world through these. Selves are—and this is where the terminology just introduced helps—*structurally coupled* with their environment due to their inborn and acquired incorporated drives and affects that provide them with affective orientations, channels that embody or integrate them in their environment. The many relatively constant drive *aims*, their characteristic activities, make up the *organization* of a self-system. The drives’ objects, however, can and do vary. In the model that seems to underpin many of Nietzsche’s remarks, embodied self-systems can be said to change in structure even if they retain their organization.

We are now in a position to return to Nietzsche’s second hypothesis on why “the young” students of history cannot make use of history: “Young people,” he writes, “are whipped onward through millennia: young men who understand nothing about war, about diplomacy, or about trade policy.” History—practiced too early and only theoretically—is not exactly meaningless. The young people understand the meaning of those words and images that make up the historical texts they read and criticize. However, they understand them only superficially, and history lacks *deep embodiment* for those who are deficient in what Nietzsche refers to as real “abilities” (HL 9: 147), that is, practical knowledge and lived experience that have already been embodied. I would like to call this HL’s “semantic embodiment” thesis: only if a self-system possesses an already existing, embodied experiential basis on which to build, can it be perturbed by, and sustain a meaningful relationship with, history. According to Nietzsche, the moderns are introduced to history too early, at a point before they have acquired the practical experience required for an embodied semantics and a meaningful interaction with history.<sup>38</sup> They develop, too early, a historical sense or drive that soon spins out of control.

An important passage that illustrates this point can be found in Nietzsche’s discussion of the critical historians, who are particularly affected by a pathological historical drive. Their outpourings lack connection with life and action, Nietzsche ar-

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<sup>37</sup> See Riegler 2002: 344. That Nietzsche conceives of content as mediated *via* concepts that function like sensory schemas or templates, see Riccardi 2011: 246. Riccardi draws on, among others, Papineau 2007, chap. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Goethe, as described by Nietzsche in TI Skirmishes 49 (“in allen Leiblichkeiten geschickt, sich selbst im Zaume habenden”), has such an embodied semantics. He stands for the possibility of a strong, embodied organization, which enables maximal diversity in the way he is able to entertain meaningful relationships within a wide variety of environments (the arts, natural sciences, politics, etc.), without endangering the cohesiveness of his self-system.

gues, and while they produce a wealth of historical data, and produce text upon text, they are actually like empty containers that merely produce an “echo”:

Immediately the echo resounds. [...] At no point does the work give rise to an effect, but always only to a “critique,” and the critique likewise produces no effect, but instead is only subjected to a further critique. [...] The historical cultivation of our critics does not even permit them to produce an effect in the true sense of that word, namely, an effect on life and action. [...] But their critical pens never cease to flow, for they have lost control of them, and instead of guiding their pens they are guided by them. It is precisely in this immoderation of their critical outpourings, in this lack of self-mastery, in what the Romans called *impotentia*, that the weakness of the modern personality is disclosed. (HL 5: 121)

Not only do these critical historians lack control over their historical drives, but they produce far too much (the drive is constantly active), and no aspect of life is exempt (everything becomes a drive object). This indicates, Nietzsche argues, that they lack an organization that enables self-mastery and allows controlled expression of their drives’ aims and objects. While their historical sense or drive is certainly “effectively embodied” and they “value” history in a superficial sense by insatiably producing more of it, they nevertheless lack any deep semantic embodiment. Only the latter would enable the selection of *relevant* data, which could then become *action guiding* and aid their flourishing. Instead, history fails to perturb their systems—the historian’s and the reader’s—in any significant way. This absence of deep embodiment, this “sickness,” extends beyond the narrow context of history. It affects modern values and culture in general as it results in overall weakness, disorientation, and a form of alienation.<sup>39</sup> Let us once more recall the end of the “young people” passage: “We moderns run through art galleries and listen to concerts in just the same way that young people run through history” (HL 7: 134–135). We can illustrate lack of embodiment proper with Maturana’s example of a fly that walks on a painting by Rembrandt. When the fly walks on a Rembrandt, it does not interact with the work of art. It does not exist as a painting for the fly; it is not structurally coupled with it as a painting. As Maturana puts it, “The painting of Rembrandt exists only in the cultural space of human aesthetics, and its properties, as they define this cultural space, cannot interplay with the properties of the walking fly.”<sup>40</sup>

The “lastborn firstlings” of HL lack the practical knowledge and embodied experiential base that couples them with the cultural space of history: they, too, are like flies on a Rembrandt, and “we moderns,” the young Nietzsche worried then, and would probably worry now, “run through art galleries and listen to concerts in just

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<sup>39</sup> I have profited from conversations with David Hurrell, who argues that there are important parallels with the later Nietzsche’s preoccupation with “decadence” and that decadence may be construed as a type of alienation.

<sup>40</sup> Maturana 1980: 75–79. This is also discussed in Riegler 2002: 341–346.

the same way.”<sup>41</sup> Unlike the medieval selves that were deeply embodied in their religious, cultural environment, and were actually perturbed by *memento mori*, the moderns have yet to learn how be perturbed by history, how to use history to their advantage. And there is a further complication. Nietzsche speculates that while the moderns have abandoned conscious belief in, and the culture of, the *memento mori*, they are nevertheless “still stuck on the *memento mori* [*sitzt noch fest auf dem memento mori*]” without realizing it.<sup>42</sup> They have yet to fully develop and liberate a proper historical sense.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined what might cause the famous “malady of history” or historical sickness identified in HL. I first defined drives, affects, and values and introduced Nietzschean selves, following Katsafanas and Richardson, as systems of drives with affective orientations and values. I interpreted the medieval *memento mori* as an embodied mechanism of willing and self-control that Nietzsche contrasts in HL with a *memento vivere* that is not yet functioning as a replacement mechanism. The historical sense functions like an acculturated but still pathological drive that, to Nietzsche, lacks proper embodiment, is not yet properly controlled, and weakens rather than strengthens the modern self. I then discussed two theses—“overload” and “semantic embodiment”—and argued, using distinctions from the embodied cognition literature, that lack of lived experience and practical knowledge undermined the modern embodiment in, and living relationship with, history.

We can see that Nietzsche realizes already in HL that a modern “mechanism of willing” and self-organization would eventually have to replace previous religious and cultural mechanisms. But Nietzsche also realizes as early as HL that modern self-systems remain in thrall to the past; they cannot easily ex-corporate the past and switch to new ways of willing and valuing. As we saw, Nietzsche speculates that the modern obsession with history, its acculturated historical drive, is still “stuck on the *memento mori*,” “a disguised Christian theodicy,” and rather than serve as the modern *memento vivere* instead leads to “hopelessness” and functions as “an opiate against everything subversive and novel” (RWB 4: 272). It comes,

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<sup>41</sup> This results, Nietzsche thinks, in the further quasi-creation of unlimited amounts of shallow, self-referential data that weaken individuals and cultures to the point where they can be exploited by market forces, in which they, unwittingly, are pawns who create, through their uncritical educational institutions, further pawns.

<sup>42</sup> In this passage, the German “*sitzt noch fest auf*” (from the verb “*auf etw. festsitzen*”) is better translated as “to be stuck on.” The sense is captured neither by Hollingdale (“treasures”) nor by Gray’s translation (“fixed on”). In later texts Nietzsche argues, at much greater length, that unbeknownst to itself, humanity is still stuck on the ascetic ideal of which the *memento mori* was merely a part.

then, as no great surprise that many of Nietzsche's later works are devoted precisely to working out how traditional values came to be incorporated in us, how they functioned, and what could be done to change them. It is also not surprising that the role of the body, and a greater understanding of the embodied nature of values, would become one of Nietzsche's central concerns.<sup>43</sup> The later Nietzsche's project of a reevaluation of values, and in particular Nietzsche's diagnosis that values must necessarily be embodied, has already begun in UM.

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<sup>43</sup> Ken Gemes's seminal article, "Postmodernism's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche" (2001), already argued that the early Nietzsche, *pace* the Postmodernists, "valorizes unity as a goal" and "rejects certain false notions of unity" (351 n. 22). There, Gemes sees consciousness as epiphenomenal to the process of self-organization: "a weak, irrelevant force, little more than an afterthought" (344). The account I favor differs on this point. Conscious mental states, not to be mistaken for the states owned by some underlying conscious *subject*, may well play a very different or even lesser role than hitherto assumed. Nevertheless, unconscious and conscious aims or intentions are for Nietzsche part of the overall embodied mental economy. For example, according to GS 360, titled "*Two types of causes, which one confuses,*" while a self is moved by the drives, the dispositional powers ready to be released and used ("ein Quantum aufgetauter Kraft, welches darauf wartet [...] verbraucht zu werden"), unconscious and conscious aims or intentions ("Zwecke" or "Ziele") can at times play their part as different "orchestrating" or "directing powers [*dirigierende Kräfte*]." While the latter "directing causes" do not supply and merely direct or channel the drives' damned up (*aufgestaute*) powers, it would be wrong to see them as irrelevant to a self's overall organization (and disorganization). However, "directing causes" are only sometimes reflectively conscious, and, importantly, are not just "in the head." A *memento mori* poem or painting could be seen as part of the medieval's *extended* mind and self, to use Clark and Chalmers's terminology, which enabled the medieval to act on the values of which she, in line with her culture, approved. And while Nietzsche himself disapproves of the medieval Christian values, he approves of the fact that unlike the moderns they—individually and culturally—were able to control and organize themselves. In "Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual" (2009), Gemes leaves room for the possibility that consciousness plays a role: "Some individuals, *due perhaps to conscious design* but more likely due to fortuitous circumstances, actively collect, order and intensify some of those disparate forces and create a new direction for them" (2009: 42, emphasis mine). On GS 360 and Nietzsche's rejection of "strong epiphenomenalism of non-reducible reflective properties," see Welshon 2014: 163–164, and 182–196. On the extended mind hypothesis, see Clark and Chalmers 1998. For a defense of a conception of unity of the self that takes seriously both Nietzsche's drive psychology and allows room for a role played by conscious thought, see Katsafanas 2016.

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Helmut Heit

## 4 Becoming Reasonable Bodies: Nietzsche and Paul Churchland's Philosophy of Mind

There is a different world to discover—and more than one!  
On to the ships, my philosophers! (GS 289)

### 4.1 Introduction

Nietzsche's notion of a "great reason of the body" (Z I Despisers) aims to transform established concepts of body, mind, and soul as well as of reason, science, and life.<sup>1</sup> It aspires to deliver a new naturalized self-perception of mankind without reducing life to a mere system of biological substances. This notion has consequences not only for the understanding of the relation between mind and body, but for our understanding of reason and knowledge, too. Any concept of ourselves is of immediate relevance in epistemological issues. By means of a comparison between Nietzsche and contemporary philosophy of mind, namely Paul M. Churchland's *Eliminative Materialism*, this paper aims to provide a better comprehension of these ideas. Such a comparison could improve our understanding of Nietzsche as well as of more recent philosophy of mind in two ways: It widens the spectra of possible approaches to the mind-body problem beyond some shortcomings of contemporary language- and science-focused philosophy. Moreover, it sheds light on an important, but often over-seen connection between fundamental epistemological obstacles and different conceptualizations of our body.

Eliminative materialism, as a recent alternative to dualistic and to reductionist philosophies of mind, holds that "our common-sense psychological framework is a false and radically misleading conception of the causes of human behaviour and the nature of cognitive activity" (Churchland 1999: 43). Traditional terms of so-called folk-psychology could not be reduced to naturalistic terms but should be eliminated and replaced by more appropriate scientific ones. When Churchland published these ideas in his first book, a referee made an astounding remark: "Churchland aims little less than a 'transvaluation of values'" (Fraassen 1981: 555). Though van Fraassen gave no further explicit references, the reminiscence of Nietzsche is not arbitrary. Not only Churchland's ambition to overcome a traditional worldview resembles Nietzsche, they share the ambition to at least broaden and proliferate the spectra

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<sup>1</sup> Essential ideas for this article were developed while enjoying the hospitality of the philosophy department at the University of California at San Diego. My stay was funded by the German Exchange Council (DAAD). I am especially grateful to Paul Churchland for engaging debates and for providing me with an early draft of his *Plato's Camera*. Nietzsche's works are quoted according to the KSA. I use familiar abbreviations for works and *Nachlass*. Translations are—unless stated otherwise—my own.



of available worldviews. Their underlying philosophies of mind appear to have some features in common, too. Like Nietzsche, Churchland is a Kantian insofar both agree that our perceptual world is co-constituted by a man-made conceptual web. Moreover, both think that the conceptual framework could significantly mislead our representations of the outer and inner world, in particular if we confuse language with reality. While Churchland argues that “propositional attitudes [...] form the systematic core of folk psychology” (Churchland 1989: 3), Nietzsche advises against the “seduction of language” (GM I 13) and the misleading “grammatical custom” to add an “I” to a “think” (BGE 17). Churchland as well as Nietzsche take contemporary science serious, be it modern research in neural networks or nineteenth-century findings in the physiology of sense-experience. Nietzsche is a philosophical naturalist as Churchland is, but both refuse to treat mental processes merely as reducible “epiphenomena”. Both see reason in the body.

However, these similarities are outweighed by significant differences, which should not be neglected. These are more philosophical than scientific, even though Nietzsche could, of course, not refer to most recent developments in neurobiology and artificial intelligence. As opposed to Churchland, Nietzsche does not invite us to replace folk-psychology with allegedly more appropriate contemporary neuro-scientific theories, because he sees a difference between a reasonable body and an information-processing brain. Disregarding his serious interest in contemporary scientific findings, Nietzsche never adopts a techno-scientific attitude towards human life and nature. The most important reasons for this are his philosophical reservations against scientific realism. Whereas the idea of a transvaluation of traditional philosophy of mind is combined with a realist attitude in Churchland’s version, in Nietzsche’s version it combines with perspectivism. Nietzsche argues for a naturalistic concept of life and he refers to scientific findings to establish his argument, but his ultimate standard is not the current state of affairs in science but the goal to become reasonable, and that means in particular self-conscious bodies. As a consequence, unlike Churchland’s scientific eliminativism, Nietzsche’s philosophy of mind rests on a naturalistically inclined pluralism. In order to bring about this comparison and its relevance for our understanding of Nietzsche’s philosophy of mind and nature, I shall proceed in three steps. In section 4.2, I will go back to an early and prominent despiser of the body. Plato’s dialogue *Theaetetus* investigates an epistemological problem on the basis of a dualistic folk-psychological model of the body. In section 4.3, I discuss Churchland’s eliminativist philosophy of mind as a solution to Plato’s problem as well as Churchland’s explanation of how neural networks establish a conceptual framework and acquire knowledge. In section 4.4, I examine Nietzsche’s alternative concept of an embodied mind and a reasonable body that differs from both Plato and Churchland.

## 4.2 Epistemology of the Despisers of the Body (Plato's Version)

Plato is, for a number of reasons, a good point of departure in epistemological issues and not just because he was one of the first to elaborate them. His work illustrates the background against which both Nietzsche and Churchland develop their alternative views. Moreover, Plato's discussion of the epistemic relation between body and soul sheds light on contemporary approaches to the philosophy of mind. Plato's significance in this context is threefold: first, his understanding of the relation between body and soul represents philosophical foundations and core principles of contemporary common sense notions and "folk psychology" (Churchland 1989: xi). Second, Nietzsche's counterpart is mainly the Platonic-Christian tradition, while the modern Cartesian and mechanistic version of dualism appears mainly as a radicalization of that tradition. Third, Plato emphasizes the epistemological implications of any specific philosophy of mind. His ambition is to acquire knowledge of the objective reality underlying the ephemeral world of appearances to which our body ultimately belongs.

Plato's *Theaetetus* is one of the most illuminating discussions of some fundamental problems regarding the nature and scope of human knowledge. At the beginning of the dialogue, the Platonic Socrates states his main concern in the following way: "Well, it is just this that I am in doubt about and cannot fully grasp by my own efforts what knowledge *really* is" (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 145e, my italics). Although this might appear to be an empirical question in some sense, Socrates specifies in further discussion that he quests not for a more or less complete enumeration and description of different kinds of knowledge we might have, but for the everlasting fundamental nature of knowledge (as opposed to other beliefs or thoughts). The dialogue discusses three concepts of knowledge none of which is found satisfying. The first definition offered by Theaetetus is empirical. "I think, then, that he who knows anything perceives that which he knows, and, as it appears at present, knowledge is nothing else than perception (*aesthesis*)" (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 151e). Is this "a real offspring or a mere wind-egg", Socrates asks, and it is no trouble to guess his final answer. Plato as much as many Ancient philosophers held that we cannot trust in and rely on our sensual experience to acquire true knowledge about the real world for two main reasons: first, the objects of sensual experience are constantly changing and, secondly, all perceptual knowledge is relative to the perceiver. You will never eat the same apple twice and you will never know the taste of an apple in your sister's mouth—how could you know something general about apples by perception, then? A further argument to finally reject "knowledge is perception" resembles very much something Nietzsche and Churchland emphasize: you cannot perceive without a conceptual framework. Plato suggests that all different kinds of sensory data given through ears, eyes and other sensory organs must unite somewhere. "For it would be strange, my boy, if [...] they do not all unite in one power, whether we should

call it soul or something else, by which we perceive through these as instruments the objects of perception” (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 184d). This (folk-psychological) assumption leads Plato to maintain a dualistic framework, in which our sensory organs appear as instruments, bodily tools to provide information for another faculty or organ. The unifying organ establishes an order for the chaotic sense data by attributing degrees of relative importance and unimportance to them and it can perceive “being and not-being, and likeness and unlikeness, and identity and difference” (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 185c). This organ, of course, is the soul, which “views some things by itself directly and others through the bodily features” (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 185e).

The two modes of the soul’s viewing are of certain interest when it comes to modern philosophy of mind, because Plato distinguishes two levels of intellectual activity:

Is it not true, then, that all sensations which reach the soul through the body, can be perceived by human beings, and also by animals, from the moment of birth; whereas reflections about these, with reference to their being and usefulness, are acquired, if at all, with difficulty and slowly, through many troubles, on other words, through education? (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 186cd)

Plato attributes the capacity to perceive to children, adults, and animals alike, and contemporary cognitive science can tell a lot more about the details of this process. But when it comes to self-reflection, second-order reasoning, and knowledge about the nature (*ousia*) of things, their importance to us and their relation to other things, reasoning, proof, and education is required. “Then, knowledge is not in the sensations, but in the process of reasoning about them; for it is possible, apparently, to apprehend being (*ousias*) and truth (*aletheias*) by reasoning, but not by sensation” (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 186d). Reflexive reasoning is, at least as far as Plato is concerned, a sentential activity and it is the only activity that might lead to knowledge. Consequently, knowledge is not in our sensual experience. This result has important consequences for the understanding and valuation of the body. Plato does not merely express an anti-natural prejudice, according to which the body is only the grave of our soul,<sup>2</sup> but he provides a logical argument that the body is essentially an unreasonable entity. This is one of the reasons why, according to Nietzsche, science ultimately turns out to be not an alternative, but the most sublime form of ascetic ideals (GM III 23).

The second definition of knowledge examined in the *Theaetetus* is “true opinion” (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 187b) as opposed to false opinion. Knowing is the mental state of having an opinion which is either adequate or not. This reflects the common “folk psychological” notion that knowledge has to be conscious, explicable and thus propositional. Socrates rejects this account of knowledge only because one can have

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Plato: *Gorgias* 493a, *Phaedrus* 80e, *Republic* 611c.

true opinions accidentally or for the wrong reasons. He does not regard a true belief as knowledge, unless you can give a *logos*, i. e. a reason, account, explanation, or justification, for your true belief. This leads to the third proposal, “that knowledge was true opinion accompanied by reason (*meta logou alethe doxan epistemen einai*)” (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 201c). This definition came to be known as “justified true belief”, though Plato was not satisfied with it. It may explicate what we mean by knowledge, but it does not inform us how and whether we actually do know something. Moreover, it moves the burden of argument to the notion of justification: what counts as a good *logos*? If we answer “the true one!”, then the whole definition becomes circular. Therefore, Plato concludes, “neither perception, *Theaetetus*, nor true opinion, nor reason or explanation combined with true opinion could be knowledge” (Plato 1961: *Theaetetus* 210ab). The avowed project of the *Theaetetus* was not accomplished. This unsatisfying result leaves a gap, which is to be closed through the Platonic theory of forms and the notion of recollection (*anamnesis*). The immortal soul saw the ideal forms before she was born into a human body. This is Plato's answer to the genetic question: whence do we derive our framework? And it provides an evaluation of our framework, too, because if our recollection works successfully, it will unveil true knowledge about the real nature of things. The ideas of an immortal soul, rebirth, recollection, and so forth run into well-known difficulties and are in many respects out of touch with our age. But rejecting Plato's solution does not imply that the problem he posed has been solved.

The prevalent topicality of Plato is due to his diagnosis. Churchland and Nietzsche agree with Plato that the epistemological question still lies were the *Theaetetus* had dropped it. Both agree that Plato's epistemological problem results from a misleading dualistic conception of the relation between mind and body. Both agree that a true opinion accompanied by reason is no proper explanation of knowledge, but for significantly different reasons. Nietzsche mainly attacks the metaphysical implications of Plato's ambition, most prominently in *Twilight of the Idols*: “How the ‘true world’ finally became a fable. History of an error”. Churchland argues on another level; to him, “the ‘justified-true-belief’ approach is misconceived from the outset, since it attempts to make concepts that are appropriate only at the level of cultural or language-based learning do the job of characterizing cognitive achievements that lie predominantly at the *sublinguistic* level” (Churchland 2012: 32–33). Following these ideas, traditional philosophy misconceived the epistemological field because a “judgment [...] is *not* the fundamental unit of cognition, not in animals, and not in humans either. Instead, the fundamental unit of cognition [...] is the *activation pattern* across a proprietary population of neurons” (Churchland 2012: 4). Churchland can back up this thesis with an increasing numbers of recent neural network studies. He, therefore, invites us to “give up the linguaformal ‘judgment’ or ‘proposition’ as the resumed unit of knowledge or representation” and refers to “conceptual resources of modern neurobiology and cognitive neuromodelling” (Churchland 2012: 5). It is to be shown in which sense these new research-results improve understanding of our mind and body.

### 4.3 Naturalized Epistemology and Philosophy of Mind (Churchland's Version)

Given that Churchland's position is occasionally attributed as a "radically reductive view" (Dove 2008: 4)<sup>3</sup> while even naturalistic interpretations of Nietzsche dissociate him from strict reductionism (e. g. Leiter 2002: 25, Clark and Dudrick 2006: 157) and in particular from "reductive eliminativist" positions (Abel 2001: 2), it seems relevant to emphasize that Churchland explicitly aims at a non-reductionist argument. Notwithstanding obvious similarities, Churchland rather aspires to overcome a traditional concept of reduction as proposed by logical positivists like Rudolph Carnap, who defined reduction as follows: "An object (or concept) is said to be *reducible* to one or more objects if all statements about it can be transformed into statements about these other objects" (Carnap [1928] 1967: 6). In opposition to such complete conceptual reductions,

eliminative materialism is the thesis that our common-sense conception of psychological phenomena constitutes a radically false theory, a theory so fundamentally defective that both the principles and the ontology of that theory will eventually be displaced, rather than smoothly reduced, by completed neuroscience. (Churchland 1981: 67)

Paul Feyerabend, one of Churchland's intellectual godfathers,<sup>4</sup> already introduced this position as a deliberate approach to overcome the false alternative between dualism and reduction. He advises empirically minded people inclined to a monistic worldview not to defend a reductionist identity-hypothesis. The ambition to reduce mental processes to material processes by means of reductive bridging laws is not only difficult, such a strategy also backfires because it implies that there are such things as mental processes in the first place. According to Feyerabend, a reasonable monist should try "to develop his theory without any recourse to existent terminology" (Feyerabend 1963: 295) because much of the traditional terminology might be essentially false and misleading. Such an enterprise is, according to Feyerabend, more promising as it might appear at first glance. "After all, a physiological theory of epilepsy does not become an empty tautology on account of the fact that it does not make use of the phrase—or of the notion—'possessed by the devil'" (Feyerabend 1963: 296). The fact that people spoke or speak that way does not imply that

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<sup>3</sup> To my knowledge Craig Dove provides the most extensive and very insightful account of similarities between Nietzsche and Churchland in his *Nietzsche's Ethical Theory*. He argues that "Churchland's naturalistic understanding of meaning as instantiated in the brain complements Nietzsche's theory of meaning" (Dove 2008: 8) and compares both ethical theories based on such naturalized epistemologies.

<sup>4</sup> "More than anything, PMC is known today as a present-day proponent of the position Feyerabend initially named: eliminative materialism" (Keeley 2006: 18). On this relationship, see also Churchland 1981: 67 and in more detail Churchland 1997.

such phrases refer to something—be it metaphorically—and could therefore be reduced to more naturalistic terms. Another example to illustrate this idea is the Lavoisier-Priestley case in chemistry: there is a real process of burning and corrosion, it only has nothing to do with a substance called “phlogiston”, which does not exist and consequently cannot be reduced, neither to oxygen nor to any other substance; it should be eliminated. Therefore, Churchland's eliminative materialism does not deny the existence of phenomena we traditionally refer to as “mental states”, it argues that their folk-psychological conceptualizations are plainly wrong and should be replaced by a better theory.

Churchland's approach towards a *New Epistemology* is premised on the assumption that in order to make perceptions we need to have a conceptual framework first. But where do we get our concepts from and how justified is our knowledge based on these concepts? It is useful to keep these two methodological problems, i.e. the descriptive-genealogical reconstruction *and* the normative-evaluative epistemology apart. Already in 1979 Churchland was convinced both problems “will not be solved short of an intellectual revolution in our conception of ourselves as intellectual beings” (Churchland 1979: 4, see 127, 150) and he has more or less stayed faithful to this idea ever since. “Now, it plainly will not do to suggest that each of us ‘sits behind’ his personal battery of measuring instruments (sense organs), observes their sensational outputs and *uses* an interpretation function in formulating his perceptual judgments” (Churchland 1979: 39). Similarly, Nietzsche rejects the folk-psychological division between perception and an interpreting perceiver as much as the one between doer and deed: “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed” (GM 1 13). He explains elsewhere:

After all, one has even gone too far with this “one thinks”—even the “one” contains an interpretation of the process, and does not belong to the process itself. One infers here according to the usual grammatical formula—“To think is an activity; every activity requires an agency that is active; consequently ...” (BGE 31)

Like Nietzsche, Churchland invites us to dismiss “the ‘sentential’ or ‘propositional attitude’ model that has dominated philosophy for the past 2500 years” (Churchland 2012: 14) in order to overcome the Platonic inheritance in epistemology. These “propositional attitudes [...] form the systematic core of folk psychology” (Churchland 1989: 3), a commonsensical misrepresentation of mental states Churchland wants to get rid of by means of eliminative materialism. Research in neural networks will—so he believes—set the foundations to solve problems, which have been misconceived and therefore remained unsolved in Western philosophy since its early Greek beginnings. He aspires to no less than to replace our traditional understanding of knowledge with a neuro-computational perspective, because our mind/brain is not (or at least not primarily) a lingual system, but a plastic neural network. In order to understand and judge this ambition and its relation to Nietzsche's philoso-

phy of mind, it is necessary to concentrate on Churchland for a moment. His main argument consists of two steps. First he provides a neuro-computational genealogy of mental states (1). Nietzsche might have been quite sympathetic towards such a naturalistic reconstruction of the mind and its genesis. In a second step, Churchland's normative epistemology argues for a new worldview in accordance with contemporary science (2), and I will argue that it is here that Nietzsche and Churchland part ways.

### 4.3.1 Establishing a Conceptual Framework

Following Churchland's naturalized epistemology, knowledge must be sought in the brain, but "the brain [is] a genuine *dynamical system*" (Churchland 2012: 19). Moreover, any propositional mental state about the world is a composition of "current sensory inputs" (a), "an already acquired profile of your background conceptual framework" (b), and "*the concurrent activation-state of your entire neuronal population*" (c) (Churchland 2012: 19). Consequently, the relation between knowledge, mind and matter is rather complex. However, Churchland gives a very illuminating and insightful reconstruction of cognitive representation and how in his view the mind establishes a conceptual framework to process sensory stimuli, i.e. to perceive in the first place. In successfully doing so he provides an answer to what I call the genetic question: where do we get our concepts from? Churchland is in accordance with Kant, Nietzsche, and others that perceiving is an active process, that some kind of framework is needed for perception to be possible. A neural network cannot "make any judgments" until it has built up and "possesses" a conceptual framework. How, then, is a conceptual framework constructed? This question has not been sufficiently addressed in traditional philosophy but recent research in artificial neural networks can, by analogy, shed some light on it, because real learning processes differ quite significantly from our traditional understanding. Churchland introduces a three-tiered conception of knowledge, a deliberate idealization of course, but nevertheless helpful. The first level consists in the material and structural process, when the "microconfiguration of the brain's  $10^{14}$  synaptic connections" is established (Churchland 2012: 33). The product of these processes, usually mostly completed when adulthood is reached, is a more or less fixed space of possible activation patterns among the neuronal population. This configuration of so-called attractor regions is, following Churchland, "in short, a *conceptual framework*" (Churchland 2012: 33). Calling such a framework "conceptual" should therefore be taken metaphorically. At the second level, different neural activities and activation states among populations of neurons are situated. "Bluntly, the brain's neural activities are *self-modulating* in real time, thanks to recurrent or feed-backwards architecture of so many of its axonal projections" (Churchland 2012: 33). This is why our mind is plastic and can represent new objects as well as old objects in new ways; it also explains the phenomenon of "gestalt-shifts". The third level refers to the cogni-

tive representation of changes that involve language, community, and culture. At this level we find the “techniques of individual and collective *evaluation* of the conceptual novelties produced at the first two levels of learning” (Churchland 2012: 34). This will be the level to address normative epistemological questions.

Let us first consider some details regarding the genesis of an artificial conceptual framework. Churchland elaborates how artificial face-discrimination networks proceed, and most likely natural ones like yours or mine, too. An artificial network of three rungs “learned” to discriminate (at first) eleven faces. It did so by focusing on “subtle *variations*” (Churchland 2012: 63) between different faces and by constructing an abstract background-map of the important differences and similarities. For this purpose the network must “compress” the information given by the 4096 receptors of the first rung to 80 artificial neurons of the second level. Each of these has a “*preferred input stimulus*” (Churchland 2012: 63), and it can, if fed with the right stimulus, produce a maximum level of excitation. All cells at this second, compression layer are concerned with whole faces and not just with eyes or nostrils, and each of them reacts more or less with respect to its specific stimulus pattern of a facial template. Although the actual pattern of “preferences” is arbitrary, it is necessary for the compressing or receiving neurons at the second layer to develop different preferred input stimuli in order to establish a significant activation-pattern. The pattern of preferences is not defined or programmed by the creators of the artificial network or the supervisors of the training-process, but it develops auto-poetically. Since all 80 cells react differently, determined by their preferences and the received stimulus, any face is matched by an unique pattern of activation level among the whole cell population. Similar faces receive similar activation-patterns and after some training, the network establishes a framework of similarity and dissimilarity-relations. “The result, for your unique face, is a unique pattern of activation levels across the entire second-rung population” (Churchland 2012: 65). Finally, the network is capable of filling gaps or repairing bad or rather incomplete pictures. If the given stimulus is insufficient, the network adds the missing elements and “infers” the most probable activation pattern. “The input deficit is made good, of course, by the network itself. Or rather, it is made good by the *general knowledge* about faces [...] slowly acquired by the network during its training period” (Churchland 2012: 66). The artificial network uses its earlier information about faces by means of vector completion and in doing so unifies the multitude of input.

Churchland provides a detailed natural account of the genesis of an information-processing mind and, I suggest, Nietzsche would generally approve of such a description.<sup>5</sup> But Churchland is prepared to say the network learned to “know” faces,

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<sup>5</sup> This is in agreement with Stanley Rosen's certainly exaggerated claim that “contemporary philosophers of mind remain entirely within the orbit of Nietzsche's teaching” but it disproves his critical objection that “they leave unanswered the same question: how do the multiple and dispersed elements of cerebral activity unify into consciousness” (Rosen 1999: 60). As we saw, Churchland is well capable of addressing this question, already raised by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*.



while Nietzsche (as we will see) would argue that the very process of “making good” indicates the human addition to and anthropomorphic falsification of indecisive stimuli (BGE 192). In spite of its really tempting results, Churchland seems to obliterate the difference between a genetic and a justificatory account. The analysis of face-recognition provides a reconstruction of our inferential praxis, but not a normative justification of knowledge-claims. Instead, Churchland seems to take a kind of dualistic Platonic ontology for granted which allows to value a world “made-good” by vector completion epistemologically higher than the world of mere stimuli: “Plato would approve of this network also, because it, too, displays the capacity to reach beyond the shifting vagaries of one’s sensory inputs as to get a grip on the objective and enduring features of one’s perceptual environment” (Churchland 2012: 67). The decisive argument behind this conclusion is Churchland’s idea that artificial as well as natural neural networks do not randomly “complete” insufficient stimuli but make use of vector completion: Vector completion is “the first and most basic instance of what philosophers have called ‘inference-to-the-best-explanation’, and have tried, with only limited success, to explicate in linguistic or prepositional terms” (Churchland 2012: 67). He emphasizes, again with reference to Plato, that the process of grasping an enduring reality behind the ephemeral appearances is plainly an iterated process of tens of thousands of abductive steps:

Accordingly, the vaguely Platonic business of looking past the noisy and ephemeral appearances, to get a grip on the enduring reality behind them, is plainly an iterated process. It involves not one, but a succession of distinct abductive steps, only tens of milliseconds apart, each one of which exploits the relevant level of background knowledge embodied in the peculiar cadre of synapses there at work, and each one of which yields a representation that is one step less stimulus-specific, one step more allocentric, and one step more theoretically informed than the representation that preceded it in the processing hierarchy. (Churchland 2012: 71)

Churchland combines abductive inference with a Platonic perspective and takes it as an argument for scientific realism. This is stunning, given that the central problem of IBE (Inference to the Best Explanation), as it was stated by Bas van Fraassen, is how one can know that the best available explanation is not just marginally better than its competitors? It might only be the best of a bad lot? Moreover, our criteria to judge an explanation as better are problematic, too. We might have pragmatic or instrumental reasons to choose the apparently best available explanation, but we neither have sufficient reason to regard this one to be true or closer to truth, nor does the probability of truth increase just because the limited amount of underdetermined abductive inferences increased. Nonetheless, Churchland is inclined to suggest that the multi-layered functional arrangement of higher mammals “could yield, for them, a more penetrating insight into the enduring categorical and causal structure of the world” (Churchland 2012: 71). His inclination towards realism, towards the idea of penetrating insights into the enduring structure of the world instead of just more or less successfully coping with live, deserves further investigation, because it marks the most significant difference to Nietzsche.

### 4.3.2 Weak Reasons for Epistemological Realism

Although it is not (as far as I see) derived from Churchland's neuro-computational account, his work breathes a strong realistic optimism; he even portrays his position on realism as a kind of personal commitment on a number of occasions: "On the view here adopted the network of belief retains systematic causal connections with reality, connections, moreover, that carry information about reality" (Churchland 1979: 41). Elsewhere he states: "I remain committed to the idea that there exists a world, independent of our cognition, with which we interact, and of which we construct representations" (Churchland 1989: 151). Taken together, these commitments constitute a number of claims: There is a real world existing. The real world is independent of our cognition. Although our cognition does not affect the world, our beliefs are systematically causally connected to the real world. Our beliefs carry information about the real world. Adding the awareness for fallibility and the notion of scientific progress, these claims sum up to convergent realism.

Realism plays a foundational role in Churchland's ambitious project to reshape our current conceptual framework into a more scientific one by means of eliminative materialism. Because our current conceptual web represents the latest stage in an evolutionary process, he invites us to consider a different way of speaking about the world: We "may examine with profit the possibility that perception might take place within a matrix of a different and more powerful conceptual framework" (Churchland 1979: 7). The more powerful conceptual framework Churchland has in mind is derived from current scientific theories and will affect our worldview fundamentally. After the

perceptual transformation here envisaged [...] people do not sit on the beach and listen to the steady roar of the pounding surf. They sit on the beach and listen to the aperiodic atmospheric compression waves produce as the coherent energy of the ocean waves is audibly redistributed in the chaotic turbulence of the shallows. (Churchland 1979: 29)

Churchland illustrates what he has in mind by means of an imaginary culture, "to gain a taste of how *better* we might apprehend the world, perceptually" (1979: 25). The post-transvaluation people would perceive and speak rather different. "Where (roughly) we learn 'is warm', they learn 'has a mean molecular KE of about  $6.5 \times 10^{-21} \text{ kg m}^2/\text{s}^2$ '" (1979: 29). He is well aware that this looks clumsy at first glance, but he is convinced it will unveil its profits in the long run. The repeated reference to "best" and "better" revives the problems of theory-comparison and theory-evaluation, mentioned above and points to the second requirement of any transvaluation: how do we judge alternatives? Why should the ones available not be a bad lot? What values should ground our judgments? Why should we like a day with a molecular kinetic energy of such and such better than a warm day? Being better is a not an essence of theories, but a function: being better for what? Churchland seems to imply that we will be better off with a perceptual framework based on the latest physical

theories in *any* respect. Is this so? A justification for such a value judgment could be its purported higher verisimilitude. Churchland seems to imply that an account in accordance with most recent scientific findings is more likely to capture the real state of affairs adequately, i. e. to be true, and that a true account is always and generally better—something Nietzsche explicitly puts into question (GS 344). However, discussing whether truth is an intrinsic and universal value or not is futile unless we actually have a real option on true accounts. The way Churchland construes his transvaluation relies on the possibility of true, or at least truer accounts, a kind of realism is required for his project, but is it also warranted by his arguments?

In order to understand Churchland's realism, a reconstruction of his rebuttal of Bas van Fraassen constructive empiricism (1980) is helpful. As opposed to van Fraassen's restriction to observational excellence as an indicator for theoretical truth, without further ontological implications beyond the observational level, Churchland argues, global excellence of theories is the measure of both truth and ontology. The main course of Churchland's argument against constructivist empiricism is noteworthy, since it primarily rejects van Fraassen's "*selective* scepticism in favour of observable ontologies" (Churchland 1989: 139). Referring to historically informed, sceptical meta-induction and to evolutionary considerations, Churchland becomes very explicit:

Why, then, am I still a scientific realist? Because these reasons fail to discriminate between the integrity of observables and the integrity of unobservables. If anything is compromised by these considerations, it is the integrity of theories generally. That is, of *cognition* generally. Since our observational concepts are just as theory laden as any others, and since the integrity of those concepts is just as contingent on the integrity of the theories that embed them, our observational ontology is rendered *exactly as dubious* as our nonobservational ontology. (Churchland 1989: 140)

The point of departure is his well justified insight that common-sense judgments are as theory-laden as scientific ones and "that there is no such thing as *non*-theoretical understanding" (Churchland 1979: 2, 37). The distinction between everyday knowledge and science collapses into the distinction between relatively new theories and theories whose cultural adoption is more or less complete. The same reduction applies to the apparent difference between theoretical and perceptual beliefs and to observable vs. unobservable ontologies. Given these premises, Churchland's conclusion is somewhat astonishing: "We cannot, therefore, adopt an instrumentalist or other non-realist attitude towards the doctrines and ontologies of novel theoretical frameworks, unless we are prepared to give up talk of truth, falsity, and real existence right across the board" (1979: 2).

Van Fraassen emphasizes that any theory whose ontology contains unobservables is radically underdetermined and he takes that as a reason to be sceptical about such theories. Churchland, however, argues that even theories—common-sense or scientific—whose ontologies contain only observables, are as underdetermined as the ones containing unobservables and yet he takes that as a reason for

realism. Churchland's philosophical consistency does not see good reasons to deny unobservable ontologies while accepting observable ones, but this does not lead him into the *prima facie* most consequent direction, i. e. non-realism. However, his line of reasoning seems to have several weaknesses. Why should something not be the case, only because its consequences are not welcome? If our scientific theories are as dubious as our common-sense notions, then science may not gain support from our notoriously wrong and misconceived common-sense. Most significant scientific revolutions started from rather counter-intuitive conjectures and deep (Platonic) distrust in immediate sense-experience. The understandable reluctance to give up talk of truth, falsity, etc. does not provide a justification for these traditional habits. It is no *reductio ad absurdum* either, since normative epistemology is not impossible in a non-realist framework. Why, then, does he need the realist commitment that is so hard to account for, "why call it scientific *realism* at all?" (Churchland 1989: 151). Churchland's answer is honest and entertaining, but it is also unmasking: "At several points in the reading of van Fraassen's book (1980), I feared I would no longer be a realist by the time I completed it. Fortunately, sheer doxastic inertia has allowed my convictions to survive its searching critique, at least temporarily [...] I am a scientific realist, of unorthodox persuasion" (Churchland 1989: 139).<sup>6</sup> I suggest, that such "doxastic inertia" was possible, because it expresses a deeply rooted personal confidence that human reason is successively and successfully revealing nature. "But the confidence in reason is" as Nietzsche pointed out "as confidence, a *moral* phenomenon" (D 15). Churchland's epistemological realism is particularly stunning, since he is arguing from a neuro-computational perspective and he himself admits that our neural networks could well do without truth as long as they are successful: "Natural selection does not care whether a brain has or tends toward true beliefs, so long as the organism reliably exhibits reproductively advantageous behaviour" (Churchland 1979: 150). This comes very close to Nietzsche's insight that it is the nature of living beings to be concerned with effects and outcomes and not with truth.

The intellect, as an instrument to sustain the individual, develops its main capacities in disguising [...] What does a man really know about himself! Yes, could he even only once perceive himself completely, as laid out in an illuminated glass-box? Isn't nature silent about almost everything, even about his body, to keep him far away from the routes of his inner organs, the fast movements of his blood, and the intermingling muscle-vibrations, and lock him safe in a self-confident but illusionary consciousness! (TL 1)

But Churchland refuses to draw the same conclusions as Nietzsche, because his proposed trans-valuation plainly would not work without realism.

Bas van Fraassen is thus perfectly justified in saying that "Churchland aims at little less than a 'transvaluation of values'" (Fraassen 1981: 555). Such a transvalua-

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<sup>6</sup> Given the personal reasons behind "Churchland's unexpected realism" one might indeed ask: "But while he may choose to do this, why ought the rest of us?" (Krieger and Keeley 2006: 191).

tion requires two things: it must be possible and it must be justified. The empirical belief that such a transformation is possible is a necessary condition to even think about the reorganization of our conceptual framework. Churchland and Nietzsche share this belief, though for slightly different reasons, insofar as both emphasize subjective, historically changeable, active elements in the process of concept-formation. Churchland states this empirical belief as follows:

If normal perceptual judgments are instances of an established pattern of theoretical responses to sensory stimulation, then the question of the propriety of anyone's perceptual judgments can be seen to turn ultimately on the question of the virtues of the theory in whose term the responses are made. A perceptual desideratum, therefore, is that one's perceptual judgments be made, if possible, within the terms of the best available world-theory. (Churchland 1979: 37)

The whole spirit of his *New Epistemology* highlights the very possibility of such a change: "If our perceptual judgments must be laden with theory in any case, then why not have them laden with the best theory available?" (1979: 35). And what is the best theory? According to Churchland, the

obvious candidate here is the conceptual framework of modern physical theory—of physics, chemistry, and their many satellite sciences. That the conceptual framework of these sciences is immensely powerful is beyond argument, and its credentials as a systematic representation of reality are unparalleled. It must be a dull man, indeed, whose appetite will not be whet by the possibility of perceiving the world directly in its terms. (Churchland 1979: 7)

In spite of his life-long interest in scientific findings, Nietzsche ultimately did not share Churchland's scientific enthusiasm. He shares the underlying diagnosis according to which the emergence of a conceptual framework is due to physiological processes:

It is we, who think and feel, that actually and unceasingly *make* something which did not before exist: the whole eternally increasing world of valuations, colors, weights, perspectives, gradations, affirmations and negations. This composition we invented is continually learnt, practiced, and translated into flesh and reality and even into commonplace. (GS 301)

Nietzsche even draws very similar conclusions:

We in the first place have created the world *which is of any significance to us!*—But it is precisely this knowledge that we lack, and when we get hold of it for a moment, we have forgotten it the next: we misunderstand our highest power, we contemplative men, and estimate ourselves at too low a rate,—we are *neither as proud nor as happy* as we could be. (GS 301)

As I will show, Nietzsche's alternative proposal envisions an unconditioned moment of contemplation and real value judgment under the conditions of perspectival pluralism instead of mere accommodation to the current state of affairs in science.<sup>7</sup>

## 4.4 Becoming Reasonable Bodies (Nietzsche's Version)

In light of the preceding comparison with Plato and Churchland, it might become apparent that Nietzsche's naturalized philosophy of mind, and in particular his notion of the greater reason of the body, also aims at a fundamental transformation of our conceptual framework. This becomes particularly evident in Zarathustra's fourth speech *On the Despisers of the Body*: "Body am I, and soul'—so saith the child. And why should one not speak like children? But the awakened one, the knowing one, saith: 'Body am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body.'" (Z I Despisers). Nietzsche rejects the misleading, "childish" folk-psychology of the Platonic tradition and contrasts it with a scientifically informed, naturalized picture. It is, as Volker Gerhardt emphasizes, "important to see that Nietzsche seeks to put himself in the position of a *knower* here" (Gerhardt 2006: 282), but it is similarly important to note that he leaves it open to speak like children—"why should one not"? He continues to use the dualism-laden terms "body" and "soul" instead of eliminating them. Even the notion, that the "soul" is only a bodily feature and that the word does not refer to any separate entity is presented as a saying of a *knower* (*Wissender*), not as objective truth. As opposed to Plato and Churchland, Nietzsche does not share their joint "metaphysical faith" (GS 344) that we could or should replace erroneous pictures with the correct ones. Nietzsche's naturalized epistemology agrees with Churchland in his rejection of Platonic, idealistic, or other versions of folk-psychology, but it also aims to overcome unjustified metaphysical prejudices such as are contained in Churchland's naturalized epistemology. This gives Nietzsche's philosophy of mind, in spite of its similarities with eliminative materialism, a fundamentally different outlook. The last section of this paper aims to show that Nietzsche developed his ideas with reference to the relevant scientific findings of his time. Yet, due to his fundamental scepticism, his position is ultimately not scientific but rather perspectivist. His philosophy of mind is naturalistic but not reductive physicalistic as his concept of nature is richer than the traditional version of mere *res extensa* still underlying many post-Cartesian world-views. As a consequence, his philosophy of mind is ultimately not eliminativist but pluralist.

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<sup>7</sup> This is why Richard Schacht is, in my view, perfectly justified in dubbing Nietzsche's view an 'Anti-Scientistic Naturalism' (Schacht 2012).

As is well-known, materialist conceptions of mind and soul are no recent invention, they are as old as Empedocles and Democritus. In the middle of the nineteenth century Carl Vogt famously suggested that

any scientist will, via reasonably coherent thinking, come to the view that all the capacities which we comprehend under the name of soul-activities are functions of brain-substance only; or, to make myself coarsely explicit, that thoughts are in more or less the same relation to the brain as is gall to the liver or urine to the kidneys. To suggest a soul that uses the brain like an instrument, with which it could work, is mere nonsense. (Vogt 1854: 323)

Though many took offence at Vogt's drastic way of putting it, a majority of nineteenth-century scientists agreed with his central idea that the so-called "soul" must find its place *in nature*. Nietzsche took the natural sciences seriously throughout his career and one area of his extensive interests are the newly developing fields of physiology and theories of perception. Inspired by Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* he became interested in the relationship between sensory perception, mental processes and epistemological judgments. As Emden confirms, "after his reading of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche in fact finds more 'evidence' for this argument in the nineteenth-century physiological and scientific treatises to which he turns during his years as a student in Bonn and Leipzig and as a young professor in Basle" (Emden 2004: 96). The fact that he asked his publisher to send free copies of his *Genealogy of Morals* to Hermann von Helmholtz, Carl Vogt, Emil Du Bois-Reymond and Ernst Mach might suffice to prove his later respect for such scholars (L. to Naumann, 08.11.1887, KGB III/5, L. 946). Following physiological theories, namely Helmholtz's theory of "unconscious inferences" in his *Handbuch der Physiologischen Optik* (Handbook of Physiological Optics; 1867), sensual perception is itself an active process of transforming stimuli into experiences.<sup>8</sup> Contemporary neuroscience provides a more detailed picture of this process, but its essential philosophical implications were clear to Nietzsche already:

We invent most parts of our experiences and we can hardly be forced to watch any process *not* as an "inventor". This all will say: we are essentially, since ancient times—*used to lying*. Or, to put it more virtuous and hypocritical, say, more convenient: You are much more of an artist than you know. (BGE 192)

This insight constitutes a significant element of Nietzsche's naturalized epistemology: if we want to understand or explain the epistemic status of mental states, we should refer to bodily features, as there is no reasoning beyond our body. But unlike Churchland, Nietzsche does not compound this epistemological heuristics with a metaphysical assumption about the ultimate ontology of our mind and body. Regard-

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<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche borrowed this book from the Basel library in spring 1873. On his relation to Helmholtz, see Reuter (2009: 40–55). I argue elsewhere that Nietzsche's interest in physiology is decisive for his general perspective on science (Heit 2012).

ing this ontology Nietzsche agrees with Du Bois-Reymond's famous claim: *Ignoramus*—we will not know!

Whether we will understand mental processes with reference to material conditions is one question, very different from another, whether these processes are the product of material conditions. The first question could be denied without deciding about the second, let alone denying it, too. (Du Bois-Reymond 1872: 75)

Friedrich Albert Lange had already argued along similar lines, adding an additional point that “notwithstanding all scientific progresses” even “a fully developed theory of brain-functions” would not close the gap between the phenomenal experience of a unified perception and the scientific image of physico-mechanisms (Lange 1866: I,15). Scientific findings point towards a naturalized epistemology and Nietzsche is inclined to reject the traditional dualism of mind and body. But according to these arguments, scientific findings cannot justify their own metaphysical presuppositions: we will never know.

As early as in *Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* Nietzsche points out that humans rely on a set of metaphors to construct conceptual frameworks, truth is beyond their grasp.

What, then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to people: truth are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are [...]. (TL 1)

It is no wonder that even the early Nietzsche tries to give an account of the origin of metaphors in naturalistic terms. Short of neural network studies, he understands it as a process of lingua-formal translation of perceptual data: “A nerve stimulus, first transposed into an image—first metaphor. The image, in turn, imitated by a sound—second metaphor” (TL 1). These stimuli, transformed into metaphors, form a language. “What is a word? The image of a nerve stimulus in sounds” (TL 1). But despite these vague connections between stimuli and words, Nietzsche rejects any realistic account. Our language does is not systematically causally connected with the world: “Do the designations and the things coincide? Is language the adequate expression of all realities? Only through forgetfulness can men ever achieve the illusion of possessing a ‘truth’ in the sense just designated” (TL 1). From this point of view, to say that something “has a mean molecular KE of about  $6.5 \times 10^{-21} \text{ kg m}^2/\text{s}^2$ ” is ultimately as metaphorical as “warm”. Neither our natural language nor our neural perceptions represent the real world, because, “to infer from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside us, that is already the result of a false and unjustified application of the principle of causation” (TL 1). If the world we live in is at least partly constructed by us, we should try to be conscious as much as possible of our subjective contributions. If we cannot escape anthropomorphism, let's do it properly. Let's take the surrounding chaos and create a successful cosmos of our gusto. Nietzsche therefore im-



poses future men to rearrange our set of metaphors in a more appropriate way as far as “cultural progress”, “art” and “life” are concerned. Under such conditions, we should make up our mind regarding the kind of world we would like to live in, and albeit we might have good reasons to choose the current scientific world, we are not obliged or determined to do so.

This naturalistically inclined agnosticism provides the key to Nietzsche’s interpretation of the childish as well as the knowing concept of the soul. It aims to avoid the wrong alternatives of dualism and reductionism respectively in order to propose “a naturalization beyond the dichotomy of transcendental metaphysics and reductionist physicalism” (Abel 2001: 7). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, a book explicitly intended to “say the same things as my Zarathustra, but differently, very differently—” (L. to Jacob Burckhardt, 22.09.1886, KGB III/3, L. 754), Nietzsche clarifies: “Said between ourselves, it is not at all necessary to get rid of ‘the soul’ itself and renounce one of the oldest and most venerable hypotheses: as happens frequently to the clumsiness of naturalists, losing ‘the soul’ as soon as they touched on it” (BGE 12). Contemporary naturalistic scientists are incapable of understanding the soul-phenomenon, in as far as they adhere to a worldview consisting of material particles (atoms) governed by universal laws (mechanism). Nietzsche does not deny the existence of consciousness as a property of mental states, he only argues that the “the Ego is a fiction” (Katsafanas 2005: 12), be it the dualistic fiction of an immortal soul or the reductionist fiction of “soul-atomism” (BGE 12). Nietzsche replaces the traditional world of atoms and laws by a dynamic world of processes and power-constellations, of events and fluctuant organizations (Abel 1984). This alternative concept of nature allows to see mental events continuous with other complex processes and events, though it should be highlighted that Nietzsche is concerned with the whole body-organization and not with a brain, a neural network or mere matter (Abel 2001: 33).<sup>9</sup> Regarding the specific soul-phenomenon, this process ontology basically implies that mental phenomena, the small reason of consciousness, are functions of a more complex organization engaging the whole body: “The formula of the ‘great reason’ of the body points to the process [*Geschehen*] that we ourselves are and that is characterized by attributes such as plurality, agonality, super- or subordination, and fluctuation” (Loukidelis 2012: 219–220, my translation). This concept is, as Loukideles shows, influenced and supported by Nietzsche’s reading of Wilhelm Roux’s *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* (Loukidelis 2012: 217 f.) but it is not merely derived from it as a new truth.

Nietzsche’s naturalized epistemology is consistent with his philosophy of mind. If he emphasizes that “there is more sagacity in thy body than in thy best wisdom” (Z I Despisers) he means to offer a new physiology, supported by arguments, evidence and prospects, but not an ultimate scientific truth. He gives an alternative interpre-

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<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche makes this difference explicit in his notes: “Goal: improvement of the whole body and not only of the brain” (NL 1883, KSA 10, 16[21]).

tation being aware “that all interpretations so far are perspectival evaluations, by means of which we succeed living” (NL 1885, KSA 13, 2[108]). It is impossible to divide alternative interpretations into true and false, yet they could and should be valued “from the optics of life” (BT 2). Such optics are the result of cultural experience and future ambitions. Unlike Churchland’s enthusiasm for neuroscience, Nietzsche provides naturalized support and experiential reasons why the concept of reasonable bodies is indeed *better* than traditional folk-psychology. Plato’s dualism is no longer convincing; naturalized epistemologies like Churchland’s provide a much more promising genealogy of the mind, and I believe Nietzsche would critically approve it. But he avoids the trap of a somewhat naive optimism regarding the sciences and their capacities to provide a basis for normative judgments. Nietzsche does indeed argue that “the way is open for new acceptations and refinements of the soul-hypothesis; and such conceptions as ‘mortal soul’, and ‘soul of subjective multiplicity’, and ‘soul as social structure of the instincts and passions’, want henceforth to have legitimate rights in science”; he even suggests

that the *new* psychologist is about to put an end to the superstitions which have hitherto flourished with almost tropical luxuriance around the idea of the soul, he is really, as it were, thrusting himself into a new desert and a new distrust—it is possible that the older psychologists had a merrier and more comfortable time of it [...]. (BGE 12)

This is all very similar to Churchland, but the last move of Nietzsche’s line of thought in section 12 of *Beyond Good and Evil* gives his concept of the new physiologist a rather different twist: “eventually, however, he finds that precisely thereby he is also condemned to *invent*—and, who knows? perhaps to *find* the new” (BGE 12). Churchland and Nietzsche are both adventurous voyagers, but while the one sets out to achieve a scientifically adequate world, the other leaves a plurality to discover.

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## Part II: **Consciousness and Freedom of the Will**



Mattia Riccardi

## 5 Nietzsche on the Superficiality of Consciousness

### 5.1 Introduction

Nietzsche famously states that “consciousness is a surface” (EH Clever 9). This is not only a highly provocative claim, but also a very puzzling one. How are we to make sense of such a striking contention? In this chapter I tackle the challenge posed by this question by showing that the view on consciousness underlying the perplexing claim expressed in *Ecce Homo*—Superficiality, for short—is philosophically well motivated, though unintuitive and probably less palatable to most of us. In particular, I will focus on two more specific characterisations of consciousness—both to be found in aphorism 354 of *Gay Science*—as it seems to me that they provide the key to Nietzsche’s endorsement of Superficiality. First, Nietzsche maintains that consciousness is “basically superfluous” (GS 354): the fact that we can explain one’s behaviour without appealing to one’s consciousness indicates that “consciousness is not causally efficacious in its own right”, as Leiter (2002: 92) puts it. Second, Nietzsche argues that consciousness involves “a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization” (GS 354), since, far from revealing the motives of our own actions, it rather tends to distort them in a way which—he suggests—we have good reason to consider confabulatory. I will refer to these two main features of Nietzsche’s position as to the “superfluousness claim” (SC) and to the “falsification claim” (FC).

In a seminal paper on this topic, Paul Katsafanas has recently offered a reading of Nietzsche’s view on consciousness which perceptively addresses both (SC) and (FC). On the one hand, he provides an interpretation of Nietzsche’s endorsement of (FC) by arguing that, by turning conscious, the content of a given mental state gets articulated conceptually and that such conceptualisation is the source of the falsification<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche ascribes to consciousness in GS 354. On the other hand, Katsafanas denies that Nietzsche holds (SC) altogether, since—he argues—this second claim is at odds with several descriptions and explanations of psychological phenomena he offers elsewhere in his works.

The reading developed in this chapter challenges the treatment Katsafanas offers of both claims. The deepest dissent will be about superfluousness, for I will argue that (SC) plays a crucial role in Nietzsche’s case for Superficiality. In particular, I

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<sup>1</sup> The general claim that for Nietzsche conceptualisation is a source of falsification is also defended by Hussain (2004). In Riccardi (2013) I, too, argue in favour of this claim. In both these pieces, however, the stress is quite different from that of the present chapter.

will maintain that Nietzsche endorses a weak, but still substantive version of *epiphenomenalism* with regard to *conscious causation*. As regards (FC), I will agree with Katsafanas' main thesis that the kind of falsification Nietzsche is concerned with in GS 354 is ultimately due to the way in which conscious content is conceptualised. However, I will dissent from Katsafanas' further claim according to which—for Nietzsche—"a mental state is conscious if its content is conceptually articulated, whereas a state is unconscious if its content is nonconceptually<sup>2</sup> articulated" (Katsafanas 2005: 2). I will instead show that Nietzsche allows for *unconscious conceptual content*. Therefore, if he takes consciousness to involve some kind of falsification, this has to depend on some proprietary form of conceptualisation. My proposal will be that *socially mediated propositional articulation* is here the relevant, intrinsically conscious, form of conceptualisation.

## 5.2 Nietzsche's Leibnizian Story

Aphorism 354 of *Gay Science* starts by laying out the puzzle of superfluosity:

The problem of consciousness (or rather, of one's becoming conscious [*des Sich-Bewusst-Werdens*] of something) first confronts us when we begin to realize how much we can do without it; and now we are brought to this initial realization by physiology and natural history (which have thus required two hundred years to catch up with *Leibniz's* precocious suspicion). For we could think, feel, will, remember and also 'act' in every sense of the term, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness' (as one says figuratively). All of life would be possible without, as it were, seeing itself in the mirror; and still today, the predominant part of our lives actually unfolds without this mirroring—of course also our thinking, feeling, and willing lives, insulting as it may sound to an older philosopher. *To what end* does consciousness exist at all when it is basically superfluous? (GS 354, translation changed)

Nietzsche argues that contemporary developments in natural science have provided support to Leibniz's insight according to which a great part of our mental life is not conscious. A first problem is how to make sense of Nietzsche's reference to Leibniz. Here, Leibniz's famous talk of "*petites perceptions*" might be the most likely association to come to mind. On closer scrutiny, though, this option does not seem to harmonise well with the context of Nietzsche's aphorism.

Consider, as Lanier Anderson invites us to do,<sup>3</sup> Leibniz's example of our hearing of the ocean's roar. The idea is that we do not perceptually experience all the tiny sounds each wave produces, but rather a 'unified' acoustic property we typically describe as the ocean's roar. However, Leibniz claims that we do have perceptions corresponding to each one of the stimuli, which conjointly generate our acoustic experience of the ocean's roar. Only, these perceptions are too infinitesimal to directly

<sup>2</sup> More precisely, unconscious content is "phenomenally articulated" (Katsafanas 2005: 4).

<sup>3</sup> See Anderson (2002).

become the object of our awareness, and must thus be unconscious. Despite being such a straightforward option, it is not clear how we could sensibly extend the model of “*petites perceptions*” so as to cover also mental attitudes like beliefs, desires or emotions, which appear in fact to be the main concern of GS 354. For what is here supposed to play the very role that, in the case of sensory experience, Leibniz ascribes to the tiny perceptions?

Fortunately, help comes from aphorism 357 of *Gay Science*, where Nietzsche refers to “Leibniz’s incomparable insight” according to which “consciousness [*Bewusstheit*] is merely an *accidens* of representation<sup>4</sup> [*Vorstellung*] and *not* its necessary and essential attribute; so that what we call consciousness [*Bewusstsein*] constitutes only one state of our mental and psychic world [...] and *by no means the whole of it*” (GS 357, translation altered). Arguably, this is the same view he has in mind when writing the opening lines of GS 354. Let us then take a closer look.

To start with, note that this characterisation of Leibniz’s position is almost literally borrowed from Otto Liebmann’s *Analysis der Wirklichkeit*—a book Nietzsche studied avidly.<sup>5</sup> In particular, Liebmann praises Leibniz’s “psychological discovery” according to which “‘to have representations’ and ‘to be oneself conscious of them’ is by no means the same”, for “there are in us many latent and unconscious representations” (Liebmann 1880: 212). To make his point clearer, Liebmann explicitly refers to the Leibnizian notion of “*connaissance virtuelle*”, rather than to that of “*petites perceptions*”.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, the former notion is immune to the problem raised by the latter, for it non-controversially applies to mental attitudes like beliefs, desires and emotions. Hence, it is this notion that turns out to be the Leibnizian idea pertinent to the context of GS 354.

Moreover, a later chapter from Liebmann’s book entitled “Human and animal cognition [*Menschen- und Tierverstand*]” provides significant clues to what Nietzsche might have in mind when he refers to discoveries in the fields of physiology and natural history that have carried Leibniz’s intuition further. In a passage underlined in Nietzsche’s own copy of Liebmann’s work we read that “the non-linguistic animal as well as the cognitively still incapable child, too, judge *in concreto* and draw wordless inferences. As many researchers (Schopenhauer, Helmholtz, Wundt, Sigwart) affirm or recognize, the activity of sensory intuition already involves a hidden logical activ-

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4 Nauckhoff translates *Vorstellung* as “power of representation”, which seems wrong to me. Nietzsche is saying that a representation, taken as a mental state token, can be either conscious or unconscious. Thus, with *Vorstellung* he does not mean some faculty or power—*Vermögen*, in German—of representation. This is confirmed by the passage from Otto Liebmann from which Nietzsche borrows his description of Leibniz’s thesis, as we will see in a minute.

5 This is convincingly demonstrated by Loukidelis (2006).

6 One might argue that the two different points made by Leibniz are not actually that different. This, however, would not be correct. Instructively, William James considers both Leibnizian ideas, i.e. tiny perceptions and latent representations, as each being the starting point for two different—and in his eyes equally flawed—arguments in favour of unconscious mental states. See James (1902: 164–168), *First Proof* and *Seventh Proof* respectively.



ity of the intellect, a tacit but very fast occurring judgment and inference” (Liebmann 1880: 498). The main reference here is to the theory of “unconscious inferences” which was first formulated by Schopenhauer<sup>7</sup> and later fully developed by Helmholtz—a view the young Nietzsche was already well acquainted with.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the way in which physiology and natural history<sup>9</sup> substantiate the Leibnizian view that most of our mental attitudes would occur and sustain our agency even if they were unconscious is by showing how the sophisticated cognitive capacities exhibited by animals do not require them to be conscious.

So far, however, it is still not clear in which sense the term “conscious” is here to be understood. Distinguishing between different ways in which we can talk about consciousness should help us to illuminate this point. Firstly, we may use the term to pick out the qualitative, first-person character of experience, i.e. the what-it-is-like to be in a certain mental state. The standard qualification in this case is “phenomenal”. Secondly, we may talk about consciousness in terms of awareness, as when one says that one is perceptually conscious of something in one’s visual field. Thirdly, we may also take the term to refer to the more specific and complex kind of consciousness we normally ascribe only to human beings, namely self-consciousness. Which of these different notions of consciousness is at stake in GS 354?<sup>10</sup>

It seems plain that neither phenomenal consciousness, nor awareness would work here. To appreciate this, recall that Nietzsche’s argument implies that the kind of consciousness he is concerned with is such that we cannot ascribe it to animals. This immediately rules out our first candidate, for phenomenal consciousness is usually understood as given together with sentience. Awareness, however, fares no better, for we intuitively allow for animals to be conscious in this sense—at least in the perceptual case. Thus, if we are looking for a notion of consciousness that is suitable for drawing a divide between animals and human beings, we have to exclude both options. Self-consciousness, however, seems to be a much more promising candidate. Firstly, consider that Nietzsche describes the kind of consciousness he is dealing with as “one’s becoming conscious [*Sich-Bewusst-Werden*] of something”, a

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7 See in this context GS 99, where Nietzsche refers to Schopenhauer’s “doctrine of the intellectuality of intuition” as to “his immortal doctrine”.

8 On this, see now Reuter (2009).

9 Here, “natural history” translates Nietzsche’s more straightforward “*Tiergeschichte*”. This roughly corresponds to what we now call evolutionary biology.

10 Of course, the list of putative candidates could go on, including for instance access consciousness and, in particular, monitoring consciousness. In my opinion, access consciousness should be ruled out because of the reflexivity implicit in Nietzsche’s description (in general, see Block (1997) for this notion). Monitoring consciousness, on the contrary, is a *prima facie* viable candidate in favour of which Welshon (2002) makes a strong case. See note 30 below for the reasons why we should prefer self-consciousness over monitoring consciousness in this context.

formulation which implies the kind of reflexivity<sup>11</sup> we normally capture with the notion of self-consciousness. Support for this reading is also lent by Nietzsche's "mirror" metaphor, which, too, suggests some sort of reflexivity. Self-consciousness, moreover, is such a high cognitive ability that we can easily expect it to serve as differentiating us from other animals. Indeed, there is the strong intuition that animals lack the kind of reflexivity implied by a genuine notion of self.

If this is correct, we can formulate the main thesis conveyed by Nietzsche's Leibnizian story as follows:

(LT): a mental state can be either self-conscious or non-self-conscious.<sup>12</sup>

At this point, a question arises: how can an unconscious mental state become conscious in the specific sense Nietzsche has in mind? In current philosophy of mind, variations of (LT) are often associated with what has become known as higher-order approaches to consciousness. The basic idea is that a mental state *M* turns conscious when it is "indexed" by a higher-order representation (HOR) of some kind, which signals to one that one is in *M*—a view which Nietzsche clearly entertains in the following *Nachlass* passage:

"Consciousness"—to what extent the represented representation, the represented will, the represented feeling (*which alone is known to us*) is completely superficial! "Appearance" [*Erscheinung*] also in our *inner* world! (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26 [49])

It is not easy to tell which kind of accompanying HOR Nietzsche has in mind here. In contemporary debates, several alternatives are being explored: the HOR accompanying a mental state is taken to be either an (inner) experience, or an (inner) perception, or a thought. Even if it is not entirely clear which one among these candidates is most appropriate to grasp Nietzsche's view, he seems to endorse something like a higher-order thought (HOT) version of the more general HOR approach. This is suggested by his description of one's being conscious in terms of the ability "to 'know' what distressed him, to 'know' how he felt, to 'know' what he thought" (GS 354). Further support for this suggestion comes from the striking similarities between Nietzsche's position and the account of consciousness defended by David Rosenthal, the most famous proponent of HOT theory in contemporary philosophy of mind.<sup>13</sup> Ac-

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**11** Luca Lupo calls this kind of reflexivity-involving consciousness "secondary consciousness" and distinguishes it from the more basic "primary consciousness" we share with animals and which roughly corresponds to mere environmental awareness. See Lupo (2006: 192–193).

**12** From this point on, I will simply drop the prefix "self" for short and thus revert to the terms "conscious" and "consciousness". However, unless specified otherwise, the terms should always be read as "self-conscious" and "self-consciousness" respectively. Also, whenever emphasis is needed, I will still resort to the prefix "self-".

**13** This point has been stressed by Brian Leiter, in particular in his incarnation as a blogger. See also Abel (2001: 10).

ording to Rosenthal’s version of the HOR approach, in order to become conscious, a mental state *M* has to be accompanied by a HOT to the effect that one is in *M*.<sup>14</sup> In particular, it will be useful here to underscore three key points made by Rosenthal, for they smoothly correlate with important aspects of Nietzsche’s account.

First, Rosenthal stresses that not all mental states are conscious. Indeed, the main motivation of his theory is to articulate a view which does not conflate ‘mental’ and ‘conscious’. According to his theory, an unconscious mental state *M* can become conscious *only* by being accompanied by the relevant HOT. This thesis nicely expresses the Leibnizian point made by Nietzsche according to which we have latent mental representations, which can at some moment “enter our consciousness” (LT).

Second, from Rosenthal’s definition of conscious mental state follows that it involves reference to the subject who is in it. Thus, reflexivity turns out to be an essential characteristic of conscious mental states. As Rosenthal puts it, the “content [of HOTs] must be that one is, oneself, in that very mental state” (Rosenthal 1997: 714).

Third, and crucially, Rosenthal stresses that the fact that mental states can occur both in conscious and unconscious form raises the problem of superfluosness already exposed by Nietzsche: for “[w]hat, if any, function do conscious versions of these states have that nonconscious versions lack?” (Rosenthal 2007: 829) It is about time to start tackling this problem.

### 5.3 Consciousness and Language

According to Nietzsche, once we grasp that all our mental attitudes can—and most of the time in fact do—occur and determine our agency without becoming conscious, i.e. without being accompanied by any suitable HOT, the obvious question arises: why has consciousness evolved, given that it is superfluous in this precise sense? His answer is that consciousness emerged as a result of the fact that human beings had to join and live in society in order to survive:

That our actions, thoughts, feelings and movements—at least some of them—even enter into consciousness is the result of a terrible “must” which has ruled over man for a long time: as the most endangered animal, he *needed* help and protection, he needed his equals; he had to express his neediness and be able to make himself understood—and to do so, he first needed “consciousness”, i.e. even to “know” what distressed him, to “know” how he felt, to “know” what he thought. (GS 354)

Nietzsche’s main thesis, thus, is that consciousness is closely related to the “*ability to communicate*” (GS 354). It is not completely clear, however, how we are to make sense of this claim. Central to his view seems to be the quite plausible idea that, among the many things the members of a given community would need to commu-

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<sup>14</sup> The classic paper is Rosenthal (1997).

nicate about, communicating the mental states they are in would in any case be fundamental. This, however, requires that one “knows” the mental state one is currently in. Moreover, the communication-driven character of conscious states is clearly indicated for Nietzsche by their linguistic nature: “conscious thinking *takes place in words, that is, in communication signs [Mittheilungszeichen]*” (GS 354). Now, provided that consciousness is born out of our need to communicate, it seems natural to assume that it bears some relevant connection to language. And yet, again, we will need to qualify this view further in order to get a clearer picture.<sup>15</sup> Let us start by highlighting two main aspects.

The first point concerns the relation between language and consciousness. In an aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil* that is tightly linked to GS 354, Nietzsche notes that to share a language is not sufficient to guarantee flawless communication. For “[u]sing the same words is not enough to get people to understand each other: they have to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences too; ultimately, people have to have the same experience *base*” (BGE 268). The issue addressed here is the problem of a private language: if mental terms refer to first-person properties of our inner states, how can we be sure that they convey genuine, i.e. inter-subjectively understandable meaning? How can mental talk not be private? Remarkably, Nietzsche’s answer is that language-mediated social intercourse has *de facto* made uniform the inner life of people belonging to the same community, thereby enabling mental terms to actually denote states of the same type. The “genius of the species” Nietzsche refers to in both aphorisms<sup>16</sup> consists therefore in the mental vocabulary shared by the members of a certain linguistic community.<sup>17</sup>

In Nietzsche’s eyes, however—and we are now on the second point—this has fatal consequences. For “each of us, even with the best will in the world to *understand* ourselves as individually as possible, ‘to know ourselves’, will always bring to consciousness precisely that in ourselves which is ‘non individual’, that which is average” (GS 354). In other words, Nietzsche seems to hold that we interpret our own mental states in light of a socially developed “theory of mind”. Crucially, this is the main reason which substantiates (FC), since it is the fact that “our thoughts themselves are continually as it were *outvoted* and translated back into the herd per-

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**15** The fact that Nietzsche directly links consciousness and language confirms that the kind of consciousness at issue in GS 354 is self-consciousness. On the one hand, it seems plausible to argue that self-consciousness depends on language as long as the capacity to self-refer implicit in it requires one’s mastery of pronouns like “I” or “mine”. On the other hand, it confirms that Nietzsche is concerned with a kind of consciousness that—being essentially linguistic—cannot be ascribed to animals. As argued by Rosenthal (2005b), our ability to verbally *report* the mental states we are in offers an important clue of the close link between consciousness and language.

**16** “*On the ‘genius of the species’*” is the very title of GS 354. Here is how the expression occurs in BGE 268: “Fear of the ‘eternal misunderstanding’: this is the benevolent genius that so often keeps people of the opposite sex from rushing into relationships at the insistence of their hearts and senses—and *not* some Schopenhauerian ‘genius of the species’—!”

**17** Lupo provides a nice discussion of this point (2006: 189–190).

spective” which causes “all becoming conscious” to bring about “a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization” (GS 354). Since we end up conceptualising our own states in accordance with the folk-psychological framework we also employ to ascribe mental states to others, the uniqueness of what we think, desire and feel is, if not completely suppressed, at least significantly blurred. Hence, to understand the dynamics of this re-interpretation will be crucial to make sense of (FC). Before we turn to this task, it will be helpful to briefly pause and see where we have gone so far.

In the light of the analyses developed in the last two sections, we can start by giving a more precise formulation of the two main claims Nietzsche endorses with regard to consciousness:

(SC): mental attitudes could—and most of the time actually do—occur and sustain our agency without becoming conscious.

(FC): in becoming conscious, the content of mental attitudes is re-translated in light of a socially developed and acquired “theory of mind”.<sup>18</sup>

More importantly, we are now in a position to address the two difficulties raised by Katsafanas’ rendering of Nietzsche’s account of consciousness. The first problem concerns (FC). According to Katsafanas’s reading, Nietzsche holds that, by turning conscious, the content of a mental state becomes conceptualised and that such conceptualisation is responsible for falsification. However, as suggested by Nietzsche’s commitment to the idea of Helmholtzian—and Schopenhauerian—“unconscious inferences”, Katsafanas’ further claim to the effect that conceptualisation *always* goes together with consciousness seems to misconstrue his view.<sup>19</sup> My own suggestion will be to argue that the kind of falsification involved in conscious mental attitudes is not due to conceptualisation *in general*, but rather results from the both *socially mediated* and *propositionally articulated* form in which mental attitudes are typically re-translated.

The second difficulty regards (SC). For does not Nietzsche’s answer to the problem of superfluosity indicate that consciousness has indeed a profound and manifest influence on the course of our life? Despite the *prima facie* conclusiveness of this observation, I will defend that there is a strong sense in which consciousness is for Nietzsche superfluous, for he holds that a mental state has the causal powers it happens to have quite independently of its being conscious. As Welshon correctly

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**18** The motivation for (FC) worked out above can be summarised as follows: (a) consciousness serves the goal to communicate the mental states we are in; (b) the vehicle of communication are words (or, more generally, signs); (c) mental terms, in order to convey meaning, have to pick out the same type of mental state. From (a), (b) and (c) follows that we express and report the mental attitudes we are in by adopting the same kind of mental talk we use to make sense of others’ inner states.

**19** See section 5.2 above.

points out,<sup>20</sup> this gives us sufficient room for a weak, but still substantive version of epiphenomenalism about conscious causation.<sup>21</sup>

## 5.4 Conceptualisation and Falsification, Unconscious and Conscious

According to Katsafanas' account, Nietzsche holds that conceptualisation is indissolubly associated with consciousness. Given that he takes conceptualisation to be responsible for falsification, the two theses follow that (a) unconscious mental states are not-yet-falsified *qua* still non-conceptualised, and that (b) conscious mental states are falsified *qua* conceptualised. In this section I will argue against (a) and show that (b) requires some substantive qualification if it is to accurately capture Nietzsche's view. Since Katsafanas sees his own reading confirmed by BGE 192, I will focus on this aphorism.

Nietzsche stresses here the inaccuracy of our perception, for instance, of a tree: how little we see it "precisely and completely, with respect to leaves, branches, colors, and shape" (BGE 192). Quite on the contrary, he notes, "[w]e find it so much easier to imagine an approximate tree instead" (BGE 192). Katsafanas' treatment of this example is as follows:

Nietzsche's idea is that our perceptions sometimes represent objects in a way that is not sensitive to all of the detail of the object, but is instead sensitive only to the general type to which the object belongs. This type of perception represents the tree as an instance of the concept TREE, rather than representing it in its individual detail; it does so by emphasizing certain general features of trees at the expense of the individual details of this particular tree. (Katsafanas 2005: 7)

Surely, Katsafanas' rendering of Nietzsche's point in BGE 192 is mostly correct. To put it more succinctly, the kind of conceptualisation responsible for falsification at the perceptual level is *generalisation*. What seems problematic, however, is the further assumption according to which such a generalisation requires a mental state to be conscious and consequently—given Nietzsche's view—language-dependent.<sup>22</sup> Is this correct?

I think the answer is No, for the kind of generalisation illustrated by the tree example seems to be the result of unconscious processes, which transform what Nietzsche refers to in the *Nachlass* as the "chaos of sensation" into a full-fledged per-

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<sup>20</sup> See Welshon (2002). For Welshon's proposal see note 30 below.

<sup>21</sup> As we have already seen at the beginning of this chapter, this is also the main thesis held by Leiter (2002), who writes that "conscious states are only causally effective in virtue of type facts about that person" (91), where "type-facts" are facts regarding one's psycho-physical constitution.

<sup>22</sup> Recall that for Nietzsche "conscious thinking *takes place in words*" (GS 354).

ception.<sup>23</sup> This is confirmed by Nietzsche's general characterisation of the way in which our perception falsifies: “[g]iven some stimulus, our eyes find it more convenient to reproduce an image that they have often produced before than to register what is different and new about an impression” (BGE 192).<sup>24</sup> Here, the fact that Nietzsche uses the term “image” suggests that no linguistic concept needs to be involved in the relevant cases. Indeed, examples like the tree perception seem to apply also to non-linguistic animals.

Even if this was accepted, one could still accommodate Katsafanas' original proposal. One strategy would be to accept that there is low-level falsification due to the unconscious mechanisms that govern our perceptions, yet at the same time refuse to qualify such processes as genuine conceptualisation. One could therefore salvage the main claim according to which only (language-dependent) conscious content is conceptualised.<sup>25</sup>

How might one respond to this move? The only strategy we can pursue is to show that perceptual generalisation counts as a genuine kind of conceptualisation. To start with, note that Nietzsche's characterisation of concepts as “pictorial signs [*Bildzeichen*] for sensations that occur together and recur frequently” (BGE 268) clearly indicates that mental images could do the required conceptual work. Indeed, according to this description, it seems that perceptual concepts are something like “sensory templates” that we form when we first come across some object *O* and then reactivate on successive encounters with objects of the same kind.<sup>26</sup> A sensory template, thus, works as a recognitional concept. Can we say that such a recognitional concept genuinely represents a given *O* as being a particular of a certain type, even if it operates under the threshold of consciousness? For the answer to this question, it will be helpful to briefly go back to the historical context of Nietzsche's theory.

Recall that Nietzsche endorsed the by his time mainstream Helmholtzian account according to which our perceptions are the result of an unconscious processing, which is best described as an instance of thought. Thus, given that sensory templates are recognitional concepts and that they plausibly play some central role in such unconscious mechanisms, we obtain a consistent notion of ‘unconscious concept’. Interestingly, we find a similar view in Liebmann's *Analysis der Wirklichkeit*—

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**23** See NL 1887, KSA 12, 9[106]. On Nietzsche's “chaos of sensation”, see Riccardi (2013).

**24** Note that the kind of inaccuracy Nietzsche is willing to point out is quite general. Indeed, as suggested by the subsequent example according to which, while reading a text, we do not actually read “all the individual words (or especially syllables) on a page” (BGE 192), to perceive something as instantiating some general type is only one way in which our senses can be inaccurate.

**25** I am grateful to João Constâncio for this point. See also section 2 of Constâncio (2011). Katsafanas, too, notes: “conscious perception involves a classifying awareness, whereas unconscious perceptions involve only a discriminatory ability, only a perceptual sensitivity to features of the environment” (Katsafanas 2005: 9). It is worth remembering, however, that according to Katsafanas the tree example is indeed an example of *conscious* perception.

**26** See Riccardi (2013) for more details on this point. The notion of “sensory template” is borrowed from Papineau (2007).

the work to which Nietzsche owes essential insights into the Leibnizian story that proves crucial for his understanding of consciousness in GS 354. As we have already seen, Liebmann maintains that the behaviour exhibited by several animal species presupposes a quite sophisticated mind. In particular—and decisively for our present concern—he holds that the “simple recognition of the objects of sensible intuition is but the primitive type of affirmative judgment” (Liebmann 1880: 498). This shows that the recognitional ability provided by one’s possession of a given sensory template suffices for one to perceptually represent an O as instantiating the corresponding type. Crucially, such an ability qualifies as conceptual, although one’s exercise thereof requires neither mastery of a language nor self-consciousness.

We can therefore conclude that generalisation is a kind of falsification-involving conceptual capacity which falls on the wrong side of the divide Nietzsche draws at the beginning of GS 354, namely on the side also populated by animals. It follows that whatever type of conceptualisation might be relevant in our context needs to satisfy the quite general constraint that it must not already occur at the level of unconscious conceptualisation which is typical for perceptual experience.<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately, this is still much too vague. To start working towards a viable solution, recall that GS 354 is concerned, in particular, with conscious mental attitudes like beliefs, desires, and emotions, the content of which is thus *propositional*. Suitable examples are states like: “I think that p”, “I want that p” and “I feel that p”. Furthermore, Nietzsche tells us that one typically acquires the ability to conceptually articulate such attitudes through linguistic intercourse with other members of one’s society. It seems to me that these two characteristics give us important clues about consciousness’ *peculiar* kind of falsification.<sup>28</sup> Let us take a closer look.

A first feature of the relevant kind of falsification derives from the mental vocabulary we use to consciously articulate our mental life. Recall Nietzsche’s position: through social, i.e. basically linguistic interaction with other members of our community we acquire a shared psychological vocabulary. In his eyes, the fact that we then conceptualise our own inner states in accordance with such categories completely obscures their nature.

A second feature is due to the propositional structure of conscious content itself. In particular, content of this kind involves reference to the “I”—something that should not surprise us, for the states we are dealing with are self-conscious states. This gives us a powerful hint as to how to make sense of the kind of falsification which, according to Nietzsche, is typical for propositionally-articulated mental attitudes: we are led to believe that there is an “I” which acts as the bearer of the rele-

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<sup>27</sup> Consider also that Nietzsche holds consciousness to be language-dependent, whereas he does not take concepts to be (necessarily) language-dependent, since, as we saw, he defines them as “pictorial signs” (BGE 268).

<sup>28</sup> Of course, the most general kind of falsification, i.e. generalisation, might be at work also in such cases. The point is that we need to understand in which proprietary way self-conscious and propositionally articulated states falsify.



vant mental attitudes. In Nietzsche's eyes, this is due to the syntactical structure of our conscious thought. However, he argues, on this point language simply misleads us.

There are two main senses in which we are thus misled: the first is that the propositional structure of conscious mental attitudes like “*I think that p*”, “*I desire that p*”, and “*I feel that p*” inoculates the belief that there is actually something to which the indexical “*I*” refers: a soul, or a subject. As Nietzsche puts it, “people used to believe ‘in the soul’ as they believe in grammar and the grammatical subject: people said that ‘*I*’ was a condition and ‘think’ was a predicate and conditioned—thinking is an activity, and a subject *must* be thought of as its cause” (BGE 54). As this passage already suggests, the second relevant aspect is that the soul, or subject, so posited is conceived of as being causally efficacious. Crucially, both aspects are for Nietzsche immediately related to the fact that the mental attitudes we are concerned with are conscious. In other words, the soul, or subject, that we take to be substantial and efficacious is also believed to be intrinsically conscious. At face value, it is hard to see how we are to make sense of the relations between the quite different properties here ascribed to the soul. Since this will give us the crucial clue as to how to interpret (SC), I will leave this problem for the next section. For now, let me briefly recapitulate the main points elaborated so far.

Nietzsche does not bind consciousness and conceptualisation together as tightly as argued by Katsafanas. The perception of a tree, for instance, typically involves generalisation, an operation he takes to be genuinely conceptual although it does not require one to be self-conscious of the perception one is having. Hence, in order to make sense of (FC) it won't help to appeal to conceptualisation indiscriminately. Rather, we need to individuate the *specific* form of conceptualisation responsible for the content of our mental attitudes being falsified as soon as they turn conscious. According to the proposal put forward here, the kind of conceptualisation we are looking for consists in our mental attitudes (a) being re-interpreted according to a socially acquired “theory of mind” (b) and being conceptualised in such a way that the “*I*” figures not only as the bearer, but also as the ostensibly authentic originator of our beliefs, intentions and volitions. In short, the relevant kind of conceptualisation is *socially mediated propositional articulation*.

## 5.5 The Illusion of Conscious Causation: Superfluosity Vindicated

As we have seen above, consciousness encompasses a proprietary form of falsification. In order to work out (SC), the falsifying element we need to focus on is the idea that conscious states are causally efficacious *qua* conscious, a view Nietzsche clearly rejects in *Twilight of the Idols*: “the conception of a consciousness (‘mind’) as cause, and then that of the *I* (the ‘subject’) as cause are just latecomers that appeared once

causality of the will was established as given, as *empirical*... Meanwhile, we have thought better of all this” (TI Errors 3). It will be impossible to deliver a detailed account of Nietzsche’s position here. Rather, I will concentrate on the aspects most relevant for the problem of superfluosity. In particular, two theses need to be discussed. The first is the view according to which real psychological causality is at the level of unconscious dispositions Nietzsche conceives of in terms of drives. The second is that we usually confabulate about our own mental life, thus construing false explanations of our being in a certain (conscious) mental state. Let us start with the first claim.

Nietzsche thinks that we become introspectively aware of just a few of the inner states we are in. Thus, only a very small part of our mental attitudes become conscious. Such conscious states, however, are causally produced by psychological processes that do not themselves “enter our consciousness”. The consequence that follows from this is twofold:

[W]hat becomes conscious is subject to causal relations which are completely withheld from us,—the succession of thoughts, feelings, ideas in consciousness does not mean [*ausdrücken*] that this sequence is causal: it is *apparently* so, though, and at the utmost level. (NL 1887, KSA 12, 11[145])

On the one hand, there are causal connections holding between our mental states of which we are not aware. On the other hand, given that we have conscious access only to a very small number of our inner states, we come to feel that there is some different, distinctive causal link obtaining *only* between those conscious states. Here, in Nietzsche’s eyes, is where the (wrong) picture we have of our own agency originates. Interestingly, Rosenthal offers a very similar account:

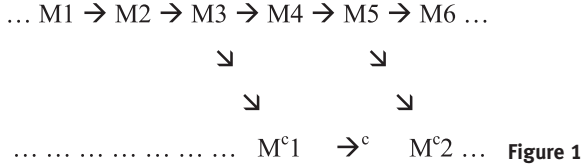
Because our mental states are not all conscious, we are seldom if ever conscious of the mental antecedents of our conscious states. And conscious desires and intentions whose mental antecedents we are not conscious of seem to us to be spontaneous and uncaused. The sense we have of free agency results from our failure to be conscious of all our mental states. (Rosenthal 2005c: 361)<sup>29</sup>

We can summarise this idea in the following model (Figure 1):

There is a series M1–M6 of causally connected, unconscious mental states. Only M3 and M5 become conscious, whereby their contents become propositionally articulated. M<sup>c</sup>1 and M<sup>c</sup>2 are the conscious counterparts of M3 and M5. (The different numeration is meant to highlight that M<sup>c</sup>1 and M<sup>c</sup>2 are the only two introspectively ac-

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<sup>29</sup> See also Dretske: “If what makes an experience or a thought conscious is the fact that S (the person to whom it occurs) is, somehow, aware of it, then it is clear that the causal powers of the thought or experience [...] are unaffected by its being conscious. Mental states and processes would be no less effective in doing their job [...] if they were all unconscious” (2000: 186). Dretske, however, takes this to be an unacceptable consequence of HOR theories of consciousness.



cessible states, for they are the only two states to become conscious.) Once we introspect and find that we are in  $M^c2$ , “we want there to be a *reason why* we are in the particular state we are in” (TI Errors 4), as Nietzsche puts it. Therefore, since all that we find by introspection is that our actual (conscious) state  $M^c2$  was preceded by the (conscious) state  $M^c1$ , we take that there is some conscious causal connection ( $\rightarrow^c$ ) between them.<sup>30</sup> Here is how we construe this connection according to Nietzsche:

The memory that unconsciously becomes activated in such cases is what leads back to earlier states of the same type and the associated causal interpretation,—*not* their causality. Of course, memory also interjects the belief that representations [*Vorstellungen*], the accompanying processes of consciousness [*Bewusstseins-Vorgänge*], had been the cause. This is how a particular causal interpretation comes to be *habituated*; this interpretation in fact inhibits an *investigation* into the cause and even precludes it. (TI Errors 4, translation changed)

The scenario Nietzsche sketchily presents in this passage is complicated. For the purpose of this chapter, it will suffice to focus on the two main elements of falsification implicit in it. The first one is the conscious causation we posit as linking together only the mental states we are conscious of, and which works, as it were, as a general schema. The second element of falsification has to do with the peculiar conceptualisation our inner states undergo by becoming conscious. As we have seen above, this process results in propositionally articulated mental attitudes. Now, such propositional attitudes are the kind of states we recur to in order to fill in the general causal

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**30** The model proposed here is similar to the one put forward by Welshon (2002: 123–124). As I see it, the main differences between my own account and Welshon’s version of epiphenomenalism result from his reading consciousness as *monitoring* consciousness. As he puts it, “psychological events cause other psychological and non-psychological events because of their non-monitoring conscious properties” (2002: 123). I agree with this general way of construing Nietzsche’s epiphenomenalism. Only, I think we should drop the qualification “monitoring”, and rather understand consciousness as self-consciousness. The main gain in so doing is that we can make sense of (FC) far more naturally. On the contrary, if we construe consciousness as some kind of monitoring of our inner states, it is not easy to see why such monitoring should involve falsification. For on the most natural reading, monitoring is a “neutral” operation, which does not affect what is being monitored in the way consciousness is supposed to do according to Nietzsche. Moreover, the relevant kind of falsification includes the way in which, by articulating our mental attitudes propositionally, we factor in the “I” as the bearer they depend on. Again, this indicates that the kind of consciousness Nietzsche is dealing with entails a constitutive reference to the self.

schema we use to make sense of our mental life, for they typically figure in our explanations as the *motives* which bring about the actual state we are in. According to the view recently defended by Peter Carruthers—another HOT theorist—“all active intentions and acts of intention-formation are self-attributed via a process of self-interpretation” (Carruthers 2007: 205).<sup>31</sup>

We are now in a position, I think, to better assess (SC). According to Nietzsche, there is some kind of psycho-physiological causation, which determines the inner states we are in. The conscious causation we ascribe to the propositionally articulated states we are introspectively aware of is, on the contrary, fictitious. This seems to suggest that a mental state *M*'s power to cause some other mental state *M\** is insensitive to *M*'s being conscious or not. From this follows a robust sense in which consciousness is superfluous: the fact that a mental state turns conscious does not lend any additional causal efficacy to it.

At this point, however, there is a strong difficulty we have to face. Katsafanas forcefully points it out by underscoring that the “way in which a state becomes conscious has the most diverse and far-reaching range of consequences” (Katsafanas 2005: 23). In particular, he considers some pertinent examples taken from Nietzsche's own work. Take, for instance, the thought of eternal recurrence. It seems quite obvious that the way one would normally get acquainted with this thought is by consciously forming and entertaining it, as most philosophy students in fact do after reading Nietzsche or after being told about ancient Pythagoreanism. Another example on which Katsafanas pauses at length is that of *bad conscience*. According to his rendering of Nietzsche's position, bad conscience “names an unconscious state of profound suffering” which “is conceptualized as guilt: that is, the unconscious bad conscience gives rise to the conscious emotion of guilt” (Katsafanas 2005: 21). Crucially, this process of conscious conceptualisation has tremendous impact on the entire mental life of the subject. If this is correct, what about (SC)? Should we say that consciousness is not superfluous, after all?

My view is that the proper answer to this last question is Yes and No. The reason for the ambiguity is due to the fact that considerations such as those put forward by Katsafanas tend to conflate two different ways in which we may understand superfluousness. Since, according to Nietzsche, linguistic communication requires a subject to be conscious, it follows that consciousness plays a fundamental role in our *acquisition* of public or cultural representations in general. Moreover, it is undisputable that such representations have an enormous impact on what we think and do.

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<sup>31</sup> There is an interesting connection between this and the belief in a substantial subject I briefly mentioned above. Two things strike me as important: (i) it seems that we are “immediately aware” of conscious thoughts, and (ii) in such thoughts always figures a reference to the “I”. See Rosenthal: “And, by seeming subjectively to be independent of any conscious inference, HOTs also make it seem that we are conscious of our conscious states in a direct, unmediated way. But that very independence HOTs have from conscious inference also makes it seem that we are directly conscious of the self to which each HOT assigns its target” (2005c: 333–334).

Nonetheless, I cannot see how this point should rule out the relevant kind of superfluosity we have been concerned with so far. For the fact that consciousness plays a crucial role in our acquisition of a wide range of representations is compatible with the physio-psychological causal role of those representations being independent from consciousness.<sup>32</sup> Let me explain this point in more detail.

Consider again the example of bad conscience. Someone in the relevant “unconscious state of profound suffering” is being told “things” which induce conceptualising her actual state as guilt. How does this happen? A quite general answer to this problem is that the “things” one is told are public representations which need to be *internalized* if they are supposed to have some bearing on what one thinks and does. In our example, thus, one would need to internalize the belief that the distressing state she is in is the consequence of some misdoing she has committed earlier. Only once this belief has been internalized would one’s state be effectively conceptualised as “guilt” and become behaviourally relevant as such. The crucial factor, thus, is the kind of psychological mechanism responsible for the internalization. Again, Rosenthal makes the relevant point:

The role that thoughts and desires can play in our lives is a function of their causal relations to one another and to behavior. And presumably those causal relations are due solely, or at least in great measure, to the intentional contents and mental attitudes that characterize the states. (Rosenthal 2005c: 362)

Likewise, the picture sketched by Nietzsche does not indicate that the process through which some acquired representation becomes psychologically efficacious involves consciousness.<sup>33</sup> Rather, he often talks of a mechanism of cognitive “assimilation” which resembles physiological processes such as digestion. In the *Genealogy*, for instance, Nietzsche tentatively suggests for such a mode of internalization the term “inanimation [*Einverseelung*]”, which explicitly parallels physiological “incorporation [*Einverleibung*]” (GM II 1).<sup>34</sup> Relevantly, this view is in tune with the claim to be found in a note from 1882 where “morality” is defined as the “quintessence [*Inbegriff*] of all our incorporated [*einverleibten*] valuations” (NL 1882, KSA 11, 4[151]). Accordingly, the moral—and, more generally, cultural—representations and beliefs we acquire socially can work as causally efficacious mental states only once they have been internalized and thus integrated into the relevant psycho-physiological mechanisms. More specifically, Nietzsche holds that the content of conscious mental

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**32** As Katsafanas (private correspondence) correctly points out, he assumes that “conscious state” for Nietzsche is tantamount to “conceptual state”. Given this, the claim that no state is causally efficacious *qua* conscious would be tantamount to the claim that no state is causally efficacious *qua* conceptualised, which is a very strong and implausible claim. However, I am not myself committed to this claim, since I do not share the premise according to which conscious is tantamount to conceptual.

**33** For a distinction similar to the one I am here advocating between the *acquisition* and the *internalization* of public representations, see Constâncio (2011).

**34** Also BGE 230 speaks in favour of the reading proposed here.

attitudes—like my conscious desire to quit smoking—needs to be reshaped so as to figure as the content of the unconscious and intentionally structured drives which actually determine my agency. This process realises in his view the kind of internalization he often refers to with metaphorical variations on the theme of *Einverleibung*.<sup>35</sup>

## 5.6 Conclusion

By arguing for Superficiality, Nietzsche maintains both that consciousness is superfluous and that it involves falsification. In this chapter, I have tried to make sense of these two claims (SC and FC respectively). In order to better frame the problem, I started by considering Nietzsche's notion of consciousness and argued that it should be read as corresponding to (a version of) that of self-consciousness. Given this—and also considered the Leibnizian story he tells us at the beginning of GS 354—the most accurate rendering of Nietzsche's position brings him in the vicinity of contemporary HOT theories of consciousness. What, then, about superfluosity and falsification?

With regard to (FC), I argued that the relevant kind of falsification is due to the mental vocabulary as well as the propositional form which govern the way in which our mental life is consciously articulated—something Nietzsche tracks back to our linguistically mediated acquisition of a folk-psychological framework we not only adopt in order to make sense of others' behaviour, but also to conceptualise our own mental states. It is therefore true that conceptualisation is the ultimate source of the falsification Nietzsche takes to be implied by consciousness, as claimed by Katsafanas. However, the kind of conceptualisation which is pertinent to consciousness is *not* mere generalisation, which we can find at work also in un(self)conscious perceptions, but rather *socially mediated propositional articulation*—hence, a quite peculiar and complex kind of conceptualisation.

Concerning (SC), I maintained that Nietzsche endorses a weak, but still substantive version of epiphenomenalism about consciousness, for he claims that the causal powers of a given mental state *M* do not depend on *M*'s being conscious or not. I also defended this reading against the arguments put forward by Katsafanas arguing that all that his considerations prove is that, for Nietzsche, consciousness plays an important role in our linguistically mediated *acquisition* of beliefs and, in general, public representations which may become behaviourally efficacious. However, and crucially, this is *not* incompatible with the epiphenomenalist reading proposed here: indeed, Nietzsche's account of cognitive *internalization* in terms of incorporation (*Einverleibung*) suggests that the mechanisms through which representations are

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<sup>35</sup> Nietzsche's position differs from Rosenthal in one relevant respect, for he seems to deny that there must be any strong continuity between the acquired content which characterises our conscious attitudes and the internalized content as it figures in the psychological mechanisms which causally determine our agency.

interiorised and thus acquire psychologically relevant causal powers work at the unconscious level. Therefore, there is no reason to deny Nietzsche's endorsement of weak epiphenomenalism as construed here.

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João Constâncio

## 6 Nietzsche on Will, Consciousness, and Choice: Another Look at Nietzschean Freedom

### 6.1 The Will and the Phenomenon of Willing

The main focus of this chapter is Nietzsche's conception of will and willing. My point of departure is Nietzsche's analysis of willing in BGE 19. His views on consciousness are crucial for the interpretation of this analysis, and I shall try to clarify them as I go along. The immediate consequence of Nietzsche's analysis of willing and consciousness is his rejection of "free will" and, more generally, of our overestimation of "choice". However, he also develops new, positive concepts of "will" and "freedom". I shall argue that these concepts are based on Nietzsche's analysis of willing in terms of his hypothesis of the "will to power". At the end of the chapter I give some indications on how the results of my argument may contribute to a new interpretation of the polemic figure of the "sovereign individual" and the conception of freedom it implies.<sup>1</sup>

#### 6.1.1 Command, Obedience and Power

In BGE 19, Nietzsche attempts an analysis of the will on the basis of an analysis of how we actually experience the phenomenon of willing, or, put differently, of the situations in which we legitimately speak of "willing". An example of one such situation is when a master commands his slave to act in a certain way; another example is when I promise not only to someone else, but also to myself that I shall behave in a certain way in the future (e.g., that I shall quit smoking), so that I, as it were, command myself to behave in this way.

One of the main points of Nietzsche's analysis of willing is precisely that what we mean by "willing" necessarily involves a command, the issuing of an order (*befehlen*). Whenever we experience an act of will and speak of willing, there is always a "commandeering thought" and "an affect of command" (BGE 19). This "affect of command" is explained by Nietzsche as "the affect of superiority with respect to

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Maria João Mayer Branco for her invaluable criticism of the first draft of this paper, as well as for her ever-generous support (and additional criticism) throughout the whole process of rewriting it. I also wish to thank Herman Siemens, Marco Brusotti, Luca Lupo, Tom Bailey, Simon Robertson and Paul Katsafanas for their comments on the shorter version that I presented in Leiden at the workshop "Nietzsche, the Kantian?" in February 2011.

something that must obey” (BGE 19). For reasons that will become apparent below when we consider Nietzsche’s views on consciousness, the “commandeering thought” is a conceptual formulation of a “purpose” or “goal”—but, as such, it only gives conceptual expression to the *affective*, and at first *unconscious*, “inner certainty” (BGE 19) that something will obey a command.

In a posthumous note from 1884 to which I shall repeatedly return throughout this chapter, Nietzsche writes the following:

*Willing, that is commanding*: commanding is, however, a certain *affect* (this affect is a *sudden explosion of strength*) (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[436], my translation).

The concept of “explosion of strength” (*Kraftexplosion*) or “discharge of strength” (*Auslösung von Kraft*) is part of what Nietzsche means by “will to power”.<sup>2</sup> Thus the “affect of command” as an “explosion of strength” is “an increase in the feeling of power” (BGE 19). That is, the reason why such an affect is an “affect of superiority” is because it is a feeling of being *more powerful than* something else (or someone else). The command that is issued may never be executed, but we can only legitimately speak of “willing” when there is at least the “inner certainty” that something (or someone) will obey a command, i. e., will yield to something (or someone) more powerful. Hence, willing presupposes the possibility of *power relations of command and obedience*, i. e., of “relations of supremacy” (*Herrschaftsverhältnisse*) as Nietzsche calls them.<sup>3</sup>

This means that, according to Nietzsche, willing must be described in terms of “power” and the “will to power”. In regard to Nietzsche’s conception of these terms, at least three crucial points should be clear from the outset. The first is that “power” is *relational*: a “living thing” is a “will to power” (e. g., BGE 13) only because it exists among a *multiplicity* of other wills to power. The “essence” of all “dynamic quanta” of power, as Nietzsche explains in a posthumous note, “consists in their relation to all other quanta” (WLN: 245 = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79]). The second point is that a relational field of “wills to power”—or a constellation of “relations of supremacy”, of “command and obedience”—is a relational field of *resistances*. “A will to power can only express itself against *resistances*” (WLN: 165 = NL 1887, KSA 12, 9 [151]), i. e., the relation of a particular “will to power” to a multiplicity of “wills to power” is such that all elements of this multiplicity, insofar as they are also “wills to power”, resist the “will” of that particular “will to power” (e. g., NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[276]). Put differently, a relational field of “wills to power” is a relational field of “resistances” or a *struggle*—a relentless struggle for dominance upon which relations of command and obedience are spontaneously built, but within

<sup>2</sup> Among Nietzsche’s published texts, see above all BGE 13 and GS 360.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the expression *Herrschaftsverhältnisse* at the end of BGE 19, which Kaufmann rightly translates as “relations of supremacy”; Norman’s translation (“power relations”) is less literal, and also less precise.

which resistance is never extinguished.<sup>4</sup> Thus if willing is to be understood in terms of “power” and the “will to power”, it follows, from the first point, that willing is in fact a “will” to have more power *in relation to* other wills to power; and it follows, from the second, that willing can only express itself “against resistances”, or within a “struggle for dominance”. The third crucial point is that, in its strict sense, a “will to power” is always an “affect” or “pathos”, i.e., a way of being *affected by a perception*, namely by the perception of “power” or “resistance”.<sup>5</sup>

By taking all of these points into account, we can gain a provisional insight into Nietzsche’s conception of willing. First, willing is the “affect” that we feel when we command ourselves to overpower (or overcome) something that we perceive as resisting our own power. Willing is always a matter of “will against will” (“*Wille gegen Willen*”, NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 5[9]) in the sense that it involves *perceiving* resistance and *responding* to resistance. Second, we speak of willing (and we have a first-personal experience of willing) when we perceive that the issuing of a command has succeeded, or, at least, when our perception gives rise to the “inner certainty” that a command will succeed—so that we enjoy a “triumph over resistances” (BGE 19) and our “affect of command” truly becomes an “affect of superiority”.

It is easy to make sense of this if we consider the case of the master and the slave. When a master commands his slave to act in a certain way and the latter obeys, the master experiences an “overcoming of resistance” that results in an “affect of superiority”. This extinguishes neither the slave’s resistance, nor the master’s perception and feeling of the slave’s resistance. The master’s “will” depends on its being put in a relation to another “will” that resists its claim to command. The “relation of supremacy” that arises is, of course, part of a wider field of power relations, that is, of a whole relational field of resistances (e.g., of a social, political, legal and economic system where slavery is a common occurrence).

However, the case where I promise to myself that I shall quit smoking and command myself to behave in this way seems more complex. And it is also the crucial case. For the master must also command *himself* to issue a command to the slave—he must *will* his commandeering stance towards the slave. In order to describe this in terms of “power” and the “will to power”, one has to determine what it is in oneself that commands and what is it that obeys. In terms of the philosophical tradition, this is tantamount to determining what we mean by “soul” and “body”.

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4 Cf. NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[55] and NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[276], my translation: “*to dominate* is to endure the counterweight of the weakest force, it is thus a form of *continuing* the struggle. *To obey* is likewise a *struggle*: as long as a force of resisting *remains*”. On the relational nature of Nietzsche’s concepts of power and the will to power, as well as on “resistance” and “struggle”, cf. Müller-Lauter (1999a: 161–182; 1999b: 39–68, 119–136), and Ottmann (1999: 355–358).

5 Cf. WLN: 91 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[151]; WLN: 247, 256 = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79], and [121]. I shall come back to this crucial point below.

## 6.1.2 Consciousness and the Drives

This is not the place to give a full account of Nietzsche's views on this topic, but a brief summary is indispensable. Nietzsche's conception of what is traditionally called the "soul" and the "body" is "adualistic".<sup>6</sup> This means, first, that we should conceive of the "body" as an organism composed of a multiplicity of "drives and affects", and of the "soul" as just "a society constructed out of drives and affects" (BGE 12). Conscious thoughts and organic drives occur along the same continuum and belong to the same process, or series of processes. They are not separate entities. This is implied in Nietzsche's view of consciousness as a "surface" and a "sign" of unconscious processes. According to this view, conscious thoughts *express* unconscious processes, and are thus continuous with them. They are, in fact, "*only a certain behavior of the drives towards one another*" (GS 333), or "only a relation between these drives" (BGE 36). Further, this sort of adualistic continuity implies that conscious thoughts and unconscious drives have essentially the same nature. The drives entail elemental perceptions, perspectives, and interpretations. The reason why every drive is, at the same time, an "affect" is precisely because every drive *perceives* and is thereby *affected* by what it perceives and how it perceives it.

If this is so, then conscious mental states belong to the organism as conceptual and linguistic developments of unconscious perceptions, perspectives, and interpretations. Accordingly, the organism as a whole is a constellation of perceptual, perspectival, interpretative relations among unconscious drives and conscious thoughts. Its unity is only "unity as *organization* and *connected activity*" (WLN: 76 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[87]), i.e., a relational or organizational unity. This, in turn, accounts for the "smartness" or "intelligence" of the organism as a whole (e.g., NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[46]).<sup>7</sup>

This essential continuity between the conscious and the unconscious activities of the organism is expressed in BGE 19 by the assertion that in an "act of will" not only is the "commandeering thought" inseparable from the "affect of command", but they are both inseparable from a multiplicity of bodily sensations and feelings. More specifically, they are both inseparable from "the feeling of the state *away from which*, the feeling of the state *towards which*, and the feeling of this 'away from' and 'towards' themselves", as well as from "a feeling of the muscles that comes into play through a sort of habit as soon as we 'will', even without our putting 'arms and legs' into motion" (BGE 19). What Nietzsche wants to say here is (i) that what we call "willing", "feeling", and "thinking" are not separate, but rather intrinsically interconnected activities that explain or express each other and hence cannot be understood in separation from each other (as Nietzsche had already suggested in BGE 16), and (ii) a

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Abel (2001), Lupo (2006), Dries (2008), Constâncio (2011b).

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed analysis of all of these points, see Constâncio (2011a), Constâncio (2011b) and Constâncio (2012); on "signs" (*Zeichen*) and "sign-relations", cf. Simon (1984) and Stegmaier (2000).

*conscious* affect of command, a *conscious* feeling of pleasure in overcoming of resistances and a *conscious* commandeering thought are surfaces of an *unconscious* “willing”, “feeling”, and “thinking”.<sup>8</sup>

This is implied, and further explained, in what is perhaps the crucial idea of Nietzsche’s analysis of willing in BGE 19: the idea that our body is “only a society constructed out of many souls” and “all willing is simply a matter of commanding and obeying, on the groundwork, as I have said, of a society constructed out of many souls” (BGE 19). We tend to analyze willing as if it were a relation of command and obedience between two entities: our soul and our body. But, in fact, our conscious willing is only the surface of the “organization and connected activity” of the “many souls” that constitute our organism—i.e., of the *drives*. The drives are “souls” because they entail elemental perceptions, perspectives, and interpretations. But, more than that, the drives, as a multiplicity of “under-souls”, are in fact the “under-wills” (BGE 19) of our conscious willing. What we call “willing” at the level of consciousness depends on the “groundwork” of a multiplicity of unconscious “under-wills”.

This characterization of the drives as “under-wills” presupposes an interpretation of the drives in terms of *power*. The drives, as Nietzsche states most clearly in the *Nachlass*, are “a multiplicity of ‘wills to power’” (WLN: 59–60 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[58]). The organism is itself a relational field of resistances that interacts perceptually with wider relational fields of resistances, that is, with the wider relational fields of resistances that constitute its environment. In fact, the organism, while in certain respects separate and self-organizing, is simultaneously also only part of and continuous with the whole of nature as “a tyrannically ruthless and pitiless execution of power claims” (BGE 22). This is an essential point for understanding Nietzsche’s thesis that every drive is a “perspectival valuation” (*eine perspektivische Abschätzung*) (WLN: 59–60 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[58]). While perceiving, each drive interprets and builds a perspective on its own power, on the power of the other drives, and also on the powers of the “outer world”—i.e., it *evaluates* its chances of obtaining gratification in relation to the other “power claims” it has to struggle against. Thus, a drive X is an “under-will” because it “wills” to command the other drives (and, ultimately, all other powers it perceives outside of the organism), and each one of these other drives (Y, Z, etc.) resists X’s claim to command—i.e., is also a “will to power”.<sup>9</sup> The “organization and connected activity” that constitutes

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**8** The unity of “willing, feeling and thinking” (*wollen, fühlen, denken*) and the idea that our consciousness of “willing, feeling and thinking” is just the surface of an unconscious “willing, feeling and thinking” is a common theme in the *Nachlass*: cf. NL 1884, KSA 11, 27[19] and [29]; NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[46], 34[86], 34[124], 35[15], 37[4], 38[8], 40[24], and 40[37].

**9** Cf. GM I 13, BGE 9, 22, 23, 36, and BGE 6: “every drive craves mastery [*ist herrschsüchtig*]”. Cf. WLN: 139 = NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 7[60]: “It is our needs *which interpret the world*: our drives and their for and against. Every drive is a kind of lust for domination [*Herrschaft*], each has its perspective,

the organism is the result of a relentless *struggle* among the drives—and, hence, it actually consists in a (relentlessly struggling) *cooperation* amongst drives based on “relations of supremacy”, based on relations of command and obedience that shape the whole organism’s relation to the “outer world”.

The upshot of all this is that the conscious affect of command, the conscious commandeering thought and the plurality of conscious bodily feelings that are involved in what we call willing are conceived as the surface of a multiplicity of unconscious power relations of command and obedience among the drives, and our conscious pleasure in the “triumph over resistances” is likewise derived from a multiplicity of unconscious “triumphs over resistances” among the unconscious drives.

This means, firstly, that the conscious commandeering thought is indeed nothing by itself: it is an “outcome” that emerges from the “groundwork” of the drives as “under-souls” and “under-wills”. In fact, more correctly described, it gives conceptual and linguistic *expression* to the affect of command. For there to be a commandeering thought, the whole organism must first be affected by its perceptions in a way that gives rise to a unifying affect of command, and this is the affect which is then expressed by the commandeering thought. This is why willing “is *fundamentally* an affect” (BGE 19, my emphasis). The posthumous note quoted at the beginning of this section also suggests that willing is essentially or fundamentally the “affect of command”: “*Willing, that is commanding: commanding is, however, a certain affect (this affect is a sudden explosion of strength)*” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[436], my translation). I call this affect a “unifying affect” because it is a single, and “sudden”, “explosion of strength” that results from (and eventually synthesizes) a *multiplicity* of affects.

Secondly, all of this has also an obvious implication in regard to our conception of “action”. Since the commandeering thought is just the expression of an affect of command that results from the “groundwork” of the drives as “under-wills” and “under-souls”, a conscious commandeering thought and an action are not connected as “cause” and “effect”. If we think of the action in terms of causation, we must say that it is an “effect” not of the commandeering thought, but of the “organization and connected activity” of *all* the “power claims” that constitute the organism as a whole. In other words, we must recognize that “the successful instruments that carry out the task” (BGE 19) are the drives, and not isolated thoughts occurring at the level of consciousness.

In addition, if we take heed of Nietzsche’s “continuum model” (to borrow again Günter Abel’s formulation), we must recognize that an action is not an “effect” separated from the organism, but rather the *expression* of the whole activity of the or-

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which it would like to impose as a norm on all the other drives”; WLN: 46 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[61]: “Our drives can be reduced to the *will to power*”.

ganism—of its “total power situation”, as Nietzsche writes elsewhere (*die gesammte Macht-Lage*) (WLN: 60 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[61]).<sup>10</sup>

This whole analysis of willing and action as expressions of relations of command and obedience within the organism is Nietzsche’s critical basis for rejecting the doctrine of the freedom of the will.

### 6.1.3 “Free Will” and the “I” of Consciousness

“Freedom of the will”, writes Nietzsche, “that is the word for the multi-faceted state of pleasure of one who commands and, at the same time, identifies himself with the accomplished act of willing” (BGE 19). Let us examine this crucial definition of the illusion of the “freedom of the will”.

The affect of command—if it is intense enough—has, so to speak, the side-effect of generating a conscious mental state in which pleasure is felt. This pleasure is thus tantamount to the consciousness of an “increase in the feeling of power” (BGE 19).<sup>11</sup> On the basis of this feeling of power the belief emerges that there is an *actual* “power” that remains the same throughout the whole process of willing, and that “causes” the ensuing action. We “identify” with such a “power”—we call it our “I”, and we understand this “I” as our innermost identity. This “I” is supposed to precede the existence of our thoughts and our actions, so that it can “cause”, first, a “commandeering thought” and, second, an action that agrees with this commandeering thought. We come to believe that we have a “will” precisely because we believe that the “I” is “causally efficacious” (*ursächlich*), and we come to believe that our will is “free” because our feeling of power makes us believe that the “I” causes the commandeering thought and the ensuing action as if it were *causa sui* (BGE 21), i. e., as if its activity were not caused by any relevant events that preceded it.

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**10** On Nietzsche’s “expressivism”, see Pippin (2010). Note that one of the analyses of willing or volition that most influenced Nietzsche’s, namely Théodule Ribot’s in *Les maladies de la volonté* ([1882] 2002) also conceives of “action” as an *expression* of volition and ultimately of “character” and the whole organism: cf. Ribot ([1882] 2002: 28, 148, 169, 174) and also Ribot ([1885] 2001: 2–3, 41, 92, 95, 123). Like Nietzsche, Ribot also sees volition as based upon a “hierarchic coordination” of a “myriad” of “conscious, subconscious, and unconscious” states of the organism: cf. Ribot ([1882] 2002: 85, 148–149, 161, 169, 174, 177).

**11** Nietzsche frequently makes the point that states of pleasure are just “incidental states and trivialities” (BGE 225), i. e., “accidents” or “collateral effects” that result from a more fundamental feeling of power. Cf. WLN: 256 = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[121]: “That the will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are just elaborations of it: That there is considerable enlightenment to be gained by positing power in place of the individual ‘happiness’ each living being is supposed to be striving for: ‘It strives for power, for an augmentation of power’ – pleasure is only a symptom of the feeling of power achieved, a consciousness of difference – / – it doesn’t strive for pleasure; rather, pleasure occurs when what was striven for has been achieved: pleasure accompanies, it doesn’t set in motion ...”.



In BGE 17, Nietzsche begins his attack on the existence of this “I”—wrongly conceived as independent, substantial, and *causa sui*—by making the phenomenological point that no conscious thought is voluntary. “A thought comes when ‘it’ wants, and not when ‘I’ want” (BGE 17), he writes. Conscious thoughts emerge from the unconscious depths of the organism, and we cannot trace our steps back to their actual point of origin. This entails that it is an illusion to think that the “I” is that point of origin. If it were, we would be able to trace our steps back to it. This suggests that the “I” is just a thought among others—i.e., one more involuntary thought among others. Finally, this leads to the idea that it is the activity of thinking that produces the “I”, not the “I” that produces the activity of thinking (BGE 17, 54).<sup>12</sup>

In BGE 19, Nietzsche further develops this idea by asserting that the “I” is only a “synthetic concept” (BGE 19). The “I” is a mere thought or concept, and this concept is “synthetic” because it consists in the particular thought that *gives unity* to the sum total of successive conscious mental states which emerge from the “organization and connected activity” of our unconscious drives. In fact, it accomplishes this by reifying itself—i.e., by creating the illusion that there is a sort of entity (an “*atomon*”, a “substance” and a “cause”) that remains the same while going through those successive states. Thus, in the phenomenon of willing, the “synthetic concept of the ‘I’” gives unity to a plurality of feelings, an affect of command, a commandeering thought and the action itself—and it does this by reifying itself as the entity that *wills* and *causes* the action. But this is precisely a purely conceptual creation and synthesis—it is an illusion, the illusion of “free will”.

This illusion is created with a good conscience, and it is perhaps unavoidable in most of our practical life: “that we are *effective* beings, forces, is our fundamental belief” (WLN: 16 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[250]). The synthetic concept of the “I” cannot be simply eradicated from our consciousness,<sup>13</sup> and it cannot but operate as a reifying thought that interprets the affect of command and the pleasure in triumphing over resistances in terms of a causally efficacious will. Thus, *he* “enjoys the triumph over resistances” (BGE 19), and *he* “thinks to himself it was his will alone that truly overcame the resistance” (BGE 19). However, in a second-order observation of the phenomenon of willing, we can find that this is just an interpretation of an organic increase in power, i.e., of an affect of command. Thus we realize that our conscious pleasure in a triumph over resistance is in fact a “multi-faceted state of pleasure”, a “sudden explosion of strength” produced by a succession of conscious and, above

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**12** In the Anglo-Saxon literature, it has been the merit of Brian Leiter to show that BGE 17 and BGE 21 are an important part of Nietzsche’s critique of the “freedom of the will”: see Leiter (2002: 88 ff.), and Leiter (2007). This has at least made clear that Nietzsche strongly opposes the thesis that there is an “I” that could be in control of our actions. On the other hand, there are good reasons to reject Leiter’s views on Nietzsche’s alleged epiphenomenalism: see Constâncio (2011b), and see my comments below in footnote 19.

**13** See Schlimgen (1999: 43 ff., 96 ff.), and the entry “Bewusstsein” in the *Nietzsche Wörterbuch* (Ton-geren et al. 2004: 334 ff.).

all, unconscious triumphs over resistances.<sup>14</sup> As a result, we find that it is only an illusion that the I's willing "suffices for action" (BGE 19), or that it is only through an illusion that the "I" can identify himself "with the accomplished act of willing" (BGE 19).

Nietzsche expresses this idea with a political metaphor. In every act of willing the "I" thinks "*l'effet c'est moi*" and "identifies itself with the successes of the community" (BGE 19), but its status as absolute monarch of the drives as "under-souls" and "under-wills" is in fact merely apparent.<sup>15</sup> In what we may call, following Schlimgen (1999: 49 ff.), "the oligarchic organization of the organism", the "I" belongs to the "ruling class" or the "management" (*Leitung*), but only as "an organ of the management" (WLN: 228 = NL 1887–88, KSA 13, 11[145]).<sup>16</sup> The drives in the "managing committee" (WLN: 228) make the "I" feel as if it were the absolute monarch because this intensifies *their* feeling of power and, thus, the whole organism's feeling of power. The "I" is enthroned as king—and yet it actually lacks royal power.

On this basis, we can finally understand "the strangest thing about the will" (BGE 19), namely that in willing, e.g., in a case like the one in which we command ourselves to quit smoking, "we are [...] both the one who commands *and* the one who obeys" (BGE 19). What this means is *not* that there is a sort of split between a conscious commandeering thought and the activity of the drives, or, as it were, between the mind and the body. As we saw, the mind and the body are not separable—and, above all, what *really* "commands" in our willing is not the conscious mind, but the dominant drives, the "managing committee". The commandeering conscious thought merely *expresses*, at the surface, a "split" *among the drives*, i.e., among those drives that now command and those that obey. Thus, this "split" is in fact a form of cooperation based on command and obedience. When the "I" of consciousness feels the he alone has willed and caused the action, this is just a *sign* of perfect cooperation

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**14** Cf. BGE 19 (modified, my emphasis): "the one who wills takes his feeling of pleasure as the commander, and *adds to it the feelings of pleasure from the successful instruments that carry out the task, the useful 'under-wills' or under-souls*".

**15** Cf. NL 1884, KSA 11, 27[8], my translation: "The human being as a multiplicity: physiology indicates no more than an amazing communication [or "traffic", *Verkehr*] among this multiplicity, as well as an ordering and subordination of the parts to the whole. But it would be false to infer from the existence of a State that there necessarily is an absolute monarch (the unity of the subject)". Commenting on this posthumous note, Müller-Lauter (1999b: 129) points out that Zarathustra's talk of a "shepherd" within the body is misleading (cf. Z I Despisers). On the "amazing communication" among the drives, cf. Wotling (2011).

**16** The organization of the organism is "oligarchic" because it is composed of a minority of higher organs or functions and a majority of lower organs or functions (e.g., vegetative functions)—so that it is ultimately an "aristocracy of 'cells'" (NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[41]): see Schlimgen (1999), §§9–10; and also, e.g., WLN: 8 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[123], where Nietzsche explains that the higher functions need to preserve the lower functions for their own benefit, and that there is a "continual *generation of cells*" which produces a continual change in the number of drives. For this changeability, see also D 119 and, e.g., WLN: 30 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4].

among the drives, i.e. a sign that they are functioning as a “well-constructed and happy community” (BGE 19).<sup>17</sup>

This “oligarchic” view of the organism, as well as of the relation between consciousness and the drives, implies that the drives (and especially the “instincts” as more permanent and long-established drives) are always *stronger* than conscious mental states (cf. A 39, GS 11). Conscious mental states—including the conscious mental states in which we interpret ourselves as an “I”—are “tools” of unconscious drives and affects.<sup>18</sup> To some extent, conscious mental states are always “secretly directed and forced into determinate channels by the instincts” (BGE 3). On the other hand, however, such “tools” express relations of drives in a new way, namely through concepts and words, and thus they, too, make “power claims” which create new imbalances of power within the organism. That is to say that they contribute to and thereby effect changes in the “oligarchic” structure of the organism. Their power, even if it is very limited, exerts some influence on the organism’s “total power situation”. The “oligarchy” is a changing, dynamic “oligarchy”. What is unchangeable in it is just the fact that the (unconscious) instincts always remain the most powerful forces in the “managing committee” of the organism—that their power always predominates over the limited power of their “tools”.

Nietzsche makes this point very poignantly in a posthumous note from 1885–86 where he writes that “what we call ‘consciousness’ and ‘mind’ [*Geist*] is merely a means and a tool with which not a subject but *a struggle wants to preserve itself*”. The organism is not a “being” that wants to preserve its “being”—the organism is rather a “struggle” (sc. a struggle among the instincts), and this “*struggle itself wants to preserve itself, wants to grow and wants to be conscious of itself*” (WLN: 63–64 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[124]). The “tools” of this struggle (sc. conscious mental states) have some power of their own, but they are still tools of a struggle which is essentially a struggle among the instincts.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the “oligarchic” view of the organism implies that, at every moment, there is a given “order of rank” (*Rangordnung*, e.g., BGE 6) among the drives, which results from their “struggle” and their cooperation. Given that each drive is a “per-

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17 On the other hand, when the drives fail to coordinate well, we should speak of a “degeneration of the instincts” (TI Errors 2), which Nietzsche interprets as “a disintegration of the will” (TI Errors 2).

18 On conscious mental states as “tools”, see Constâncio (2011b).

19 As I pointed out in Constâncio (2011b), if this is so, then Brian Leiter is wrong in defending that Nietzsche’s position oscillates between strict epiphenomenalism (sc. conscious thoughts have no causal power whatsoever) and a doctrine of “the will as secondary cause” (sc. conscious willing has causal power, but it is caused by unconscious drives and affects), and Paul Katsafanas (2005) and (2011) is right in arguing that Nietzsche’s position is neither of these two because it includes not only the idea that unconscious mental states impact on conscious mental states, but also the idea that conscious mental states impact on unconscious mental states. On the other hand, Katsafanas goes wrong when he fails to see how *limited* the power of conscious mental states actually is according to Nietzsche. As I shall argue below, Nietzsche clearly rejects the type of conception of “choice” that Katsafanas attributes to him.

spectival valuation” (WLN: 59–60), this order of rank of the drives orders and ranks *values*. It creates a “table of goods”. As an intelligent organization and connected activity of perspectival drives, the human organism is an *evaluative* organism, such that “who one is” (BGE 6) is always defined by the organism’s evaluations. In other words, our “character” (“who we are”) consists in the organism’s instinctive “morality”—in the order of rank of its evaluations. Our actions are fundamentally the expression of our “character” understood in terms of this instinctive order of rank.<sup>20</sup>

It follows from this that my identity is not the identity of the “I” of consciousness, and I am not a “subject” in this sense. As part of the organism (and, in fact, as a part of it that cannot be eradicated), the “I” belongs to what I am. But what I am is mostly defined by my instincts and the order of rank of my drives, not by the “I” of consciousness, which is merely the “surface” of what I am.

This being so, it should be asked whether Nietzsche’s analysis of the phenomenon of willing implies not only the rejection of *causa sui* “free will” and of our self-understanding as an independent and ruling “I”, but also of the “will” itself, as several pronouncements of his seem to suggest.<sup>21</sup>

## 6.2 The “Will” and the “Will to Power”

In BGE 19, Nietzsche declares that “willing strikes me as, above all, something *complicated*”,<sup>22</sup> and in GS 127 he had already argued that the “will” as “something simple” does not exist. If my interpretation of BGE 19 is correct, Nietzsche’s point against simplicity must be that every act of will is based on power- and supremacy-relations among a *multiplicity* of “under-wills”, and the conscious thoughts and feelings involved in willing are surfaces of such relations. A *relational* field of resistances, a

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<sup>20</sup> See the end of BGE 19, where Nietzsche defines morality as “a doctrine of the power relations under which the phenomenon of ‘life’ arises” (BGE 19). Cf. also WLN: 29–30 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4], a posthumous note titled “Morality and Physiology” where Nietzsche declares that the interpretation of all organic “thinking, feeling, willing” is “a problem of morality, not of mechanics”.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. NL 1883–84, KSA 10, 24[34], my translation: “There is no ‘will’: that is only a simplified conception, like ‘matter’; and WLN: 257 (modified) = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[121]: “my proposition is that the *will* in psychology up to now has been an unjustified generalisation, that this will does *not exist at all*”; cf. WLN: 158–159 = NL 1887, KSA 12, 9[98]: “The logical-metaphysical postulates, belief in substance, accident, attribute, etc., draw their persuasive power from the habit of regarding our doing as a consequence of our will—so that the I, as substance, is not absorbed into the multiplicity of change.—*But there is no will*”; A 14: “The old word ‘will’ only serves to describe a result, a type of individual reaction that necessarily follows from a quantity of partly contradictory, partly harmonious stimuli: – the will does not ‘affect’ anything, does not ‘move’ anything any more ...”; TI Errors 3: “The ‘inner world’ is full of illusions and phantasms: will is one of them”.

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche expresses this idea at the beginning of BGE 19, but in his preparatory notes it comes at the end, as the corollary of his analysis of willing and free will (cf. NL 1885, KSA 11, 38[8]).

*multiplicity* of wills to power (WLN: 59–60 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[58])—this is precisely the opposite of something “simple” or “atomic”.

That the phenomenon of willing presupposes a multiplicity is indeed the point that decisively undermines every traditional conception of the will—that is to say, every conception of the will that, like Descartes’ and Schopenhauer’s, is part of a metaphysics based on the concept of substance and on the concept of “thing in itself” (cf. BGE 16). Descartes places the will in the *res cogitans*, which he believes to be a substance ontologically distinct from the body, i.e., with intrinsic properties and hence in itself un-related to the body (e.g., PP I. xxxii, 17, Med. II, 31 ff., IV, 56 ff.).<sup>23</sup> Schopenhauer places the will in the body, or more precisely: he interprets the will as the essence and substantial ground of the organism (e.g., WWR I §§17–19, WWR II §20).<sup>24</sup> Thus Schopenhauer creates the concept of an “unconscious will”, which he dualistically opposes to the “intellect”.<sup>25</sup> In arguing that there is no will as “something simple”, Nietzsche is rejecting every form of dualism that, like Descartes’ or Schopenhauer’s, posits the existence of non-relational entities—particularly, every form of “atomism of the soul” (BGE 12) that implies discontinuity between the conscious mind and the body.

If this is so, then Nietzsche’s assertion that “there is no will” is not unconditionally true. There is no will as something simple, but there are “under-wills”, and the organization and connected activity of these “under-wills” gives rise to the *will* of the organism as a whole. The “unity” of this “will” is not the unity of a substance (and least of all the unity of a metaphysical, intelligible substance beyond all phenomena, as for Schopenhauer), but it is still a particular type of unity. This will is still *one* will, e.g., a “strong will” or a “weak will”.<sup>26</sup>

This seems to imply that, although Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of the will, he does agree with him in that the will does not belong to the *res cogitans* and is in fact identical with the body. It should at least be clear that he

<sup>23</sup> Med. = *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (Descartes 1996a); PP = *Principia philosophia* (Descartes 1996b).

<sup>24</sup> WWV = *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Schopenhauer 1949); WWR = *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vols. (Schopenhauer 1958).

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, WWR II §19, 208: the will is, in itself, “without knowledge” (*erkenntnislos*), the intellect is “without will” (*willenlos*); WWR II §19, 201: “the will is the substance of man, the intellect the accident”; WWR II §15, 139: the will is “the *prius* of consciousness, and the root of the tree of which consciousness is the fruit”; WWR II §22, 278: “The *knowing* and conscious *ego* is related to the will, which is the basis of its phenomenal appearance, as the image in the focus of the concave mirror is to the mirror itself; and, like that image, it has only a conditioned, in fact, properly speaking, a merely apparent reality. Far from being the absolutely first thing (as Fichte taught, for example), it is at bottom tertiary, since it presupposes the organism, and the organism presupposes the will”.

<sup>26</sup> Cf., again, WLN: 76 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[87]: “All unity is *only* unity as *organization* and *connected activity*: no different from the way a human community is a unity: thus, the *opposite* of atomistic *anarchy*; and thus a *formation of rule* which means ‘one’ but is *not* one”.

agrees with him in that consciousness is not the “kernel of man”, and the “unity of the organism”—the unity of its “will”—is not given by consciousness.<sup>27</sup> Does this mean that when Nietzsche speaks of the will in a positive sense—e.g., by distinguishing “strong” from “weak” wills (e.g., BGE 21)—he is referring to a quasi-Schopenhauerian “unconscious will”?

In GS 127—which is one of the most important of Nietzsche’s texts on Schopenhauer and the will—he writes:

Against him [sc. Schopenhauer] I offer these propositions: first, in order for willing to come about, a representation of pleasure or displeasure is needed. Secondly, that a violent stimulus is experienced as pleasure and pain is a matter of the *interpreting* intellect, which, to be sure, generally works without our being conscious of it [*uns unbewußt*]; and one and the same stimulus *can* be interpreted as pleasure or pain. Thirdly, only in intellectual beings do pleasure, pain, and will exist; the vast majority of organisms has nothing like it (GS 127).

We only experience “willing” at the level of consciousness (cf. NL 1883, KSA 10, 12 [35]), and so “will” and “willing” are words that, properly speaking, apply only to organic states that involve conscious feelings and thoughts—more specifically, to organic states that involve a conscious pleasure derived from the “affect of command” and a conscious commandeering thought that expresses this affect.

Obviously, this does not imply that Nietzsche defends a Cartesian conception of the will. His very conception of consciousness and “intellectual beings” rules out this interpretation. “Intellectual beings” are organisms whose “intellect” “generally works without our being conscious of it [*uns unbewußt*]”, i.e., is only intermittently conscious (cf. GS 11). Such an intellect is just the organism’s capacity to *interpret* stimuli, to perceive and feel in ways that allow for conscious expression. Thus, in GS 127, what Nietzsche is saying, in opposition to Schopenhauer, is that the “unconscious will” of the organism is not a “blind impulse” (*blinder Drang*; cf. WWV I §27, 178; WWR I §27, 149). First, because the idea of an “unconscious will” as an atomic unity should be replaced by the idea of a multiplicity of unconscious drives; and second, because these drives, as we saw, should be seen as perceptive, perspectival, interpretative, “smart” drives. As “under-wills”, they are also the “under-souls” which constitute *the depth of consciousness*. They are intrinsically related to consciousness. Not only are they forms of awareness, but they also belong to the same continuum as the self-reflexive, conceptual, linguistic, communicational states which emerge at the surface of the human organism. It is part of what they are—of their “will to power”—that they “want” to become conscious. Their unconsciousness strives for conscious expression (e.g., WLN: 63–64 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[124]). It is *this* unconscious

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<sup>27</sup> Compare, for example, GS 11 with WWR II §15 and §22.

—this multiplicity of pre-conscious drives—that gives rise to our conscious experience of willing, and not a “blind impulse”.<sup>28</sup>

Two very important ideas follow from this. First, when Nietzsche uses the term “will” in a positive sense, he is referring neither to something exclusively conscious, nor to something exclusively unconscious. A “will” in Nietzsche’s positive sense is a human organism considered in its capacity to act in a way which, *at the level of consciousness*, we interpret as “purposive”, or “end-directed”, but which is fundamentally conditioned by *unconscious* drives, affects, and instincts.<sup>29</sup> Second, if the proper sense of the words “will” and “willing” refers to what happens to a human organism when it commands itself to perform an action and is *conscious* of commanding itself to perform this action, then the talk of *unconscious* “under-wills” or *unconscious* “wills to power” results from an interpretative projection. Such talk is in fact an interpretation of the nature of the organism in the light of our conscious experience of willing.

This last point suggests that the whole “hypothesis” (BGE 36) of the “will to power” is an interpretation of the phenomenon of willing. In a posthumous note from 1885 where Nietzsche lists his main “hypotheses” he includes the following: “the only *force* which exists is of the same kind as that of the will: a commanding of other subjects, which thereupon change” (WLN: 46 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[42]). The point of departure of Nietzsche’s analysis of willing is a “macroscopic” situation in which a “subject”, i. e. an organism, which commands another subject and thereby imposes its will on another “subject”. The analysis of such a situation reveals that in imposing his will the subject who commands feels superior to the subject who obeys, so that he thinks: “I am free, he must obey” (BGE 19 and NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[436], my translation). Further analysis leads to the conclusion that this commandeering thought and the feeling of superiority are the surface of a “discharge of force” (or strength) of the *whole* organism, and that this discharge presupposes a field of *inner* resistance. Thus the hypothesis arises that the organism is constructed out of a multiplicity of organic drives, and that such a multiplicity should be interpreted as a multiplicity of wills to power, i. e., of “relations of supremacy”. This leads, final-

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**28** In the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche goes as far as to speak of the unconscious drives as “intellects” and “intelligences”, i. e., as “consciousnesses”! Cf. NL 1883, KSA 10, 12[37]; cf. WLN: 30 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4]: “There are thus in man as many ‘consciousnesses’ as—at every moment of his existence—there are beings which constitute his body”. This suggests that there are degrees of consciousness; even the vegetative functions of the organism depend on a sort of elemental “communication” among “drives”, and the self-reflexive, conceptual, linguistic and communicational states we recognize as conscious states develop out of organic states of awareness. On this conception of “communication”, see again Wotling (2011).

**29** For Ribot, “volition” in the proper sense of the word is also the “reasonable activity” of the organism—that is, its choosing to act after some sort of deliberation, even if minimal. Volition implies more than an “automatism” or a “reflex”—and yet is an “activity” which is fundamentally the expression and final result of a multiplicity of unconscious, physiological activities within the organism. See Ribot ([1882] 2002: 10, 72, 84, and *passim*).

ly, to the further hypothesis that the very “phenomenon of life” arises from “relations of supremacy” (BGE 19)—i.e., that “life itself is will to power” (BGE 13).<sup>30</sup>

However, as is well known, BGE 36 raises an even more general, and more radical, hypothesis, namely that “*all* efficacious force”, even the force we usually understand as “inorganic” and “mechanistic”, is “will to power”. This hypothesis consists, firstly, in interpreting “the only thing ‘given’ as real”—which is “our world of desires and passions” (BGE 36)—as a world of drives, i.e. of organic wills to power, and our consciousness of our desires and passions as just “a relation between these drives” (BGE 36). Secondly, such a hypothesis consists in projecting this interpretation onto the mechanistic world, i.e., in interpreting the mechanistic world by analogy with human willing.<sup>31</sup>

The reason for this analogy, Nietzsche explains, is that our belief in “the causality of the will”—our belief that willing is “efficacious”—is “really just our belief in causality itself” (BGE 36). “Hume is right” in that “we do not have a ‘sense for the causa efficiens’” (WLN: 74 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[83]), and from this Nietzsche concludes that our belief in causality derives exclusively from the “feeling of force” (*Kraftgefühl*) that we experience in willing: “we instinctively think that this feeling of force is the cause of the action, that it is ‘the force’” (WP 664 = NL 1883–84, KSA 10, 24[9]).<sup>32</sup> It is thus that we develop our concept of causality out of “the only thing that is ‘given’ as real”—that is, out of our experience of willing, out of the “feeling of power” or the “affect of command” and “superiority” that occurs in willing.

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**30** This, I believe, is Nietzsche’s train of thoughts in BGE 19, and it explains why he first expresses the commandeering thought and the affect of superiority as “I am free, *he* must obey” (BGE 19, my emphasis), and not as “I am free, *it* must obey”. Nietzsche starts, as it were, from the outside (i.e. from the relation between a person who commands and a person who obeys—“will against will”) and then probes deeper and deeper into the inside of the phenomenon of willing, i.e. into the relation of a person to herself and thus into the inner relational field of resistances consisting of unconscious drives and conscious mental states that express them. Finally, he comes back to the outside, to the “phenomenon of life”, to “life itself”. This should solve the textual puzzle discussed by Clark and Dudrick (2009: 250 ff.).

**31** Cf. also WLN: 26 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[31], where Nietzsche explicitly uses the word “analogy”. In the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche designates his use of this analogy as the method of using “physiology” as a “starting point” for philosophy and of doing philosophy “along the guiding thread of the body” (*am Leitfaden des Leibes*). The idea that the “guiding thread” of philosophy should be the body is also crucial for Schopenhauer, whose metaphysics is based precisely on an *analogy* between the will as we find it in the inner experience of our body and every other force outside of us (cf. WWR I §§17–19). Regarding the crucial points of this important parallel between Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s philosophical methodologies, as well as Nietzsche’s purpose of using “the guiding thread of the body” not as a means to develop a new metaphysics (like Schopenhauer), but rather to *overcome* metaphysics all together, cf. Salaquarda (1989) and (1994), Janaway (2007: 150–164).

**32** Cf. also NL 1880–81, KSA 9, 10[F100]; cf. WP 689 (modified) = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[81]: “From a psychological point of view the concept ‘cause’ is our feeling of power [*Machtgefühl*] in so-called willing—our concept ‘effect’ the superstition that this feeling of power is power itself”.



It follows that our usual interpretation of nature in terms of mechanistic “causes” and “effects” is also an analogy with human willing, of which we have forgotten that it is an analogy. Firstly, it is an interpretation of willing as the activity of an atomic or monadic “I” that acts as “cause”, an interpretation of willing as the activity of a “doer” that has effects on its own thoughts, but also on matter (“on ‘nerves’ for instance”, BGE 36). Secondly, it is a projection of this interpretation onto the outer world. The mechanistic view is fundamentally an interpretation of the outer world as composed of “things” and ultimately of “*atoma*” that we believe to be “effective” in the same sense as we believe the “I”, the “subject”, the “will” to be effective.<sup>33</sup>

The hypothesis of the will to power claims to be no more than a better analogy than this mechanistic analogy—a better interpretation of the phenomenon of willing that also allows for a better interpretation of life and nature.<sup>34</sup> Put differently, Nietzsche’s idea is simply that we have to choose between a simplifying, clearly false interpretation of the will as an efficacious *atomon* and a better interpretation of the will as will to power. *Stricto sensu*, he is not saying that everything is will to power—in fact, he *denies* that most organisms are able to will (GS 127), not to speak of the inorganic. What he is saying is rather that we should try to *interpret* our willing as will to power and, *by analogy*, every other reality *as if* it were a will to power. The hypothesis of the will to power is a critical, heuristic concept, not a metaphysical doctrine.<sup>35</sup>

This hypothesis is the cornerstone of Nietzsche’s attempt to get rid not only of “free will”, but also of “un-free will”—“which is basically an abuse of cause and effect” (BGE 21). The rejection of “free will” entails the acknowledgment that everything happens necessarily; but by interpreting the “necessity” of everything that happens in terms of the will to power, Nietzsche believes he can develop a new, positive view of freedom and necessity—beyond the traditional concept of “free will”, and beyond determinism and mechanism. Put differently, in his mature period Nietzsche tries to dissolve the metaphysical opposition between freedom and necessity—but he also tries to construct new, non-metaphysical concepts of freedom and necessity that he presents as compatible. This is the object of the next section.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. TI Reason 5, and e.g., NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[83], 2[139]; NL 1887, KSA 12, 9[91]; NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79], 14[98], 22[19–22].

<sup>34</sup> Cf. WP 689 = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[81]: “If we translate the concept ‘cause’ back to the only sphere known to us, from which we have derived it, we cannot imagine any change that does not involve a will to power. We do not know how to explain a change except as the encroachment of one power upon another”.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Stack (1983: 16, 23, 67–68, 105, 227, 239, 248, 293) and Stegmaier (1992: 307 ff.).

### 6.3 Necessity and Freedom

Nietzsche's necessitarianism is not strictly deterministic because he rejects the idea that there are "laws of nature" that determine our actions,<sup>36</sup> and his "fatalism" should not be confused with what he himself calls "Turkish fatalism", that is, the sort of fatalism that argues that we should "resign" ourselves to fate.<sup>37</sup> Within an analysis of willing, we should, however, focus on another point, namely on the anti-mechanistic nature of Nietzsche's concept of necessity. This is a point which is only implicitly present in BGE 19. We may also call it Nietzsche's anti-mechanistic critique of the teleological interpretation of willing.

We usually speak of willing in relation to actions that seem to be directed at some end or purpose (*Zweck*), and the philosophical tradition has interpreted purpose as a "cause" (the *causa finalis*) of willing and action. In opposition to this, Nietzsche writes in a posthumous note from 1884 (which I have partially quoted above): "we should speak, not of a cause of willing, but of a stimulus of willing" (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[436], my translation). The reason for this—the reason why we should substitute the concept of "cause" with the concept of "stimulus" (*Reiz*) when speaking of willing—is that, as we have seen, willing as an "affect of command" is "a sudden explosion of strength [*Kraftexplosion*]" (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25 [436], my translation). As we have also seen, it is from this affect that we derive the concept of freedom of the will, when in fact a "sudden explosion of strength" indicates that willing is a matter of necessity.<sup>38</sup>

Accordingly, in the very important aphorism 360 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche develops the idea that willing can only be stimulated, but not caused, and his conclusion, at the end of the aphorism, is precisely that "willing" (*wollen*) is the same as "having to" (*müssen*). When an organism "wills", it is like a ship "following the current", and "it 'wills' to go that way *because it—must*" (GS 360).

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<sup>36</sup> See BGE 22 and Schacht (1983: 172ff.).

<sup>37</sup> See WS 61 (where Nietzsche argues that, if it is true that when we resist fate we are only fulfilling fate, it is also true that when we resign ourselves to fate we are also just fulfilling fate, and hence it is not more reasonable to opt for resignation than for resistance to fate). See Franco (2011: 32–33, 73, 81–83).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. also NL 1883, KSA 10, 16[20], my translation: "Where there is a living thing, there are sudden explosions of strength: the subjective feeling in these cases is 'freedom of the will'"; NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[185], my translation: "Will? What actually happens in every feeling and knowing is an explosion of strength: in certain circumstances (extreme intensity, so that a pleasure-feeling of strength and freedom arises), we call this 'willing'"; NL 1883, KSA 10, 7[226], my translation: "Willing is a very pleasant thrusting feeling! It is the collateral phenomenon of all *outpouring of strength*"; see also the continuation of the posthumous note quoted above: NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[436], my translation: "(we should speak, not of a cause of willing, but of a stimulus of willing)/ *Willing, that is commanding*: commanding is, however, a certain *affect* (this affect is a *sudden explosion of strength*)—eagerly, clearly, exclusively one thing in view, the innermost conviction of superiority, certainty that it will be obeyed—'freedom of the will' is the feeling of superiority of the commander: 'I am free, and *he must obey*'".

In another note from 1884, Nietzsche expresses this same idea, and connects it to his critique of the thesis that living organisms essentially strive to *preserve* themselves:

Against the preservation-drive as radical drive: what something that lives wills is rather to *discharge* its strength—it ‘wills’ and ‘must’ (both words have the same weight for me!): preservation is only a *consequence* (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[277], my translation).

In GS 360 Nietzsche begins to explain what he means by the above by stating that there are “*two kinds of causes that are often confused*”. We have to distinguish, he writes, “the cause of acting from the cause of acting in a certain way, in a certain direction, with a certain goal”. The “cause of acting” is a cause in the usual, mechanistic sense: e. g., the impact of a billiard ball upon another billiard causes the latter to move. Here, the “cause” is just “a quantum of dammed-up energy waiting to be used somehow, for something” (GS 360), and the effect is said to be “equal” to the cause because the movement of the billiard ball is *proportionate* to the force which is applied to its mass. Thus the mass of each billiard balls is supposed to be *preserved*, as if the two billiard balls were two atoms or discrete entities whose nature is not altered by their collision. The other type of cause is what Julius Robert Mayer called “catalytic force”. This force, as Nietzsche writes, is “something quite insignificant, mostly a small accident” which causes that a quantum of dammed-up energy “‘discharges’ itself in one particular way: the match versus the powder keg” (GS 360).<sup>39</sup> Here, the relation between the cause and the effect is clearly *disproportionate*: there is no quantitative relation between the “small cause” and the “large effect”, e. g., between the small spark in the match and the large explosion of the powder keg”.<sup>40</sup> The reason why Nietzsche sees the distinction between these two types of cause as an “essential step forward” (GS 360) is because it allows him to conceive of *willing* in terms of the second type of cause. Even if in physics we have reason to conceive of certain effects as proportional to their causes, we have certainly no reason to conceive of our willing in terms of proportionate “causes” and “effects”. Will-

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**39** Günter Abel (1998: 43 ff.) has shown that Nietzsche has borrowed the distinction between the two types of causes from Julius Robert Mayer’s *Über Auslösung* ([1876] 1978), partially also from Schopenhauer’s distinction between “cause” and “stimulus”. See Abel (1998: 47–49); see also Müller-Lauter (1999a: 119–126), and Brusotti (1992) and (2001).

**40** Cf. Mayer ([1876] 1978: 104), translated and quoted by Caneva (1993: 272): “[...] when we ignite a match by means of a little frictional heat and by means of this burning match initiate a further, arbitrarily large combustion process, so, too, do we have here another simple example of ‘unloosing’ [*Auslösung*], and such examples confront us close at hand in infinite plenty. Light pressure with the finger produces a violent effect with firearms, etc. etc.”. Mayer (1845: 80), translated and quoted by Caneva (1993: 273): “A force is called ‘catalytic’ insofar as it stands in no kind of quantitative relationship to the intended effect. An avalanche falls into the valley; a gust of wind or the beat of a bird’s wing is the ‘catalytic force’ that gives the signal for the fall and brings about the extensive destruction”.

ing is wholly similar to a “discharge” of *disproportionate force*, a *release* or *unloosing* of *accumulated force*. We should realize that what the philosophical tradition calls “purposes” are just “accidents and matches”: “they are relatively random, arbitrary, nearly indifferent in relation to the enormous force of energy that presses on, as I said, to be used up somehow” (GS 360). A purpose stands to the discharge of strength as a “match” stands to a “powder keg”. At best we can say that, as the match shapes the *way* in which the explosion of powder occurs, so the purpose “directs” the discharge of accumulated strength. “Often”, Nietzsche adds, the purpose is not even a “directing force”, but only a “beautifying pretext” (GS 360)—a stimulus that we use to *justify* the fact that our organism is already discharging its strength in a certain way, i.e., has already been *accidentally* stimulated by other purposes to discharge its strength, or even by no *conscious* purposes whatsoever. Thus, the “I” of consciousness may often think of itself as the “helmsman” of a ship—or, to borrow the metaphor from BGE 19, as the absolute monarch of the community of drives that constitute the organism—when in fact the organism’s actions are just the *necessary result* of a discharge of force: its willing to act in a certain way and its having to act in this way are the same thing (GS 360). Therefore, the “I” is always *driven* by a discharge of force. It does not drive, it does not control the organism. The ship “certainly has a direction but—no helmsman whatsoever” (GS 360).<sup>41</sup>

It should be emphasized that Nietzsche’s point here is not only that willing cannot be controlled by consciousness and is therefore “necessary”, but also that willing is not *just* an “effect” of a cause, is not really *conditioned* by a cause, not “pushed and shoved” by something coming from the outside. Or, in other words, if we conceive of willing as a necessary “effect”, we should realize that it is always the “effect” of *stimuli*, but not of a *cause* in the mechanistic sense of the word.

The problem both with the doctrine of “free will” (which enthrones consciousness as a ruling power within the organism) *and* with the doctrine of “un-free will” (which makes consciousness totally passive) is precisely the unwarranted assumption of the validity of a mechanistic conception of “cause” and “effect”. Both doctrines assume that this conception is valid, and both assume that it makes sense to conceive of the “will” either as a discrete entity X that “pushes and shoves” another discrete entity Y or as a discrete entity X that can be “pushed and shoved” by another discrete entity Y. This assumption is based upon a superficial reflection on the phenomenon of willing. In fact, the mechanistic conception of causality itself has first *arisen* from a superficial reflection on the phenomenon of willing—one which fails to notice that willing is not a matter of collision or impact, but rather of “action at a distance” (*actio in distans, Wirkung in die Ferne*). Nietzsche writes:

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41 Cf. Mayer (1845: 53–54), translated and quoted by Caneva (1993: 272): “The movements of a steamboat obey the will of the helmsman and the machinist. But the psychic [*geistig*] influence, without which the ship would not set itself in motion...—it directs, but it does not move anything; continued motion requires a physical force, coal ...”.

'Action at a distance' cannot be eliminated: *something draws something closer, something feels drawn*. This is the fundamental fact: compared to this, the mechanistic notion of pressing and pushing is merely a hypothesis based on *sight* and *touch* (WLN: 15 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[247]).<sup>42</sup>

In speaking of causality we are trying to understand the world "from inside" (BGE 36 and NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[31]). For we are actually interpreting our willing (our "inside") and projecting this interpretation, by analogy, onto the inner workings of the world. However, in the phenomenon of willing we find nothing of the direct *impact* that we observe, through sight and touch, in what happens outside. Instead, we find a continuum of *perceptual* relations that presuppose distance, and that result in relations of command and obedience.<sup>43</sup> According to Nietzsche, it is not by accident that even the physicists cannot get rid of the concept of "action at a distance"—and in fact they should not. The "inside" of the so-called inorganic world is better understood if, in the light of willing, we interpret it as a multiplicity of centers of power or force that affect each other at the distance along a continuum, as the physicist Boscovich has tried to do (even without starting from an analysis of the phenomenon of willing, and lacking, therefore, the concept of will to power).<sup>44</sup> But, above all, if by focusing on willing we substitute the mechanistic concept of causality with the anti-mechanistic concepts of will to power and "action at a distance", we gain a new concept of necessity.

Let us consider the main features of this new concept.

Firstly, it involves the idea that when something or someone obeys, this is not an "effect" of a command, but only a way of *being affected by the perception* of a command. Obedience is a reaction that is enabled by this perception, and it is a necessary reaction, but it comes *from within* that which obeys, or from within the one who

<sup>42</sup> Cf. also NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[31], 36[34], and NL 1883, KSA 10, 12[27].

<sup>43</sup> Cf. NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[247]; NL 1883, KSA 10, 12[27]; on action at a distance and perception, cf. also Branco (2011) and Branco (2010: 258 ff.).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. WLN: 26 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[31]: "The physicists cannot eliminate 'action at a distance' from their principles, nor a force of repulsion (or attraction). There is no help for it: one must understand all motion, all 'appearances', all 'laws' as mere symptoms of inner events, and use the human analogy consistently to the end. In the case of an animal, all its drives can be traced back to the will to power: likewise all the functions of organic life to this one source". Action at a distance was "eliminated" from physics only when Faraday started to replace Boscovich's *mathematical* centers of force acting at a distance with *physical* lines of force traveling across space—a conception which is, however, fundamentally a physical version of Boscovich's critique of mechanist atomism: see Hesse (1962: 198 ff.). Boscovich's critique of materialistic atomism implies that "matter" is a continuum and material bodies are, in reality, centers or fields of force; this leads to the idea that there is no "matter" and the boundaries between bodies are merely a semblance, i.e. that *direct impact* between two material bodies is only a sensory illusion, and what really happens in nature is always action at a distance among fields of force (or impact along a continuum and, consequently, a type of "impact" that always occurs *before* what we come to observe as direct, material impact): cf. Poellner (2000: 48–57), Gori (2007: 103 ff.). Nietzsche accepts this critique of "materialistic atomism", and intends to use it as a model for his critique of the "atomism of the soul" (BGE 12).

obeys. That is why it is *disproportionate*, a “discharge of force”. Secondly, when something or someone commands, this is also just an affect, precisely the affect of command, i.e., a way of *being affected by the perception* of obedience (or by the “inner certainty” of being obeyed). It is a reaction that, again, is necessary, but that comes *from within* that which commands, or from within the one who commands. And that is why it is *disproportionate*, a “discharge of force”. In other words, obedience is actually a *feeling* of compulsion that necessarily leads something or someone to act in a certain way; and command is actually a *feeling* of power that necessarily leads something or someone to act in another way. The difference between commanding and obeying is just that, in the former, “*something draws something closer*”, whereas in the latter “*something feels drawn*” (WLN: 15 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[247]).

This implies that commanding is a *feeling* of power that *expresses an actual increase in power*, whereas obeying is a *feeling* of compulsion that *expresses an actual decrease in power*.<sup>45</sup> In what we call an “act of will”, no mechanistic causal relation occurs, and yet a stimulus is, by necessity, “incorporated” or “assimilated” in a way that actually makes the organism “grow” or “expand”—i.e., an “explosion of strength” takes place. In obeying, a stimulus is, by necessity, “incorporated” or “assimilated” in a way that actually makes the organism lose power—i.e., strength is either merely accumulated and repressed, or else it is discharged but *against* the organism itself (it is “internalized”).<sup>46</sup>

Thus, when Nietzsche writes that, “The old word ‘will’ only serves to describe a result, a type of individual reaction that necessarily follows from a quantity of partly contradictory, partly harmonious stimuli” (A 14), we should understand this as implying, first, that willing is a necessary reaction, but, second, that it is the reaction of a perceptive, “smart” body—and thus a reaction which is necessary and, at the same time, *spontaneous*. The reaction comes “from within”:

Life is not adaptation of inner circumstances to outer ones, but will to power, which, working from within [*von innen her*], incorporates and subdues more and more of that which is ‘outside’ (WP 681 = NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 7[9]).

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<sup>45</sup> For the idea that a will to power is perceptual and in fact an “affect” or a “pathos” (and not a “being”), cf. WLN: 91 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[151]; WLN: 247, 256 = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79], 14[121].

<sup>46</sup> On “internalization”, cf. GM II 16, cf. GM II 17: “[...] an instinct of freedom forced back, repressed, incarcerated within itself and finally able to discharge and unleash itself only against itself”. Nietzsche is here presenting the “beginnings” of the “bad conscience”, but he is also describing a more general phenomenon. As he explains in GM II 18, this “instinct of freedom” is synonymous with the “will to power”, and so his description of internalization refers to every form of repression of a will to power—e.g., both to the “bad conscience” and to the “hypnotic”, “buddhistic” states of the “will to nothingness”. Note also that, since the will to power is the same as an “instinct of freedom”, we can say that there is freedom (actual, not just apparent freedom) when this instinct obtains gratification *sc.* when a will to power commands and thus increases its power; there is un-freedom when the opposite occurs: see below.

NB. *Against* the doctrine of the influence of milieu and external causes: the internal force is infinitely *superior*; much that looks like an influence from outside is really only its adaptation from inside [*von innen her*]. One and the same milieu may be interpreted and made use of in opposite ways: there are no facts.—A genius is *not* explained by such conditions of his origin (WLN: 94–95 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[175]).

Willing is a necessary discharge of force—but it is more than a “reflex” or a pure “automatism”, i.e. more than a mechanic reaction. The discharge of force is still a reaction but one that expresses how an intelligent form of life (composed of a multiplicity of drives, etc.) has perceived and interpreted certain stimuli. Nietzschean “necessity” is, at the same time, a form of (intelligent) *spontaneity*.

Thus the “I” of consciousness is always driven by a force that it cannot control—but this force is not Schopenhauer’s “blind impulse”. It is rather a multiplicity of *intelligent* impulses or drives. Even more precisely, the force that drives the “I” results from the interaction of unconscious, intelligent drives with an environment. However, in being driven the “I” is also engaged in the process, as the helmsman is engaged in steering the helm. The “I” does not control the process and does not move the “boat”, but it is also not simply a “spectator” or a “witness” of the whole process. Since our conscious thoughts are intelligent, they have some degree of power over the intelligence of our drives. They are often able to steer the “boat”. That the “I” is “driven” by a force means only that the “I” is a small part of a process that it (or he or she) cannot control.

This whole new concept of necessity is the basis for Nietzsche’s new conception of freedom and un-freedom in terms of power and the will to power. Although all actions are necessary, they are all, in some sense, “free”, i.e., spontaneous. This is more than a nominal paradox. For not all actions are equal, i.e., equally spontaneous. Commanding is different from obeying, acting on a feeling of power is different from acting on a feeling of compulsion, willing is different from not willing (e.g., from acting on “reflex”, as in many mental pathologies). This allows for a distinction between freedom and un-freedom within the realm of necessity and spontaneity.

The key concept that allows for this distinction is the concept of “resistance”. Freedom is “measured by the resistance that needs to be overcome”, Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols* (TI Skirmishes 38). In a posthumous note from 1885, he adds:

*Free* means: ‘not pushed and shoved, without a **feeling of compulsion**’/ NB. Where we encounter a resistance and have to give way to it, we feel *un-free*: where we don’t give way to it but compel it to give way to us, we feel *free*. I.e., it is *our feeling of having more* force that we call ‘freedom of will’, the consciousness of our force *compelling* in relation to a force which is compelled (WLN: 16 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[250]).

Our concepts of freedom and un-freedom are not arbitrary. They result from the fact that in willing resistance is felt and, when we (or any drives within us) triumph over resistances, an increase in power is felt. A feeling of power is an *actual* increase in power, the affect of command is not an illusion. What is an illusion is the traditional

conception of the “freedom of will”, the belief that an action can be “caused” by a conscious thought which emanates from a conscious, atomic “will” belonging to an “I”. But we can legitimately speak of un-freedom as a giving way to resistance—i. e., *as obedience*—, and of freedom as compelling a resistance to give way—i. e., *as command* or *supremacy*. In simpler terms, there is un-freedom when a will is subjected to another will, and there is freedom when a will overcomes the resistance offered by another will. Note that freedom and un-freedom are spontaneous and necessary at the same time, for they both come “from within” (*von innen her*) and yet they are necessary reactions to stimuli. What distinguishes one from the other is just that in one case the stimuli enable growth, expansion, i. e., an increase in power and in the feeling of power—in the other case, they provoke a decrease in power and in the feeling of power.

These are, of course, concepts of *relative* freedom and un-freedom. Nietzsche’s relational concept of power entails that, as Henning Ottmann has put it, a “monopoly of power” (*Machtmonopol*) is impossible: all power, among the drives, or in nature, politics, morals, art, is always a mixture of power and lack of power.<sup>47</sup> What this means is, first, that freedom and un-freedom are always relative to some point of resistance (or points of resistance): the master is free in relation to the slave, and the slave is un-free in relation to the master, but the master may be, at the same time, un-free in relation to someone else or something else. Second, freedom is always a matter of *degree*. Since the slave, as a living “will to power”, will always keep on resisting the master (no matter how “passively”), the master enjoys no more than a given degree of freedom in relation to the slave, and not absolute freedom. Resistance is never eliminated—and, in fact, it is *needed* for there to be freedom. For this reason, a will to power will always *seek* resistances that it can try to overcome (e. g., WLN: 264 = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[174]; GM III 28). Third, the affect of command and the feeling of power are based on a multiplicity of relations of command *and obedience*: when a person commands, this means that something within her is commanding *and* something is obeying. Her freedom means only that, *overall*, she has a feeling of command and superiority in relation to certain resistances she feels within herself and in her environment. Fourth, obedience in relation to X often enhances the feeling of power in relation to Y. Submissive love is an example of this; obedience in the military is another example. Obedience may be cooperative, self-enhancing and even self-serving—and, in such cases, it becomes a form of command (in relation to something else). However, the degree of freedom that is thus achieved is far from the higher degrees of freedom—from those in which a person obeys only herself, i. e., something within herself (cf. Z II Self-Overcoming). Love among equals is freer than one-sided, submissive love; philosophical revaluation of values is freer than military command and, *a fortiori*, freer than military obedience. Last but not least, since a person’s freedom happens necessarily, it is, at the same time, un-freedom in relation

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<sup>47</sup> Ottmann (1999: 358).



to “fate”; she may even feel free in relation to “fate” (and she will tend to interpret her freedom as “freedom of the will” in the traditional sense), but, in truth, she is just being fated to be free.<sup>48</sup>

All of this explains why Nietzsche does not consider freedom to be an intrinsic characteristic of human beings, but rather an achievement: freedom is “something that you have and do *not* have, that you *will*, that you *win*” (TI Skirmishes 38). This achievement—the “overcoming of resistances”—is always relative and limited, and it happens within the bounds of necessity, but the point is that the necessity and fatality of everything that happens does not erase the difference between liberated and servile lives, or, at least, between free and un-free moments in the lives of human organisms. Or, in other words, the fact that every human being is entangled in an extremely complex web of power relations (which includes a multiplicity of differentiated fields of resistance) does not rule out the possibility of relative freedom.

This is the meaning of Nietzsche’s new compatibilism, which he expresses, for instance, when describing the creative sovereignty of great artists:

[Artists] are the ones who know only too well that their feeling of freedom, finesse and authority, of creation, formation, and control only reaches its apex when they have stopped doing anything “voluntarily” and instead do everything necessarily,—in short, they know that inside themselves necessity and “freedom of the will” have become one (BGE 213).<sup>49</sup>

In creating, an artist “knows how strictly and subtly he obeys thousands of laws” (BGE 188)—and yet the necessity to which he or she is subjected is compatible with freedom, even with “freedom of the will” understood as the kind of willing which, like an explosion of powder enabled by a match, allows the organism to

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**48** It is also important to add that, as Patton (2008: 473) remarks, Nietzsche makes the point that some of the activities that enhance the feeling of power seem to result in a *decrease* of *actual* power, and some activities that diminish the feeling of power (e.g., suffering) seem to result in an *increase* of *actual* power. But, *pace* Patton, what this actually means is that a *momentary* increase of power and of the feeling of power may result in a decrease of power and of the feeling of power *in the long run*, and a *momentary* decrease of power and of the feeling of power may result in an increase of power and of the feeling of power *in the long run*. Thus, for example, the slave’s “imaginary revenge” against the master does not change, by itself, the *actual* relation of power between the slave and the master, if by that we understand their *permanent* relation of power—but, *momentarily*, it does help the slave to survive, i.e., it increases not only his feeling of power, but also his *actual* power, if by that we understand his *momentary inner* power as an organism. In the long run, this may or may not lead to a substantial change in the permanent power relation between the slave and the master, but it will at least make its *preservation* more likely. In the best-case scenario, it will lead to a substantial change, or even to an inversion, of such a relation. Hence, the slave’s gain in (relative) freedom by means of an “imaginary revenge” is wholly “spiritual”, but it is “real”—i.e., it is a gratification (although a small one) of his instinct of freedom. On imaginary, symbolic and real power, and on the relation of all three forms of power to the feeling of power, cf. Saar (2008: 457 ff.).

**49** Cf. also BGE 188, TI Skirmishes 8–11, EH Zarathustra 3, Z III Tablets 2; cf. Richardson (1996: 210).

grow or expand beyond itself, to overcome resistances and explode *freely* beyond any “law” previously inscribed either in itself or in the event that enables this explosion. This kind of willing is the one which distinguishes a “strong will” from a “weak will”.

In GM II 2, when Nietzsche describes the “strong will” as the will of a “sovereign individual”, he equates this sovereign individual’s freedom with “autonomy”. However, the word “autonomy”, in my view, should not deceive us into thinking that the sovereign individual’s freedom is “freedom of choice”. Its “autonomy” is rather a “freedom of the spirit”,<sup>50</sup> which Nietzsche interprets as “self-creation”. I shall now conclude by briefly explaining this last point.

## 6.4 The “Sovereign Individual”: From Choice to Self-Creation

When we speak of “choice”, we refer to our alleged capacity to choose between alternative courses of action by using our reason and, thus, to determine our actions by our conscious intentions. Kant interprets this as “a faculty of determining oneself from oneself, independently of necessitation by sensible impulses” (CPR A 534/B 562).<sup>51</sup> In view of what we saw above about consciousness, it should be obvious that Nietzsche does not accept the existence of such a faculty. None of our conscious mental states are independent of our “sensible impulses”, i.e. of our drives and affects. On the contrary, all our actions are, to some extent, “necessitated” by the “organization and connected activity” of our drives and affects.

But, on the other hand, it can also be argued that Nietzsche accepts a more modest account of choice. Our conscious intentions and purposes are never the “*driving force*” of our willing, but they often function as its “*directing force*” (GS 360), i.e., as forces of limited power which, nonetheless, *stimulate* (but do not “cause”) a specific “discharge of strength”. It seems that it makes sense to speak of “choice” when our conscious intentions and purposes “direct” the course of our willing, especially if such intentions and purposes follow from reflection and deliberation. Nietzsche writes in the *Nachlass*:

The freest action is the one where our most personal, strongest, most subtle and practised nature emerges, and so that, at the same time, our intellect shows its directing hand.—Therefore, the most arbitrary and yet the most rational action! (NL 1883, KSA 10, 7[52], my translation).

Let me first emphasize this point: if, as this note suggests, the intellect’s “directing hand” merely enables the expression of our instinctive nature, there is no “freedom

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<sup>50</sup> E.g., HH Preface 4; HH I 26, 221, 226; WS 318, 350; D 56; GS 358; GM III 24; A 47; NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[17]; NL 1887, KSA 12, 9[39]; NL 1888, KSA 13, 22[24], 24[1]; cf. also BGE 188.

<sup>51</sup> CPR = *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998).

of choice". Freedom of choice is the same as "freedom of the will" in the traditional sense. It implies that an "I" or "subject" is able to choose between two (or more) alternative courses of action of which he or she is conscious. But such an "I" is just a fiction. When "we" choose between two alternative courses of action, this means that a necessary and spontaneous process involving unconscious drives and conscious thoughts has "chosen" one of the alternatives. Nothing *controls* this process. No matter how much we reflect and deliberate, we are just being driven to reflect and deliberate. The fact that our action will be influenced and even "directed" by our conscious intentions and purposes does not mean that it will be *controlled* by them (remember the "match" and the "powder keg"). In the end, it may be that the action agrees with a "commandeering thought", but it has not been "chosen" by an "I" that has thought this thought.

On that account, when Nietzsche writes that a "strong will" does "*not* react immediately to a stimulus" and, instead, is able to "take control of all the inhibiting, excluding instincts" (TI Germans 6, cf. TI Morality 2), this does not entail that a "strong will" is one which is able to control the instincts by reflecting and deliberating. A "strong will" is just a well organized organism—i. e., an organism that spontaneously, and instinctively, takes care to maximize its power, often by not reacting immediately to a stimulus and, thus, by preventing that harmful instincts become dominant within it. Its conscious mental states are only a part of its spontaneous reaction to stimuli, and they may help the organism to maximize its power (whereas in a weak will they will tend to be one more disturbing factor)—but such states are never really "in control" of the organism. To repeat, they are never the organism's "helmsman" (GS 360).

However, it could still be argued that Nietzschean freedom is "freedom of choice" in the modest sense sketched above. This would mean that the organism's ability to incorporate stimuli so as to grow or expand—its ability to overcome resistances—should be understood as tantamount to its ability to use the intellect's directing (but not controlling) "hand" to choose among alternatives. This is, of course, part of what Nietzsche means. A "strong will" tends to act in ways that agree with the organism's conscious intentions and purposes. But the decisive point is that if in the "freest action" the activity of the intellect's directing hand consists in enabling the organism to express its "most personal, strongest, most subtle and practised nature", then reflection and deliberation focused on particular alternatives which enter one's consciousness are surely no more than a small part of what is implied in the freedom-enabling activity of the intellect's directing hand. Our "most personal, strongest, most subtle and practised nature" concerns the life of our drives and affects, the order of rank of our instinctive valuations. This is why, in BGE 32, for example, Nietzsche argues that, instead of praising, censoring or judging our actions by our "intentions", we should "at least suspect that the decisive value is conferred by what is specifically *unintentional* about an action" (BGE 32). "Intentions", as well as "purposes", are just signs, symptoms, superficial interpretations of "the behavior of the drives towards on another" (GS 333, cf. BGE 32), and even our conscious values

are only a “sign language” of our instinctive morality (cf. BGE 187). This is precisely the point of presenting the intellect’s “hand” as a directing but not a controlling hand—i. e., of presenting conscious thoughts as “tools” of the drives and affects. The “hand” will always remain a “hand” of the whole organism, and it “frees” by enhancing the power of the drives and the affects, not by separating itself from them.

Furthermore, given that, on Nietzsche’s view, the birth of the state and the whole process of socialization has made human beings “sick” and “herd-like” by imposing herd-values not only on their consciousnesses but, most importantly, on their instincts, what the intellect’s directing hand must do in order to contribute to our freedom will have to be something much more fundamental than to help us choose between particular actions. It will have to help us change our instinctive valuations in ways that promote our “health” and individuality. This is essentially what Nietzsche means by the necessary, fundamentally uncontrollable process of “becoming what one is”—i. e., by *self-creation*. This process, the process of “self-creation”, is essentially the product of the “lengthy, secret work and artistry of my instinct” (EH *Clever* 9), and the intellect is merely an enabler (not at all a “cause” in any mechanistic sense) of the fundamental “revaluation of all values” which is involved in such a process. Nietzsche explicitly writes that in writing his *Zarathustra* and accomplishing the “revaluation of all values” he “never had any choice” (EH *Zarathustra* 3).

Hence, if it makes any sense to speak of “choice” for Nietzsche it is only as a “choice” of the whole organism, or, to borrow Ribot’s expression, as a “preference affirmed” by the “individual” as a whole.<sup>52</sup> “Choice” in this sense is the same as “willing”. It is “the reaction that is appropriate for an individual”.<sup>53</sup> But willing, or “choice” in this sense, is not *controlled* by a person or self—it is not “choice” as we usually understand it in the Kantian tradition (and as Nietzsche understood it when he wrote that he “never had any choice”).

These are fundamental ideas for the interpretation of the figure of the “sovereign individual”. The sovereign individual’s freedom is not “freedom of choice”, at least not in any usual sense. It is rather its power to give itself its own law, i. e., it is “auto-nomy” in the literal sense of the word (cf. GM II 2). A sovereign individual is an individual who is able to create its own values and, thus, its own individuality. It becomes “like only to itself, having freed itself from the morality of custom” (GM II 2). The “morality of custom”, the whole process of the socialization of man, is the highest resistance to the individuality of a human organism. The sovereign individual is “free” and “autonomous” precisely because it overcomes, to an unusual extent, the very process of socialization—“the herd animalization” of man (TI *Skirmishes* 38). In other words, a sovereign individual is someone who, like Goethe, is “strong enough for this freedom”, sc. to the freedom of self-creation (cf. TI *Skirmishes* 49). Like the artist described in BGE 188 and BGE 213, the sovereign individual is the

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<sup>52</sup> See Ribot ([1882] 2002: 26 and *passim*).

<sup>53</sup> See Ribot ([1882] 2002: 24, 139): “la réaction propre d’un individu”.

type of individual in which freedom and necessity become truly compatible (or “become one”) because an amazingly protracted “explosion of strength” (*Kraftexplosion*), or “discharge of strength” (*Auslösung von Kraft*), takes place which allows such an individual’s spirit to grow and expand “freely” beyond (almost) every previously prevailing values and “laws”. Such is its “strong will”, which enables it to “obey only to itself”, that is, to keep a “promise” implied in a “duty” it has created for itself and imposed upon itself (cf. GM II 2 with A 11). Such a “duty” is not a norm arising from the “morality of custom”, but rather from that mysterious “conscience” which tells the sovereign individual: “become what you are” (cf. GM II 2 with TI Arrows 36–44 and GS 266–275).

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## Part III: **Mind, Metaphysics, and Will to Power**





Friedrich Ulfers and Mark Daniel Cohen

## 7 Nietzsche's Panpsychism as the Equation of Mind and Matter

Amongst the many and varied interpretive approaches to Nietzsche's work, one that is receiving burgeoning interest from scholars, but that has intricacies and subtleties whose exploration remains inadequately explored, is the reading of Nietzsche as an ontological thinker; as a philosopher of the nature of the real. Many contemporary analyses of Nietzsche closely examine his ideas on the transvaluation of values, the psychology of *ressentiment*, the destructive influence of religious belief and a range of specifically human concerns—issues that arise within the realm of human perception and thought. However, relatively little has been written on his views regarding the nature of the universe as it is in itself—beyond the scope of human conceptualization—as the foundation of human thought rather than as its consequence, and therefore as beyond the limit of ordinary experience. In short, Nietzsche typically continues to be viewed as a phenomenologist, rather than as an ontologist who addresses concerns that have no direct implications for how one ought to live.

The authors of this chapter hold that much of Nietzsche's thought is devoted to a conception of the real, which is intended to have the credibility and legitimacy of a scientific theory. Ever since *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche devoted much of his thinking not only to the nature of human life, but also to the world as it is in itself. The latter, Nietzsche maintains, is accurately portrayed in Greek tragedy. In Nietzsche's *Nachlass*, many of his late notes are dedicated to developing a theory of a "processual" world—a world intrinsically constituted of processes rather than of fixed entities. It is essentially a world of Becoming rather than Being (a theory closely aligned with Nietzsche's thought in the *Birth of Tragedy*). Nietzsche demonstrates an ongoing interest in formulating an accurate idea of what the world is—one that is beyond the scope of everyday human thought—and develops a conception of a world that remains inconceivable to the ordinary human mind.

Nietzsche's ontology is formulated in a number of specific theories, which were predominantly developed during his last functioning years. While they are published only in part, these theories can nonetheless be reconstituted from his unpublished notes. These theories can be considered to be conceptually synonymous, insofar as the varying formulations both stem from and illustrate the same basic principles of the universe, as conceived by Nietzsche. They include the principles of Will to Power, Eternal Recurrence, Nietzsche's "time-atom theory" (the theory that time is composed of discrete components).

For all the obscurity that surrounds Nietzsche's ontological speculations, there is one theoretical formulation in particular that has been overlooked more than any

other—that which the authors of this chapter term “panpsychism,”<sup>1</sup> which may alternatively be referred to as “panexperientialism.” Panexperientialism is Nietzsche’s attribution of psychical aspects, referred to in his *Nachlass* as “*Wesen der Dinge*,” as the “essence of material things” (NL 1872–73, KSA 7, 19[161]). This worldview is distinct from traditional Idealism in several respects. In particular, it purports that world events are not simply purely contents of experience, i. e. essentially sensations, but are, to a degree, capable of experience. In short, they are not only objects of experience, but are themselves, to a limited extent, subjects of experience.

Predominant amongst the psychical qualities possessed by reality as a whole are “*Empfindung*,” or feeling, and “*Gedächtnis*,” or memory. These qualities are not specifically attributable to, nor isolated amongst, individual human beings or individual living entities. Rather, *Empfindung* is a quality that pervades the world and is present in the most essential components of the real: “*Der Stoss, das Einwirken des einen Atoms auf das andre, setzt Empfindung voraus*” (NL 1872–73, KSA 7, 19[159])—“The push, the impact of one atom upon another, presupposes feeling.” “*Der empfindungslose Zustand dieser Substanz ist nur eine Hypothese! keine Erfahrung!—Empfindung also Eigenschaft der Substanz: es giebt empfindende Substanzen*” (NL 1883–84, KSA 10, 24[10]). “The condition [of substances] devoid of feeling is only a hypothesis! Not based on experience!—Thus feeling is a property of all substance: there are feeling substances.”

Nietzsche therefore seeks to treat matter as not entirely distinct from psyche, or mind, or experience in their rudimentary meaning as *Empfindung* (feeling). In other words, Nietzsche ultimately ignores the distinction between mind and mindless matter, between the organic and the inanimate, recognizing what he refers to as “*Der Verband des Organischen und des Unorganischen*” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 39[13]), “the binding together of the organic and the inorganic.”

Nietzsche’s attribution of psychic qualities to all that exists is not altogether surprising, given the rudiments of his idea of Will to Power. In particular, we should recognize that the Will to Power does not create the matter and events that constitute the world, but rather manifests itself as those events and objects, in much the way that water manifests itself as waves, which therefore do not exist as independent and self-sustaining phenomena. Nietzsche clarifies the matter by attributing a quality of self-initiation, of willing, to all entities, or more precisely to all events, which for Nietzsche are the sole constituents of apparent entities. This attribution of volition is an aspect of his rejection of classical cause-and-effect mechanics. Events neither arise out of nor are necessitated by the preceding events that we ordinarily understand as forcibly triggering subsequent events. Rather, events are themselves self-determining and self-directing, or more precisely, autogenerative—one of the most

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1 A small number of contemporary scholars have offered observations concerning this subject, as we will subsequently note. All agree on the use of the term “panpsychism,” although it should be noted that Nietzsche never used this term nor any equivalent German term.

distinguishing qualities and defining aspects of the Will to Power. The principle that governs events is one of autopoiesis, a self-organizing drive that is the nature of the world and its constitutive events. This drive, along with the world's constitutive events, creates itself out of itself, subject to, and illustrative of, no causal principles such as efficient cause or final cause. The world and its component eventualities have no external causes, nor any ultimate purpose. They are driven by an internal quality comparable to a "will" that is a "pathos," an "agon" or "suffering."

This Will to Power is the creative principle of the universe and it is what Nietzsche calls "*Urschmerz*," a "suffering, primal and eternal, the sole ground of the world" (BT 4). The suffering at the heart of the world, the pathos, is the essential nature of the real, of Will to Power. The pathos at the centre of the world is its "primordial contradiction and primordial pain" (BT 5). It is the contradiction of things struggling with their own opposites—their internal opposing tendencies or forces—that causes the birth of new phenomena in unending creation, like an overflow of potential: "Excess revealed itself as truth" (BT 4). The contradiction is an "*Ineinander*," an interpenetration, or chiasmic unity, of opposites that renders even the primordial pain intricated with its opposite: "*Das Ineinander von Leid und Lust im Wesen der Welt*" (NL 1870–71, KSA 7, 7[196]), "The interpenetration of suffering and pleasure at the heart of the world." As the outcome of this pain and contradiction at the core of all things, the world then realizes itself like "a work of art that *gives birth to itself*" (NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[114] = WP 796), without the intercession of an artist, creator or external cause.

Nietzsche rejects the dichotomy of the mental and the material, and instead implicitly postulates an inconceivable third—the *tertium* between opposites. This is supposed to be the excluded middle, but for Nietzsche, it is the essence of the real. The third, in the case of his panpsychism, is what we might, for lack of a better alternative, term Nietzsche's "psychical materialism." He thus rejects the standard Cartesian dualism between mind and matter, which forms the foundation of "common sense" conceptions. In other words, mind and matter are inextricably interpenetrated (insofar as it is meaningful to distinguish between them at all, given their significance as only vague approximations). Rather than somehow coexisting whilst remaining mutually exclusive (as the standard, classical and dualistic interpretation of the mind-body problem would have it) mind and matter are logically incommensurable concepts that point, from different directions, toward a reality that in itself cannot be represented and expressed.

We can put this matter more simply if we refer to the language that Charles Hartshorne (whose later position has significant similarities to Nietzsche's) used to express a similar thought. In fact, all conceptual language faces the difficulty of being structurally simple, relative to the inconceivable reality to which it approximates. In *The Zero Fallacy*, Hartshorne argues that there are varying degrees of mindedness present in matter, but at no point is a zero degree of mindedness achieved. To a degree, qualities of mind are present in all aspects of material reality: "Atoms, particles, radiation waves, are not inert, and matter consists of them. They need not be

soulless, a zero of freedom or a zero of mind. The zero of activity cannot be distinguished from the zero of actuality” (Hartshorne 1997: 62).

It should be noted that, in ascribing mental qualities to all components of reality, Nietzsche should not be taken to assert that the capacity for thought or self-awareness exists in everything. Much like Hartshorne’s view that varying degrees of mindedness are to be found everywhere, Nietzsche argues for a universal minimal degree of mindedness, perhaps best referred to as sentience. This minimal degree of mindedness is a form of awareness or responsiveness without full consciousness, and definitely without self-consciousness. Nietzsche thus asserts a feeling-based capacity of responsiveness that underlies all events. Specifically, he asserts that, “*Der Wille zur Macht interpretiert*” (NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[148]), “the Will to Power interprets.” This concept makes sense of his parallel assertions that the quality of feeling, or *Empfindung*, is universal and that the ego structure, the canonical model for self-awareness, is a fiction not even attributable as an actual quality to human beings. In arguing against the existence of coherent unities in nature, he asserts that: “We need ‘unities’ in order to be able to reckon: that does not mean we must suppose that such unities exist. We have borrowed the concept of unity from our ‘ego’ concept—our oldest article of faith” (NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79] = WP 635). Inanimate matter’s responsiveness to eventuality can be distinguished from our human responses to events, but this difference is one of degree rather than a difference in kind. *Empfindung* underlies all events, for it is a capability; the capability that directs all of existence.

What we have entitled Nietzsche’s argument for panpsychism bears a distinct resemblance to Schelling’s philosophy of nature, which is particularly significant in light of Nietzsche’s familiarity with Schelling’s work. The clearly panpsychical character of Schelling’s thought is rooted in his vision of a dynamic and organic nature animated by a “world soul,” which he describes in *Von der Weltseele* as nature’s “organizing principle.” This is the principle in which nature’s dualistic structure has its origin: “*Der Dualismus in der Natur führt auf ein organisierendes Prinzip = Weltseele*” (Schelling 1856–61: 450).<sup>2</sup>

In his *Freiheitsschrift (Of Human Freedom)*, Schelling refers to the “world soul” as “Wille” or “will,” declaring it “*den höchsten Ausdruck [der] Philosophie*,” “the highest expression of philosophy,” as it constitutes the Being of beings. Schelling, in observing that “*Wollen ist Urseyn*” (Schelling 1927: 350), “Will is primordial Being,” perhaps anticipates Nietzsche’s Will to Power to a greater degree than does Schopenhauer. Much like Nietzsche’s Will to Power as pathos, as a primordial pain that is a chiasmic unity—an interpenetration of opposing forces—Schelling’s will is described as a Heraclitean unity of opposites, a dualism that at the same time admits of a unity.

As Schelling moves to a principle of autopoiesis, there are further anticipations of Nietzsche. As he expands on will as “primordial Being,” Schelling makes clear

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<sup>2</sup> All translations of Schelling are by the authors.

that his conception of will is rooted in the sense of the word “wollen”—to want or to long for—as opposed to will as the intent to dominate. In terminology that seems distinctively Nietzschean, Schelling's primordial will constitutes a “*Sehnsucht* [...] *sich selbst zu gebären*,” “longing [...] to give birth to itself” (Schelling 1927: 359). In terms attributed by the authors to Nietzsche's primordial conception, Schelling describes the will as “*Potenz*” (Buchheim 1992: 149), “potentiality” as “*reines Können*” (Schelling 1927:149), a “pure capacity” as “*ruhendes Wollen*” (Schelling 1927: 149), and a “longing at rest” that becomes *Wollen* in the sense of “*Übergang a potentia ad actum*” (Buchheim 1992: 43), “*transition a potentia ad actum*,” or self-actualization.

Although Nietzsche's panpsychism has largely escaped the notice of most Nietzsche scholars, it has been recognized by a few. Günter Abel has observed that in Nietzsche's work, all processes, from the “realm of the inorganic to that of conscious thought,” have an internal interpretive capacity, so that one can speak of an all-pervasive “*Geistigkeit*” (Abel 1998: 55), or “mentality” to the world.

In *Nietzsche on Time and History* (Dries 2008a), Manuel Dries and R. Kevin Hill both offer observations regarding Nietzsche's panpsychism. In his essay “Towards A dualism: Becoming and Nihilism in Nietzsche's Philosophy,” Dries notes that Nietzsche's perspectivalism seems to imply that the Will to Power enacts interpretive processes in life forms of varying degrees of complexity. “Life is seen as perspectival at all levels: a minimal intentionality or directedness is assumed to be already at work in non-conscious organic life-forms such as ‘protoplasm’” (2008b: 131). In a footnote, he goes on to observe that “Nietzsche insists that even the inorganic must be thought of as having a minimal directedness. Recently, philosophy of mind has started to seriously consider such a ‘panpsychist’ theory” (2008b: 131).

In “From Kantian Temporality to Nietzschean Naturalism,” Hill notes that Nietzsche conceived of the universe in accordance with the theories of eighteenth-century mathematician and physicist Roger Boscovich, who saw the universe as interacting fields of force—a proposition with which the authors of the present chapter agree. Hill adds that

Nietzsche also appears to have endorsed a form of panpsychism regarding these fields of force [...] he thought the idea of force makes no sense unless we understand forcing and being forced to be something undergone, felt, something (in our sense of the word) mental. Thus every field of force will have its corresponding “feel” as it presses on other fields and is pressed upon in turn. (Hill 2008: 83)

Hill further notes that Nietzsche's panpsychism permits him to avoid the implications of universal mind that necessarily arise in Idealism, thus in a sense naturalizing the attribution of universal mentality.

Panpsychism thus allows Nietzsche to escape from the most untoward consequences of the *esse est percipi* principle. It allows Nietzsche to continue to affirm the existence of a nature within which we are embedded. Though it is permeated with mind, Nietzsche's nature *transcends* us.

Our knowledge of it may well be imperfect, thus affirming a distinction between how things seem and what is so. (Hill 2008: 83)

Nietzsche, in conceiving of aspects of human mentality as inapplicable to the world in general—and as illusory even in the case of human beings—diffuses any charge of anthropomorphism.<sup>3</sup> Mindedness becomes a natural quality in which humans share, rather than a human quality that nature also manifests. Hartshorne confronts the same potential charge by making a similar argument:

Those who say that, apart from the specifically human forms, or the specifically mammalian or animal forms, nature is devoid of psychical traits altogether are indeed celebrating the role of man or manlike creatures in the world. They are saying that our kind of creature introduces mind as such into nature. Apart from us and our kind there is nothing with intrinsic life, feeling, value, or any sort whatever. Is this not in a class with the idea that our planet is the centre of the universe? (Hartshorne 1977: 94)

Therefore, if we argue against Nietzsche and Hartshorne that attributing a non-human mindedness to nature is equivalent to attributing a human quality to nature, we engage in a logical contradiction. And to believe otherwise as an article of faith—to hold the unshakable belief that mindedness is fundamentally human—is to engage in what we would now call “human exceptionalism.” If Nietzsche can be said to have consistently and vigorously held any position throughout his work, it is the rejection of human exceptionalism.

The foundation of *Empfindung* as feeling or sentience is therefore not located in individual minds or individual entities. We ordinarily take substantial, fixed and present entities or “things” to be evident forms of Being, yet these are rejected by Nietzsche as fictions that we perceive (it would perhaps be more appropriate to say “imagine”) based on our mistaken belief in ourselves as egos, which is our “oldest article of faith.” In short, they are fictions born of our illusory awareness of our existence as discrete selves. For Nietzsche, *Empfindung* constitutes the ultimate essence of reality. It is the quality of Becoming, of that which is transitory and in a flux so constant and essential that it is not even momentarily self-identical. As Nietzsche puts it, “*die thatsächlich vorhandene Ungleichheit*” (NL 1883, KSA 10, 7 [93]), “the non-identical/non-self-same given in reality” is situated in active, self-activating moments, which Nietzsche characterizes as “singular” (TL 1; KSA 1: 879–880) instances of feeling (or pathos). These are essentially discontinuous and too insignificant, when taken one by one, to be registered distinctly by our senses, or to be conceivable as individual entities.

Nietzsche’s theory of singulars, which can be conceived of as discontinuous pulses of Becoming, aligns closely with his theory of time-atoms. This component of his

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<sup>3</sup> The topic of Nietzsche’s considered doubts regarding the value, and even the possibility of thought, has yet to be adequately explored.

ontological thought, much like his panpsychism, is only now starting to gain recognition.<sup>4</sup> It is perhaps appropriate that both ontological formulations, of singulars and time-atoms, align with Nietzsche's panpsychism, for all three theoretical formulations are philosophically synonymous.

In formulating his time-atom theory, in which time is conceived of in terms of discontinuous points, Nietzsche states that "*die Zeitatomistik fällt endlich zusammen mit einer Empfindungslehre. Der dynamische Zeitpunkt ist identisch mit dem Empfindungspunkt*" (NL 1873, KSA 7, 26[12]), "the atomistic time ultimately coincides with a theory of sensation. The dynamic time-point is identical with the sensation-point" (NL 1873, KSA 7, 26[12]; trans. Nietzsche 2000). The loci of *Empfindung* may be thought of as "*Willensatome*" (NL 1870–71, KSA 7, 7[201]), "atoms of will," which are as indivisible as they are discrete, unconnected but not unrelated to each other. They are the alternative to the paradigm of Being as the single and fixed reality behind the mere appearances of this world. They are also the alternative to the paradigm of the real as a continuous field upon which the drama of the world is played out, the stage upon which all events of history occur—the space and time within which the universe exists. For Nietzsche, the inherent geometry of the universe, composed of the structural principles of Will to Power as pathos (NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[79] = WP 635), of *Empfindung* as the constituent "material" of reality, is something entirely and radically different. His panpsychism reveals itself as a structure, which is quite unlike the structure that is assumed to be the backdrop of the real. It is an essentially non-visualizable structure, which is inconceivable as even a hypothetical direct perception. It is the pattern, the structural principle, that underlies each expression of his ontological "vision."

Nietzsche's ontology can be characterized as that of a punctiform universe, a universe rooted in discontinuity. Taken at face value, there is a certain initial difficulty in determining how a conception of the world as composed of discrete self-existing elements<sup>5</sup> differs from the standard vision of the world as a realm inhabited by individual, self-identical, enduring, substantial entities interacting with each other. It would initially appear that this is the standard conception of reality poured into a new bottle, with Nietzsche's ontological innovation amounting to a distinction without a difference. To appreciate the radical nature of Nietzsche's discontinuous and atomized universe, one must comprehend the structural principles by which it is organized.

For Nietzsche, the events of *Empfindung*—of feeling, pathos, Becoming, or the actions of Will to Power become, as one explores his reasoning, conceptually synonymous formulations. They are not the discrete foreground activities that constitute the

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that Nietzsche's theory of time-atoms has also been elucidated by Robin Small (2010) and by Keith Ansell-Pearson (2000).

<sup>5</sup> Each existing in its own right rather than as a result of the causal influence of preceding events or the purpose-driven influence of ultimate goals, and that must, perforce, possess a principle of interrelationship.



activities of the real. Nor are they the components of the world and its history occurring in a continuous space and over continuous time, in which they are suspended, much as we think of the entities and events of apparent physical reality as being suspended in space, i. e. the universe at its most essential, and time, i. e. its progressively transpiring presence.

Instead, for Nietzsche, the discontinuity is fundamental, not in the sense that it is a condition “outside” or beyond the nature of the world, nor in the sense that it generates that nature by means of causal influence, but rather in the sense that discontinuity is the root nature of things. It is responsible for all other aspects of reality by way of necessary implication or simultaneous aspect—B is the case because A is the case, by definitional implication and not causal influence, or by an *a priori analytic* (rather than *a priori synthetic*) relationship among aspects. In other words, discontinuity is the background condition of Nietzsche’s universe, for the eventualities of the processes are not played out in a continuous space and time, but in spaces and at moments; each in its own space and of its own moment—each its own space and moment. There is no overall stage upon which the events of the world can be played out; there is no single encompassing space and unfolding stream of time that consumes them all.

Hence, it is clear that a fundamental discontinuity is an absolute discontinuity. Events occurring in their own spaces and moments, which are their own spaces and moments of eventuality, exist as if in parallel dimensions. They have no principle of proximity, for unlike foreground physical atoms, sub-atomic particles, quarks (or whatever else we may ordinarily comprehend as moments in a flowing time, or as individual entities of any sort), they are not separated by measurable amounts of space or time. They are not set apart by extension, by any unoccupied formations of the “material” of which they are constituted, either spatially or temporally. They are neither joined nor separated by any interceding medium. They are simply discrete. It is as if each event were a universe unto itself—an instance of Becoming, of process, that is intrinsically and primarily temporal due to its processual and durational character. This process does not occur over time, nor does it occur in time. It is not itself an extension of time, nor does it occur in an overall extension of the world’s time. It simply occurs.

The reason that there is no principle of contiguity, that distinct, discontinuous points, or “atoms,” are the structural principle of Nietzsche’s ontology in all of its theoretical formulations, is a function of a principle of organization that he makes quite clear. According to Nietzsche, if moments of *Empfindung* or time were to be in contact, they would blend together in a single, greater point of sensation or time: “*Aufeinanderfolgende Zeitpunkte würden in einander fallen,*” “Successive time-points would merge together” (NL 1873, KSA 7, 26[12]). For Nietzsche, contact equals merging, by which he observes a well-recognized proposition: when two systems of identical organizational principles interact freely, they are in essence the same system. It would be entirely artificial to describe them as separate systems—a distinction without a difference.

It is evident that, were points of time to be in contact, they would constitute a larger single point and the situation would be back to where it began, with a single time or sensation point and the question of its relation to other points. And if there were to be a temporal medium between two otherwise discontinuous time-points, the same condition would apply: the entire system would merge together, and again, be back where the question of relation began. What remains as the only possibility is fundamental discontinuity—sensation and time being manifested in distinct moments that are not in direct contact and which are not separated by an intervening temporality or sensation.

It is obvious that an examination of what we have been calling Nietzsche's panpsychism "blends into" an analysis of his theory of time-atoms. As has been made clear, *Empfindung* is essentially temporal: "The dynamic time-point is identical with the sensation-point," since both are conceptually indistinguishable from the singulars of Becoming. As is the case with *Empfindung*, time comes in distinct points that are not mathematical points in the sense of possessing a measurement of zero (for there is no zero degree of feeling or time, and time-atoms are durational). These points are not in direct contact, for then they would blend into a single larger moment. This moment would either ultimately be a single, frozen moment of all time (thus returning us to unchanging Being as the condition of the world and eradicating all change), or would make all eventuality changing but simultaneous, with no possibility of even perceived succession. And the time-atoms are not "suspended" in a continuum of time. They do not occur *in* time, for they *are* time. Their structures of fundamentally separate time-points that have no time passing between them and keeping them separated at different *times*, so to speak, are the only time there is. Hence, the discontinuity is fundamental in the sense described above—time exists in parcels, and the parcels of time have no temporal relations between or amongst them, none of them is given as occurring before or after any of the others, and they do not combine into a temporal continuum or flow: "*Die Zeit ist aber gar kein continuum, sondern es giebt nur totalverschiedene Zeitpunkte, keine Linie,*" "But time is no continuum at all, there are only totally different time-points, no line" (NL 1873, KSA 7, 26[12]). Neither do they occur simultaneously—"Der dynamische Zeitpunkt ist identisch mit dem Empfindungspunkt. Denn es giebt keine Gleichzeitigkeit der Empfindung," "The dynamic time-point is identical with the sensation-point. There is no simultaneity in sensation" (NL 1873, KSA 7, 26[12]). The denial of "*Gleichzeitigkeit*" to "*Empfindung*," and so to time-atoms, is a deeper, more radical stipulation than the mere denial that different feelings and different time-points can occur simultaneously. It is comparable to, for it is of a piece with, Nietzsche's assertion that his singulars of Becoming are "*Ungleichheit*," that they are not identical with themselves. So too with time, for every time-atom, every moment, is not the same as itself. In a sense, it is out of sync with itself.

Even so, it is just as obvious that there must be a principle of relation between time-atoms. Otherwise, every event, every moment would exist, literally and thoroughly, in a universe of its own, in the sense that every event could have no effect

on (or presence) in relation to any other event. Such an implication would not only be self-evidently implausible, it would also be fully at odds with other key elements in Nietzsche's ontology. As he wrote in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "*Alle Dinge sind verkettet, verfädelt, verliebt,*" "All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored" (Z IV Drunken Song 10). Furthermore, the principle of relation among time-atoms is necessary to their individual qualities, which is to say that in their essential natures, these separated atoms of sensation and eventuality, of Becoming, are relational. A time-atom is the smallest "unit" of temporality of Becoming, and thus of eventuality. It cannot be subdivided while maintaining the integrity of the event that is the time-atom, the moment of Becoming, the feeling of the event. Its scale is determined for Nietzsche by the time necessary for a discrete event. However, what constitutes a discrete event is a matter of viewpoint—the discreteness of the event is perspectival. Without interaction, the concept of a time-atom is therefore meaningless.

Nietzsche does address the issue of relation among time-atoms, and calls the principle of relation "*actio in distans*" (NL 1873, KSA 7, 26[12], trans. Nietzsche 2000). "*Eine Wirkung von aufeinanderfolgenden Zeitmomenten ist unmöglich: denn zwei solche Zeitpunkte würden in einander fallen. Also ist jede Wirkung actio in distans, d. h. durch Springen. Wie eine Wirkung dieser Art in distans möglich ist, wissen wir gar nicht*" (NL 1873, KSA 7, 26[12]). "An effect of a sequence of time-moments is impossible: for two such time-moments would coincide. Thus every effect is actio in distans, i. e., through jumping. How an effect of this kind in distans is possible we do not know at all."

There is a principle of "jumps," of immediate and non-transpiring leaps from one time-atom or moment to another. One may presume that this is a transition that neither takes time nor is instantaneous, insofar as there is no time, no quality of temporality, in the relation between moments. To either assert time or deny it to the event of the "jump," to claim that some time transpires or that no time transpires at all, is hence to commit a category mistake. It is not that there is no time, nor that there is time. To speak of time transpiring or failing to transpire in the "jump" between time-atoms is comparable to speaking of the color of an aroma.

How that jump occurs, its structural method, is unknown to Nietzsche (by his own admission) and can, for obvious reasons, be taken to be outside the established laws of physics. Even so, it is evident that Nietzsche intends to leave room for his proposition that all things are entangled, even in the face of an apparently contradictory state of affairs, in which every moment and event is distinct and unconnected to every other. Here, too, Nietzsche's formulation of time and *Empfindung*, and hence his panpsychism, must be considered as a "third"—as an impossible to fully conceive alternative to the dichotomy and apparent contradiction of the standard opposition between inter-relation and hermetic isolation. Thus, despite the complete separation of every event in a moment of its own, disconnected from all other moments, Nietzsche's conception of the time-atom as a singular is a rejection of Descartes' concept of something existing that "needs no other thing in order to exist" (Descartes

1991: 23). The moments of time, walled off from each other by non-existent, unbridgeable gulfs of non-time, are nonetheless intimately involved in each other.

Quite evidently, Nietzsche's time-atom theory was left incomplete and was presumably intended—as presumably was his completed ontological theory—for a book he did not live, or remain coherent enough, to write. But much of it is present in his unpublished notes. The theory can hence be discerned in its broad outlines, and the theoretical formulations he did compose—the Eternal Recurrence of the Same, the Will to Power, and his panpsychism—can be given readings informed by these essential ontological propositions of fundamental discontinuity.

Despite this lack of completion, Nietzsche's ontology can be seen to be prescient of developments in science and philosophy that came shortly after its formulation, in the first half of the twentieth century. In a chapter of this brevity, only a few instances can be cited and little analysis and depth of research offered. But a few of the alignments are worth noting.

The most obvious relation of Nietzsche's ontological thought of fundamental discontinuity with future science is, of course, with the development of quantum theory. This theory introduced the recognition of a basic punctiform nature into the conception of energy, a discontinuity in what had been understood on the model of a flowing stream or continuum. We now realize that energy comes in atomistic bursts, or quanta, pellets rather than jets—Max Planck's theory of the quantum was published in 1900, the year of Nietzsche's death. There is, of course, a distinction between Nietzsche's fundamental discontinuity of space and time, and Planck's division of energy into a series of quanta (atoms of energy) that travel in a sequence (like bullets) with a measurable expanse of space between each. However, recent developments in physics come far closer to the ontological vision that Nietzsche was working toward: This vision is reflected in string-theory, with its additional dimensions curled up and forming closed systems rather than joining together into a universal expanse. And in particular, Nietzsche's ontological vision is reminiscent of loop quantum gravity, in which the structure of both space and time come in discrete components. These are nodes with a minimum size, which are indivisible, and which form, through a method of connectivity, a "spin network" that accounts for the macrostructure of Einsteinian space-time: a "fundamental formulation" of gravity in which there is no "background spacetime" (Rovelli 2008: 5, 8). In fact, the more closely one examines Nietzsche's time-atom theory, the more it resembles loop quantum gravity in its broad outlines. And it can be said that, regardless of the ultimate estimation of the cogency and applicability of Nietzsche's ontology, Nietzsche was moving forward, intuitively, toward a number of what are now the most advanced theoretical developments in physical theory.

In twentieth-century philosophy, a few philosophers have adopted ideas comparable to aspects of Nietzsche's ontology of panpsychism, and even time-atoms, although without any evidence of direct influence. And yet, there appear to be none who have reflected the heart of his conception, the discontinuity of the foundation

of the real, even though science has acquired the idea and is finding ways to put it to the test.

William James formulated a concept comparable in some regards to time-atoms. Specifically, he acquires from Bergson the idea that time is intrinsically durational, that experience transpires, and thus any experience requires a passage of time for it to be experiential. Experiential time cannot be reduced or subdivided into non-durational points. It is not composed of individual infinitesimal moments of “now,” since the “now moment” cannot exist. Any experience requires time to transpire, requires a temporal thickness, something more than a single moment. That is to say, the conceptions by which we comprehend and measure time do not reflect the inherent quality of time, and *that* is to say that abstractions are not representations.

For James, every experience hence requires a duration of time to be an experience. Time is experienced in durations that do not appear to us below certain increments. Time affects us in discrete segments that in their scale are specific to the experience they carry. Below their minimal scale, experience cannot be detected and time cannot be grasped by us.

All our sensible experiences, as we get them immediately, do thus change by discrete pulses of perception, each of which keeps us saying ‘more, more, more,’ or ‘less, less, less,’ as the definite increments or diminutions make themselves felt. The discreteness is still more obvious when, instead of old things changing, they cease, or when altogether new things come. Fechner’s term of the ‘threshold,’ which has played such a part in the psychology of perception, is only one way of naming the quantitative discreteness in the change of all our sensible experiences. They come to us in drops. Time itself comes in drops.

Our ideal decomposition of the drops which are all that we feel into still finer fractions is but an incident in that great transformation of the perceptual order into a conceptual order [...] All ‘felt’ times coexist and overlap or compenetrates each other thus vaguely. (James 1987: 733–734)

James’s view corresponds to Nietzsche’s conception of a minimal duration of time as intrinsic to time’s inherent nature, and also to the idea that minimal duration is determined by the quality and nature of the event, and not by an arbitrary, fixed scale of measure, such as the mechanical clock or the metronome. The time that James speaks about here is human perceptual time, time as it is experienced by us—the subjective experience of time. There is no indication in these observations that the mentality that experiences goes beyond the human mind, or that these temporal qualities imply an ontological philosophy. James’s observations here are purely psychological.

However, there are passages elsewhere in James’s work that suggest the possibility of a panpsychism, one which would presumably carry the attributes of perceived time to an ontological level, making them qualities of the essential constitution of reality.

In *The Principles of Psychology*, James observes that the principle of evolution, as the underlying dynamic in the development of the universe, requires some degree of

consciousness from the beginning (i. e. in things), and thus a consciousness not dependent on human minds, or on brain structure of any kind.

Consciousness, however small, is an illegitimate birth in any philosophy that starts without it, and yet professes to explain all facts by continuous evolution. *If evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origin of things.* Accordingly we find that the more clear-sighted evolutionary philosophers are beginning to posit it there. Each atom of the nebula, they suppose, must have had an aboriginal atom of consciousness linked with it; and, just as the material atoms have formed bodies and brains by massing themselves together, so the mental atoms, by an analogous process of aggregation, have fused into those larger consciousnesses which we know in ourselves and suppose to exist in our fellow-animals. (2007: 149)

Clearly, James is observing the principle *Natura non facit saltus* (Nature does not make jumps), the Leibnizian, Newtonian—and Darwinian—principle that there can be no abrupt appearances in nature, nor any emergence of what was not there before in some form. Any movement from zero presence to positive presence is abrupt, regardless of how small the emergent property (“Consciousness, however small, is an illegitimate birth in any philosophy that starts without it”). In short, anything that is there must always have been there in some way.

James's rejection of abrupt emergences constitutes, of course, a rejection of discontinuity, as well as a rejection of Nietzsche's leap amongst time-atoms. It is hence inherently at odds with Nietzsche's core ontological proposition of background discontinuity. Even so, in his conception of minimal durations of time and the determination of time intervals strictly by the events in which they occur, there is a distinct proximity between James's conception and Nietzsche's theories.

A contemporary philosopher who has postulated panpsychism as an overtly ontological philosophy—one of the few who currently propound the position themselves—is Galen Strawson. In “Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism,” the lead essay in the collection *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature*, Strawson argues that the proposition that the universe is fundamentally physical requires the assertion that a minimum degree of psychism must be present at its fundamental level. The logic is comparable to that of James: the rejection of the possibility of an emergent property, the claim that the capacity to have experience cannot arise at any point in a universe that previously did not contain it. “Real physicalists must accept that at least some ultimates are intrinsically experience-involving. They must at least embrace *micropsychism*” (2006: 25). Strawson admits that “Micropsychism is not yet panpsychism” (2006: 25), but argues that panpsychism is necessarily possible and, unless one is willing to allow the possibility of multiple types of ultimate constituents of the universe, inevitable.

The core Nietzschean ontological concept of background discontinuity is no more evident in Strawson than it is in James. The one post-Nietzschean philosopher of influence and recognized significance who reflects both Nietzsche's panpsychism, and his essential discontinuity of time-atoms and *Empfindungspunkte*, is the leading

thinker in process philosophy: Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead's philosophy agrees with Nietzsche's in a surprising number of particulars, beginning with the emphasis, of course, on an ontology of process. Whitehead sees the basic constituents of reality as "actual entities" (1979: 50), which are acts of Becoming. As such, the "actual entities" are more precisely events, which through succession and their compounding in perception ultimately contribute to the appearance of enduring objects. Yet only the act of Becoming, only the occasion, can be considered real: "Actual entities"—also termed 'actual occasions'—are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real" (1979:18). The only reality is the reality of process.

Whitehead's process ontology promulgates a principle of panpsychism according to a logic that makes the process by which occasions acquire the appearance of normative entities—things—precise and substantive. There are for Whitehead two primary characters to space and to time—the "separative," by which "things" are separated by space and by time, and the "prehensive," by which "things" are held together in space and in time. (Whitehead 1967: 64) What might initially be taken as a physical process, or a process of physics, is in fact a mode of perception that is distinctly, or potentially, a process of what Nietzsche terms interpretation, in the above sense that everything is a function of the Will to Power and "the Will to Power interprets." In essence, "prehension" involves "apprehension."

In postulating an alternative to Berkeley's proposition that "the realisation of natural entities is the being perceived within the unity of mind" (1967: 69), Whitehead offers a thought that should be followed in some detail.

We can substitute the concept, that the realisation is a gathering of things into the unity of a prehension; and that what is thereby realised is the prehension, and not the things. This unity of the prehension defines itself as a *here* and a *now*, and the things so gathered into the grasped unity have essential reference to other places and other times. For Berkeley's *mind*, I substitute a process of prehensive unification [...]. The things which are grasped into a realised unity, here and now, are not the castle, the cloud, and the planet simply in themselves; but they are the castle, the cloud, and the planet from the standpoint, in space and time, of the prehensive unification. In other words, it is the perspective of the castle over there from the standpoint of the unification here. It is, therefore, aspects of the castle, the cloud, and the planet which are grasped into unity here. You will remember that the idea of perspectives is quite familiar in philosophy. It was introduced by Leibniz, in the notion of his monads mirroring perspectives of the universe. I am using the same notion, only I am toning down his monads into the unified events of time and space. (1967: 69–70)

Arguably, it remains possible that there is a distinction here between the world as it is and the word as apprehended (and unified specifically and solely in that apprehension). The connection between that which is and that which is perceived—such that Whitehead can be seen as proposing in his analysis of perception an ontological process, a panpsychic process—is in the use of the term "prehension," which is applied clearly as both a natural process, presumably to that which is, and as a perceptual process. Whitehead strengthens his claims to a further degree: "Space and time

exhibit the general scheme of interlocked relations of these prehensions [...] A prehension is a process of unifying. Accordingly, nature is a process of expansive development, necessarily transitional from prehension to prehension" (1967: 72).

In this formulation, the alignments with Nietzsche's ontology are more obvious. Everything, i.e. it is only interpreted as possessing the greater stability and substantiality of more normative objects and coherent events. Nietzsche's perspectivalism is reflected, almost duplicated, in Whitehead's exclusion of any process of unification that is not perspectival—all qualities are functions of interactions (interpretations), which occur from the standpoints of a here and a now that are elsewhere, somewhere other than that which is being reacted to. All interactions are construed on the model of psychic awareness—an "apprehension"—and specifically not on the model of the Berkeleyan "unity of mind." Whitehead's "apprehensions" are more akin to Nietzsche's minimal degree of psyche, more on the order of what we have called sentience. And it should be noted that Whitehead's substitution of the "unity of prehension" for Berkeley's "unity of mind" serves the same function for Whitehead that Hill argues Nietzsche's formulation of panpsychism served for him: It avoids the pitfalls of Idealism, allows nature to be psychical while at the same time allowing it to transcend us, to be of mindedness and capable of experiencing whilst not being the product of our own minds. It allows nature to give rise to us, as to all else, and thus to give rise to our own minds; to be a world in which we are embedded.

A concept comparable to Nietzsche's time-atoms also arises in Whitehead's work. Along with the separative and the prehensive, Whitehead has a "third character of space-time. Everything which is in space receives a definite limitation of some sort ... Analogously for time, a thing endures during a certain period, and through no other period" (1967: 64). Elsewhere in his work, this quality of location takes on a durational aspect. Noting, like James, the influence of Bergson, Whitehead asserts that objects, which Whitehead recognizes more precisely as accumulations of occasions or events, require minimum amounts of time to exist, with the required time being specified by the object, or in other words, by the constituent events. There is even a smallest possible transpiring of time, as we discover in nature a smallest object: "It is possible therefore that for the existence of certain sorts of objects, e.g. electrons, minimum quanta of time are requisite" (Whitehead 2000: 162). Like Nietzsche's time-atoms, Whitehead's "quanta of time" deny the division of time below a certain scale, that limitation of scale being determined by the shortest eventuality that is observed—or reacted to, in a panpsychical process—from the standpoint from which it is observed.

What is not clear, finally, is whether Whitehead also reflects the ultimate aspect of Nietzsche's ontological formulations, and his most radical, if judged by the degree to which those who have come after him have not acquired it: his fundamental discontinuity, his essentially punctiform universe, his universe perforated by no time, no space, by non-existence. This is because it is ambiguous whether Whitehead's discrete durations, the amount of time that each object and event requires to transpire,



dispel the idea of a universal time that is always transpiring, that is the background to all things, all events, to the history of the universe. On the one hand, Whitehead makes clear that his discrete durations are not only perspectival but are capable of being sequenced, such that they can accumulate into the appearance, from a standpoint, of temporarily enduring objects, presumably capable of compiling all of history, of compounding the continuous story of the world. Yet there is secondary literature on Whitehead that concludes that since the discrete durations are all the time that exists, there can be no universal temporal background that serves as the stage for all of history, or time as the house of history. In essence, discreteness, if there is only discreteness, means discontinuity. To give one example, F. Bradford Wallack writes that, for Whitehead, “Time perishes with its occasion. There is no continuously existing, actual time, absolute, reified, substantialized” (Wallack 1980: 173).

If Whitehead can be taken as having achieved a conception of background discontinuity as the ultimate ontological precondition, as the precondition for existence of any kind, then he is the single example of a significant philosopher who acquired the idea, if not directly from Nietzsche, then in his immediate wake. And Nietzsche, Whitehead, and the physicists who are currently conducting tests to discover if space is broken up by pockets of non-space, if empty space is perforated by what is not even empty, what is not even spatial, are the only ones to have adopted, and are amongst the few who can comprehend, so radical a thought.

For it is one thing to observe a foreground discontinuity such as photons streaming in a strangely vibratory line away from a light source, with measurable distances of space separating the individual quanta of light. And it is quite another to note that electrons of an atom shift in energy levels and move to different distances from the nucleus without traversing the space between the two electron shells, moving by way of the “quantum leap.” There, it is space itself that seems discontinuous, broken, partial in its presence. And what exists between and separates (or marks the separations of) areas of space remains, to date, inexplicable and incomprehensible. Whitehead may have moved to these radical lengths. It is certainly clear that Nietzsche did, in a precedent for the physicists who now contemplate the possibility that, in essence, Nietzsche is right.

There is hence no philosopher in whose work we can observe as clearly as in Nietzsche’s an ontology whose radical nature has yet to be fully analyzed and appreciated. Nietzsche’s panpsychism is one part, one aspect or facet, of a movement of extreme imagination. It is a movement that participates in a more general development of thought that began early in the nineteenth century with the geometry of Carl Friedrich Gauss and which has been accelerating in philosophy and science over the last 100 years; a movement away from rooting comprehension in visualization. Increasingly, the inference and assertion of fact does not depend on and eludes the limitations of visualization—not merely in the sense of laboratory observation but in the sense of conception and comprehension that is not compelled by the capabilities of the mind’s eye. To a growing degree, we understand the real in terms that cannot be

visually imagined. Thinkers of our time often speak of transgressing logic, or of dealing in contradictions, but what we are moving towards is more the unlocking of our logic from the intrinsic qualities of our internal optics. As a result, we find ourselves, as Nietzsche clearly found himself, capable of more expansive logics than those we have inherited from the long history of what we can now recognize as a visually-bound philosophical tradition. It is just this quality that constitutes the most radical, innovative, revolutionary aspect of Nietzsche ontological “vision.”

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Frank Chouraqui

## 8 On the Place of Consciousness within the Will to Power

**My intention:** to demonstrate the absolute homogeneity of all events [...]. (NL 1884, KSA 12, 10 [154] (260))

The moral i.e. the affects—as identical to the organic; the intellect as “stomach of the affects.” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[93])

Nietzsche’s hypothesis of the will to power as a universal explanatory principle implies *some form* of monism.<sup>1</sup> Like all monistic theories, the will to power challenges any ontological, dualistic distinction of bodies and minds, which, as we shall argue, puts it in a better position with regard to what is traditionally referred to as the problem of mental causation (a problem that non-monistic theories run into due to the principle of incommensurability, whereby only objects that share a common essence can interact). However, the monism Nietzsche proposes runs into the opposite problem, namely, to account for the status of the *perceived* distinction between mental and physical aspects. For Nietzsche, this perceived distinction is most obvious in our experience of agency where it seems *as if* our mental states motivate or cause physical action.

Nietzsche grapples with the problem throughout his writings beginning with his Schopenhauer-inspired critique of agency in the notebooks of 1874 as well as his *Untimely Meditation* on Schopenhauer. His early writings seem patently indecisive in their treatment of this question and his indecision and the correlative contradictions in his writing have fuelled a long and widespread debate in the Nietzsche scholarship. The current naturalistic trend in the scholarship intends to do away with any distinction between the mental and the physical realm by reducing all mental acts to physically observable phenomena, of the sort that are “open to empirical study” (Risse 2003: 144). Less prominent in recent years has been a certain post-modern interpretation which, inspired by Foucault’s “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” regards the thought of the will to power as a failed ontological attempt on Nietzsche’s part, whose shortcomings allow us to dismiss the question altogether as being inessential to Nietzsche’s thinking (see Conway 2000: 136).

In our opinion the problem shared by both interpretations is that they do away with Nietzsche’s passion for goals and its correlative appeal to agency: not only does

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<sup>1</sup> Given Nietzsche’s frequent rejection of monism, the crux of the matter will lie in the kind of monism one wishes to attribute to Nietzsche. It seems to us that when Nietzsche rejects monism, it is largely when he regards monism as a principle of indifferenciation. In this paper, I wish to argue for a monism of the will to power, which includes differentiation. Indeed, it seems to us that the will to power is Nietzsche’s attempt at proposing a monism that does not preclude difference: indeed, the will to power is the unique element of differentiation. On Nietzsche’s rejection of monism, see NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[117], 2[133], and NL 1887–88, KSA 13, 11[99].

Nietzsche place goals for himself, for us his readers and for the future human beings; but also, his highly self-aware mode of writing is replete with metaphors that attribute physical features to his own writing and ideas. For Nietzsche, ideas, even as they appeal to consciousness, must be reckoned with: they are supposed to have a transformative power not just over our minds but over reality in general. They (and in particular the thought of the Eternal Recurrence) are, for example, “hammers” and “disciplinary doctrines” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[227]) that are “strong enough” to “dominate the earth” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[211]), and “the words” used to express them can “annihilate” some types of humans (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[290]). Indeed, Nietzsche posits one objective for himself: to “fight with language” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[337], Nietzsche’s emphasis).<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche’s insistence on the strategic importance of ideas and acts of consciousness for his task gives consciousness an importance that no naturalistic account has been able to acknowledge in a satisfactory manner.

In my view, Nietzsche’s mature position on this issue only emerges with the formulation of the will to power as a universal explanatory hypothesis in 1885. In this paper, my aim is thus to propose a viable characterization of the will to power fit to explicate Nietzsche’s attempts to recast the distinction between the mental and physical in representational, phenomenological terms. This does not by any means suggest that one must take the hypothesis to be more than just that, a hypothesis, but it also refuses to dismiss the will to power on the basis that it is a mere hypothesis. Taking the hypothesis of the will to power seriously will enable us to account for Nietzsche’s reliance on agency whilst maintaining the will to power as a unified and universal explanatory principle. Our first task (Section 8.1) will be to map out Nietzsche’s conception of agency in order to determine what the will to power is intended as an explanation for. The second section (8.2) will be devoted to a characterization of the will to power as a psycho-physical principle which is not a synthesis of the mental and the physical so much as a weakening of both concepts (and of their incompatibility). It is based on Nietzsche’s remarks on phenomenology from the *Nachlass* of 1885 and 1886. Finally, (Section 8.3) shall examine how Nietzsche’s new conceptions allow him to do away with causation, and to propose an alternative account of interactions within the will to power.

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<sup>2</sup> The ambiguity of Nietzsche’s expression (*der Kampf mit der Sprache*) leaves open the question of whether Nietzsche wishes to fight against language or use language as a weapon. In fact, the context of the fragment makes it clear, in my view, that Nietzsche means both, insisting all the more on the fundamental importance and consequentiality of language.

## 8.1 The Problem: Vs. Epiphenomenalism and Will as Secondary Cause

In his article entitled “Nietzsche’s Theory of Mind: Consciousness and Conceptualization,” Paul Katsafanas proposes to characterize Nietzsche’s concept of consciousness as “conceptualization” (Katsafanas 2005: 1–31). The merit of this characterization, which explains consciousness not as a substance but as a process, is that it takes stock of Nietzsche’s repeated refusal to reify consciousness. First of all, as Katsafanas recognizes, we must avoid talking of consciousness in the traditional language of faculties. As is common in Nietzsche, his most complete definition of consciousness is provided by way of a genealogical account. Consciousness, he writes in GS 354, is “a network of communication between humans,” which has appeared, been informed, and therefore been defined exclusively as a response to the need to verbalize those affects that have come to be regarded as “internal states.” Katsafanas’s characterization of consciousness as conceptualization (the necessary condition of verbalization, according to Nietzsche) takes this into account in a satisfactory manner that is of good use to our present purposes.

In his “Nietzsche’s Theory of the Will,” Brian Leiter exposes two possible views of the causal efficacy of consciousness, or of conscious representations, acts, or ideas (this is left unspecified by Leiter). The first, which Leiter favours insofar as it offers the possibility to match Nietzsche’s doctrine with current trends in empirical psychology (Leiter 2007: 12 ff.), is what he calls the “epiphenomenalist” reading. In this reading, consciousness is, in Nietzsche’s own terms, only a “symptom” or an “expression” of acts of the will whose essence is considered to be essentially unconscious. Leiter however acknowledges that another view, which he calls “the will as secondary cause” (2007: 13) is equally supported by Nietzsche’s writings. According to this reading, the conscious stage plays a causal role in the chain that leads to an action, but this role is neither primary nor final.

It is not our goal to examine closely Leiter’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s passages or of how he is led to conclude that these two views are equally warranted by the text, and that one should favour epiphenomenalism. But it may suffice for the present purpose to point out that if Nietzsche does indeed emphasize repeatedly that consciousness is “merely” a “symptom,” “a sign” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[92]), or an “appearance” even (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[313]), it is usually in the context of a critique of the traditional reification of consciousness or of its moralistic appraisal, and not in contexts dealing directly with its causal role. Regardless, it seems that the epiphenomenalist view runs into serious conceptual difficulties if one takes Nietzsche’s proposal of the will to power seriously.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> It seems Leiter would defend his position by calling into question the importance of the hypothesis of the will to power for Nietzsche himself. “First, in the works Nietzsche chose to publish, it seems

In his article, Leiter places (rightly in my view) great emphasis on the idea of “drives” but he makes no attempt to relate his interpretation to Nietzsche’s hypothesis of the will to power. However, as Richardson points out, the drives are best understood as “the unit of the will to power” (Richardson, 1996: 20). Will to power as an ontological principle presented itself to Nietzsche as a principle for the “interpretation of all events [*alles Geschehens*]” (39[1], 40[2], 40[50], 1[35]), or for a “new interpretation of the world [*einer neuen Welt-Auslegung*]” (2[73]). It is therefore apparent that even if one does away with the will to power and replaces it with “drives,” the result obtained shall be informed by the ontology of the will to power which is the only way Nietzsche succeeds in affirming the “homogeneity” of all events (10[154]). In his earlier *Nietzsche on Morality* (2002) Leiter has made the case for construing Nietzsche as a methodological naturalist as opposed to a substantive or metaphysical naturalist. In line with Risse’s naturalism mentioned above, the methodological naturalist holds the world to be composed of natural or physical things, which are to be understood through the methods and results of science. However, in spite of the rejection of anything supernatural, this naturalist is not a reductive materialist since s/he can allow for the fact that not all events are physical and that the existence of *qualia* (of what it feels like to experience something as a sentient being) needs to be acknowledged. It is, however, not clear at all that such a distinction between the methodological and substantive naturalist is applicable to Nietzsche once we take into account his philosophical commitment to the will to power which appears everywhere as the identity of method and substance (as we shall discuss, the will to power is no different from its own *modus operandi*). Second, Nietzsche has a specific appreciation of “quale,” which arguably differs from the kind Leiter attributes to him. With reference, for example, to GS 373 Leiter assumes that Nietzsche is concerned with “the qualitative or phenomenological aspect of experience, e. g., what it is like to experience a piece of music as beautiful” (Leiter 2002: 25). This is an invitation to examine further what Nietzsche means by *qualia*, and especially, what kind of distinction he draws between *qualia* and *quanta*. The conception of *qualia* we find at work in Nietzsche emerges from how he himself conceives his philosophical descent. He writes of this in the following note, which he drafted in the summer/autumn of 1884:

When I think of my philosophical genealogy I feel I am related to the anti-teleological, i. e. the Spinozistic movement of our age but with the difference that I consider “purpose” and “will” *in us* to be illusory, as well; likewise, I feel related to the mechanistic movement (all moral and aesthetic questions traced back to physiological ones, all physiological ones to chemical

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clear that he did not, in fact, accept the doctrine in the strong form... (namely, that it is only power that persons ever aim for or desire). Second, it is simply not a plausible doctrine in its strong form.” Whether this is a credible description of the will to power hypothesis “in its strong form” is dubious, and it does not seem to us necessary to accept this “form” of the hypothesis in order to object to the epiphenomenalist reading. Indeed, as we shall see, *any* account of the will to power that does not dismiss it entirely, suffices to reject the epiphenomenalist reading.

ones, all chemical ones to mechanical ones), but with the difference that I do not believe in “matter” and think of Boscovich as a great turning point, like Copernicus; that I consider unfruitful everything that takes the self-reflexion of spirit as its point of departure, and believe that no research which does not take the body as its guiding thread can be good. A philosophy not as *dogma*, but as a provisional regulative of *research*. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[432])

In another notebook entry we find a specific treatment of qualia that stems from his concern with “life” understood as qualitative growth, movement, expansion, and so on:

Might all quantities not be signs of qualities? A greater power implies a different consciousness, feeling, desiring, a different perspective; growth itself is a desire *to be more*; the desire for an increase in quantum grows from a *quale*; in a purely quantitative world everything would be dead, stiff, motionless.—The reduction of all qualities to quantities is nonsense: what appears is that the one accompanies the other, an analogy— (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[157] = WP 564)

For Nietzsche the problem centres on the limits of any mechanistic world-view, which he thinks stands victorious for us. Mechanism leaves notions of “reason” and “purpose” out of the picture as far as possible, assuming that given sufficient time anything can evolve out of anything else, for example, accounting for evolutionary phenomena in terms of “pressure and stress” (*Druck und Stoß*). But then Nietzsche notes that we are unable to “explain” pressure and stress themselves and that ultimately the mechanists cannot get rid of what he construes as a non-mechanical concept of “action at a distance” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[34]; cf. WP 618). It is this kind of anti-reductionistic insight that leads Nietzsche to argue that the victorious concept “force” might need to be completed by ascribing an inner *dynamis* or will to it (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[31] = WP 619). In BGE 36 he appeals to a “conscience of method” to justify his hypothetical claim that the world seen from inside is “will to power.” The concept of “force” must be supplemented and “[...] one is obliged to understand all motion, all ‘appearances,’ all ‘laws,’ only as symptoms of an inner event and to employ man as an analogy to this end” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[31] = WP 619). In the case of “life” Nietzsche notes that mere differences of power (*Machtverschiedenheiten*) could not feel themselves to be such and thus, “there has to be something that wants to grow, interpreting every other something that wants to grow in terms of its value” (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[148]). Although this seems to make room for a limited teleology into our understanding—one that is necessary to our understanding the world in terms of phenomena of “life” such as growth and expansion—Nietzsche recommends that we beware of “superfluous teleological principles,” such as positing the instinct of preservation as the cardinal drive (he holds that a living thing desires above all to discharge its force) (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[63] = WP 650). On this model, then, mechanism and matter are to be “*excluded absolutely*” as expressions of “the most despiritualized form of affect (of ‘will to power’)” (NL 1887, KSA 12, 9[8] = WP 712).



Nietzsche thinks that it is such a “dynamic” interpretation of the world, with its denial of empty space and little clumps of atoms, that will come to dominate physics and it is in this context that his interest in the example of music needs to be appreciated. In a note entitled “*Against the physical atom*” he writes:

The calculability of the world, the expressibility of all events in formulas—is this really “comprehension”? How much of a piece of music has been understood when that which in it is calculable and can be reduced to formulas has been reckoned up?—And “constant causes,” things, substances, something “unconditioned”; *invented*—what has one achieved? (NL 1886, KSA 12, 7[56] = WP 624; see also GS 373).

Nietzsche’s concern, then, is not simply phenomenological in the sense of a concern for what something feels like to me as subject of experience, but an ontological one about our comprehension of the world and the need for a dynamic principle to account for its “life” aspects. Nietzsche’s commitment to monism means that he does not need to operate with a distinction between methodological and substantive naturalisms, and their correlated distinction between subjective experience and physical objects. Instead, his focus is on degrees of difference amongst material and spiritual forms of life (e. g., differences of complexity and concomitant differences in qualia in the organisation of living systems). The difficulty, therefore, becomes apparent: the epiphenomenalist view, whilst firmly rooted in the ontology of the drives, which we regard (with Richardson) as the unit of the will to power, not only dismisses any talk of the will to power, but further *requires* that the will to power be completely disregarded, as it affirms the existence of events that cannot be accounted for with reference to the will to power, namely, the epiphenomenal events of consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

The view of the “will as secondary cause” on the other hand seems to avoid the above contradiction and by and large, it appears to be a more acceptable solution. However, it does run into difficulties of its own. These are, in our opinion, of two sorts. The first is the vagueness of the view: unlike the epiphenomenal reading, the “will as secondary cause” reading does take stock of the host of passages where Nietzsche talks of conscious acts as efficient, be it only (as we mentioned above) the thought of Eternal Recurrence, and all other “persuasive definitions” to use Stevenson’s (and Leiter’s) expression. According to this view, conscious acts are causal. However, there is a restriction: they are causal only as intermediaries,

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<sup>4</sup> It should be added that Leiter defends the epiphenomenalist view against attacks from Clark and Dudrick (2009) and Gemes (2009), by borrowing Charles Stevenson’s concept of “persuasive definitions” (Leiter 2010: 534–535), thereby acknowledging that language and meaning have effects that go beyond the mere mental or linguistic realm. If we define consciousness as the verbal state of ideas (and Leiter provides nothing against that, even in his discussions of Katsafanas’ definition of consciousness as conceptualization), then there are conscious states that are performative (those that persuasive definitions rely on), therefore, epiphenomena are phenomena, and consciousness is not epiphenomenal.

and are never *primary* or *final* causes. The crucial question this raises is what a “primary” or “final” cause would look like for Nietzsche. Obviously, they wouldn’t look like much, as the thought of Eternal Recurrence forbids any talk of ends (and beginnings) whether teleological or logical: indeed, Nietzsche explicitly calls “contradictory” any idea of “primary causes” in 25 [377] and calls an “illusion” any idea of “ends”—even in the “antiteleological” sense of 26 [432]. Admittedly, this is not the same sort of ends as the proponents of the will as secondary cause have in mind. Rather, what they have in mind are primary and final causes *of a given event*. This distinction, however, is of little import for Nietzsche’s view. Any talk of an event being “given” is only a play on words resulting from the equalizing activity of our consciousness:

There is no event in itself. What happens is an ensemble of phenomena, *chosen* and gathered by an interpreting being (NL 1885, KSA 12, 1[115]).

Strictly speaking, in fact, there are no single and discrete events. It is therefore remarkable that it is in a discussion of Nietzsche’s denial of free will that Leiter offers the reading of the “will as secondary cause,” when, according to Nietzsche, it is exactly for the same reasons that free will must be denied and that any idea of primary or final causes must be denied, namely, that there never strictly is the *initiation* of any single event (TI Errors 7). Thus, we must think of ends and beginnings only in relative terms (or as Nietzsche says, in “symbolic terms” in NL 1884, KSA 11, 26 [68]), and the distinction between conscious acts and others therefore collapses. As a result, all the “will as secondary cause” reading affirms is that conscious acts must be understood as part of a causal chain, nothing more. This is, of course, far too vague to offer anything more than a correction to the most obvious shortcomings of the epiphenomenal reading.

The second difficulty that this reading encounters is of more philosophical import. The “will as secondary cause” reading assumes that there is a difference *in kind* between conscious acts and other acts or events (some can be primary or final, and others can’t), and yet, that although different in kind, they can be causally articulated. This strict distinction between conscious acts and other events is, in our view, the crux of many of the shortcomings of the recent scholarship on Nietzsche’s theory of mind, and probably also of the ambiguities of Nietzsche’s text itself. It is therefore this distinction that we shall seek to re-examine in the rest of this paper.

As is now well known, thanks largely to the recent naturalistic readings of Nietzsche by Schacht (1983), Richardson (1996), Leiter (1998), Risse (2003) and others, whether Nietzsche uses the body (*Leib*) as an explanatory concept or whether he seeks to take a stand in favour of the body in its traditional rivalry with the mind, Nietzsche constantly reaffirms the importance of the body. It is clear that for Nietzsche, the body as an explanatory principle has been given up far too soon. The consequences of this are of the most extreme importance as, according to Nietzsche, the mind, which has become the traditional explanatory principle, is

far from offering the level of clarity that the empirical observation of the body does. Nietzsche reminds himself:

Essential to start from the body and use it as a guiding thread. It is the far richer phenomenon, and can be observed more distinctly (NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[15]).

This should not lead us, however, to uncritically submit all those phenomena hitherto considered “mental” to the dominion of the body. Instead, the revision of the notion of mind must coincide with a reformation of the concept of the body itself. For Nietzsche, it is the naïve notion of the body that makes mental explanations necessary, and in order to do away with the latter, we must conceive of the former in a new way. A note from the summer of 1884 insists on the failure of mental explanations, but it also affirms that the physicalist explanations have failed too:

Hitherto, *none* of the two explanations of the organic life have succeeded. Neither the mechanistic explanation, nor *the explanation by the spirit*. I insist on this *second* failure. The spirit is more superficial than we think. The governance of the organism takes place in such a way that both the mechanistic world and the spiritual world can explain it only symbolically. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[68])

Any valid account of organic life will now need to be neither mental nor mechanistic. The will to power could be seen as Nietzsche’s most developed attempt at establishing a general explanatory principle that would avoid the problems of both mentalist and mechanical explanations. For him, the will to power does not do away with all “mental” events. It is a concept sufficiently malleable to provide a unified explanation for both mental and physical acts. Nietzsche defines the will to power by its *modus operandi* (it is nothing outside of its “doing,” or as Nietzsche says, “every power draws its ultimate consequence at every moment” (BGE 21; WP 634), and this *modus operandi* is incorporation (*Einverleibung*) (NL 1885, KSA 11, 38[10]; NL 1887, KSA 12, 5[64], 5[65], 5[82]). Nietzsche finds incorporation at work both in the mental realm and in the physical realm, or as he says (the equivalence is self-evident here), in the “organic” and in the “inorganic.” He writes:

What is generally attributed to the *mind seems to me to constitute the essence of the inorganic*: and even in the highest functions of the mind, all I find is a sublime variety of the organic (assimilation, selection, secretion etc.)

But the opposition between “organic” and “inorganic” itself belongs to the realm of the phenomena! (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[356])

This entry may be too rich to be fully unpacked here, but it may be enough to point out that Nietzsche emphasizes that the opposition between the physical and the mental, or as he terms it here, the “organic” (or the realm of the “mind”) and the “inorganic,” is only a “phenomenal distinction,” and also, that Nietzsche defines both not by finding an *essence* common to them, but by showing that they *operate* in the same way, and it is this common *modus operandi* that he refers to as the will to

power. This is consistent with the general movement of Nietzsche's views on physics in the years 1884–86 where we witness a weakening of the notion of physical matter, which coincides with an effort to dethrone the mind from its privileged position as an explanatory principle. In the note from the second half of 1884 cited above, Nietzsche distances himself again from the mechanists insofar as he does “not believe in matter and [he holds] Boscovich to be the great turning point” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[432]). Just like Boscovich did away with any concept of “matter” by replacing it with the concept of “force,” Nietzsche conceives of matter in terms of the will to power as activity of incorporation and discharge, which he characterizes as “*Einverleibung*,” a concept which he finds illustrated in mental and physical things alike, to the point that he defines the mind as a “stomach” starting in the drafts of *Zarathustra*, and consistently since (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[377], 26[141]; see also BGE 230). This is because the mind, like the body, is defined mainly by its incorporative activity.

It seems clear therefore, that Nietzsche's criticism of mental explanations of life are not intended for us to reduce life to the physical realm, at least not in the traditional sense. On the contrary, Nietzsche endeavours to establish an explanatory ground where the distinctions between mental and physical explanations are obsolete. Further, the introduction of the psycho-physical concept of the will to power allows Nietzsche to place all events on a psycho-physical ground, where the problem of incommensurability within a causal chain made of essentially distinct mental and physical elements no longer exists. In the remainder of this paper, I would like to draw on Nietzsche's remarks on the concepts of meaning and of phenomenology in the *Nachlass* of 1884–86 to elaborate a psycho-physical characterization of the will to power.

## 8.2 Nietzsche's Phenomenological Ontology

The image-maker [*der Bildner*] (refusal of the “idealism” of hitherto, with the little games it plays with images [*Bildern*]). It is a matter of the *body* [*Leib*]. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[233])

In the years 1884–86, Nietzsche sought to develop an account of meaning and images based upon the thought of the will to power. His starting point offers distinct echoes from the effort of classical figures from Descartes and Spinoza to Kant and his doctrine of the schemata, insofar as their efforts to explain what they called “imagination” were occupied entirely with establishing whether or not the existence of our faculty of imagination was any proof that the mind should be conceived as necessarily embodied. As is well known, the verdict offered by the classical idealists was decidedly opposed to the idea of embodiment. In the note quoted above, Nietzsche takes over the same problem in an explicit polemic against his predecessors and asserts that it is the body (*Leib*) that is behind our faculty to imagine (*der Bildner*).

Nietzsche's brief reprise of the traditional question of imagination reveals his interest in placing the body at the root not only of our affects but also of our representations. This indicates that the body must be understood as responsible also for conscious perceptions and, therefore, that the distinction between the physical and the mental is not necessarily an essential (or "real") distinction. Indeed, Nietzsche goes further and affirms that meaning, too, is created and should be understood in terms of the will to power, as it arises from the experience of interest:

Being and appearance, psychologically considered, yield no "being-in-itself," no criterion of "reality," but only grades of appearance measured by the strength of the *interest* we show in an appearance. (NL 1886, KSA 12, 7[49])

The struggle fought among ideas and perceptions is not for existence but for mastery: the idea that's overcome is *not annihilated* but only *driven back* or *subordinated*. *In matters of the mind there is no annihilation ...* (NL 1886, KSA 12, 7[53]; parts of both notes were published as WP 588)

If interest, therefore, is the name of the structure of the will to power, it seems that it is from interest itself that the world arises: the subject (be it the body-subject "Leib" or the spiritual subject of the idealists) like the object become constituted only by the workings of an interest that *pre-exists* both of them. As such, interest is neither physical nor mental or conscious. On the contrary, taking his cue from Boscovich, Nietzsche sees interest as pure force, and the arousal of a world as an equilibrium between opposing forces:

The world which matters to us is only illusory, is unreal.—But the concept "really, truly there" is one we drew out of the "mattering-to-us": the more our interests are touched on, the more we believe in the "reality" of a thing or being. "It exists" means: I feel existent through contact with it [*ich fühle mich an ihm als existent*].—Antinomy. (NL 1886, KSA 12, 5[19])

Phenomena, Nietzsche explains, result from the intensity of the opposition between two forces. Their clarity, or as Nietzsche says, their "degree of consciousness," is proportional to the degree of intensity of the contact: "the genesis of 'things' is wholly the work of the imaginers, thinkers, willers, inventors—the very concept of 'thing' as well as all qualities" (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[152]). This signifies (a) that the distinction between the conscious and the non-conscious—a distinction instrumental to the "will as secondary cause" reading—is not a difference in kind but merely one of degrees, and (b) that neither is the distinction between the physical and the mental as they both pertain to a "homogenous force" (see NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[38]), and finally (c), that the rejection of this distinction implies neither a reduction of all phenomena to the physical realm, nor to the mental realm, but instead, that it requires a critical reappraisal of both notions. This is not to say that we must read Nietzsche as proposing a form of parallelism *à la* Malebranche or Leibniz. Instead, it is the very distinction between the realities covered by both notions which Nietzsche seeks to reject and replace with a unified middle ground he calls phenomena or representations.

At first sight, it seems as if the will to power is introduced *in opposition* to the very concept of phenomena. However, as Nietzsche makes it clear, his rejection of phenomena must be interpreted as the rejection of the implication that phenomena involve noumena, which he finds in “recent philosophers [*neueren Philosophen*]”:

There are fatal [*verhängnisvolle*] words that present themselves as the expression of some knowledge but which really *hinder* our knowledge; the word “phenomena” [*Erscheinungen*] is one such example. May those phrases I am borrowing to various recent philosophers show what degree of confusion is contained in “phenomena.” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[52])

He continues:

against the word “*phenomena*”. [*Erscheinungen*]

N.B.: *Appearance* [*Schein*] to my mind, is the genuine and only reality of things. [...] Therefore, I do not posit “appearance” in opposition to “reality;” on the contrary, I consider that appearance is reality, [...] a precise name for this reality would be “the will to power, designated by virtue of its internal structure and not of its proteiform, elusive and fluid nature.” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 40 [53])

In fact it seems that, by placing appearance (*Schein*) above mere phenomena (*Erscheinungen*), and by defining the will to power in terms of the former, Nietzsche is performing a move very akin to the foundation of phenomenology in Husserl’s first *Logical Investigations*. For Nietzsche, as for Husserl later, we must define being as appearance, and do away with any reference to the in-itself:

Being [*Wesen*] is *lacking*: what is “becoming” [*Das “Werdende”*], the “phenomenal” [*Phänomenale*] is the only form of Being [*Sein*]. (NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 7[1])

Contrary to his early discussions of phenomena in BT and elsewhere, where he used the concept as inherited from Schopenhauer, the later Nietzsche takes his concept of phenomena from Kant (in order to better refute him). His first concern is to establish a phenomenal ground not only in external relations (he considers this to have been sufficiently established by transcendental idealism, or, as he says, “recent philosophy”), but also in what he calls internal relations:

Critique of recent philosophy [*neueren Philosophie*]: erroneous starting point, as if there were any such things as “facts of Being”—and no phenomenalism at all in self-observation (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[204])<sup>5</sup>

Nietzsche’s critique of inner immediacy in the name of “phenomenalism in self-observation” should not be simply categorized under the headings of his naturalistic critique of consciousness. It seems to me that Nietzsche’s point works hand in hand with the establishment of mediation in our external relations. This is why, in

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5 Note the repetition of the expression “*neueren Philosophie*” establishing a link with NL 1885, KSA 11, 40 [52] above, and presumably aimed at the Neo-Kantians of the mid- nineteenth century.

my view, Nietzsche characterizes consciousness not as a purely naturalized entity (which would establish some immediacy between consciousness and physical phenomena), but instead, he affirms: “consciousness always contains a double reflection—there is *nothing that is immediate*” (NL 1885, KSA 12, 1[54] our emphasis; see also 2[204] and 26[49]).

The positing of mediation in “everything” lays the ground for a phenomenological ontology understood as an ontology that defines being as *Schein* no longer opposed to any reality. And indeed, Nietzsche follows his remark by affirming that our world is made of representations and interpretations entirely (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2 [151]).

It is worth pausing here in order to gauge the implications of Nietzsche’s assertion that nothing is immediate. Firstly, as I mentioned already, this means that our world is representational (or phenomenal) through and through. Secondly, and consequently, it means that self-identity is nowhere to be found. This is a point Nietzsche makes in several instances after 1885. Indeed, for Nietzsche, one must not posit beings (those entities that are constituted by the oppositional activity he calls will to power) prior to the will to power. Instead, the fundamental element in the arousal of the world is not the beings that are constituted and make up the phenomenal world, but rather, as Nietzsche writes remarkably: “it is not a being but a struggle that seeks to maintain itself” (NL 1885, KSA 12, 1[124]). In other words, the true “matter” of life is not to be conceived in physical terms but in relational terms, and these relational terms, as we mentioned above, are essentially representational for Nietzsche, that is to say, psycho-somatic.<sup>6</sup> Within Nietzsche’s will-to-power phenomenology, nothing should be conceived as independent, everything is a condition of everything, and it would be unwarranted to introduce any separations in kind, whether between the physical and the mental, or between discrete events. As Nietzsche writes strikingly:

—the world of the unconditional, if it existed, would be the *Unproductive*. But we must finally understand that existing [*Existent*] and unconditioned [*Unbedingt*] are contradictory attributes. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[203])

### 8.3 Causation

We opened our discussion with a consideration of the two views of Nietzsche’s concept of consciousness as laid out most eloquently by Brian Leiter. As we said, Leiter pronounces himself in favour of the epiphenomenal reading of consciousness, al-

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<sup>6</sup> This, of course, should not send us back onto the path of the “will as secondary cause” be it only insofar as this view relies on a robust distinction between the conscious (which is given causal efficacy) and the subconscious. The arousal of the world is gradual on the contrary and relies on the impossibility to establish a ground anterior to representation.

though he acknowledges that Nietzsche's text leaves room for another interpretation, which he calls the "will as secondary cause." We objected to the epiphenomenalistic reading insofar as it postulates epiphenomena which are of a different nature than phenomena, and which it describes as inefficacious. As we have tried to show, this reading would be incompatible with the will to power that Nietzsche proposes as an explanatory principle (which he develops more fully in his notes but clearly maintains in his published writings). We objected to the "will as secondary cause" that (like the epiphenomenalist reading) it created a problematic separation *between* phenomena (some are causally inefficacious and some aren't) and that its reliance on a language of "primary and secondary causes" led it to assume the existence of objectively determined events. We have tried to show that this would be inconsistent with Nietzsche's cosmological ideas as well as with the letter of his text where he rejects any idea of independent events and of primary or of secondary causes.

This set of objections constitutes a list of requirements for any fresh account of the status of consciousness and conscious acts, one of which I have attempted to outline here. According to the two requirements, as I understand them, an account of Nietzsche's concept of consciousness that is consistent with his idea of will to power must

- (a) not rely on any distinction *in kind* between acts of consciousness and physical events (i.e. the will to power must be accounted for in psycho-physical terms, and it must be the only explanatory principle); and
- (b) not rely on any final or primary causes, and avoid any separation between the links of a causal chain.

What has been said so far regarding these requirements must suffice for the purposes of this paper. It should be apparent that Nietzsche conceives of the will to power in terms that are neither physical nor mental; instead, he presents it as the activity which gives rise to the phenomenal world of representation. In so doing, he affirms that (a) the will to power is a common origin, the *modus operandi* for both consciousness and the physical world; and (b) that the world of consciousness and the physical world are separated by a difference of degree and not a difference in kind. Indeed, for Nietzsche, the representational nature of the world means that any entity that would be purely physical and therefore mind-independent would never be brought to our attention (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[35])<sup>7</sup> and that the same would be the case for any purely mental act (NL 1886, KSA 12, 7[4]).<sup>8</sup> This is so, as we have argued, because for Nietzsche only the "conditioned" is "existent." As a result, both the physical and the mental realms are products of our consciousness solidified

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<sup>7</sup> "Alles organische Leben ist als sichtbare Bewegung coordinirt einem geistigen Geschehen."

<sup>8</sup> "No isolated judgment is ever 'true,' is never knowledge, it is only within a certain context, in relation, between a number of judgments that any proof comes to light." Nietzsche goes on to criticize even pure contextualized judgment by showing that this context of other judgments ultimately relies, contrary to Kant's assumption, on experience.



into concepts and, Nietzsche writes, mere “symptoms” of desires and “the most fundamental desire (*Begierde*) is the will to power,” which is of neither nature (NL 1885, KSA 11, 1[59]).

This brings us to the next criterion, regarding the question of causation within a world understood from the point of view of a will-to-power phenomenology Nietzsche proposes. In the psycho-physical view I propose, it is clear that the will to power does not allow for distinct entities of any kind. For Nietzsche, the will to power refers to the phenomenal world that exists through this unique activity Nietzsche calls “discharge” or “incorporation.” This view runs into the obvious difficulty that it cannot account for causality, if causality means the relation between single phenomena. In both the “will as secondary cause” and the epiphenomenalist reading, it is acknowledged that there is a web of causal relations between different bodies and acts, whether mental or physical, with the difficulties we have mentioned. In the psycho-physical view on the contrary, which denies the distinction between entities, causation becomes problematic for opposite reasons. This is not necessarily in contradiction with Nietzsche’s thought, however. As he declares in 1886 in BGE 21:

one should not make the mistake of objectifying [*verdinglichen*] “cause” and “effect” as do the natural scientists [*Naturforscher*] (and whoever nowadays think in a naturalistic manner [*und wer gleich ihnen heute im Denken naturalisirt*]), in conformity with the prevalent mechanistic foolishness that pushes and tugs at the cause until it “has an effect”; “cause” and “effect” should be used only as pure *concepts* as conventional fictions for the purpose of description or communication, and *not* for explanation. In the “in-itself”, there is nothing of “causal associations” [...] the effect does *not* follow “upon the cause,” no “law” governs it. *We* alone are the ones who have invented causes [...].

Here Nietzsche acknowledges the fact that *it seems to us* that things are causally connected, and yet, he argues that this is an illusion. More importantly, Nietzsche’s critique, which seems addressed directly to those epiphenomenalists and those who hold the view of the “will as secondary cause” be it then or now, is concerned with our “objectifying” (*verdinglichen*) causes and effects.

In his notebooks of autumn 1885 to autumn 1886, in which he is preparing the manuscript of BGE, Nietzsche’s attacks on causation are made from two different angles. The first one is a critique of the idea of primary or final causes (which I alluded to above). Any talk of primary and final causes would be superficial and illegitimate if, as Nietzsche hypothesizes, all phenomena were interconnected (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2 [143]) and the process of the world had neither beginning nor end (NL 1887, KSA 13, 11 [72] = WP 708).

The second argument is a reprise of traditional Humean arguments according to which causation is a mental construct, which is not given in experience (NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[70]; NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[83]). In his most developed critique of the idea of primary and final causes, Nietzsche rejects any talk of causation as being derived from the fiction of an active and intentional subject. He writes:

All judgment contains the complete, full, deep belief in subject and predicate, or in cause and effect; and this latter belief (that is to say as the claim that every effect would be an activity and that every activity presupposed an actor) is even a special case of the former, so that the belief as fundamental belief remains: there are subjects (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[83])

Let us stress at once that in all the passages where Nietzsche attacks the notions of “subject,” “object,” “cause” or “effect,” he always assumes that what is apparent is none of the above, but their action, and that they are inferred retrospectively and, he thinks, mistakenly, by an entity driven by the will to power that has a vested interest not in truth but in intelligibility. For Nietzsche, indeed, no one has ever seen any cause, any effect, any subject or any object. If we must understand the belief in causation as a “special case” of the belief in subjects, it becomes obvious that the fallacy Nietzsche finds in causation lies in the assumption that causes and effects (like subjects and objects) are *external* to each other. This belief, Nietzsche writes, is based on two further assumptions: first, the solidification of causes and effects described in BGE 21, which makes them necessarily incommensurable, and therefore, external; and, second, our inability to think of actions (or, in this case, interactions) without assuming subjects and objects of actions (or of interactions). Nietzsche, on the contrary, asks:

Question: is the intention cause of an event? Or is also this an illusion? Is it [the intention] not *the* event itself? (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[83])

This is not to say that we must place all the weight of the action on the side of the intention, or that we must think of the intention as an epiphenomenal expression of some internal event. On the contrary, we must conceive of the action and the actor as ontologically non-differentiated. Bearing in mind that for Nietzsche, only the action is apparent, his argument amounts not to reducing agent and action to each other, but to reducing the agent to the action. As Nietzsche affirms, just five entries earlier: “Separation of ‘action’ and ‘actor’: *utterly wrong*” (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[78]). In the very same note, Nietzsche uses the verb *verdinglichen* (objectification) again, this time to characterize the action: “the ‘lightning’ glows—reduplication [*Verdoppelung*—the action *objectified* [*verdinglicht*]” (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[78]).

For Nietzsche, indeed, there is nothing more to the “lightning” (note the inverted commas) than its glow, making the expression “the ‘lightning’ glows” a linguistic redundancy with ontological consequences Nietzsche seeks to warn us against. In the final version of this note, in GM I 13, Nietzsche concludes strikingly: “the ‘doer’ is invented as an afterthought,—the doing is everything.” Interestingly, Nietzsche uses the verb *verdinglichen* again, in the same period,<sup>9</sup> this time to characterize the “will”: “‘Wille’—eine falsche Verdinglichung” (1[62]).

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<sup>9</sup> To our knowledge, he uses this verb in any of its forms only five times in his entire writings. First in

For Nietzsche, therefore, the concept of will has been mishandled just like the concept of action insofar as it has been “objectified.” As I pointed out above, for Nietzsche, all that remains in the phenomenology of the will to power is the struggle itself, deprived of any fictitious agents. This leaves a world of pure representations, without subjects or objects, which are constituted within the complex will to power events only secondarily, as “*regulative* fictions” that might be “indispensable” but nevertheless “false” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 35[35]).

In this world, Nietzsche finds an alternative to causal thought, which takes stock of the impossibility to conceive of causes and effects as *partes extra partes*: in the tightly-knit universe Nietzsche describes repeatedly and where the only reality is will to power, no single entity can be individuated as the cause of another. Rather, everything is connected to and conditions everything else. Causation becomes therefore replaced with a new concept of concurrent or mutual dependence. Nietzsche writes:

Supposing that the world had a certain quantum of force [*Kraft*] at its disposal, then it is obvious that every displacement of power [*Macht*] at any point would affect the whole system—thus together with sequential [*hintereinander*] causality there would be a contiguous [*neben(einander)*] and concurrent [*miteinander*] dependence [*Abhängigkeit*]. (NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[143] = WP 638)

The interdependence Nietzsche assumes is therefore directly related to the impossibility to individuate atomistically any chains of events, or any individual link within a chain of events, and to establish any primary or final causes. Instead, the interconnectedness of the world, entailed in the hypothesis of the will to power, connects all “parts” not successively (as in the conventional concept of causation), but “contiguously and concurrently.” This interdependence is thus distinguished from causation insofar as it is neither sequential nor made of actions that comprise one active and another, passive, part. On the contrary, Nietzsche writes, the relation is “mutual,” and does away with any differences in kinds, as Nietzsche said as early as the summer of 1884 in a laconic note: “Coordination in place of *cause and effect*” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[46]).<sup>10</sup>

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HH II and then four times between Autumn 1885 and Autumn 1886 in BGE 21, in NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[62], 1[65], 2[78].

**10** In the note immediately following (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26 [47]) Nietzsche first uses the term ‘*miteinander*’ to characterize the bond that the struggle between opposing forces creates between them. Further down the same note, he makes a similar argument when he affirms the general interdependence of all events within the great event of the world: “In order to be joyous about anything, one must approve of *everything*.” The consistency of the web of concepts Nietzsche uses between 1884 and 1886 is striking and corroborates our interpretation.

## 8.4 Conclusion

What does the idea of mutual dependency as an alternative to causality offer to those who, like us, remain dissatisfied with the traditional accounts of consciousness in Nietzsche? Within a philosophy that posits the “hypothesis” of the will to power (BGE 36) as a universal explanatory principle—provided one accepts as we do that Nietzsche is indeed serious about this proposal—asking about the status of consciousness amounts to asking how, or how well, consciousness may be accounted for in terms of the will to power. As I have tried to show, the two main accounts of consciousness in Nietzsche’s philosophy proposed in the recent years are not compatible with the thought of the will to power.

We have argued that their shortcomings are all related to the fact that ontological or metaphysical divisions are impossible within the will to power. Whether these distinctions imply separating mental from physical events, conscious from unconscious events, causes from effects, or phenomena from epiphenomena—they are incompatible with and defeat the unifying purpose of Nietzsche’s hypothesis. Following Nietzsche on his path towards a characterization of the will to power as I have tried to do here shows that he consistently challenges such distinctions and conceives of the will to power as a psycho-physical hypothesis, i.e. he attempts to characterize it as neither mental nor physical, but rather, he views the realms of the mental and the physical as phenomena that belong to one and the same event called the world.

Nietzsche’s sustained attempts to elaborate a conception of the will to power that would satisfy these requirements led him to propose a unitary phenomenology that describes the world as composed of purely psycho-physical representations, driven by the same *modus operandi*, in which sequential causality is understood as a fictitious simplification of the real interconnectedness and interdependence of the whole. The introduction of the concept of the will to power in 1884 culminates in an ontology that refutes previous distinctions, characterizes the mental and the physical in representational terms, and offers a new ground for their relation.

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## Part IV: **Consciousness, Language, and Metaphor**



Lawrence J. Hatab

## 9 Talking Ourselves into Selfhood: Nietzsche on Consciousness and Language in *Gay Science* 354

What can be said about the kind of beings we are, about our “selves”? Nietzsche’s thinking on human selfhood is radical and complicated. With his philosophy of primal becoming, any talk of a “self” has to confront the ambiguities of an ungrounded phenomenon, which cannot be grasped as a “kind.” Selfhood, for Nietzsche, is always emergent within a dynamic of life forces that will disallow any impulse toward “identity.” Nietzsche therefore rejects the modern model of an individual, unified, substantive, autonomous self. Selfhood cannot involve an enduring substance or a unified subject that grounds attributes, that stands “behind” activities as a causal source (BGE 19–21). There is no substantive self behind or even distinct from performance: “There is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything” (GM I 13).

More than anything it is language that subsidizes these mistaken models of selfhood. Human experience and thinking are decentered processes, but the “grammatical habit” of using subjects and predicates, nouns and verbs, tricks us into assigning an “I” as the source of thinking (BGE 17). Human experience is much too fluid and complex to be reducible to linguistic units (BGE 19), and the vaunted philosophical categories of “subject,” “ego,” and “consciousness” are nothing more than linguistic fictions that cover up the dynamics of experience and that in fact are created to protect us from the precariousness of an ungrounded process.

Selfhood, for Nietzsche, is not a stable unity, but an arena for an irreducible contest of differing drives, each seeking mastery (BGE 6, BGE 36). There is no single subject, but rather a “multiplicity of subjects, whose interplay and struggle are the basis of our thought and our consciousness” (WP 490 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[42]). Nietzsche’s agonistic psychology does not suggest that the self is an utter chaos. He does allow for a shaping of the self, but this requires a difficult and demanding procedure of counter-cropping the drives so that a temporary mastery can be achieved. This is one reason why Nietzsche thinks that the modern promotion of universal freedom is careless and even dangerous (TI Skirmishes 41). Contrary to modernist optimism about the rational pursuit of happiness, Nietzsche sees the natural and social field of play as much more precarious and demanding. So according to Nietzsche (and this is missed in many interpretations) freedom and creative self-development are not for everyone: “Independence is for the very few; it is a privilege of the strong” (BGE 29). Simply being unconstrained is not an appropriate mark of freedom; being free should serve the pursuit of great achievement, a pursuit that most people cannot endure (Z I Creator).

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That most human beings are bound by rules and are not free to cut their own path is not regretted by Nietzsche. The “exception” and the “rule” are *both* important for human culture, and neither one should be universalized. Although exceptional types further the species, we should not forget the importance of the rule in *preserving* the species (GS 55). The exception as such can never become the rule, can never be a model for all humanity (GS 76). Absent this provision, Nietzsche’s promotion of “creative individuals” is easily misunderstood. The freedom from constraints is restricted to those who are strong enough for, and capable of, high cultural production. “My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank: not at an individualistic morality. The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd—but not reach out beyond it” (WP 287 = NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 7[6]).

Nietzsche (before Freud, and borrowing from Schopenhauer) also dismisses the centrality of consciousness and the longstanding assumption that the conscious mind defines our identity and represents our highest nature in its capacity to control instinctive drives. According to Nietzsche, consciousness is a very late development of the human organism and therefore it is not preeminently strong or effective (GS 11). In GS 354, Nietzsche says that if we consider ourselves as animals, we should be suspicious of the claim that consciousness is necessary for our operations.

The problem of consciousness (more precisely, of becoming conscious of something) confronts us only when we begin to comprehend how we could dispense with it; and now physiology and the history of animals place us at the beginning of such comprehension. ... we could think, feel, will, and remember, and we could also “act” in every sense of that word, and yet none of all this would have to “enter our consciousness” (as one says metaphorically). The whole of life would be possible without, as it were, seeing itself in a mirror. For even now, for that matter, by far the greatest portion of our life actually takes place without this mirror effect; and this is true even of our thinking, feeling, and willing life, however offensive this may sound to older philosophers. (GS 354)<sup>1</sup>

I must note here that by “consciousness” Nietzsche could not mean simple “awareness” but rather self-consciousness, a reflective “mirror.” Accordingly, non-consciousness would not exclusively mean “unconsciousness” but also non-reflective activity, since he includes thinking and acting in what can operate without (self-)consciousness. In addition, consciousness is not the opposite of instinct, but rather an epiphenomenal *expression* of instincts; even the reflective thinking of a philosopher “is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts” (BGE 3).

Since consciousness seems to arise in “internal” self-reflection, the emphasis on consciousness has been coordinated with atomic individualism, the idea that human beings are discrete individuals and that social relations are secondary to the self-relationship of consciousness. For Nietzsche, however, the notion of an atomic individ-

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<sup>1</sup> In cognitive science and neuroscience there is a vast literature on the role that unconscious processes play in human thinking and experience. A useful overview can be found in Dijksterhuis (2006: 95–109).

ual is an error (TI Skirmishes 33; BGE 12). “Individuality” is not an eternal property, but a historical, emergent development (GS 117). In this respect GS 354 offers the surprising notion that consciousness itself is a social and linguistic construction. Nietzsche’s argument is that consciousness is a function of language, and with language understood as *communicative* practice, a *common* apprehension of signs goes all the way down.

Consciousness is really only a net of communication [*Verbindungsnetz*] between human beings; it is only as such that it had to develop; a solitary human being who lived like a beast of prey would not have needed it. That our actions, thoughts, feelings, and movements enter our own consciousness—at least a part of them—that is the result of a “must” that for a terribly long time lorded it over man. As the most endangered animal, he *needed* help and protection, he needed his peers, he had to learn to express his distress and to make himself understood; and for all of this he needed “consciousness” first of all, he needed “know” himself what distressed him, he needed to “know” how he felt, he needed to “know” what he thought. For, to say it once more: Man, like every living being, thinks continually without knowing it; the thinking that rises to *consciousness* is only the smallest part of all this—the most superficial and worst part—for only his conscious thinking *takes the form of words, which is to say signs of communication*, and this fact uncovers the origin of consciousness.

In brief, the development of language and the development of consciousness ... go hand in hand. ... The emergence of our sense impressions into our consciousness, the ability to fix them and, as it were, exhibit them externally, increased proportionately with the need to communicate them to *others* by means of signs. The human being inventing signs is at the same time the human being who becomes ever more keenly conscious of himself. It was only as a social animal that man acquired self-consciousness. (GS 354)<sup>2</sup>

If Nietzsche is right, then even *self*-consciousness, perceived as a kind of internal representation or dialog, is a function of social relations and the commerce of common signs. Accordingly, even “self-knowledge” (a crucial ingredient in traditional philosophical methods) is in fact only a function of the internalization of socio-linguistic signs that operate by fixing experience into stable and common forms. What is truly “individual,” then, is *not* indicated even in self-reflection, because the *instruments* of reflection are constituted by the *omission* of what is unique in experience.

... given the best will in the world to understand ourselves as individually as possible, “to know ourselves,” each of us will always succeed in becoming conscious only of what is not individual but “average.”

... Fundamentally, all our actions are altogether incomparably personal, unique, and infinitely individual; there is no doubt of that. But as soon as we translate them into consciousness *they no longer seem to be*. (GS 354)

For Nietzsche, “individualism” is disrupted by the fact that most of what we recognize as human nature is a *social* phenomenon. Yet we cannot ultimately *reduce*

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<sup>2</sup> A similar point is made in later works: BGE 268 and TI Skirmishes 26. See also WP 524 (NL 1887–88, KSA 13, 11[145]).

human life to conscious linguistic and conceptual categories, even when such structures have been appropriated by individuals in their own self-regard, because there is an element of non-conscious experience that eludes these structures.

Before moving on with questions stemming from this analysis, I want to interject that something like Nietzsche's account of consciousness and language can be backed up by findings in developmental psychology. The notion of "inner speech" or "private speech"—meaning self-directed verbalization—can account for *how* language is implicated in self-consciousness. Research shows that inner speech is the most important factor in the development of self-awareness, the capacity to become the object of one's own attention, one's own thoughts and behaviors (see Morin 2005: 115–134). Such a process occurs originally in children but in adults as well (Morin 2005: 2). Fully immersed experience is not self-conscious. A kind of "distance" between the observer and the observed is required for the self-awareness of observation. Inner speech provides this kind of distance (Morin 2005: 7). It is important to stress that such a development is derived from the original *social* milieu of language, so that self-awareness arises from the *reproduction* of social mechanisms by way of self-directed language (Morin 2005: 5). The case of Helen Keller is instructive because she claimed that consciousness first existed for her only after she gained access to language (Morin 2005: 9). There is also neurophysiological evidence mapping the processes here described (Morin 2005: 8 ff.).

Private speech in young children (talking to oneself in task performance) has often been met with concern by parents; and Piaget had taken it to be a stage of ego-centrism. But L. S. Vygotsky initiated the dismissal of this scheme by arguing that private speech is essential for the cognitive and behavioral development of the child, because here the child takes over the regulative role of the social world (see Winsler et al. 1997: 60). Language begins as collaborative tasking and conversation; private speech is a redirection of this milieu toward independent functioning. Cognitive and behavioral capacities begin in a social-linguistic network, and private speech begins a process that over time leads to the *internalization* of these capacities that now can operate "silently," as it were (Winsler et al. 1997: 61, 77). In sum, mature development, individuation, and self-consciousness are the result of an internalization of the social-linguistic environment, mediated by inner or private speech. Such research lends credence to Nietzsche's analysis, although the language-consciousness conjunction in his account raises more radical philosophical interrogation about the very nature of human selfhood and the meaning of individuation.

It should also be noted that the word "conscious" had an early meaning of sharing knowledge with another person (see the OED), hence the phrase "conscious to ..." The same sense could apply to inner awareness as witnessing one's own thoughts, as in the phrase "conscious to oneself" (thus borrowed from the social structure of consciousness). The word "conscious" is derived from the Latin *conscientia*, meaning "knowing together," which could refer either to shared knowledge or the joining together of different thoughts in the mind, or to self-awareness. Such meanings of *conscientia* were deployed by Descartes (see Henning 2007). The Ger-

man *Bewusstsein* and *Gewissen* bear a relation with knowledge, and *Bewusstsein* was originally associated with *conscientia* (see Aquila 1988: 561).

A number of questions arise in considering Nietzsche's thesis concerning language and consciousness. How far does Nietzsche take the conjunction of self-consciousness and socially based language? Is selfhood nothing more than a linguistic-communal phenomenon? Is language nothing more than a network of common signs that averages out experience? Given Nietzsche's endorsement of creative types, and thus creative language, would this have to be distinguishable from the language-consciousness conjunction to render creative departures from the norm genuinely possible?

These questions are far from peripheral concerns. The issue of consciousness, language, and selfhood is a focused version of a central theme in Nietzsche's philosophy: that knowledge and other assumptions of "form" run up against the limit of radical becoming; also that knowledge stems from the "fixing" effects of language and grammar. For instance:

Our usual imprecise mode of observation takes a group of phenomena as one and calls it a fact: between this fact and another fact it imagines in addition an empty space, it *isolates* every fact. In reality, however, all our doing and knowing is not a succession of facts and empty spaces but a continuous flux. ... The word and the concept are the most manifest ground for our belief in this isolation of groups of actions. (WS 11)

GS 354 adds the matter of selfhood and startles us by seeming to deny individual self-awareness a privileged status. What is truly "individual" is not any kind of accessible "self." Both knowledge and self-consciousness appear to be "errors"—instigated by language—when measured against life forces that exceed formation. In GS 355, right after the section on the communal function of language, Nietzsche claims that knowledge originates in reducing the unfamiliar to the familiar, a reduction based on *fear* of the strangeness of experience. Yet we know that Nietzsche often insists that "errors" such as these are necessary for human functioning and survival. Indeed, identifying such errors is not on that account an objection (BGE 4). In BGE 268 Nietzsche calls the communal character of words "the most powerful of all powers" because of its life-serving value. Even further, in WP 522 (NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 5 [22]), after outlining the prejudices of language, Nietzsche adds: "we think *only* in the form of language. ... we cease to think when we refuse to do so under the constraint of language." The linguistic order of thinking is "a scheme that we cannot throw off." A comparable claim is given in a published work: "we have at any moment only the thought for which we have the words at hand" (D 257).

Remarks such as these make it hard to read the "errors" in question as fitting any familiar sense of falsehood, especially if one cannot even *think* outside of such errors, likewise if the fluid excess of becoming cannot really count as a "measure" for any kind of discernible truth. Of course the question of truth is an enduring concern in Nietzsche studies, which I will not address in any detail here. I do take my bearings, however, from TI (Reason 5), where Nietzsche admits that once the tradi-

tional measure of “reality” is rejected, it doesn’t make sense to talk of an “apparent world,” of mere appearance, because there is nothing “real” in comparison—truth and falsehood could be substituted here to the same effect. An 1881 *Nachlass* passage is relevant to this question (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[156]). There Nietzsche distinguishes between three degrees of “error” in relation to an eternal flux: “the crude error of the species, the subtler error of the individual, and the subtlest error of the creative moment [*Augenblick*].” Species-form is the crudest error because it corals differences into a common universal. The assertion of the individual is a “more refined error” that comes later, rebelling against commonality in favor of unique forms. But then the individual learns that it itself is constantly changing and that “in the smallest twinkling of the eye [*im kleinsten Augenblick*] it is something other than it is in the next [moment].” The creative moment, “the *infinitely small moment* is the higher reality and truth, a lightning image out of the eternal flow.” The “higher reality and truth” of the creative moment is thus an “error” in a quite different sense compared to the species-error, which seems also to be the case with the error of the individual. Even the notorious fragment “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense”—the supposed source of Nietzsche’s critique of truth as an erroneous superimposition of form onto flux—shows some leeway in distinguishing creative formation from secured form. The metaphorical transfer of fluid experience to fixed words and concepts is actually preceded by original “intuited metaphors” and “images” that are closer to the flux of experience by being singular, unique apprehensions; and such pre-conceptual apprehension is associated with an artistic imagination that does not fall into the trap of fixed words and concepts (see TL, KSA 1: 875–890 = WEN: 253–264).

The distinction between creative formation and fixed form may have a bearing on the question of selfhood. With respect to *individual* selfhood, in the light of GS 354 it is hard to fathom how individuality is thinkable, since it seems inaccessible to language and conscious awareness. What I would want to say is that individuality here is not “graspable,” but perhaps thinkable as a negative trace, as something *relative* to consciousness and language in terms of what is *not* discernible in words and self-awareness. I cannot fully develop this idea here, but its sense might emerge in considering the following question: How is creativity thinkable in the light of GS 354 and the communal function of language? GS 354 contains the following aside: After a long duration of the communicative practices of language, “the ultimate result is an excess of this strength and art of communication—as it were, a capacity that has gradually been accumulated and now waits for an heir who might squander it.” Nietzsche then includes artists and writers as among such heirs and squanderers. This remark makes room for creative language, and the idea of squandering may fit claims Nietzsche sometimes makes about artistic creativity being a non-voluntary compulsion arising from an over-flowing surplus of energy (e.g., BGE 213, Z I Gift). Yet the question remains: How can language be truly creative if it is seemingly bound by common forms and effects? The question turns on what Nietzsche means by creativity.

We have noted that for Nietzsche the existence of the norm is essential for the maintenance of human culture, but in another sense he insists that it is necessary for, and intrinsic to, creativity as well. The freedom of the creative type does not do away with structures and constraint. Creativity breaks the hold of existing structures in order to shape new ones (see WS 122). Creativity is a complicated relationship between openness and form. Certain “fettters” (*Fesseln*) are required 1) to prepare cultural overcomings of purely natural states (HH 221), and 2) to provide a comprehensible shape to new cultural forms (WS 140). Creative freedom, therefore, is not the opposite of normalization, discipline, or constraint; it is a disruption of structure that yet needs structure to both prepare and consummate departures from the norm (see GS 295 and BGE 188). For Nietzsche, creativity is a kind of “dancing in chains” (WS 140). For this reason, even a “creative self” does not have a strict identity counterposed to “normal” selves.

In WP 767 (NL 1883–84, KSA 10, 24[32]) Nietzsche suggests that creativity is an individual *interpretation* of inherited schemes of language.<sup>3</sup> Yet even more, and surprisingly, in WS 122 and 127 Nietzsche expresses admiration for Greek poetry’s deployment of conventions, and he questions “the modern rage for originality.” And in WP 809 (NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[119]) he talks of the aesthetic state as “the source of languages” and as a “superabundance of means of communication,” and “the high point of communication and transmission between living creatures.” Furthermore, “every mature art has a host of conventions as its basis—insofar as it is a language. Convention is the condition of great art, *not* an obstacle.” I find this perfectly right, and it should temper certain overheated accounts of Nietzschean transgression. Finally, listen to GS 173: “Those who know they are profound strive for clarity. Those who would like to seem profound to the crowd strive for obscurity.”

Creative language, therefore, is not the opposite of common meanings and communication, although it will disrupt and alter ordinary familiarity, and it will likely not have a universal audience, but an audience nonetheless. At the same time, since the original fuel for creativity is not the conscious self but a dynamic of subliminal, sub-linguistic drives and instincts, then the idea of a “creative individual” can be understood only in a performative sense, in the contrasting effects of innovation compared to established patterns. This is why Nietzsche calls the free spirit a “relative concept,” rather than some discrete identity (HH 225). Although GS 354 seems to render individuality *in cognito*, inaccessible to self-awareness and language, we need not polarize this rendition into an unspeakable uniqueness on the one hand and communal speech on the other. Cultural creativity must manifest itself in communicative language and its “uniqueness” is both drawn from subliminal drives and indicated in its effects relative to normalcy. Moreover, the performative and relative

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<sup>3</sup> The fact that words are different from things means that individual appropriation of common terms can bring variations of meaning.

character of the creative individual would be consonant with Nietzsche's insistence that there is no "doer" behind the deed, that the deed is all there is (GM I 13).<sup>4</sup>

The idea that creativity cannot be grounded in individual consciousness is something expressed often in Nietzsche's work, and I want to offer some remarks on how we can read him on this score. WP 289 (NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[128]) offers the stark claim that "all perfect acts are unconscious." And in BGE 17 we are told that "a thought comes when 'it' wishes, and not when 'I' wish." Returning to a point made earlier in this essay, the word "unconscious" cannot be coextensive with sheer unawareness. I think there are two senses of "unconscious" operating in Nietzsche's analysis, a *depth* sense and a *surface* sense. The depth sense refers to instinctive drives and life forces that are not available to awareness; the surface sense refers to spontaneous, non-reflective activity, behavior, and cultural functions. On spontaneous, non-reflective action, consider these passages from *The Wanderer and His Shadow*:

*Closing the eyes of one's mind.*—Even if one is accustomed to and practiced in reflecting on one's actions, when one is actually acting (though the action be no more than writing a letter or eating and drinking) one must nonetheless close one's inward eye. (WS 236)

For as long as one is experiencing something one must give oneself up to the experience and close one's eyes: that is to say, not be an observer of it while still *in the midst* of it. For that would disturb the absorption of the experience. (WS 297)

Recall that Nietzsche includes even thinking among activities that can operate spontaneously, without being "mirrored" in consciousness. If Nietzsche holds that thinking is grounded in language, then we can also talk of non-reflective language as well. This would help us understand various occasions in the texts where Nietzsche talks about an *immediacy* in artistic language or thought processes, in other words, a direct disclosure not only without reflection but without *any* intercession beyond its self-presentation. I will mention a few instances without detailed discussion, simply to put this matter in play for consideration.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes the immediate disclosive effects of tragic poetry on the audience, which is so direct as to not even be "symbolic" or "fictional" (see BT 7, BT 8, BT 21). He identifies the Dionysian with music (BT 6, BT 17), especially its immediate emotional force that "overwhelms" conscious individuation. The Apollonian is associated with poetic language and theatrical technologies that shape a more individuated world. But since music and language are coordinated

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<sup>4</sup> While culture-creation disrupts established forms of life, it is meant to settle into *new* forms of culture (rather than unhinged or indiscriminate anomalies). In this respect we should consider Nietzsche's recognition of "second nature," which he calls a "new habit, a new instinct" that coalesces after a "first nature" of cultural inheritance has been altered or replaced—keeping in mind that the first nature in question was once a second nature replacing a first nature, and that this new second nature will become a first nature that will face disruption in the future after its own settlement (HL 3).

in tragic drama (BT 21), immediate disclosive force still operates in performances. Poetic metaphors are not “symbolic,” they possess a living power to disclose (BT 8). For Greek audiences, drama was not a fictional departure from reality; it produced on stage powerful scenes of “a world with the same reality and irreducibility that Olympus with its inhabitants possessed for the believing Hellene” (BT 7). Tragic drama produced a Dionysian effect of mimetic identification, originally embodied in choral impersonation, where one acted “as if one had actually entered into another body, another character” (BT 8). As Nietzsche writes in an 1870 note:

All art demands a “being outside oneself,” an *ekstasis*; it is from here that we take the step into the drama, by *not* returning within ourselves, but entering into another being, by acting as if we were bewitched, in our *ekstasis*. (WEN: 16 = NL 1860–70, KSA 7, 2[25])

Tragic art died at the hands of a Socratic-Euripidean nexus that valued conscious knowledge over the absorbing power of poetry (BT 12). Euripides aligned with Socrates in bringing the critical “spectator” on stage, especially by way of his Prologues (BT 11). Modern audiences have been corrupted by such critical distance from drama’s capacity to “enrapture the genuine listener” (BT 22). In certain later discussions, Nietzsche reiterates this sense of poetic immediacy. The discussion of poetic convention in WS 122 includes the motivation of poets to be “understood immediately,” because of the competitive, public conditions of oral performance. In WP 811 (NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[170]) artists are described as intoxicated with an overwhelming force of extreme sensuous acuity, which produces a “contagious” compulsion to discharge images that are “immediately enacted” in bodily energies: “An image, rising up within, immediately turns into a movement of the limbs.” GS 84 likewise discusses the origin of poetry in discharges of rhythmic force that compel both body and soul toward disclosive effects. And in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche tells of how *Zarathustra* and eternal recurrence “came to” him in August 1881, as a quasi-prophetic inspiration that “invaded” and “overtook” him, an involuntary necessity that took him “outside” himself, that made him feel like a mere “mouthpiece,” and where image, parable, and reality seemed indistinguishable (EH Books Z 1 and 3). In section 3, Nietzsche quotes from *Zarathustra* (Z III Homecoming), where the immediacy of creative language is far from an error or a violation of becoming: “Here you ride on every parable to every truth.”<sup>5</sup>

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5 As an aside, this sense of linguistic immediacy may be related to Nietzsche’s peculiar concept of “necessity.” For Nietzsche, the necessity of an event does rule out alternatives, but simply from the standpoint of the “self-evidence” of the immediate event as such, with nothing *other* or outside it, whether that be a causal chain or a self-originating “will” or “substance.” This is why Nietzsche says that “occurrence [*Geschehen*] and necessary occurrence is a *tautology*” (WP 639 = NL 1887, KSA 12, 10[138]). Necessity is counterposed not only to free alternatives but to any sense of mechanism, causality, or law: “Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities” (GS 109). Necessity does not follow from the force of law but from the *absence* of law (BGE 22); it cannot mean some fixed relation between successive states (which violates the primacy of radical



Another angle on linguistic immediacy can be found in Nietzsche's supposition that gesture and music are at the origin of language. In HH 216 Nietzsche claims that language began with gestures and facial expressions, together with the automatic, immediate imitation of these phenomena in face to face experience, which is natural in adults as well as children (called "motor mimicry" in modern psychology). Such was a direct communication of shared meanings (such as pleasure and pain). From such common comprehension, Nietzsche says, a "symbolism" of gestures could arise, with verbal sounds first coupled with the gestures, and then after familiarity operable by way of the sound symbols alone. In addition, Nietzsche considers music to be equiprimordial with gesture as a foundation for language, particularly in terms of how a speaker's *tone* accompanies gesture symbolism. Rhythm and pitch intonations, according to Nietzsche, provide a common field of comprehension that renders the communicative power of language possible.<sup>6</sup> This is one reason why the Dionysian was essential for Greek tragedy in Nietzsche's eyes, because the "universal" element behind Apollonian language could be presented through the combination of music, gesture, and dancing that embodied the poetic performance (see Higgins 1986: 663–672).<sup>7</sup> We could say that Nietzsche's answer to the question of how language could express something beyond its arbitrary phonic forms (given the differences in words across different languages) would not be in terms of universal cognitive conditions, but universal corporeal conditions of gesture and musicality. And his reasons for restricting language to a certain fictional status would follow from our tendency to separate distinct words from 1) the flux of experience and 2) the embodied forces behind verbal speech. Yet it seems that the first tendency is the more apt target because the corporeality of language in gesture and tone is said by Nietzsche to make language possible and it is not hard to intimate its indigenous function in embodied speech. In summation, various elements of *immediacy* in language can provide some flexibility in coming to terms with Nietzsche's critique of

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becoming) but simply that a state is what it is rather than something else (WP 552 = NL 1887, KSA 12, 9 [91]; also WP 631 = NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[139]). Necessity indicates that an occurrence "cannot be otherwise" *simply* by force of its immediate emergence, independent of any sense of causality—whether the self-causality of freedom, the final causality of teleology, or the efficient causality of determinism—since causality always looks *away* from an occurrence as such and in one way or another relies on the possibility of alternatives. Nietzsche does not deny the possibility of causal thinking, only its primal posture as "explanation." Causality is an *interpretation* of experience that is useful for "designation and communication" (BGE 21–22). Necessity names the primal immediacy of events-in-becoming *as such*, for which in each case an "alternative" would not be "another event" but *no event* (see WP 567 = NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[184]).

**6** See the 1871 fragment "On Music and Words," found translated (by Walter Kaufmann) in Dahlhaus (1980). In DW, gesture and tone are originally instinctive, without consciousness, but not without purpose (see Nietzsche 1999: 134). An 1871 note offers tone as the universal foundation of language, with differences in gesture generating different forms of language (WEN: 84–85 = NL 1871, KSA 7, 12[1]).

**7** Nietzsche thought that the Greeks had a capacity largely lost in modern experience, namely a "third ear" that could hear the musical background of language (BGE 8). He even talks of an element of dance in writing (TI Germans 7).

language—by offering an alternative to the *separation* of “words” and “experience” that allows space for identifying the supposed deficiency of language in the first place.

To retrieve the question of selfhood by way of conclusion, a certain immediacy of experience is something that Nietzsche frequently celebrates to counter the primacy of self-consciousness in modern philosophy, and self-consciousness is the domain of “this entirely dismal thing called reflection” (GM II 3). Reflection is “dismal” because it displaces what Nietzsche thinks are the healthy, instinctive, and spontaneous energies in life. In GM I 10, noble behavior is described as spontaneous, which is one reason why nobles are less “clever” than slaves.<sup>8</sup> Yet we cannot say that Nietzsche utterly dismisses reflection. Philosophy is impossible without some degree of reflection, and Nietzsche always considered himself to be a philosopher. We could say that among the motivations behind his non-traditional writing styles and the elusive character of his thinking, one key element stands out: Philosophy has typically aimed for reflective criteria to *govern* experience and thought. Nietzsche advances the essentially ambiguous task of reflecting upon that which precedes and always eludes reflection, and which is always already driving things, even reflection itself—in a word, *life*.<sup>9</sup> If this makes sense, we might hear more pointedly the perplexing opening line of the *Genealogy*: “We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers, even to ourselves, and with good reason” (GM Preface 1). Nietzsche’s thought is sometimes described as fitting the classification “philosophy of life,” which sounds right. Yet Nietzsche seems unique in recognizing and sustaining the fundamental enigma in thinking about life. A philosopher, as a living being, is something like a dog chasing its own tail. Nietzsche’s communicative practices aim to talk us out of talking ourselves into selfhood, if that names a “what” behind our always already *becoming* what we are (paraphrasing GS 270). In this light, another puzzling remark in *Ecce Homo* might make more sense: “To become what one is, presupposes that one not have the faintest notion *what* one is” (EH Clever 9). There is nothing wrong with using the word “self” or “I,” as long as “grammatical habits” don’t cover up the fact that “my” life is never fixed or finished, or even traceable to an inner “me.”

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**8** Spontaneity is a sign of strength and release from customary restrictions. In an 1887 note Nietzsche speaks of “an escape from the tyranny of pernicious small customs and rules—a struggle against the wasting of our strength in mere reactions; an attempt to give our strength time to accumulate, to become *spontaneous* again” (NL 1887, KSA 12, 10[17]).

**9** For significant studies that emphasize Nietzsche’s strategies of appealing to readers’ lives rather than propositional knowledge, see Janaway (2007), Allison (2001), and Nehamas (1985).

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Benedetta Zavatta

## 10 The Figurative Patterns of Reason: Nietzsche on Tropes as Embodied Schemata

### 10.1 A Despised and Neglected Art

Rhetoric is the discipline that studies persuasive discourse, both how to compose it and its referential and communicative aspects, and from these analyses it draws the theoretical principles for producing well-formed and effective discourse. While grammar deals with the correct use of language from the point of view of its rules, rhetoric deals with the correct construction of an argument. That is why Aristotle links rhetoric with dialectic, which is the discipline that concerns the rational discussion of opposing ideas. Rhetoric and dialectic concern communication in general and therefore deal with any kind of text, not just with literary ones (Rhetoric 1354a). *Rhetorica recepta* (the knowledge concerning the production of discourse that has accumulated over the centuries) develops along two axes: a horizontal one concerning the structure of the text or speech (*exordium*, *narratio*, *agumentatio* and *peroratio*), and a vertical one that includes the operations of its production (*intellectio*, *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *actio*). Strictly speaking, only *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio* concern the production of the text or speech, whereas *memoria* and *actio* concerns its memorization and delivery. During the *inventio* the orator selects the referents of the rhetorical text, i.e. all the beings, states, processes, actions and ideas that will be involved in it. During the phase of *dispositio* the orator organizes these elements in a syntactic structure, while in the phase of *elocutio* the text is concretely produced. In other words, *elocutio* is the result of the operations of *inventio* and *dispositio*, but cannot be thought apart from the other two. Rhetorical treatises usually treat the operations of *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio* separately, as if they follow one another (cf. for example Cicero 1942, I, 31). But actually these operations are by no means independent of each other, since they are wholly or partly simultaneous. It follows, importantly, that *ornata*, i.e. tropes and figures of speech, which are traditionally included in the *elocutio*, have to be regarded not simply as tools to communicate an already formed thought. Rather, they are to be intended as concerning the operation of *inventio* and *dispositio* as well, namely as cognitive procedures through which the reality is represented into in an image of the world and in a system of signs, i.e. language. The etymology of the term ‘ornatus’ confirm this thesis. ‘Ornatus’ originally did not mean ‘ornament’, but just the opposite: “apparatus, instruments, furniture, armaments”, i.e. “the standard equipment needed for a particular activity” (Vickers 1988: 314). Tropes and figures were conceived by the ancients as the necessary tools for representing reality. It was just from early

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modernity on, and particularly with the Enlightenment, that tropes began to be regarded as a mere embellishment of discourse. Figurative language was banned from philosophy, in that it was considered as an expedient to arouse emotions that could endanger the proper use of reason. Emblematic is Locke's aversion to figurative expressions: he claims that "all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment" (Locke 1849: 310, quoted by Nietzsche in DaR KGW II/4: 415). Kant too refers to rhetoric as "an insidious art that knows how, in matters of moment, to move men like machines to a judgement that must lose all its weight with them upon calm reflection" (Kant 1968: 327–328).<sup>1</sup>

Starting in the eighteenth century, a strong counter-movement emerged, which claimed the priority of figurative language over so-called 'natural' one (Weinrich 1980: 1181). In Italy Vico considered poetry and myth to be the original forms of speech of humanity and consequently he considered tropes as necessary modes of expression of the first nations. Similarly in France Rousseau revalued figurative language as the original and authentic language of humanity, in that he considered it as closer to our sensibility and feelings than scientific or rational language (cf. Weinrich 1980: 1181). In Germany, the revaluation of metaphor began with Hamann, who laid the basis for the statement that all language is figurative. In the *Aesthetica in Nuce*, which Nietzsche borrowed from Basle library in March 1873, he claimed that all signs are translated from the language of God and angels into human speech (see Emden 2005: 94). Herder then stated that expressing abstract concepts by referring to concrete objects was not just a poetic affectation, but a necessity and a natural impulse for human beings (Herder 1891: 71; for Nietzsche and Herder see Borsche 1994, Fürst 1988, Bertino 2011). The idea that the primordial language of humanity was metaphorical then became a cultural *topos* of Romanticism with Jean Paul, who in his *Lessons of Aesthetics* stated that language is no more than a dictionary of faded metaphors, meaning a repertory of words whose origin in the senses is now forgotten (Jean Paul 1813, quoted in DaR KGW II/4: 442 f.). According to the Romantic view, it is the supposedly 'proper expression' that is secondary, i. e. derived from a process of gradual impoverishment of the figurative language. Nietzsche's colleague in Basel

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<sup>1</sup> Banned from philosophy and confined to the literary field, rhetoric was moreover considered as inferior to poetry. Indeed, poetry deserves respect and admiration as the sincere expression of the poet's inner nature, while rhetoric is discredited as something tied to the sphere of external appearance. "Rhetoric is the art of transacting a serious business of the understanding as if it were a free play of the imagination; poetry that of conducting a free play of the imagination as if it were a serious business of the understanding. Thus the orator announces a serious business, and for the purpose of entertaining his audience conducts it as if it were a mere play with ideas. The poet promises merely an entertaining play with ideas, and yet for the understanding there ensures as much as if the promotion of its business had been his one intention" (Kant 1968: 203). These prejudices survive intact still in Hegel, who considers rhetoric unsuitable for philosophy and inferior to poetry, inasmuch as rhetoric is an art subjected "to the law of practical *utility* [*praktischer Zweckmäßigkeit*]" (Hegel 1970: 262); ultimately, nothing more than a means to an end.

Wilhelm Wackernagel maintained that language gradually moves further from its origin in the senses, becoming less vivid and concrete. Language was assumed to pass from an ‘infantile’ state, dominated by poetic figures, to a more mature one, dominated by abstract concepts, until it reached old age, when logical and grammatical forms performed the main function (Wackernagel 1862: 64, Emden 2005: 64).

During the nineteenth century rhetoric had been strongly revalued also by a few classical philologists who, unsatisfied with the traditional partition of linguistics in phonology, morphology, and syntax, aimed at extending the study of language also to meaning. Karl Christian Reisig who, together with his followers Haase and Herdegen founded modern semantics (*Semasiologie* or *Bedeutungslehre*), used rhetoric as a paradigm to explore the principles of semantic change. At that time, meaning was conceived of as a mental image (*Vorstellung*). Accordingly, it was assumed to change according to psychological principles. According to Reisig, these psychological principles are universal forms of the human mind. In other words, while the semantic partition of each language is different from any other, the principles according to which mental contents interact with each other—thus giving rise to new mental contents or meanings—are the same for all people and in all ages. Linguistic change is thus thought of as the result of the interaction of universal laws of conceptual association and historical circumstances, which are different for each nation. Reisig identified these universal patterns of conceptual association with the procedures that, within rhetoric, were called ‘tropes’ (Reisig 1890: 2). In other words, he stated that metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche were not simply figures of speech but, first of all, universal laws of the human mind, i.e. patterns of conceptual association, which ruled semantic change (Reisig 1881: 5).<sup>2</sup>

Nietzsche grew up immersed in this tradition and knew the research results of German semasiologists very well (Zavatta 2013). It is thus not surprising that, during his ten years of professorship in Classic Philology at Basle University (1869–79), he demonstrated a striking interest in rhetoric and very often lectured on this topic.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Reisig distinguishes the tropes used intentionally by poets for aesthetic or strategic purposes from those that unconsciously structure the way we use language and perceive the world. The former are what rhetoric and stylistics study, while the latter must necessarily come under semasiology, as they are fundamental principles of semantic change (Zavatta 2013: 35–36). In the 1870s and 1880s the Latinists Haase and Herdegen confirmed Reisig intuition, even though criticizing his approach. Indeed, Reisig deduced the principles of linguistic change from the categories of reason. Conversely, Haase and Herdegen derived them empirically by examining and comparing a huge amount of ancient texts. However, in the end they agreed on the fact that metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche are the most recurrent patterns of conceptual association and the principles ruling semantic change (Zavatta 2013: 37). This intuition was later developed by Bréal (1897) and Paul (1880), see Nerlich (1992 and 2001), Geeraerts (2009).

<sup>3</sup> During his ten years of professorship in Basel Nietzsche held no less than nine courses on rhetoric. He dealt with classics of the tradition such as Cicero’s *De Oratore*, Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, or Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, as well as with the study of the historical and political conditions under which rhetoric arose in Greece as a tool of public consensus (*History of Greek Eloquence*). He also dealt with

Rhetoric was for him not simply a discipline for producing eloquent and persuasive speech. First and above all, rhetoric was an invaluable tool to cast some light on the functioning of language and, given the relation between language and thought, also on the functioning of the human mind. In other words, the study of rhetoric became for Nietzsche the tool for conducting a “critique of impure (because mediated by language) reason” (Kopperschmidt 1999: 201).

## 10.2 “Language is Rhetoric”

What does legitimize Nietzsche to use rhetoric as a tool to explore the functioning of language? Nietzsche put the premises of his enquiry already in the short essay *On the Origin of Language*, written as an introduction to the course on Latin grammar of 1869. In this essay Nietzsche states that language is the product of an unconscious artistic instinct (*Kunsttrieb*) residing in the depths of the human soul. In other words, he thought of language not, as it was for Schopenhauer, as the product and tool of reason, but rather as its condition of possibility and hidden matrix (KGW II/2: 185).<sup>4</sup> In the course *Presentation of Ancient Rhetoric* (1874), Nietzsche identifies the unconscious artistic instinct from which language originates with a rhetorical *dynamis*. He took this expression from Aristotle, who defines rhetoric as primarily neither a scientific knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*, episteme) nor a technique (*τέχνη*, techne), but a power (*dynamis*) innate to every human being, which can be perfected through education and practice. Aristotle states that rhetoric is “the power to discover (*θεωρησαι*, theoresai) and make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing” (Rhetoric 1355 b, KGW II/4: 425). In other words, he held rhetoric not only as the specific education and practice aimed at producing well-formed discourse, but first and above all as a universal and innate capacity to understand what, in every discourse, makes it effective and then to use this knowledge to affirm one’s own view. Nietzsche endorses Aristotle’s definition, but takes it much further. Indeed, he states that rhetoric as a conscious art aimed at affirming one’s own point of view relies on an innate and unconscious drive—characterizing all human beings

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rhetoric under a systematic perspective (*Presentation of Ancient Rhetoric*). In the winter semester 1870–71 and in the summer of 1871, he held a course on Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*. In the winter semester 1871–72, he gave a course on Cicero’s *De Oratore*, and in the winter semester of 1874–75, the summer semester of 1875 and again in the winter semester of 1877–78 a course on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, part of which he translated for his students. The dating of the courses *History of Greek Eloquence* and *Presentation of Ancient Rhetoric* is instead quite controversial, see Stingelin (1996: 93); Behler (1998); Most and Fries (1994).

<sup>4</sup> The idea that language derives from an unconscious artistic instinct is part of the Humboldtian tradition that came down to Nietzsche mainly through Ritschl and Curtius. From the same tradition he also derived the idea that lexis and syntax condition our thinking about the world. However, it was specifically the reading of Eduard von Hartmann’s *Philosophie des Unbewussten* which exerted an important influence on this piece by Nietzsche (see Gerratana 1988 and Thüring 1994).

—to create and affirm through language a vision of the world. In other words, Nietzsche states that language from its very beginning is aimed not at conveying a truth, but at persuading. Language “does not refer to truth, to the essence of things. It does not want to inform, but rather to transfer [*übertragen*] a subjective impression and assumption to other people” (KGW II/4: 425–426). In short, the intention that characterizes language from its inception is pragmatic, not theoretical; it is the desire to have our point of view affirmed and recognized (Kopperschmidt 1994: 53). Thus, in the end, Nietzsche uses Aristotle’s definition to sustain a radically opposite stance. According to Aristotle, all men have a natural disposition to knowledge, which is confirmed by the great pleasure they receive from sense experience. Such a pleasure has nothing to do with utility, but arises from disinterested contemplation of nature. The natural disposition to knowledge distinguishes man from all other living beings and places him at the uppermost position in the natural world. In *On Truth and Lies* Nietzsche systematically inverts all of Aristotle’s assumptions (Ungeheuer 1983: 183). Indeed, Nietzsche states that man strives for ‘knowledge’ only inasmuch as reaching an agreement on ‘what has to be held as true’ assures him of some advantages in the struggle for survival. “He desires the pleasant, life-preserving consequences of truth; he is indifferent to pure knowledge without consequences” (TL 1, KSA 1: 878).<sup>5</sup> The natural attitude of human intellect towards external reality is not at all contemplative, but pragmatic: all human activities, including the activity of intellect, are driven by interest. Furthermore, as an effect of the constitutive inadequacy of his sense apparatus, man’s vision of the world is not more complete than the vision attainable by a mosquito. What distinguishes human beings from animals is thus not the attitude to knowledge, but rather the ability to make of an intuitive and subjective image of the world a universally valid and binding one. “All that distinguishes man from animals depends on this ability to dissipate intuitive metaphors into an abstract pattern, that is, to dissolve an image in a concept” (TL 1, KSA 1: 881). Fixing a convention on what has to be held as true is necessary in order to stop the “*bellum omnium contra omnes*” and make living in a society possible (TL 1, KSA 1: 877). Language arises precisely to satisfy this need.

### 10.3 Language and Truth

According to Hans Blumenberg, there are two fundamental ways of understanding rhetoric in the philosophical tradition: “Rhetoric has to do either with the conse-

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<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche’s position will be further elaborated in the 1880s also thanks to the reading of Herbert Spencer, who maintained that the propositional content of a judgment is held as true just inasmuch as it brings some advantages to the surviving of the species. See WLN: 24–25 = NL 1885, KSA 11, 36 [19]: “It is unlikely that our ‘knowing’ would go any further than what’s just necessary for the preservation of life. Morphology shows us how the senses and nerves, also the brain, develop in proportion to the difficulty of finding food”.



quences of possessing the truth or with the abashment [*Verlegenheit*] that result from the impossibility of obtaining truth” (Blumenberg 1987: 429–430). A good example of the former is Plato, who regards rhetoric as legitimate only for the purposes of communicating the truth to the people unable to reach it for themselves. In short, Plato condemns rhetoric when it does not serve the aims of philosophy, while finding it acceptable and even desirable if it might help lead the soul towards the true and the good.<sup>6</sup> The second possible way of conceiving rhetoric, which dates back to the Sophists, began from the recognition of the impossibility of man reaching the truth and the abashment (*Verlegenheit*) that follows. Barbara Cassin (1995) notes that, while in the ontological tradition that derives from Parmenides and Plato, ‘saying’ is regarded as an effect of being and language a tool for communicating reality, for the Sophists being is more like an effect of ‘saying’ and reality a creation of discourse: being is not what the word reveals, but rather what discourse creates.<sup>7</sup> These two ways of understanding rhetoric—as the communication of a possessed truth or as a tool to compensate its loss—are related to two different anthropological models: man as a rich being who transcends the biological determination of the animals and is somewhat similar to God, and man as a poor being, lacking the necessary instinctual equipment for survival and forced to devise artificial means to adapt to his environment. In this second anthropological model man has recourse to rhetoric to make up for the lack of truth to which he is condemned by his poor cognitive apparatus. Language, then, is not a means for communicating a possessed truth or expressing an objectively given reality, but an adaptive tool for reaching agreement as to what has to be held as true and real. It is this second anthropological model—outlined by Herder, and that, with Gehlen, later became central to twentieth-century anthropology—that Nietzsche adopts.<sup>8</sup> In *On Truth and Lies* he describes human beings as the “most unfortunate, most delicate and most transitory beings” (TL 1, KSA 1: 875) in nature, who compensate for their biological inadequacies by cre-

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**6** In the *Presentation of Ancient Rhetoric* Nietzsche refers to the passage in the *Phaedrus* where Socrates explains that possession of the truth brings with it the need and desire to communicate it (*Phaedrus* 273e), and to that in the *Politician* where he expresses the conviction that the masses need to be persuaded by rhetorical means (*Politikus*, 304d, both cited in KGW II/4: 418). A more detailed examination of Plato’s position on rhetoric can be found in Nietzsche’s course *Introduction to the Study of Plato’s Dialogues* (1871–72).

**7** Barbara Cassin (1995) calls the counter-movement initiated by the Sophists ‘*logologie*’, in opposition to the ‘*ontologie*’ of Parmenides and Plato.

**8** *On Truth and Lies*, dictated to Gersdorff in the summer of 1873, had actually been conceived as an introduction to a second, never-completed work on Greek civilization (see D’Iorio 1994: 34–37). Nietzsche would have called this work *Weisheit und Wissenschaft. Über die Philosophen* (NL 1872, KSA 7, 19[85]) or *Der Philosoph. Betrachtungen über den Kampf von Kunst und Erkenntnis* (NL 1872, KSA 7, 19[98]), or simply *Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (NL 1872, KSA 7, 19[188] and 19[190]). “Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks” is a sketch of the historical part (NL 1872, KSA 7, 19[191]) of this work, while Nietzsche’s notes from the years 1872 and 1874 give us a general idea of its content.

ating, through language, an artificial environment in which they can survive. Various readings in the field of the psychology and physiology of perception (see Emden 2005: 98–99) had convinced Nietzsche that our sense organs are absolutely inadequate for knowing reality objectively and exhaustively. On the other hand, the research results of historical-comparative linguistics, which in the first half of the nineteenth century had made significant progress, had proved that language does not offer an exhaustive and objective description of the essence of things, and still less is it the expression of a supposed “universal reason”. Language is simply the tool for building a vision of the world that is always historically and culturally conditioned (see Zavatta 2014). Praising the Sophists’ scepticism as the most lucid and courageous moment in the history of thought (NL 1888, KSA 13, 14[116], 14[147], 24[1]), Nietzsche endorses their thesis that reality is not revealed, but created by discourse. In this perspective it is also easier to understand why Nietzsche’s interest in rhetoric increased from 1872. After the dissolution of the trust placed in music as a universal *medium*, able to grasp and express directly the true essence of things, it became clear to Nietzsche that, however inadequate language is, it remains the only tool man possesses for relating to the world and for communicating with his fellow man. Rhetoric as the power to impose a subjective point of view (*doxa*) became important for him when he realized that it is impossible to achieve an *episteme*, i.e. true knowledge of things. We cannot know what things are in themselves, but we can (and should) impose through discourse what things mean for us.<sup>9</sup>

## 10.4 Tropes as Unconscious Cognitive Patterns

According to Nietzsche, one is legitimized to use rhetoric as a tool to investigate the nature and functioning of language because of their “*Funktionsidentität*” (Kopperschmidt 1994: 50). In other words, the orator’s intention to persuade the listener to embrace his argument is simply a prosecution and intensification of an unconscious drive innate in every human being, i.e. the drive to make one’s own point of view valid and binding for everyone. “Language is rhetoric, as it wants to transfer not a truth (ἐπιστέμη), but only an opinion (δόξα)” (KGW II/4: 426). However, rhetoric and language present not only a “*Funktionsidentität*”, but also a “*Struktursidentität*” (Kopperschmidt 1994: 50). In other words, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche as conscious rhetorical strategies are to be regarded as a continuation and intensification of similar procedures that are performed automatically and unconsciously by all

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<sup>9</sup> “What rhetoric breaks apart, at the most decisive and fragile articulation of *The Birth of Tragedy*, is therefore the very distinction between the Dionysian and the Apollonian” (Lacoue-Labarthe 1993: 32). In other words, Nietzsche no longer believes in the distinction between the immediate expression of the essence of things and a representation subjected to the *principium individuationis*. Even the claim that we can know nothing about the essence of things is regarded as dogmatic, in that it presupposes that essence, even though in the form of an unknowable *x*.

human beings in their everyday thinking and speech. Therefore, through the analysis of tropes as conscious strategies one can become aware of the processes that lead to the constitution of language and, at the same time, of a *Weltansicht*.

In the chapter of the *Presentation* dedicated to explaining the relation of rhetoric to language, Nietzsche observes: “We call an author, a book or a style ‘rhetorical’ when we notice a conscious use of artifices of discourse [*Kunstmitteln der Rede*], always with a slight note of disapproval. We consider it to be not natural, and as producing the impression of being done purposefully” (KGW II/4: 425). But actually, such an assumed non-figurative, natural level of language does not exist: “There is no unrhetorical ‘naturalness’ of language to which one could appeal; language itself is the result of purely rhetorical art [*von lauter rhetorischen Künsten*]” (DaR KGW II/4: 425). In short, Nietzsche questions the usual distinction between a ‘proper’ or ‘natural’ use of language, purely denotative, and a rhetorical or ‘artificial’ one, enriched with tropes and figures. All language has been produced through tropes. The belief in a discourse that simply indicates reality is the effect of having forgotten the process of the creation of language, which is a rhetorical process. “*In summa*: tropes are not occasionally added to words. Rather, tropes constitute the very essence of words. There is nothing like a ‘proper meaning’ that, under certain circumstances, is transposed. ... Everything that is usually called discourse is actually figuration [*Figuration*]” (KGW II/4: 427).

In *On Truth and Lies*, Nietzsche presents a simplified model of the process leading to the formation of language and of a *Weltansicht*. The unconscious transformation of a nerve stimulus (*Nervenreiz*) into a mental image (*Bild, Vorstellung*) and then into a sound/word (*Lautbild*) is defined as a series of successive metaphors. “A nerve stimulus first transformed into an image—the first metaphor! The image then reproduced in a sound—the second metaphor! And each time a complete overleaping of the sphere concerned, right into the middle on an entirely new and different one” (TL 1, KSA 1: 879). The term ‘metaphor (*Metapher*)’ here is used as a synonym of ‘transposition (*Übertragung*)’, a term commonly used in nineteenth-century physiology to indicate the transposition of data from the physiological to the mental sphere.<sup>10</sup> In short, Nietzsche assumes that our mental representations of external objects are the product of physiological processes and that, in turn, such mental representations are associated with sounds, which allow us to recall and communicate

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**10** See Emden (2005: 99); Reuter (2009: 25–113). In particular, Helmholtz’s theory of perception had a very important influence on the development of Nietzsche’s thought during the Basle years. Such an influence has been exerted both directly (Nietzsche borrowed Helmholtz’s *Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen als physiologische Grundlage für die Theorie der Musik* in 1870 and his *Handbuch der Physiologischen Optik* in 1873) and mediatedly, i. e. through the reading of authors such as Gerber, Lange and Zöllner, whose theories rely to a great extent on Helmholtz’s “logic of perception [*Logik der Wahrnehmung*]” (Treiber 1994). On Nietzsche’s reading of Gerber see Hödl (1997: 82); for Nietzsche’s relation to Gerber see also Meijers (1988); Meijers and Stingelin (1988); Reuter (2009: 79–90); Zavatta (2009, 2014).

to other humans the experience we have had. However, since every metaphor (transposition) involves the transition to a completely heterogeneous sphere (sensation—mental representation—sound), there cannot be a perfect correspondence between the initial datum and its translation, but only “an allusive relation [*ein ästhetisches Verhalten*]” (TL 1, KSA 1: 884). Our “*Erkenntnisapparat*” is “*kunstschaffend*” (Böning 1988: 8). The sound simply recalls, or alludes to (*andeuten*) the mental image and this, in its turn, recalls (or alludes to) the nerve stimulus that generated it. Nietzsche then concludes that language does not provide us with any objective knowledge of the external object, but simply with tools for recalling the sensation we have experienced.<sup>11</sup> However, through repeated use we assume words to be “universally valid and binding definitions of the essence of things [*gleichmässig gültige und verbindliche Bezeichnung der Dinge*]” (TL 1, 1.877). That is to say that, by forgetting the process which led to their formation, the conviction arises that, among the many different ways of referring to the outside world, there could be one that is more truthful than others (Tebartz-van Elst 1994: 113). But actually, the image of the world that is conveyed through language expresses simply what, at a given moment, affected us. It is nothing but the product of an arbitrary elaboration of our senses and brain.<sup>12</sup>

While in *On Truth and Lies* the process leading to the formation of language and a corresponding *Weltansicht* is described in very general terms as a series of successive metaphors (and the term metaphor intended as transposition), in the *Presentation of Ancient Rhetoric* Nietzsche presents a more complex and refined model, in which each of the three great tropes of the tradition (synecdoche, metonymy and metaphor) play a specific role (and, consequently, he uses the term metaphor to indicate a specific kind of transposition based on analogy). The conscious procedures called synecdoche, metonymy and metaphor are thus used as hand lenses to observe the unconscious operations that led to the constitution of our everyday language and the image of the world on which all our conceptual thinking relies.

Synecdoche as a conscious rhetorical strategy consists in naming a part for the whole, as when we say “sail [*Segel*]” to mean “ship [*Schiff*]”. Actually, Nietzsche argues, we unconsciously activate a similar mechanism every time we name an object. If we examine the etymology of every name, we shall see that it always expresses just one characteristic of the object designated. This characteristic, regarded as more sa-

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11 The conventional character of language is further shown by the diversity of languages. “A juxtaposition of the different languages shows that what matters about words is never the truth, never an adequate expression; otherwise there would not be so many languages” (TL 1, KSA 1: 879).

12 In short, Nietzsche abolishes the distinction between literal and transposed expressions. Assuming that words are artistic reformulations of perceptual stimuli and that the subject does not have direct access to the outside world, we cannot judge a word more ‘proper’ than others in referring to an object. The only relation we can establish with the outside world (‘Weltbezug’) is aesthetic, and it is operated through artistic means. Actually, the only difference between so-called ‘proper’ words and tropes is the habit of using them more or less frequently with reference to a certain object. “Instead of regarding literal and figurative language as two distinct categories, Nietzsche views them as the ideal poles of a continuum” (Cantor 1982: 72).

lient than others, is taken to represent the object as a whole. “Language never expresses something exhaustively, but emphasizes just one characteristic in each thing [*Merkmal*] that seems to stand out from the others” (KGW II/4: 426). For example, we call an animal a “serpent [*Schlange*]” because of its sinuous “winding movement [*schlangen*]”.

But why is *serpens* not also called “*Schnecke*”? A subjective perception [*einseitige Wahrnehmung*] takes the place of the complete intuition. With *anguis* the Romans indicated the serpent as a *constrictor*, while the Jew calls it “the sibilant” [*die Zischelnde*] or “the vanishing one” [*die Schwindende*] or “the devourer” [*die Verschlingende*] or “the creeping one” [*die Kriechende*] (KGW II/4: 426–427).

Every object is perceived and named on the basis of its most significant characteristic. Different languages have different names for the same object because each people considers some characteristics as more relevant than others on the basis of its specific “conditions of existence” (*Existenz-Bedingungen*): “It is not the things that pass over into our consciousness, but the manner in which we stand toward them” (KGW II/4: 426), and the manner in which we stand toward things depends on the needs which have to be satisfied.

Metonymy consists in exchanging (*Vertauschung*) cause and effect, as when we say “sweat [*Schweiß*]” for “labour [*Arbeit*]” or “tongue [*Zunge*]” for “language [*Sprache*]” (KGW II/4: 427). This conscious linguistic strategy rests on a pattern of conceptual association activated in everyday life and speech, by which we unconsciously invert cause and effect or, to be precise, we invent an imaginary cause for every observed phenomenon. A drink that arouses a sensation of a certain kind in us is called ‘bitter’, as if there were a *qualitas occulta*, ‘bitterness’, that pertains to the drink and causes the sensation. Actually, this quality is an abstraction we construct *a posteriori*, to explain the sense data we received (KGW II/4: 446. See also HH 39).

Once a first, basic repository of words has been created, metaphor intervenes to create new meanings starting from the already existing names. Indeed, metaphor is the transfer of a name from one object to another on the basis of a (perceived or created) similarity or analogy.<sup>13</sup> Obviously, it is not just the name that is transferred. Metaphor consists in applying existing mental categories to new experiences or, in other words, in perceiving new, i.e. foreign objects through the mental categories we have formed for other objects. Since the first things to be named are the parts and the activities of the body, it is very common to refer to the parts of a mountain as its “*Koppe Fuss Rücken Schlünde Hörner Adern*” (KGW II/4: 427).<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche claims that the tendency of shaping the outside world through the cognitive categories elaborated to describe the body and its basic activities (grasping, eating, breathing,

<sup>13</sup> In metaphor analogies are not actually discovered, but rather established. See Richards (1936) and Black (1962).

<sup>14</sup> We cannot provide an English translation because there are no direct analogues for these terms.

lying, etc.) is a universal and very powerful instinct: “man represents always the existence of other things in analogy with his own existence [*nach Analogie des eignen Daseins*], i.e. anthropomorphically” (PTAG 11, KSA 1: 847). In other words, Nietzsche states that every people in every age tends to create through language an anthropomorphic image of the world, where natural phenomena or objects are represented as if they were living being. With the passing of time, metaphors are no longer perceived as such. Words such as “bottleneck” have been integrated in the lexicon and are now used as literal expression. However, so called “dead” metaphors are not structurally different from “alive” metaphors (Ricoeur 1975), which allow us to become aware of the process that led to the formation of the first.

Nietzsche seems to consider the above-mentioned procedures (highlighting of a trait, creation of essences as causes of dynamic processes, creation of correspondences among phenomena) as universal patterns of the human mind, i.e. patterns used by people of every age and culture to form their own *Weltansicht*. It is, then, the variety of the “conditions of existence” of the different peoples that determines the specific content of their vision of the world, i.e. what is more relevant in an object (synecdoche), what domains of experience are interconnected (metonymy) and, finally, what cognitive schemata are more suitable to be extended to new phenomena (metaphor).

## 10.5 Abandoning Rhetoric?

During the years 1872–74 Nietzsche reached the important conclusion that the unconscious procedures leading to the cognitive organization of experience into a vision of the world and, correspondently, into a language are identical with the consciously performed operations called metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. Nevertheless, it is a fact that, in post-1875 notes and works, the terms ‘metaphor’, ‘metonymy’ and ‘synecdoche’ no longer occur, and even the term *Übertragung* only appears occasionally. To explain this fact, Lacoue-Labarthe claims that rhetoric was a passing interest for Nietzsche that sprang up suddenly and, just as suddenly, was abandoned without leaving significant traces in his later works.<sup>15</sup> But a more careful analysis of Nietzsche’s philosophical output in its entirety reveals that this is not the case. Undoubtedly, from *Human, All too Human* onwards, and still more powerfully in the works of the late 1880s, Nietzsche’s interest shifted from rhetoric to grammar as the storehouse of moral values and metaphysical concepts. This does not necessarily imply, however, that the results of the Basle years had been

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<sup>15</sup> “As of 1875, rhetoric ceased to be a privileged instrument. It even appears that Nietzsche deprived it of all its rights and that, for all practical purposes, it ceased to be a problem” (Lacoue-Labarthe 1993: 15). Lacoue-Labarthe claims Nietzsche’s interest in rhetoric was “accidental”, determined only by his reading of Gerber and Volkmann (Lacoue-Labarthe 1993: 16). For a critique of this position see Behler (1989).

abandoned or forgotten. Rather, particularly in the notes from the late 1880s, Nietzsche returned to affirm a very similar view to that he had endorsed during the Basle years. He claimed that the only relation we can have with the world is artificial (*künstlich*), i.e. mediated by technical means (see Tebartz-van Elst 1994: 120 and D'Iorio 1995: 267). “Will to power” is the name he gave to the ongoing and pervasive activity of interpretation, i.e. reworking and organization of sense data, that characterizes every living being. If we carefully analyse the posthumous notes of the late 1880s we will be able to detect various references to unconscious artistic procedures by which man cognitively organizes reality and creates a socially shared representation of the world that are very similar to the previously mentioned processes of synecdoche, metonymy and metaphor. Quite simply, Nietzsche no longer uses rhetorical terminology to designate them.

As for the procedure by which new objects are conceptualized via categories we already possess (metaphor), in a note of 1885 Nietzsche claims that all knowledge is acquired by analogy, starting from a few basic experiences: “Knowledge: consists in expressing something new through the signs of things already ‘known’, which we have already experienced” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 38[2]). Or, in a note of 1884 he explains in greater detail: “The first impression of the senses is elaborated by the intellect: simplified, adapted to previous schemas” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[424]).<sup>16</sup> All phenomena, whether in the scientific or moral field, are mentally represented by analogy with everyday bodily experiences, such as eating, breathing or grasping objects. This means that the cognitive schemas formed to account for these basic experiences are extended and adapted to new ones. The phenomenon most fully represented at cognitive level—the perception of one’s body and its basic activities—is exploited as the cognitive matrix on which to represent all the others.

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**16** Nietzsche had explained this process very clearly in 1872 *Nachlass*. He stated that our senses reproduce nature, and that this activity (‘Nachahmen’) develops in two steps: first, an image is associated with a certain nerve stimulus, then the image is multiplied to take into account a multiplicity of similar cases. The first operation is automatic, so that we can say that, in a sense, we ‘receive’ or ‘take up’ the image (‘Aufnehmen’). The second is actively performed (NL 1872, KSA 7, 19[226]; see also Holbrook 1988). Memory plays a fundamental role in the first phase, when we recall the mental image commonly associated with a certain experience. In the second phase, the main role is performed by the imagination (‘Phantasie’), which leads us to apply this mental image to other experiences that are similar to the first. Nietzsche defines this process as “continuous transference of the received image into a thousand metaphors [*ein fortgesetztes Übertragen des aufgenommenen Bildes in tausend Metaphern*]” (NL 1872, KSA 7, 19[226]). In other words, Nietzsche places metaphor in the sense of ‘transposition on the basis of analogy’ at the basis of every new acquisition of knowledge. “*Imitation* [Das Nachahmen] is the opposite of *knowledge* [*der Gegensatz des Erkennens*], in that knowledge does not want to accept any transference [*keine Übertragung gelten lassen will*], but wants to grasp the impression [*den Eindruck*] without a metaphor .... There are no ‘literal’ expressions [*keine ‘eigentlichen’ Ausdrücke*] and *no proper knowing* [*kein eigentliches Erkennen*] *without metaphor* .... *Knowledge* [Das Erkennen] is merely working with the most popular metaphors [*ein Arbeiten in den beliebtesten Metaphern*], i.e. an imitation that is no longer perceived as imitation [*ist nur also ein nicht mehr als Nachahmung empfundenes Nachahmen*]” (NL 1872, KSA 7, 19[228]).

If our “I” is our only *being*, on the basis of which we make everything *be* or understand it to be, fine! ... Along the guiding thread of the body we find a tremendous *multiplicity*; it is methodologically permissible to use the more easily studied, the *richer* phenomenon as a guiding thread to understand the poorer one (WLN: 77 = NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[91]).

Nietzsche explains the categorization of unknown phenomena by means of previously acquired schemas as a response to the need to adapt as efficiently as possible to the environment: specifically, to meet new situations quickly. Adapting pre-existing cognitive structures is more economical than creating completely new ones, and so allows a more rapid response to external stimuli.

Whoever, for example, could not discern the “like” often enough with regard to food, and with regard to animals dangerous to him, whoever, therefore, deduced too slowly, or was too circumspect in his deductions, had smaller probability of survival than he who in all similar cases immediately divined the equality (GS 111).

That is why Nietzsche sees the capacity to grasp resemblances as the winning card in the struggle for survival, or, to be precise, in the struggle for power (see TI Skirmishes 14, “Anti-Darwin”).

In the post-1885 notes Nietzsche also returned—though very sporadically—to the cognitive procedure by which the salient characteristics of an object (e.g. its colour or form) is taken as representative of the whole (synecdoche). Categorizing an object according to only one of its characteristics springs from the need to simplify the complexity of the world, so as to face practical requirements more easily. We read in a note of 1885:

over a long period of time a thing was identified by one of its predicates [*Merkmale*], for example a certain colour. The multiplicity of features [*Merkmale*] in a single thing has been admitted with the greatest slowness .... The longest mystification [*Verwechslung*] is that of identifying the sign-predicate [*Prädikat-Zeichen*] with the thing itself (NL 1885, KSA 11, 38[14]).

Nietzsche is here denouncing the seduction exerted by language. For a long time, people have believed that names could univocally and exhaustively express the essence of things (HH 11). Actually, predicates attributed to things (from which their names were derived, for example, star = the sparkling one) are the result of the perceptual interaction with the object (“The predicate expresses an effect that is exerted on us”, NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[78]), but this interaction is always contingent and subjective. In other words, we can attribute to the same object many different predicates, according to the different kinds of perceptual interaction that we, under different circumstances, establish with it. Consequently, a multiplicity of names can be given to the same object. The characteristic which is judged to be the most important is that which highlights the way in which we can more profitably relate to it. Indeed, language serves as the repository of the experience of the species, which is given to every new-born individual to help him successfully relate with the environment.



Words are nothing but signs to recall cognitive-behavioural schemas by which we can profitably relate to an object.

Finally, the procedure of inverting cause and effect illustrated in the *Presentation* as ‘metonymy’ reappears with a central role in *Twilight of the Idols* and the post-1885 notes. In the section of the book on the “four great errors” of humanity, Nietzsche devotes one chapter to the “error of confusing [*Verwechslung*] cause and effect” (TI Errors 1) and another to the error of creating “imaginary causes” (TI Errors 4) to explain observed phenomena. The cognitive procedure by which we tend to mistake cause and effect, or rather, posit an imaginary cause for an observed phenomenon is described by Nietzsche as a “perversion of reason [*Verderbniss der Vernunft*]” (TI Errors 1). However, this habit is so deeply rooted in human beings as to seem natural.<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche explains this attitude as man’s adaptive response to a constantly changing environment that disconcerts and frightens him. As “a knowledge of what is wholly changeable is impossible” (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[330]), man uses language to create a world of stable, immutable essences that can be mentally represented. The inversion of cause and effect is the metaphysical gesture *par excellence*, as it leads to the creation of a *Hinterwelt* of eternal, immutable substances, of which the visible world is then considered the “uncertain, apparent, spurious, sinful, suffering, deceptive” counterpart (AOM 32). In other words, reality is divided into ‘being’ and ‘becoming’, regarded respectively as the ‘real world’ and the ‘apparent one’. “Being is imagined into everything thought—*pushed under everything*—as a cause” (TI Reason 5).<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, by analysing Nietzsche’s late works and notes it emerges that the procedures denominated ‘metaphor’, ‘metonymy’ and ‘synecdoche’ during the period 1872–74 do not disappear with the disappearance of the words previously used to refer to them. After the Basle years Nietzsche abandoned rhetorical terminology not because he was no longer interested in those cognitive procedures. Rather, he recognized that the linguistic expression of these cognitive procedures is just one of their many possible forms of expression. It follows that Nietzsche’s early considerations on rhetoric cannot be dismissed as “a passing interest” that left no significant traces in his later works (Lacoue-Labarthe 1993: 15–16). Rather, they have to be carefully examined as an important anticipation of his mature epistemology.

In consideration of what we have shown so far, we can compare the concept of rhetorical *dynamis* elaborated by Nietzsche in his early notes (1872–74) with that of will to power (*Wille zur Macht*) that he developed in later ones (1885–87). Both the rhetorical *dynamis* and the will to power arise from the human need to believe in an

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<sup>17</sup> In a long note of 1888 entitled “The phenomenism of the ‘inner world’” too, Nietzsche observes that, though “the cause enters consciousness later than the effect”, normally we unconsciously “invert the chronology of cause and effect” and assume that the representation we create of the external world, starting from sensation, is actually a cause of it (WLN: 270 = NL 1888, KSA 13, 15[90]).

<sup>18</sup> “Die Metonymie ist Nietzsches idealistisch motivierte und zugleich universalistisch ausgerichtete Erklärungshypothese für die Welt *als Vorstellung*” (Reuter 2009: 300).

objective reality. They are creative drives by which man elaborates sense data into a vision of the world that has to be held as true.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, rhetorical *dynamis* and will to power operate fundamentally through the same procedures: assimilating the new to the old, organizing phenomena in macro-categories on the basis of one salient characteristic, creating imaginary substances as causes of the phenomena. These are three different ways of satisfying the same need to create a coherent representation of reality in which phenomena can be easily catalogued and managed. These recurrent patterns of sense data organization are not inborn structures, but they have developed evolutionarily in response to stimuli received from the environment. They seem to be ‘universal’ only because their evolution is very slow (see D’Iorio 1995: 246). Nietzsche calls these recurrent patterns of organization of sense data “habits of feeling” (HH 16). Among these “habits of feeling”, some depend on our physical structure, some on culture, others on individual experience. The oldest and most stable patterns of association are those grounded in our physiology; they have remained pretty much unchanged since man started walking in an erect position. There is then a second level of patterns of association, which varies by culture. Usages and customs, laws, religious beliefs and moral codes determine certain ‘habits’ in representing the world—certain patterns for organizing our perceptions that are modified along with social practices. Finally, there is a third, purely subjective level, which depends on the individual’s personal experiences, habits and tastes.<sup>20</sup>

## 10.6 Cognitive Linguistics and Nineteenth-Century *Sprachwissenschaft*

Nietzsche’s conception of tropes substantially anticipates the most important results of present-day cognitive linguistics (see Kremer-Marietti 2000: 1, 2; Haaz 2006: 186). According to the theory of conceptual metaphor (CMT), proposed for the first time by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 and later developed in the light of discoveries made in

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**19** The ‘will to power’ is described in *Beyond Good and Evil* as “the power of spirit to appropriate foreign elements”. This appropriating instinct manifests itself in a “strong tendency to assimilate the new to the old”. In this way, man aims to “incorporate new ‘experiences’, to classify new things into old classes”, something that gives him a sensation of power (BGE 230). The tendency to simplify the complexity of reality and to categorize new phenomena adapting already available cognitive schemas is an adaptive resource by which man can keep control over the outside world.

**20** This is confirmed by an analysis of the senses in which Nietzsche uses the term ‘conditions of existence (*Existenz-Bedingungen*)’; sometimes referring to the human species, sometimes to a certain culture, and sometimes to a social role (priest, slave, master, etc.). This means that some conditions of existence are shared by all men (at the same stage of evolution); others are specific to a certain people, which has shared the same environment and historical events for a long period of time; others again are characteristics of a certain social role and depend on individual experience.

the neurosciences (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Grady 2007: 194), metaphor is a phenomenon which primarily concerns cognition and permeates everyday life. Metaphor is an adaptive process by which systematic correspondences are set up from a conceptual source domain to a conceptual target domain, so that the knowledge we possess for one domain can be applied to the other. The activity of metaphor is conducted for the most part unconsciously and is then spontaneously reflected in discourse.<sup>21</sup> As a consequence of this discovery, scientists concluded that language cannot be studied apart from our conceptual organization and that this, in turn, arises from our having experience of the outside world.<sup>22</sup>

Lakoff and Johnson detected in everyday language a wide range of what they called ‘ontological metaphors’, which includes the reification (‘I caught a cold’) and personification (‘inflation is killing us’) of phenomena. Along with ‘orientation metaphors’ (e.g. ‘I feel down’, ‘I’m over the moon’) these ontological metaphors demonstrate that the human conceptual system is structured through the perception of the body, of its orientation in space, and basic movements. Besides these ‘universal’ or ‘primary metaphors’ (e.g. ‘more is up’), shared by all human beings inasmuch as they possess the same sensory-motor system, there are also ‘culture-based’ metaphors, which are founded on correlations established after the introduction of a certain social praxis (e.g. ‘time is money’). These metaphors rely on the specific experiences of a certain people, with its particular history and tradition.<sup>23</sup>

Considering Nietzsche’s conception of rhetoric and tropes in the light of present-day cognitive linguistics is profitable because of several reasons: on the one hand, we can better appreciate the novelty and coherence of Nietzsche’s theory of tropes. Combining the traditions of Neo-Kantianism with German semasiology, Nietzsche developed the quite original view that language is inseparable from cognition, which, in turn, evolves with perceptual experience (primary or culturally mediated). Through language a repository of codified meanings is conveyed to the individual. Such a re-

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**21** As a consequence, a wide range of linguistic metaphors can be traced back to the same conceptual metaphor; for example, linguistic metaphors as ‘our relationship has hit a dead-end street’, ‘our relationship is off the track’, etc. rely on the same conceptual metaphor ‘love is a journey’.

**22** Using the method of brain imaging, the intuition has been confirmed that abstract concepts are derived from schemas regarding our sensory-motor experience. The metaphorical mapping always proceeds from the concrete to the abstract, as the domains that involve physical activity are much more richly represented at mental level than abstract ones. “Since knowledge of moving around or manipulating objects is essential for survival, it has to be highly compiled and readily accessible knowledge” (Narayanan 1999: 121).

**23** Recent neurophysiological studies in language processing have further demonstrated that the distinction between literal and figurative is “a psychological illusion” caused by habit. In fact, the cognitive operations underlying expressions perceived as literal and expressions perceived as metaphorical have been proved to be exactly the same. A decisive factor in perceiving an expression as literal or figurative is “the degree to which the conceptual connection or the linguistic expression is generatively entrenched” (Turner 1998: 62–63). The more this connection is entrenched in our cognitive system, the more the expression based on it will be perceived as literal.

pository of knowledge is then automatically activated by external stimuli, which trigger automatic responses. In addition, only by regarding Nietzsche's philosophy from the point of view of contemporary cognitive linguistics one can appreciate the continuity of his consideration of the procedures by which we cognitively organize our experience of reality from the Basle years to later ones, when these unconscious processes are no longer called metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. Finally, adequate consideration of Nietzsche's theory of tropes and his sources in a cognitive perspective would tone down Lakoff and Johnson's claim that their conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) is subverting a paradigm that had been unquestioned in western culture for more than two centuries. Last, but not least, a deeper investigation of nineteenth-century research results might convince cognitive scientists to extend their study to other tropes and figures that would prove to be as pervasive in everyday language and relevant for cognition as metaphor.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Only recently has metonymy and synecdoche attracted the attention of scholars, see Panther and Radden (1999); Barcelona (2000); Dirven and Pörings (2002); Panther and Thornburg (2007); Burkhardt (1996) and Nerlich (2010). Mark Turner (1998) is one of the few who, already in the 1980s, fully recognized the importance of other tropes for cognition and everyday language.

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## Part V: **Towards Naturalism**





Anthony K. Jensen

# 11 *Selbstverleugnung—Selbsttäuschung*: Nietzsche and Schopenhauer on the Self

Schopenhauer's mystical embarrassments and evasions in those places where the factual thinker let himself be seduced and corrupted by the vain urge to be the un-riddler of the world; the indemonstrable doctrine of *One Will* [...], the *denial* [*Leugnung*] of the individual [...], [and] his ecstatic reveries on *genius* ("in aesthetic intuition [*ästhetische Anschauung*] the individual is no longer individual but pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge"; "the subject, in being wholly taken up in the object it intuits, has become the object itself") [...]. (GS 99)<sup>1</sup>

These words, written in 1882, illustrate well enough Nietzsche's ideological difference with his once and former *Erzieher*. Schopenhauer's teaching of the world as will, that pan-immanent will of which the empirical self is considered the material objectification, is derided throughout Nietzsche's middle and late work as a form of romantic mysticism. And yet evidenced here is a more specific target. Nietzsche's issue here is not with the "factual thinker," not with Schopenhauer's characterization of the world or self under "normal circumstances," that is, under the domain of the fourfold root of the principle of sufficient reason, but the possibility of an ecstatic self, of a self that is, properly speaking, the dissolution of subjectivity and individuality.

Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche has been discussed often and often very well, especially with regard to aesthetics, ethics, and pessimism.<sup>2</sup> But the extent to which Nietzsche's notion of the self is informed by a persistent engagement with Schopenhauer's formulation of the ecstatic self—what I will argue is actually the *center* of their disagreement, from which the other differences in their philosophies follow as consequences—has not.<sup>3</sup> For Schopenhauer's reveries on the aesthetic genius and the ethical life are themselves consequences of his view of the possibility of an

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1 References to Nietzsche's published works are cited in parentheses according to the standard abbreviated English title, followed by the section number. References to Nietzsche's notebooks are cited according to the year, followed by KSA volume, and note number. References to Schopenhauer accord the volume and section number of his *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*, WWR), as printed in the first two volumes of his *Sämtliche Werke* (Schopenhauer 1986). While I have consulted E. F. J. Payne's translations of Schopenhauer and the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy editions of Nietzsche's works, all translations are ultimately my own unless otherwise noted.

2 Since this chapter was accepted for publication, several excellent articles have appeared that also deal with the connection between Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's philosophies of mind and self. See among others Constância 2011 and 2012, and Reginster 2012. I myself have published several pieces since then that treat further aspects of that relationship. See Jensen 2012, 2016a, and 2016b.

3 The exception is Cartwright 1998. While I find myself largely in agreement with Cartwright's depiction of the self in both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, my own emphasis on the developmental aspects of Nietzsche's relationship is in some part an effort to correct his more historically static presentation.

‘ecstatic’ moment of selfhood, a temporary interruption of the tragic character of our existence through a mystical release into pure objectivity, a state wherein the constant but ever-unsatisfied striving of will is suspended and even in a certain way renounced. Accordingly, I will exposit Schopenhauer’s notion of both the normal and extraordinary states of self, reveal Nietzsche’s early acceptance and adaptation of those notions, and demonstrate that his own later formulation of the self can only be properly understood in the context of his complicated relationship with Schopenhauer. If my exposition is accurate, then it will reveal Nietzsche’s wrestling with Schopenhauer as the chief negative impetus against which he constructs his own mature visions of the self.<sup>4</sup>

## 11.1 Schopenhauerian *Selbstverleugnung*

Schopenhauer’s originality with respect to his conception of selfhood stems from the contention that will is the genuine self rather than intellect. The antipode of the Cartesian *res cogitans*, will is a classificatory designation that captures the entire affective and volitional side of subjectivity.<sup>5</sup> Only because space, time, and causality are known transcendently as forms of intellectual intuition can we say that the affective side of subjectivity, since it persists as the fundamentally antipodal aspect to intellection, stands “underneath” the *principium individuationis*, and hence is not individuated. Thus, what “I” am, for Schopenhauer is at once the intellectually individuated self as brain, body, and individual acts of willing, but also, considered more fundamentally ‘underneath’ the *principium individuationis*, nothing more or less than the un-individuated world will.<sup>6</sup> The body itself as material objectification of the will<sup>7</sup> is the filter through which all conceptual knowledge is obtained, and in-

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<sup>4</sup> While there has been a tremendous amount of scholarship on Nietzsche’s relationship to Schopenhauer’s metaphysics, aesthetics and ethics, this key Schopenhauerian notion of the *Selbstverleugnung* has received scant attention in Nietzschean literature. In fact, the recent anthology on Nietzsche’s relationship with Schopenhauer fails to hold a sustained discussion on the theme. See Kopij and Kunicki 2006. The only paper in this anthology to treat the renunciation of the self is the very brief offering is Caysa 2006. Recent discussions that reference the theme at least obliquely include Schulz 1999, Hödl 2005, and Neymeyr 1995. But I find that each of these accounts persistently treats the renunciation of the self as an incidental consequence of Schopenhauer’s aesthetics and ethics respectively rather than, as I will argue, both the core of those views for Schopenhauer and the crux of Nietzsche’s critique.

<sup>5</sup> On Schopenhauer’s critique of the Cartesian Ego and Nietzsche’s reception thereof, see Loukidelis 2005: 300 – 309.

<sup>6</sup> An excellent discussion of self and body in Schopenhauer is Salaquarda 2007. Salaquarda nevertheless minimizes the importance of *Selbstverleugnung*. Better in this respect is Zöller 1999, though Zöller’s article is not concerned with any connection to Nietzsche.

<sup>7</sup> “Teeth, gullet, and intestinal canal are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual impulse; grasping hands and nimble feet correspond to the more indirect strivings of the will which they represent” (WWR I §20).

deed all cognition is processed, first by means of embodied perception, and second by means of intellectual processes within the physical brain carried out under the fourfold root of sufficient reason. While the intellect is in nearly all its activities devoted to procuring at least temporary satisfactions of the individual will, there are two curious ways by which the intellect works to emancipate itself from the alternative tortures of striving and boredom generated by the individuated will and thereby, paradoxically, works to emancipate itself from itself considered as an individual objectification of will. Intellect in special circumstances strives to bring about an ecstatic state, a *Verleugnung* or renunciation, of the forms of embodied individuality, by altering both its inner composition and external relation to the world: ethically as a renunciation of its egoistic and self-interested forms of striving, and aesthetically as a pure will-less subject of knowing. Through ethics and aesthetics, the human person is able to enter an ecstatic state whereby the fetters of the individual will are temporarily suspended in the realm of aesthetics or else denounced in that of ethics.

The fullest expression of ethical life, for Schopenhauer, is the self-reflective recognition “that he himself is that will of which the whole world is the objectification or copy” (WWR I §54). As embodied individuated wills, our condition is an unceasingly miserable oscillation between the moments during which our striving remains unsatisfied and those during which, the object of desire having been momentarily attained, sheer boredom blunts the will to live. Yet there remains open to a few overflowing intellects a small window through which to escape this fate, like a song from Orpheus’s lyre that for a moment brakes the Wheel of Ixion. For when intellect looks past the will-determined confines of our own interests, strivings, and desires, it recognizes that because the one Will is ultimately the underlying reality of the world itself our individual suffering is objectively identical with and no more than another manifestation of the suffering of all other forms of life. We now take on the ethical character of compassion, the only true source of moral value (Schopenhauer 1986: 144). Carried beyond even the traditional virtues, which result from an interested and hence ultimately selfish desire to do good in the here and now, in the genuinely ethical state we are ready to sacrifice our phenomenal selves for the sake of other beings who are identically and at the same time our own true and innermost selves. Becoming benevolent and charitable in the process, we “thus take upon [ourselves] the pain of the whole world” as our own (WWR I §68).

Schopenhauer’s notions of compassion or sympathy are concepts far beyond the trite sorts of “considerations for the other” or “walking a mile in another’s shoes” popularized today. His vision thereof literally transforms the compassionate and sympathetic individual into something essentially different, considered from the standpoint of the intellect, than his or her everyday self. In this state he not only feels his affinity with the rest of the world, he recognizes his metaphysical identity with it. He recognizes, in short, that his empirical self is merely an illusion generated by the spatio-temporal forms of the intellect. By its abdication, “man attains to the state of voluntary self-denial [*Entsagung*], resignation [*Resignation*], true composure, and complete willlessness [*Willenslosigkeit*]” (WWR I §68). Though metaphysically

nothing but will, the ethical character ceases as far as possible to will anything and cultivates indifference toward his own drives. No longer do the pains of his phenomenal individuality concern him, but only the inner nature of the whole as perpetual passing away, vain striving, inward conflict, and continual suffering. Chastity and asceticism are the preliminary steps along the way to the summit of the ethical life as a perpetual maintenance of this state, typified by the “beautiful soul” or “ascetic saint.”<sup>8</sup>

The second path out of the phenomenal self runs through the temporary suspension of the *principium individuationis* toward aesthetic contemplation of the beautiful. As Schopenhauer writes:

[...] we relinquish the ordinary way of considering things, and cease to follow under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason merely their relations to one another [...] Further, we do not let abstract thought, the concepts of reason, take possession of our consciousness, but, instead of all this, devote the whole power of our mind to *Anschauung*, sink ourselves completely therein, and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present [...] We lose ourselves entirely in this object, to use a loaded expression; in other words, we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object [*klarer Spiegel des Objekts*], so that it is as though the object alone existed without anyone to perceive it, and thus we are no longer able to separate the intuitor from the intuited [*den Anschauenden von der Anschauung*], but the two have become one [...]. (WWR I §34).

For Schopenhauer, aesthetic *Anschauung*<sup>9</sup> is the special mode of perceiving wherein we apprehend “beyond” the physical spatio-temporal object presently at hand, past the *principium individuationis*, and gaze into the corresponding idea. Unlike Plato’s *eidoi*, Schopenhauer’s ideas are not static metaphysical realities that cause an object to be what it is. Similar to Plato, however, they are the most universal and non-relational notions of an object possible, “also nicht mehr das Wo, das Wann, das Warum und das Wozu...; sondern einzig und allein das *Was*” (WWR I §34). Such a relationless intuition can hardly be accomplished through normal acts of perception, wherein our attention to the object is effectively determined in relation to its possible instrumentality in satisfying our will. It is through the aesthetic contemplation of the beautiful, especially music due to its lack of visual form, that we free our gaze from the demands of the empirical will. We now look upon the object as an instance of the universal rather than as a particular in some relationship with other objects in the world. Magritte’s painting of a pipe really is no spatio-temporal, physical pipe, no object that can serve to mollify the constant cravings of the embodied will. His paint-

<sup>8</sup> For an interesting non-Nietzschean critique of Schopenhauer’s position on ethical self-renunciation see Neeley 1994.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the technical usage by Schopenhauer is far removed from the contemporary everyday German meaning “views.” It is distinct from Kant, whose use of *Anschauung* is restricted to intellectual acts, and Schelling, for whom *Anschauung* is an intellectual organ for achieving transcendent knowledge. Schopenhauer’s usage is almost exclusively aesthetic rather than intellectual.

ing depicts the visual representation of the Idea “pipe,” which does not satisfy so much as silence our willed desires for its potential instrumentality. As the higher ethical state recognizes my personal suffering as a mere example of the universal suffering, so too in the aesthetic state the ecstatic observer recognizes the universal Idea as it appears within this particular spatio-temporal representation.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in the contemplation of such an object, we rise above the demands of will and become like a clear mirror of the object as Idea (WWR II §31).

The vehicle by which this mystical way of knowing is attained is most thoroughly explicated in Schopenhauer’s chapter “On the Pure Subject of Knowing.”

The apprehension of an Idea, its entry into our consciousness, comes about by means of a change in us, which might also be called an act of Self-Renunciation [*Akt der Selbstverleugnung*]. It consists in turning away entirely from our own will [...] and considering things as though they could never in any way concern the will. For only thus does knowledge become the pure mirror of the objective inner nature of things. (WWR II §30)<sup>11</sup>

Since plurality, difference, and individuation are themselves nothing subsistent ontologically but phenomenal properties resulting from the peculiar interaction among the spatio-temporal forms of intuition that constitutes the principle of sufficient reason, a disruption or suspension of these forms would annul those same phenomenal properties that result from them. The corresponding act of *aesthetische Anschauung* is accordingly achieved outside the framework of the normal subject/object dichotomy, in an act that effectively *renounces* the affects of the will, transforming the visceral subject into a “*reines, willenloses, schmerzloses, zeitloses Subjekt der Erkenntnis*” (WWR I §34). Through this suspension of the forms of the phenomenal self, we no longer approach the world as will form the standpoint of a knowing subject but as an aesthetically apprehending one. Art has such a power to captivate us that the ecstatic observer can, like Wio-wani, “step into the painting” and leave the phenomenal world behind.<sup>12</sup> “As soon as knowledge, the world as representation, is abolished, nothing in general is left but the mere will, blind impulse” (WWR I §34).

Far removed from today’s superficial measures of intelligence, Schopenhauer’s artistic genius is able to non-conceptually apprehend the most fundamental truth at the center of reality itself. And not only is genius a measure of depth, it is also

<sup>10</sup> For a helpful discussion of this point, see Young 1992: 15.

<sup>11</sup> Schopenhauer’s use of the phrase and of the notion of self-renunciation generally is frequent. See for examples WWR IV §60, §62, §66, and §68.

<sup>12</sup> “So beautiful was [the painting] that the Emperor himself had come to see it; and gazing enviously at those peaceful walks, and the palace nestling among the trees, had sighed and owned that he too would be glad of such a resting-place. Then Wio-wani stepped into the picture, and walked away along a path till he came, looking quite small and far-off, to a low door in the palace-wall. Opening it, he turned and beckoned to the Emperor; but the Emperor did not follow; so Wio-wani went in by himself, and shut the door between himself and the world forever” (Housman 2005: 17–18). I thank Günter Zöller for pointing out this similarity.

one of accuracy. Since the will is the principle that “twists, colors, and distorts” our normal perceptions of spatio-temporal objects (WWR II §30), the gaze of the will-less genius will apprehend its Idea without that subjective prism of interestedness. Our aesthetic intuition is thus “objective” in the sense of being freed from all subjective desires, impulses, or motivations.

But it is above all *Anschauung* to which the real and true nature of things discloses and reveals itself, although still in a limited way. All concepts, all things that are thought, are indeed only abstractions, and consequently partial representations of this [*Anschauung*], and have arisen merely through our thinking something away. All deep knowledge, so far as it is real wisdom, springs from the intuitive apprehension of things [*anschaulichen Auffassung der Dinge*]. [...] An intuitive apprehension [*anschaulichen Auffassung*] has always been the process of generation in which every genuine work of art, every immortal idea, received the spark of life. All original and primary thinking takes place figuratively. On the other hand, from concepts [*Begriffen*] arise the works of mere talent, mere rational thoughts, imitations, and nearly everything calculated for only the present need and for contemporary events. (WWR II §31)

While the person of great intellectual talent can hit a target no one else can hit, the enraptured genius can hit a target no one else can even see, hence their often awkward and even childlike relationship to socially accepted values and truths (WWR II §31). This also explains, Schopenhauer muses, the manifest similarities between genius and madness (WWR II §32).

## 11.2 Nietzsche’s Adaptation of Schopenhauer’s *Selbstverleugnung*

The usual story about Nietzsche’s reception of Schopenhauer revolves around the former’s initial acceptance and later rejection of the latter’s aesthetics, ethics, and pessimistic worldview generally.<sup>13</sup> While this is certainly part of the truth, it addresses merely the branches and not roots of the tree. For Schopenhauer’s aesthetics and ethics are not independent doctrines but integral consequences of his core metaphysical insights—logical consequences of his metaphysics of the self and his claims about the possibility of the self’s renunciation. And Nietzsche’s earlier adoption and later rejection of those two consequent doctrines are, I contend, at root a change in his attitude toward the self rather than a disagreement about those two branches per se.

We see Nietzsche’s commitment to Schopenhauer’s theory of the ecstatic self in the very first sentence of the *Birth of Tragedy*. There, the “deep truth” of tragedy as the expression of the temporarily interweaving Dionysiac and Apollonian drives is

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<sup>13</sup> This tendency was begun with the first systematic analysis of the relationship by Simmel 1907; see also Young 1993.

won, “not just through logical insight, but through the unmediated certainty of *Anschauung*” (BT 1). As Wilamowitz-Moellendorff was aware, Nietzsche’s methods in this text are hardly those he utilized in his own earlier critical philological works, employing here no critical investigation of texts, no source criticism, no engagement with codices or indices.<sup>14</sup> The character of tragedy is illuminated rather than demonstrated from the point of view, to quote another early reviewer, “from Nietzsche’s *Anschauungen*.”<sup>15</sup> Although Nietzsche could hardly be characterized a mystic at any point in his career, he, like Wagner, who in his own aesthetic ecstasy was claimed by Nietzsche to have attained a “sort of omniscience [...] as if the visual power of his eyes hovered not only upon surfaces, but into ‘das Innere’” (BT 22), believed himself to inhabit the sort of aesthetic *Selbstverleugnung* of Schopenhauer’s genius. In Nietzsche’s own words, “Only insofar as the genius, during the act of artistic procreation, merges fully with that original artist of the world does he know anything of the eternal essence of art” (BT 5). And the genius is only capable of that apprehension because, Nietzsche continues, “now he is at one and the same time subject and object, simultaneously poet, actor, and spectator” (BT 5). The aesthetic genius is precisely the opposite of—again in precisely Schopenhauerian terms—“a non-genius, that is, as his own ‘subject’, that entire unruly crowd of subjective passions and striving of his own will aiming at something particular, which appears real to him” (BT 5), who can in no way understand the character of the tragic play as an instantiation of the undulation of the two manifested forces of the self, the Dionysian and Apolline. The non-genius cannot, in fact, ever understand the true nature of the world as will, which may “only be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon” (BT 5).<sup>16</sup>

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14 “This critical-historical method, in principle common to the scientific community is, as I claim, the exact opposite of [Nietzsche’s] dogmatic point of view which demands ongoing self-confirmation” (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 2000: 4–5). A later statement by Wilamowitz shows how his attitude softened toward Nietzsche’s Schopenhauerianism. “The historical method and that of ‘*Anschauung*’, however, are two different approaches; and to justify something in a scholarly way naturally always presupposes that you have no presuppositions. But I am far from denying that an approach from the purely artistic, abstract side is unfruitful. Quite the contrary, because it is just this approach that comprehends the essence of the thing and—if it is successful—brings out from within through ‘*Anschauung*’ far more perfect results than we, who only believe what we know, can bring into it from without.” Preserved in Calder III (1983: 231).

15 “[Tragedy] is illuminated from the point of view of Nietzsche’s *Anschauungen*, and it cannot be denied that one finds precisely in this section many truly ingenious verdicts, many dazzling turns of phrase. [...] With this concession, which Wilamowitz is not inclined to make, one avoids the necessity of reproaching Nietzsche for all sorts of anachronisms and ignorances; of course, at the same time, one has renounced all hope of extracting any gain for exact philology from Nietzsche’s book” (Guhrauer 1874: 62).

16 The phrase cannot simply be read as if artistic objects justify the otherwise tragic character of existence. Read properly, in the context of Schopenhauer’s aesthetics, this often quoted phrase makes no claim about the nature of the world, but about our apprehension of it. See on the contrary, Came 2006, Hyland 1988, and the original progenitor of the view, Nehamas 1985: 13–41. Closer to my own reading in this respect are Strong 1989 and Urpeth 2003.



The ability to generate *Anschauung* and to enter into this ecstatic condition wherein the forms of subjectivity and the affects of the will are temporarily suspended is precisely the mechanism whereby the aesthetic observer is able to apprehend the Dionysian character of art.

In the same place Schopenhauer also described for us the tremendous *awe* which seizes a man when he suddenly doubts his ways of comprehending illusion, when the principle of reason, in any one of its forms, appears to suffer from an exception. If we add to this awe the ecstatic rapture [*Verzückung*], which rises up out of the same collapse of the *principium individuationis* from the innermost depths of a human being, indeed, from the innermost depths of nature, then we have a glimpse into the essence of the *Dionysian*. (BT 1)<sup>17</sup>

Nietzsche's point is that ecstatic genius involved in the *Anschauung* is no longer an individual self, imbued with precisely these affects that make a person *this particular* empirical object. The aesthete has renounced this self and become the pure, will-less, pain-less, time-less mirror of the real world's first objectification as Idea. "In the artist," Nietzsche confirms, "the Will comes to the ecstasy of *Anschauung*" (NL 1870–71, KSA 7, 7[174]). More than detached spectators of the tragedy, in the ecstatic state we are the chorus—immanent revelers in the ongoing and already determined play. Through our participation we intuit the object beyond its phenomenal representation, i. e., non-conceptually, outside the boundaries of space, time, and causality, only insofar as a change has taken place in us, only insofar as we are able to suspend our individuated subjectivity.<sup>18</sup> "[E]ach person feels himself to be not simply united, reconciled or merged with his neighbor, but quite literally is one with him, as if the Veil of Maya had been torn apart, so that mere shreds of it flutter before the mysterious primordial being" (BT 1). The Dionysian "self" is in large part the Schopenhauerian self in the ecstatic state of *Selbstverleugnung*.

### 11.3 A Return to the Body

Even while composing the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche began to doubt the Schopenhauerian view of the "ecstatic self." That doubt concerned the logical coherence of

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<sup>17</sup> See also BT 10: "In the *Anschauungen* described here we have already all the constituent elements of [...] the mystery-teaching of tragedy: the fundamental recognition that everything which exists is a unity; the view that individuation is the primal source of all evil; and art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation can be broken, a premonition of unity restored."

<sup>18</sup> Schopenhauer writes, "But now, what kind of knowledge is it that considers what continues to exist outside and independently of all relations, but which alone is really essential to the world, the true content of its phenomena, that which is subject to no change, and is therefore known with equal truth for all time, in a word, the *Ideas* that are the immediate and adequate objectivity of the thing-in-itself, of the will? It is art, the work of genius. It repeats the eternal Ideas apprehended through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding element in all the phenomena of the world" (WWR I §36).

believing the self somehow attained a state whereby it could suspend its own affects in a moment of aesthetic inspiration. This was a meta-aesthetic critique, which concerned the conditions necessary for the possibility of the aesthetic state, more than any particular disagreement about aesthetics.<sup>19</sup> One can outline Nietzsche's shift in attitude clearly from the notes of 1870–71, where he writes, "How is painlessness possible? *Anschauung* is an aesthetic product. What therefore is real? What is *das Anschauende*? Is it possible that multiplicity of pain and indifference itself are conditions of being?" (NL 1870–71, KSA 7, 7[116]). Months later, shortly after the *Birth of Tragedy*, he expresses more confidently:

Unconscious *inferences* actuate my thinking: it is a passing over from *image to image*: the last-achieved image serves as an impulse and motive. Unconscious thinking must take place outside of concepts: therefore in *Anschauungen*. But this is the way in which contemplative philosophers and artists infer. They do the same thing that everyone does regarding their personal psychological impulses, but carried-over into an impersonal world. (NL 1872–73, KSA 7, 19[107])

These notes illustrate particularly well that Nietzsche's burgeoning discomfort with Schopenhauer's aesthetics revolved around the status of the subject as aesthetic creator and as observer. Nietzsche does not deny that great art is produced and observed through the faculty of *Anschauung*. What concerns him now is whether the aesthetic state can be freed from the embodied conditions of subjectivity. Artists may be more apt than an everyday person at utilizing their aesthetic intuitions in the production of art. This is not, however, the result of some mystical ability to unchain themselves from the embodied demands of will. In fact, in what is manifestly a nascent expression of perspectivism, we see here that their aesthetic proclivities are considered precisely the consequence of their particular mode of embodiment: the unconscious inferences that turn thinking generally into *my* individual and particular form of thinking. For the first time, there is no self-renunciation associated with art, no *Selbstverleugnung*, but an acknowledgment and indeed affirmation of the necessarily constitutive function subjectivity plays in cognition.<sup>20</sup>

The nuanced shift in Nietzsche's view in these years can be seen in his unpublished *On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense* (1873). On the one hand, Nietzsche's continued admiration for Schopenhauer is manifest. His depiction of the contrast between the "rational man" and "intuitive man" in TL is actually a fair imitation of

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<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche sketches a criticism of Schopenhauer's attempt to logically adduce the character of Will in his 1868 notes "On Schopenhauer," noting that it may only be apprehended with the help of "poetic intuition." See "On Schopenhauer" (Nietzsche 2006: 25). Recent research has come forth showing that Nietzsche's relationship to Schopenhauer was more critical than purely adulatory. See Janaway 1998: 18–22 and Barbera 1994. I would agree with their arguments that Nietzsche was privately critical of Schopenhauer from the start, but nevertheless maintain that his *published* work, especially BT does not genuinely shift from the Schopenhauerian conception of self until after about 1875.

<sup>20</sup> While Clark 1998 does a generally excellent job at spelling out the naturalistic aspects of embodied cognition, she does not pay sufficient attention to this key moment in Nietzsche's development.

Schopenhauer's description of that same contrast between the man of talent and the artistic genius. For Schopenhauer, "the merely practical man [...] uses his intellect for that for which nature destined it, namely for comprehending the relations of things partly to one another, partly to the will of the knowing individual. The genius, on the other hand, uses his intellect contrary to its destiny, for comprehending the objective nature of things" (WWR II §31). For Nietzsche, the "liberated intellect" that is "free and absolved of its usual slavery," celebrates a sort of "Saturnalia," like Greek slaves who for a day could imagine themselves masters (TL 2, KSA 1: 888). The liberated intellect which can "cast off the mark of servitude" and is "master of itself," finds itself "permitted to wipe the expression of neediness from its face" precisely insofar as it is "now guided, not by concepts but by intuitions" (TL 2, KSA 1: 888 f.). Like Torquato Tasso to Antonio, the genius of *Anschauung* is set in contrast to the man of reason and concepts, that man for whom all objects under consideration are responses to need, for whom the scaffold of concepts temporarily supporting the perpetually "under-construction" edifice of social relations is like a safety net stretched over an abyss. For Schopenhauer the aesthetic genius, "lacks coolness or soberness;" he is "thrown into emotions of the most varied kind" (WWR II §31). For Nietzsche, the man of intuition "is just as unreasonable when he is suffering as he is when happy, he shouts out loudly and knows no solace" (TL 2, KSA 1: 890). And for both, liberation from the "columbarium" of concepts through art is merely temporary. Indeed, the genius "suffers more severely" and more frequently when he does suffer because his lack of reasonableness makes him fall "into the very same trap time after time" (TL 2, KSA 1: 890). His is not a permanent freedom from the suffering of the striving will, a status even Schopenhauer only assigns to the ethical saint, but in Nietzsche's words a mere "masterpiece of pretense," a "mask, as it were, with its features in dignified equilibrium" (TL 2, KSA 1: 890). In non-allegorical terms, Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer to the letter in depicting the artist's supposed freedom from the confines of subjectivity as just a mask, a mask in fact both *upon* and *of* nothing other than the embodied will.

Yet, on the other hand, Nietzsche's TL also lays the groundwork for a re-envisioned view of the ecstatic self. Under the increasing influence of naturalists like Lange, Spir, Helmholtz, Gerber, and Zöllner, this text represents Nietzsche's first attempt to describe the act of cognition as a function of an embodied mind.<sup>21</sup> Of course, for Schopenhauer the normal state of consciousness takes place inside the physical brain as well. Seen from the standpoint of representation rather than of will, in fact, the brain simply is the material objectification of the intellect whose processes must be described in naturalistic terms as well. But Nietzsche's treatment of cognition in TL does not follow the Schopenhauerian lead, despite the fact that he utilizes a nearly identical terminological framework. For here *Anschauungsmeta-*

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21 On Nietzsche's reading in post-Kantian naturalism, see Schlechta and Anders 1962: 60–167, Djurić and Josef Simon 1986, Orsucci 1992, Small 2001, Green 2002, and Brobjer and Moore 2004.

*phern* or *anschauliche Metaphern*, as Nietzsche labels them (TL 1, KSA 1: 881–883), unconsciously translate the natural world's impressions upon our sense organs into a coherent mental representation as fits the dynamic of pre-conceptual physiognomic drives and further translates that mental representation into an articulated sound. When those sounds are processed into intelligible propositions, they are judged as true or false under the rules of socially established, linguistic, and epistemic norms. Thus the *Anschauung*, which communicated the deep truths of the world apart from the distortions of subjectivity in BT is still in use in 1873, but that use has been naturalistically modified.

But generally it seems to me that the correct perception—which would mean the full and adequate expression of an object in the subject—is something contradictory and impossible; for between two absolutely different spheres, such as subject and object are, there is no causality, no correctness, no expression, but at most an *aesthetic* way of relation, by which I mean an allusive transference, a stammering translation into a quite different language. (TL 2, KSA 1: 884)

The aesthetic condition no longer means the unification of subject and object in an act of *Selbstverleugnung*—nor could it since the perfect intuitional apprehension requires the identity of “two absolutely different spheres.” Now, and henceforth in Nietzsche's thought, art is the *creative* medium, and precisely insofar, is regarded as the falsifying medium by which the embodied cognitive agent translates the sensory effluvia of the external world into a coherent mental representation in the brain.<sup>22</sup> For whereas participation in the Dionysian ecstasy and the rapture encountered in the moment of aesthetic inspiration required a temporary respite from “the penal servitude of willing” (WWR I §68), here even the most primal act of cognition is shown to rely precisely on the embodied elements of subjectivity, specifically, perceptual and neural physiognomy.

In short, Nietzsche has not abandoned the Schopenhauerian view concerning the primacy of art at this point, but has turned Schopenhauer's vision of the self as its transcendental condition precisely on its head. That is, as *Anschauung* was precisely the means whereby the Schopenhauerian subject freed itself from itself in a moment of aesthetic rapture, so is *Anschauung* transformed by Nietzsche into the watchword for the necessary dependence of all cognitive activity—itsself an artistic activity—upon the embodied constraints of subjectivity.

## 11.4 Mature Perspectives

Soon after TL, Nietzsche's attempt to link *Anschauung* to a natural physiognomic activity of the brain is abandoned. In fact, Nietzsche never refers to *Anschauung* in any positive way after 1875. The reason, I suspect, is that despite his own attempt to re-

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<sup>22</sup> On this point, see the fine discussion in Emden 2005: 88–123.

vitalize the term naturalistically Nietzsche recognized that it was already tainted by its association with Schopenhauerian *Selbstverleugnung*. The sort of *Willkürigkeit* that Schopenhauer trumpeted as the precondition of the aesthetic state is criticized as an unrealistic medium for creation (see Young 1998: 78–82). But far beyond a simplistic critique of effectiveness, Nietzsche attacks the view of the disinterested self and subjectivity that underpinned Schopenhauer's aesthetics. As a piece of "childishness in the realm of reason," Nietzsche writes in *Human all-too Human*,

[e]very activity of man is amazingly complicated, not only that of the genius: but none is a "miracle".—Whence, then, the belief that genius exists only in the artist, orator and philosopher? That only they have "intuition"? (Whereby they are supposed to possess a kind of miraculous eye-glass with which they can see directly into "the essence of the thing"!)" (HH 1 162; see also HH 1 59)<sup>23</sup>

The notion of "*interesselose Anschauung* must be taken before the judge," Nietzsche demands, as it is the "seductive guise under which the castration of art tries to create a good conscience for itself" (BGE 33). Nietzsche now recognizes that Schopenhauer's conception of art represents a dangerous seduction that, by its attempt to "cut off" the affects of the will, leads only to the "castration" of those same drives that constitute the self. Art and creativity are direct concomitants of particular dynamic conglomerations of drives and affects, and ought to be affirmed as such. Creativity is inextricable from the forms of his subjectivity, from life itself, and for Nietzsche simply cannot be an attempt to re-present or mirror the "true nature of things" outside one's empirical self. The difference between an allegedly non-subjective art and an art that acknowledges the necessarily subjective elements within every creative act, indeed the difference between degenerate Platonic art and healthy Homeric art, is itself "the entire, the true antagonism—on one side [Plato], the 'beyond of the best will', the great slanderer of life; on the other side [Homer], life's unintentional worshipper, the *golden nature*" (GM III 25).

The problem is not confined to aesthetics, but carries over to Nietzsche's re-envisioned formulation of morality. Precisely in contrast to the highest ethical state for Schopenhauer, which featured a disruption and indeed renunciation of the drives to seek pleasure and escape pain, Nietzsche tells us "morality is preceded by *compulsion*, indeed it is for a time itself still *compulsion*" (HH 1 99). Sympathy or *Mitleid*, touted by Schopenhauer as the very fundament of moral value, is shown by Nietzsche to be inextricably tied to the demands of will rather than the result of some mystical separation from it. "The thirst for compassion [*Mitleid*] is thus a thirst for self-enjoyment, and that at the expense of one's fellow men; it displays man in the whole ruthlessness of his own dear self" (HH 1 50). Our empathic reflection of the

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<sup>23</sup> While the theme is too complex to address here, I would highlight that the criticism, pointed against those who believe they possess *Anschauung* as a special avenue into reality, does not by implication suggest that Nietzsche holds no form of priority whatsoever.

feeling of another is no consequence of the mystical recognition of the identity of all fellow human beings, no “mystical process by virtue of which *compassion* [*Mitleid*] makes two beings into one and in this way makes possible the immediate understanding of the one by the other” (D 142). Compassion is, like all moral phenomena, to be explained in a naturalistic way by reference to the drives and affects that constitute subjectivity. Because no direct intuition into another’s mental states is possible, compassionate feelings can only result from an empirical observation of the other’s fully embodied affective states: “the expression of his eyes, his voice, his walk, his bearing” (D 142). His pain mirrors their pain, his joy their joy, only because “through long millennia, he saw in everything strange and lively a danger; at the sight of it he at once imitated the expression of the features and the bearing and drew his conclusion as to the kind of evil intention behind these features and this bearing” (D 142). We are compassionate, in other words, out of a biological impetus to imitate the bodily expressions of another in an attempt to assimilate with society, to “lie with the herd.” Thus even compassion and empathetic responses, the supposedly “self-less” moral dispositions that exemplify the Schopenhauerian will-monism, are explained by Nietzsche entirely with reference to the natural history of the development of the species.

Master morality, though a quite multifaceted phenomenon for Nietzsche, consists partly in the recognition that one’s judgments about good and bad are reflections of what are considered good and bad to one’s own self. “A faith in yourself, pride in yourself, and a fundamental hostility and irony with respect to ‘Selbstlosigkeit’ belong to a noble morality just as certainly as does a slight disdain and caution towards feelings of sympathy [...]” (BGE 260).

Only a degenerate moral attitude seeks a disinterested or detached set of values apart from what is advantageous or disadvantageous to one’s self. *Selbstverleugnung* is thus a *Selbsttäuschung*, a sort of delusional state wherein the subject’s interest and desire is paradoxically aimed at becoming disinterested and free of desire. Nietzsche tells us in 1887’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* that the notorious ascetic ideal is defined by its attempt to shut off one’s ego, one’s desires, and drives in order to come to an objective and abstracted standard of moral value.<sup>24</sup> And not only does Nietzsche criticize Schopenhauerian asceticism as an impossibility, even the *attempt* to detach oneself from oneself is considered the symptom of a particularly degenerate form of life, indeed here a form of secret self-cruelty. “One thing we do know—I have no doubt about it—namely, the nature of the *pleasure* which the selfless, self-renunciating [*der Sich-selbst-Verleugnende*], self-sacrificing person experiences from the beginning: this pleasure belongs to cruelty” (GM II 18). Complete *Selbstverleugnung* had been denied by Nietzsche for years by this point. But repeatedly returning to the same Schopenhauerian thematic framework, Nietzsche the genealogist has now diagnosed the very motivations that led Schopenhauer to see it as a positive

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<sup>24</sup> On Nietzsche’s critique of Schopenhauer’s moral theory on this point, see Cooper 1998: 196–216.

value in the first place. “Only bad conscience, only the will to abuse the self, provides the condition for the *value* of the un-egoistic” (GM II 18).

## 11.5 Schopenhauer *Umgekehrt*

From what we have said, the mature Nietzsche’s position on subjectivity should appear as more than a mere rejection of Schopenhauer. At nearly every step, we see a manifest diametrical opposition between the two which, I argue, indicates that the development of Nietzsche’s conceptualization follows from a sustained critical engagement. From a common starting point in naturalism Nietzsche systematically turns Schopenhauer on his head. For both Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, the self in normal circumstances is neither a subsistent thing nor an intellect nor any sort of causally efficacious kernel of being; it is the designation for a stream of drive-processes of which the individual material body is the material concomitant. All empirical forms of cognition must take place through the filter of the subjective facticities of the embodied will.

But where Schopenhauer laments embodied individuality as a function of the persistently restless will and seeks its dissolution through an act of self-renunciation, Nietzsche embraces and affirms the body as the condition of life. Whereas for Schopenhauer aesthetic contemplation and ethical asceticism present ways out of the tortures of subjective individuality and thereby offer the purest creation and appreciation of art on the one and the foundation of all moral value on the other, for Nietzsche *Selbstverleugnung* is a *Selbsttäuschung*, a delusion of thinking the mind can accomplish either an aesthetically contemplative or ethically self-less state outside of itself. Art and moral valuation accordingly become precisely the inverse of Schopenhauer’s ideal, namely, the ineluctable result of perspectives generated by embodied individuality. For Schopenhauer, truth is won by freeing the intellect from the fetters of the will temporarily in an ecstatic contemplation wherein subject and object are united. For Nietzsche, because there is never a subject-object identity there can be no single privileged intuition into the deep nature of the world and hence no truth in that respect. Finally, for Schopenhauer, our apprehension of the self represents a sort of back-road into the thing-in-itself, a recognition that the emotions and strivings directly felt are an intelligible mirror of the striving of the metaphysical *One Will*. For Nietzsche, our so-called knowledge of our selves is countenanced by an empirical observation of the affective sensations of our merely “surface consciousness.” Willing appears to Nietzsche, in a passage of declared opposition to Schopenhauer’s *Ur-Eine*, “above all something *complicated*, something that is a unity only in word” (BGE 19), a plurality of feelings toward which and away from which we are moved. Because we only experience those multiple affects of the will as a sort of “social structure composed of many ‘souls’” (BGE 19) that perpetually conflict with and strive to overcome one another, we may characterize their common character as will to power. “*L’effet*,” this eternal struggle, “*c’est moi*” (BGE 19). But we are not, contrary to Schopenhauer, logically permitted to induce from this

common character the thing which is allegedly its cause. Grammar itself seduced Schopenhauer into thinking that behind or underneath the actions of my embodied self lies a distinctly non-bodily network of causation. But beyond observable affects we ought not proceed. For all we can know, “there is no ‘being’ behind the doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is simply fabricated into the doing—the doing is everything” (GM I 13).

I have not attempted to offer a full account of Nietzsche’s view of subjectivity, obviously. But I hope to have made two points clear. First, the usual story that the young Nietzsche accepted Schopenhauer and then the later Nietzsche completely broke from him is far too simple and must be replaced by one that illustrates Nietzsche’s persistent wrestling with Schopenhauerian themes throughout his life. While Nietzsche is obviously hostile to many Schopenhauerian elements, especially the notion of the ecstatic self, it is clear down to the very terminology he uses that he is in near constant dialog with his former *Erzieher*. My second point follows from the first. It is evident that Nietzsche has not exactly abandoned Schopenhauer’s conception of the self, so much as turned it on its head. Many of Nietzsche’s most important discussions of aesthetics, ethics, and cognition are formulated within the framework of Schopenhauerian themes and even creatively readapting Schopenhauerian terminology.

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Christian J. Emden

## 12 On Natural Beings: Nietzsche and Philosophical Naturalism

To argue that Nietzsche's genealogy entails a form of philosophical naturalism easily invites misunderstanding. Nevertheless, Nietzsche himself is rather clear about the general direction of his project, especially during the 1880s: "the *body* and physiology as starting points [*Ausgangspunkt vom Leibe und der Physiologie*]" (NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[21]).<sup>1</sup> In a sense, such statements bring Nietzsche dangerously close to a reductionist position that he simply does not wish to hold and that he vehemently criticizes especially with regard to contemporary scientific materialism. There is much to be said, however, for a naturalist account of Nietzsche's philosophical project.<sup>2</sup> Above all, such an account has to be rooted in the seemingly uncontroversial assumption that human beings—including, of course, the ethical norms they subscribe to—cannot really be seen as a special case vis-à-vis the rest of nature, even though it might often seem to us that the normative dimension of ethical judgments somehow distinguish human beings from the natural world.<sup>3</sup> Whatever our post-humanist condition, moral autonomy is not to be found among jellyfish. But if living within an ethical framework does in fact imply that we voluntarily, as a kind of "second nature," tend to observe certain norms, it does indeed make sense to relate such a psychology of ethical judgments back to something beyond our ideational and cultural world. It is reasonable to assume that the psychology of, say, moral judgments cannot seriously be examined in any substantial way without at least taking into account natural drives and instincts (see Williams 2002: 22–27 and Williams 2000: 153). But if Nietzsche really does hold this view, he is also unable to defer to nature without adopting a position that is generally described as philosophical naturalism.

At least at first sight, this seems counter-intuitive. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), for instance, he delivers a sustained and even scathing attack on that tradition of British thought, from Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes to John Locke and David Hume, which is often portrayed as preparing the ground for modern philosophical naturalism and which is also credited with establishing irreducible links between philosophical thinking and scientific method (BGE 20 and BGE 252). Likewise, at the very beginning of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche famously rejects those "English psychologists" (GM I 1), who extrapolated the inevitable progress of

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1 Nietzsche's *Nachlass* (NL) is quoted according to *Kritische Studienausgabe*, abbreviated as KSA, followed by volume and fragment number.

2 On some of the epistemological implications of such naturalism, see Cox (1999: 69–106). For a fuller account of Nietzsche's naturalism in its historical context, see Emden (2014).

3 In contrast, Richard Schacht (2001: 160–163, 175–176) argues that Nietzsche's naturalism still assumes humans to be a special case, even though normativity is not an exclusively human phenomenon.

morality toward an altruistic civil society from Darwin's theory of natural selection, as—Nietzsche believed—in the case of Herbert Spencer's *Data of Ethics* (1879a: 201–218, §§ 75–81).<sup>4</sup>

Given his criticism of this tradition, we should not expect Nietzsche to adopt a position that could reasonably be labeled as naturalist. But as usual, things are more complicated, for Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism seeks to operate outside the traditional field of tension between idealism and materialism, or between a phenomenological account of the world and its reductive physicalist counterpart. Nietzsche might maneuver himself into an impossible position. The central question he has to address, however, is not whether philosophical naturalism holds water, but rather: what kind of naturalism would be able to account for the way in which we have to speak about nature as if it were different from us, while accepting our status as natural beings at the same time. In the first part of this essay (12.1), I shall outline some of the general principles of Nietzsche's tentative answer to this question, while the second part (12.2) is concerned with the way in which Nietzsche's position develops within the broader context of his writings. In the third part (12.3), Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism is linked more closely to the genealogical project, in particular his reflections on the emergence of normative order. This also seeks to provide some preliminary reasons why the meta-ethical distinction between moral realism and moral anti-realism—in contrast to much current debate—is only of limited relevance for Nietzsche's genealogy.

## 12.1

Although this is not the place for a properly detailed investigation into the problem of philosophical naturalism in general, it is helpful to distinguish between different kinds of naturalism.<sup>5</sup> First of all, what we might call a substantive form of naturalism would have to claim that human experience in its entirety, including ethical norms, can only be explained successfully and coherently if it can be reduced to physical functions. Furthermore, such explanations need to be based on empirical study. Any substantive naturalism, thus, amounts to a physicalist perspective on both the natural world and cognition, and substantive naturalism also seeks to close the traditional gap between facts and values, between the natural and normative, by reducing values to facts.<sup>6</sup> Such substantive naturalism is inherently reductionist, and critics of naturalism—not without reason—often argue that such reductionism looms

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<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche owned the first German edition, *Die Thatsachen der Ethik* (Spencer 1879b).

<sup>5</sup> On the historical emergence of philosophical naturalism in the context of nineteenth-century scientific culture, see Hatfield (1990).

<sup>6</sup> McDowell describes this as “bald naturalism” (1996: 73).

large in the background of all forms of naturalism.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, a methodological version of naturalism, connected to W. V. Quine, makes only limited substantive claims. Rather, it mainly holds that any method of explaining the world out there can only be reasonable, and by implication successful, if it corresponds to those methods that have been shown to be successful in the natural sciences, that is, philosophy, especially epistemology, needs to be understood as continuous with the sciences. Such naturalism generally tends to refrain, for instance, from naturalizing ethical judgments and focuses on naturalizing epistemology.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps closest to Nietzsche's position, a third variant, which has been introduced by Joseph Rouse and which—for want of a better term—I shall call pragmatic naturalism, seeks to avoid reductionist arguments by shifting the attention from scientific methods and the representation of nature to practices, that is, to the way in which we engage and interact with the natural world (see Rouse 2002: 309–310).

Rouse assumes—much like Nietzsche, albeit with Martin Heidegger and Robert Brandom in the background—that since human beings are natural beings, any normative claims about reality that such beings make, and any norms that govern these claims themselves, are necessarily embedded in the material as much as conceptual interaction with reality, since it is through the latter that normative claims ultimately acquire and sustain their binding force. In contradistinction to substantive and methodological varieties of philosophical naturalism, this claim implies that it cannot be made explicit or determined in advance what constitutes science, method, practice, or even nature. The latter, rather, are the result of the interactions with the world which Rouse describes as “patterns of practical/perceptual intra-action within the world,” and it is the emergence of such patterns—“discursive patterns,” as Rouse describes them with a nod to Michel Foucault—“that continually reshapes the situations in which agents live and understand themselves” (Rouse 2002: 20, 227). Such patterns are “intra-active,” in other words, because they both make up what the world is and intervene in this world at the very same time.

On this account, which Rouse himself repeatedly describes as a “Nietzschean commitment” (2002: 3, 303–304), scientific practices and technological arrangements, as much as philosophical thinking itself, “continue to reshape what it is to be nature, and how we can understand ourselves and our possibilities as natural beings” (2002: 360).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, as Nietzsche himself comes to realize in late summer of 1884:

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7 A good example for such a substantive form of naturalism is Kornblith (1999: 158–169), which argues for a strong empirical program of epistemology, thus rendering the latter as a sub-discipline of cognitive science and experimental psychology, albeit without fully admitting to the latter.

8 See Quine (1969: 69–90). For a sophisticated attack on strong versions of epistemological naturalism, see Friedman (1997).

9 Although Rouse refrains from discussing Nietzsche at any great length, the latter appears at crucial junctures throughout the argument (e.g., Rouse 2002: 4, 95, and 359). Rouse has further refined his account of philosophical naturalism in Rouse (2015).

As a matter of fact, the existing world, which is relevant for us, is *made* by us—by us, that is, by all organic beings—it is the product of the organic process, which as such appears to be *productive* and formative, generating values [*produktiv-gestaltend, werthschaffend*]. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26 [203])

And it is these values, one could continue Nietzsche's thought, which allow us, yet again, to intervene in the organic world, in nature. What is generally called "life" is thus, for Nietzsche, not the result of any existential or aesthetic experience, as is often claimed, but rather a metaphor for the "multitude of forces"—including "all so-called feeling, imagining, thinking"—that contribute to the reshaping of nature as much as ourselves as natural beings (NL 1883–84, KSA 10, 24[14])—a position not altogether different from one of his main sources at that time, Otto Caspari's reflections on the philosophy of nature (1881: 25–68).<sup>10</sup>

This understanding of philosophical naturalism, suffice to say, also has an effect beyond the question as to how normativity emerges through scientific practices. Indeed, as Rouse showed, the normativity of social practices is maintained not on the basis of scientific methods—not on the basis of "reason," as Nietzsche would have said—but rather on the basis of "interactions" among the parts that make up these practices (Rouse 2007: 48). The normativity of social practices, thus, depends on the interaction among their constitutive parts, on the interaction between present and past practices, and on the way in which these practices are embedded in the natural world. Normativity—and Nietzsche would have undoubtedly appreciated this—is an ongoing project, both open-ended and subject to revision on the basis of its own history and the resistance it encounters in the world.<sup>11</sup> Such a pragmatic naturalism is able to account for normativity, that is, for the value of a particular practice without the need for law-governed regularity, and at the same time it is able to place normativity in nature without the need for physicalist explanations.

Human experience and agency would also need to be characterized as an interaction between that which we regard as natural and that which we believe to be social, this distinction merely being of heuristic value—an illusion or regulative fiction, as Nietzsche would have pointed out (see Rouse 2002: 184–233). This kind of naturalism differs fundamentally from substantive naturalism, which has to start out from a predetermined concept of nature, but it also differs from methodological naturalism, which has to assume that there are normative standards for scientific method and explanation that are located outside scientific practices and that do not come into existence through such practices themselves.<sup>12</sup> Most relevant to Nietzsche, such

<sup>10</sup> On Caspari's importance for Nietzsche, see the remarks by Brobjer (2008: 76–77; 2004: 37) and Gebhard (1983: 166, 249–254, 282–292).

<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, Rouse (2007: 54) again refers to Nietzsche. For a fuller account of Nietzsche's understanding of normativity along these lines, see Emden (2016).

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Rosenberg (1990: 34–43), who argues that epistemological claims are able to set normative standards for scientific method.

a form of philosophical naturalism contends that cognition, knowledge, and normativity are always embedded in the material world, so that the traditional opposition between mind and matter is undercut by the structure of normativity itself (see also Haugeland 1998). Indeed, the traditional distinction between facts and norms also appears to be problematic on this account: facts are already normative in the sense that they make certain claims on us, that is, shape the way we act, think, imagine, etc., while norms emerge to be factual in the sense that we cannot escape the claims they make.

Nietzsche, I would suggest, holds a strong version of such a pragmatic form of naturalism and a weak version of methodological naturalism: social reality—including the inevitably historical formation of moral values and ethical judgments—is embedded in the natural world and emerges as a result of our “intra-actions” with this world, but any critical examination of such a historically emerged social world has to proceed in analogy to scientific practices, albeit not necessarily methods.<sup>13</sup> This is the reason why Nietzsche, for instance, right at the beginning of *Human, All Too Human* (1878–80)—and in sharp contradistinction to his earlier, thoroughly negative remarks about the “Socratic world” of science in *The Birth of Tragedy* (BT 12–15)—notes quite explicitly that his own philosophical project “can no longer be separated from natural science” (HH I 1). What he came to describe as “*historical philosophizing*” (HH I 2) ultimately conforms to the very idea of scientific practice. As such a practice, Nietzsche’s philosophical project both describes the world and interacts with the latter, and—unlike, say, Kant or Hegel—this practice circumscribes its object of research as it moves along: “dehumanizing nature [*die Entmenschung der Natur*] and then naturalizing the human,” which in mid-1881 he presented as the central “task” of his philosophical project, should ultimately lead to a better “concept ‘nature’” (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[211]), even though such a concept of nature would always be reshaped by practice and, therefore, had to be of a metaphorical quality—hence Nietzsche’s quotation marks.<sup>14</sup>

Seen from this perspective, the link between philosophizing and living, which Nietzsche stresses throughout his writings, the demand “to live philosophically [*eine Philosophie zu leben*]” (NL 1873, KSA 7, 29 [197]), has little to do with a kind of existentialist aestheticization of life; rather, it refers to the way in which even the philosopher, or especially the philosopher, does not stand outside life, peering in, but intervenes in the very notion and fabric of what it means to live through con-

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**13** On the distinction between “weak” and “strong,” or “hard” and “soft,” versions of naturalism, see Hatfield (1990: 261–270). For a detailed critique of “hard” epistemological naturalism, see Putnam (1983).

**14** Nietzsche was fully aware of the fact that any talk of “nature” had a tendency to be mythological (NL 1876–77, KSA 8, 23[18]) in much the same way as any talk of the “universe as organism” amounted to metaphysics at best and theology at worst (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[201]).



ceptual practices, that is, through describing and reshaping how we see ourselves as natural beings.<sup>15</sup>

The reason for this emphasis on practice over method that can be found in Rousseau's account and that is also central to Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism in *The Gay Science* (1882–87) (GS 372), has much to do with the practice of science itself: we might appeal to normative methods in order to explain the success of a particular scientific enterprise, whereas its success in fact depends on practices that might not easily be represented in terms of normative methods, or any normative theory.<sup>16</sup> A philosophical naturalism based on such a normative theory, in contrast, would have to assume that the latter is independent of actual practices and that there was some kind of unity to science. Such unity, however, as Nietzsche was quick to point out, would turn science into metaphysics, necessarily appealing to the supernatural, whereas scientific practice showed that the sciences did not possess a common "logic" (HH I 6 and HH I 31). For Nietzsche, this implies above all that, much like Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the twentieth century, and responding to a large degree to the same scientific culture, he is bound to reject any form of naturalism that seeks to make substantive and reductionist claims. But unlike Husserl, in "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" (1911), Nietzsche does indeed believe that naturalism remains a viable philosophical program (see also Husserl 1965: 80–82).

## 12.2

Seen against this background, it should become more obvious why Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil* and elsewhere, is able to deride those contemporary psychologists who seek to reduce the concept of the "soul" entirely to that of the "brain" as "clumsy naturalists" (BGE 12).<sup>17</sup> Responding to a central shift in nineteenth-century psychology and physiology, he certainly has no wish to return to antiquated philosophical concepts with little epistemic value. Rather, he warns that substantive versions of naturalism rest on metaphysical conjectures in disguise. The claims of what he polemically describes as "materialistic natural scientists"—referring to the scientific materialism of Carl Vogt, Jacob Moleschott and Ludwig Büchner as much as to the popularized version of Darwinism—are based on "faith" and "entangled with the Spinozistic dogma" *deus sive natura* (GS 373 and GS 349).<sup>18</sup> The latter merely

<sup>15</sup> See, in contrast, the discussion in Nehamas (1985: 141–234).

<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche's position is not unlike that of more recent work in the philosophy of science, such as Hacking (1996), Rouse (1996b), and Pickering (1995: 21–27). See also my criticism of Leiter (2015) and Kail (2015) in Emden (2017).

<sup>17</sup> On the shifts in psychology and physiology that Nietzsche responds to, see Hagner (1997).

<sup>18</sup> See Spinoza (2000: 226 (Part IV, Preface), 231 (Part IV, Proposition 4)). On Nietzsche's ambiguous reception of Spinoza, see Abel (1998: 49–59), and Gerhardt (1996: 190–193). Vogt (1847), Moleschott (1852), and Büchner (1855) are classic examples of nineteenth-century materialism, which Nietzsche

replaces “God” with “nature” and unwittingly contributes to the continued survival of religious and metaphysical residues in modern science (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[15] and NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[131]).

In contrast, Nietzsche, who does not deny that “it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests,” sought to turn such faith, and with it the moral authority and autonomy of science, against itself: if the “‘will to truth’ or ‘truth at any price’” constitute the moral ground on which scientific practice is able to assert its authority, this presupposition of the discursive regime that is generally described as science emerges itself as a “regulative fiction,” as he notes in reference to Kant (GS 344).<sup>19</sup> The honesty that Nietzsche demanded from his imagined philosophers of the future—“researchers to the point of cruelty”—should also be valid in the realm of scientific practices (GS 335, BGE 44 and BGE 210)—even if such “rigorous science,” as he had already pointed out in the pages of *Human, All Too Human*, were to offer a glimpse into the emptiness of the metaphysical assumptions with which we order the world (HH I 6 and HH I 16).

In any event, the authority of science—what Rouse has called science’s “epistemic sovereignty” (1996a)—cannot simply be the result of faith, or of some kind of moral commitment, especially if Nietzsche is intent on naturalizing such commitments. Otherwise, we would have to accept such “erroneous conclusions” as: “a thing exists, therefore it has a right to” (HH I 30). Rather, the normative claims of scientific practices must have the same source as those of other, equally normative, practices, such as moral judgment. It is in this respect that the normative question “Why morality?” must be negotiated on the very same grounds as the normative question “Why science?” Of course, these are two different questions to the extent that one can follow up on moral obligations quite successfully without any commitment to the value of scientific knowledge. The normative question—in Christine Korsgaard’s sense: “Why should I be moral?” and feel obliged to save a drowning child—is not the same question as “Why should I accept the binding force of scientific statements about the world?” and believe in the existence of gravitation. Nevertheless, one of the most important components of the overarching ethical question “Why should I be moral?” is another question: “Where do moral concepts come from?” (see Korsgaard 1996: 7–47). The answer to the latter, at least from the perspective of Nietzsche’s philosophical naturalism, should not be fundamentally different from the answer to the question: “Where do scientific concepts come from?” In a decisive passage of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche points in exactly this direction when he begins to link the world of affect to the material world:

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had read in detail, and they are directly connected to the so-called *Materialismustreit*. See the contributions in Bayertz, Jaeschke, Gerhard (2007).

<sup>19</sup> See Kant (1998: 659–660 (B 799)), where he speaks of “regulative principles” that serve as “heuristic fictions” for the understanding.

Assuming that our world of desires and passions is the only thing “given” as real, that we cannot get down or up to any “reality” except the reality of our drives (since thinking is only a relation between these drives)—aren’t we allowed to make the attempt and pose the question as to whether something like this “given” isn’t *enough* to render the so-called mechanistic (and thus material) world comprehensible as well? [...] [I]t might allow us to understand the mechanistic world as belonging to the same plane of reality as our affects themselves [...]. We would be able to understand the mechanistic world as a kind of life of the drives, where all the organic functions (self-regulation, assimilation, nutrition, excretion, and metabolism) are still synthetically bound together—as a *pre-form* of life?—In the end we are not only allowed to make such an attempt: the conscience of *method* demands it. (BGE 36)

Nietzsche’s reference to a conscience of method is a reference to the ethical commitment of science, which he also addressed in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, published in 1887, and which he turned against itself: taking the commitments of modern science seriously—in particular its commitment to specific notions of truth, itself linked to a new ethic of objectivity that emerged around the same time as Nietzsche wrote these passages—might undercut these very commitments, but at the same time it also opens up a new perspective on the sources of normativity.<sup>20</sup>

Nietzsche’s perspective differs, of course, considerably from Korsgaard’s thoroughly Kantian argument that the sources of normativity “must be found in the agent’s own will,” that is, the authority of moral claims is based on “self-conscious reflection about our actions,” granting a degree of autonomy to the individual that Nietzsche is certainly not ready to accept (Korsgaard 1996: 19–20).<sup>21</sup> Instead of imagining how things ought to be if reason were autonomous, Nietzsche’s “task” is “to see things *the way they are*” (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[65]), and it is only on these grounds that we would be able “to become who we are,” as he noted in *The Gay Science* (GS 335). Thus, what he describes—for instance in *Twilight of the Idols* (1889)—as a proper “naturalism in morality” (TI v:4) suggests that human beings are no special case vis-à-vis the rest of nature: any claim to autonomy, the claim that human intellect “operates freely in its own sphere,” remains shaped by the biological make-up of what makes us human and by the resistance we encounter in our interactions with the world (McDowell 1998: 85 and 115). This is as true for claims about the world made on the grounds of scientific practices as it is for moral claims about our actions.

Throughout his intellectual career, Nietzsche’s understanding of scientific practices and methods varied considerably, of course, drawing on a dazzling array of disciplines that represented the scientific expert culture of nineteenth-century Germany, from chemistry and physics to physiology and biology. It goes without saying that

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<sup>20</sup> On the new epistemic virtues connected to the rise of objectivity in nineteenth-century scientific practice, see Daston and Galison (2007: 39–42, 183–190).

<sup>21</sup> Rouse (2002: 1) also seeks to distance himself from Korsgaard’s discussion of normativity. For a fuller discussion of the opposition between Nietzsche’s naturalism and Korsgaard’s view of normativity, see Risse (2007).

this reading influenced his developing naturalism, which had initially been triggered by his reception of Friedrich Albert Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus* (1866) and Johann Carl Friedrich Zöllner's collection of essays *Über die Natur der Cometen* (1872), as well as by a range of contemporary scientists that advocated a cautiously materialist turn in the study of human agency and experience.<sup>22</sup>

The orientation of any philosophical naturalism, and Nietzsche's is no exception here, is certainly contingent on which scientific discipline, at any given moment, provides the dominant paradigm for understanding the natural world in terms of "normal science" (see Kuhn 1996: 24–34). The latter always has a tendency to cross from clearly defined expert cultures into the wider public and, within Nietzsche's own intellectual environment, this has been particularly the case with regard to the biological sciences, broadly speaking.<sup>23</sup> Increasingly drawing on evolutionary biology from Charles Darwin to Wilhelm Roux and beyond, Nietzsche, since the late 1870s, slowly begins to undercut well-established distinctions between the natural world and the world of human values, without, however, reducing the one to the other.<sup>24</sup> This becomes particularly obvious in his attempts to rethink traditional epistemological questions along the lines of the body: "behind all logic [...] stand valuations or, stated more clearly, physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life" (BGE 3). In much the same way as human consciousness does not stand in opposition to inevitably unconscious drives and instincts, the values and valuations that we see as governing human experience are inevitably embodied (GS 354 and NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[164]). As such, they are part of our evolutionary history, and Nietzsche remarks in his notebooks of late 1885 and early 1886: "*Valuations are innate [angeboren], despite Locke!, inherited [angeerbt]*" (NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[21])—which, needless to say, should not be regarded as a return to Cartesian metaphysics, but

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**22** Nietzsche read Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* (Lange 1866) and Zöllner's *Über die Natur der Cometen* (Zöllner 1872) shortly after their publication. Although Nietzsche's reading lists are selective and his conclusions not entirely unproblematic, no serious investigation into his understanding of the task of philosophy is able to ignore these scientific interests. He even asked his publisher, Constantin Georg Naumann, to forward copies of *On the Genealogy of Morality* to the scientific establishment in Berlin and Leipzig, including to Hermann von Helmholtz, Emil Du Bois-Reymond, and Wilhelm Wundt (BVN 1887, KGB III/5, 946). Complimentary copies of *On the Genealogy of Morality* also went to, among others, Ernst Mach.

**23** For a concise discussion of German biological thought during the 1870s and 1880s, see Nyhart (1995: 168–305). On the central explanatory models and metaphors of nineteenth-century biology, see Keller (2002: 15–78).

**24** Most influential among Nietzsche's sources, apart from Darwin, are Alfred Espinas, *Die thierischen Gesellschaften* (Espinas 1879); Georg Heinrich Schneider, *Der thierische Wille* (Schneider 1880); Wilhelm Roux, *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* (Roux 1881); William H. Rolph, *Biologische Probleme, zugleich als Versuch zur Entwicklung einer rationellen Ethik* (Rolph 1884); and Carl von Nägeli, *Mechanisch-physiologische Abstammungslehre* (Nägeli 1884). For a detailed study of Nietzsche's reception of contemporary biological thought, see Moore (2002: 21–84).

rather as a rejection of that kind of Lockean empiricism that continued to determine the self-perception of the natural sciences in the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Accepting that new valuations and values emerge through our “intra-action” with the world, to use Rouse’s term, Nietzsche had to deny a radical form of empiricism which assumed even the foundations of knowledge to be the result of experience. Relying heavily on Wilhem Roux’s account of self-regulation in the development of organic life (NL 1883, KSA 10, 7[190]), Nietzsche furthermore argued that the human individual as a whole had to be understood as a continuation of those processes that took place on the cellular and molecular level (NL 1883, KSA 10, 7 [196]).<sup>26</sup> Most importantly, however, he also suggested that what was traditionally seen as a result of human biology, such as intellect and affect, was in fact itself a kind of organ: “Drives are higher organs,” he noted in mid-1883, and seemingly distinct “actions, affects, and emotional states” are always “coadunated [*ineinander verwachsen*], organizing themselves, feeding off one another” (NL 1883, KSA 10, 7[198] and also 7[211]). Human intellect as a continuation of human physiology meant that intellect itself had to be seen as part of the organic world: “the entire development of the intellect [*Entwicklung des Geistes*] is perhaps merely that of the body [*Leib*]: it is the tangibly emerging history of the formation of a higher body” (NL 1883–84, KSA 10, 24[16]). Referring to contemporary discussions in German animal morphology and *Entwicklungsmechanik* about the nature of ontogeny, he even asked: if “the intellect” was part of “organic development,” then which organic “properties” of the human embryo could produce “thinking” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[80])?

Nevertheless, Nietzsche would agree that the intellect develops most fully, and hence has the most lasting consequences, in a context of social interaction, that is, in the context of what Rouse describes as social practices. From the perspective of Nietzsche’s philosophical enterprise, then, normativity, together with the social practices it generates, has evolved in both a historical and a biological way. Studying historically emerging social practices and customs, including the emergence of specific disciplinary regimes linked to morality, would thus merely be a “continuation of zoology,” as he remarks somewhat nonchalantly during the mid-1870s: after all, if statistics should be of any use in the study of society, it shows above all else that

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**25** See also NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[72]: “Valuations can be found in all functions of the organic being.” For Locke’s criticism of innate ideas, see Locke (1975: 95 (I. iv. 17–18)). Nietzsche’s own insistence that valuations are innate, however, refers to the organic world, while the limited number of ideas Descartes and, following him, Malebranche accepted as innate are of divine provenance, such as the idea of God’s existence. See, for instance, Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Descartes 1996: 26–27, 30–32, 35, 47), and Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth* (Malebranche 1992: 36–37 (III. ii. 4)). Descartes mentions the concept of “innate ideas” first in a letter to Marin Mersenne, dated April 15, 1639, in which innate ideas refer to immutable essences and necessary truths that cannot be known through experience and must therefore have been willed by God (Descartes 1974–86, vol. 1: 145).

**26** For Roux’s account of self-regulation, see Roux (1881: 26–34). On Roux, see Nyhart (1995: 278–305), and for Nietzsche’s reading of Roux, see Müller-Lauter (1999: 161–182).

“human beings are herd animals” (NL 1873, KSA 7, 29[149]). But while Nietzsche, at this moment in his philosophical career, is not yet aware of the way in which such observations can be linked up with evolutionary theory properly speaking, a seemingly inconspicuous note from 1881 presents a more sophisticated model of society’s embeddedness in nature. If philosophical naturalism really holds water and it is correct to assume that human intellect is a kind of organ, constituting a continuation of human physiology, then it might also be reasonable to argue that the human individual as a whole should be regarded as a continuation of nature, that is, as an “organ” that stands “in the service of its society.” Human individuals as a group replicate, as it were, the cell structures and molecular parts of the body, so that society itself emerges as an extension of nature, not as its opposite: “as an organ of the community,” Nietzsche continued, the human individual adopts “the entire characteristics of the organic” (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[182]). Most importantly, this shows that the idea of the autonomy of the individual, indeed the very notion of being a human individual, becomes irrelevant: human individuals merely constitute an accumulation of natural forces, a *Machtmenge* (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[63]), while seemingly cultural constructions, such as “peoples states societies [*Völker Staaten Gesellschaften*],” have to be understood as the “highest organisms” in terms of their complexity—organisms, nevertheless (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[316]).<sup>27</sup> This, to be certain, should not be misunderstood as a naïve social Darwinism, but rather ties in with Nietzsche’s commitment to philosophical naturalism.

Social practices, on this account, are continuous with organic functions in the same way in which human intellect and affect represent a continuation of human physiology, down to the cellular level, as Nietzsche could see in the work of Roux and others. Ernst Haeckel’s biogenetic law, for instance, which stated that ontogeny recapitulated phylogeny—that individual development recapitulated the evolutionary development of the species—suggested that there was a causal relationship between ontogeny and phylogeny: evolutionary development as a whole caused the morphological development of individual organisms.<sup>28</sup> If this should be the case, it must have seemed to Nietzsche that human intellect, social practices, even entire states were subject to the temporality of nature. In the same way that Haeckel had dedicated his *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen* (1866), among others, to Goethe, there was a *naturphilosophisch* streak in Nietzsche’s argument, harking back to the scientific imagination of German Romanticism, which also had a considerable im-

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<sup>27</sup> Such complexity, as Nietzsche was quick to point out, is not unproblematic: the more complex an organism, the “more flawed [*fehlerhafter*]” it is, and this is particularly the case with regard to “herds and states” that can become responsible for their own decline (NL 1881, KSA 9, 12[163]).

<sup>28</sup> See the remarks in Ernst Haeckel, *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen* (1866, vol. 2: 6–10, and 300). For an interpretation of these passages, see Richards (2008: 148–156), and Gould (1977: 76–84). While Gould sees in Haeckel’s biogenetic law an increasing distance from Darwin’s theory of evolution, Richards (1992: 111–164) convincingly shows that Haeckel and Darwin are much closer than generally assumed.

pact on Darwin before the latter had fully formulated his theory of evolution, but which can still be traced in his later works, such as *On the Origin of Species* (1859).<sup>29</sup>

Within this context, the emergence of social customs, disciplinary regimes, and moral norms is, for Nietzsche, inherently intertwined with natural selection and broader evolutionary processes.<sup>30</sup> When he described thinking as “corresponding to drives,” after all, he immediately added: “Darwin’s theory is to be brought up” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[184]). Any form of what we regard as social selection, which, in the first instance, leads to specific customs and, in the long run, to a set of seemingly universally valid moral norms, is as such always embedded in evolutionary processes of natural selection (see Richardson 2004: 70–94). From the perspective of Nietzsche’s pragmatic philosophical naturalism, there is no real difference between social and natural selection. But this should not be taken to mean that his position is, after all, reductionist. Rather, the relationship between such a natural and social selection should be seen, in Rouse’s terms, as “intra-active,” and this also affects the emergence of normativity. The difference between, say, the emergence of social practices and natural selection is more of a heuristic device, that is, a way to distance the critical observer—Nietzsche’s philosopher of the future—from a process of which he is an integral part.

## 12.3

How is it possible to conceive of the emergence of normative order in society along these lines? Nietzsche discusses one rather concrete possibility in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, when he focuses on the correlation between the physical effects of corporeal punishment and the emergence of a psychology of moral conscience. The formation of the latter “in man’s pre-history,” he claimed, was based on a “*technique of mnemonics*” that mobilized the physical organization of the body in order to produce normative forms of seemingly voluntary social control:

“A thing must be burnt in so that it stays in the memory: only something which continues to hurt stays in the memory”—that is a proposition from the oldest (and unfortunately the longest-lived) psychology on earth. [...] When man decided he had to make a memory for himself, it never happened without blood, torments and sacrifices: the most horrifying sacrifices and forfeits (the sacrifice of the first born belongs here), the most disgusting mutilations (for example, castration), the cruellest rituals of all religious cults (and all religions are, at their most fundamental, systems of cruelty)—all this has its origin in that particular instinct which discovered that pain was the most powerful aid to mnemonics. [...] With the aid of such images and procedures, man was eventually able to retain five or six “I-don’t-want-to’s” in his memory, in connection with which a

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<sup>29</sup> On this *naturphilosophisch* dimension in Darwin’s evolutionary ideas, see Robert J. Richards’s revisionist reading (2002: 514–554). On the productive presence of German Romantic *Naturphilosophie* in German biological thought during the second half of the nineteenth century, see Lenoir (1982).

<sup>30</sup> For a somewhat different account of this relationship, see Lemm (2009: 10–29).

*promise* had been made, in order to enjoy the advantages of society—and there you are! With the aid of this sort of memory, people finally came to “reason”! (GM II 3)

Social control, which is ultimately necessary for any form of political organization, can only be successful if the physical inscriptions of violence at its source have been physiologically internalized to such an extent that they are forgotten, while at the same time being passed on from one generation to the next as a form of organic memory and social habitus, that is, as a physiological structure and trace that shaped human agency. Furthermore, Nietzsche’s genealogy entails an anthropological conception of the function of violence, but the latter is also always embedded within natural processes of development, both on an individual level as well as on the level of the species.<sup>31</sup>

The intra-active relationship between the material world of nature, exemplified by the human body, and the social practices we follow allows Nietzsche to understand why, and on what grounds, claims about the world can be normative. Traditionally, claims about nature are regarded as normative if they conform with a particular theory that is seen to represent nature as in the case of natural laws. The problem with such a notion of normativity is, however, that it assumes an underlying distinction between normativity and nature (see Rouse 2002: 77–105). On the other hand, if human agency as a whole is part of nature, normative claims themselves must be part of nature—after all, normativity is not relevant for jellyfish, but it is for human beings. This is precisely what Nietzsche has in mind when, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he notes almost laconically: “morality is just a *sign language of the affects*,” assuming that affects are themselves part of the physiological organization of human beings (BGE 187).

Normativity, to be sure, might not be a natural kind, but Nietzsche believes that there are indeed clear cultural signs that what we describe as normativity needs to be related back to nature. Drawing on his broad reading in contemporary anthropological thought he notes that “morality [...] is strongest among primitive peoples [*Naturvölker*] (their bondage through ethical norms [*Sitten*])” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 1[9]).<sup>32</sup> Leaving aside that even Nietzsche could not escape the colonial language of the nineteenth century, it was the illusion of autonomy from such norms that was part of European metaphysics, that is, the illusion of a world of reason that transcended nature. Seen from this perspective, it also seemed as though the drive to truth and knowledge that has to be seen as part of such a world of reason was nothing but a “continuation of the *alimentary* drive and the *drive* to hunt” (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11 [47]). It is with this in mind that Nietzsche increasingly tends to naturalize reason,

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<sup>31</sup> For a fuller account of Nietzsche’s anthropology of violence, see Emden (2010: 107–133, 121–133). For a meta-ethical assessment of Nietzsche’s understanding of cruelty, see Leiter (2002: 232–235), and May (1999: 126–134).

<sup>32</sup> On Nietzsche’s reading in contemporary anthropological thought, see Emden (2008: 174–216), and Orsucci (1996).



presenting the latter as a kind of “supplementary organ [*Hilfsorgan*]” that “emancipates” itself from other drives without ever transcending its natural background: even the presumed “*predominance*” of reason remains a natural phenomenon, in much the same way as Nietzsche stipulated already during the early 1870s that the “*drive to truth*” was an “infinitely slow acquirement of mankind” and, thus, a “physiological” phenomenon (NL 1870–71, KSA 7, 19[97] and [102] and NL 1881, KSA 9, 11 [243]). Epistemic normativity as much as the normative force of moral values were part of some kind of evolutionary, and therefore organic, process.

The question, then, Nietzsche has to face is this: how does a naturalistic conception of nature incorporate our understanding of nature and our social practices as natural phenomena? His tentative answer seems to be that, by linking the normative force of social practices to nature, such practices continuously reshape what is seen as “nature” and are themselves reshaped by nature (see Rouse 2002: 346). Normative practices and claims about the world do not require prescriptive regularity. Rather, they simply need to be understood as following causal, albeit open-ended, “patterns” that are both functional and develop over time (see Rouse 2002: 19–20).

Nietzsche’s perhaps not entirely uncontroversial claim that what we regard as moral conscience—one of the functional patterns mentioned above—can be inherited through an interaction between social and natural selection, that is, through the intra-active relationship between what we regard as social and what we see as nature, as he seems to argue in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, does not come unprepared. In a lecture at the Viennese Academy of Science in 1870, the physiologist Ewald Hering—most famous perhaps for his work on the perception of color—suggested that the material organization of the brain contained the physiological inscriptions of past events in the form of so-called “engrams”—a theory that could easily be linked up with contemporary discussions about the inheritance of psychological characteristics (see Hering 1876). Although highly speculative because of its lack of experimental verification, the possibility of organic memory had a considerable impact on both psychological thought and on the wider public imagination in the final decades of the nineteenth century, especially because Hering’s theory was inextricably linked to the evolutionary framework of the new life sciences in the nineteenth century, in particular the problem as to whether intellectual characteristics and even specific representations could be inherited (see, e.g., Galton 1869; Ribot 1873; Schuster 1879).<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche himself had consulted Francis Galton’s *Inquiries into the Human Faculty and Its Development* (Galton 1883) while in Nice in early 1884 and he was aware of Hering’s lecture through Zöllner’s *Über die Natur der Cometen* (Zöllner 1872: xv–xvi) already long before the genealogical project began to take shape.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Wilhelm Wundt’s 1877 article on “Philosophy in Germany,”

**33** For a concise historical overview of the debates about organic memory in the nineteenth century, see Otis (1994: 1–49).

**34** On Nietzsche’s reception of the debate about organic memory, see Emden (2005: 145–152).

which appeared in the British journal *Mind* and with whose translator, George Croom Robertson, Nietzsche had several conversations while holidaying in the same year in Switzerland (BVN 1877, KGB II/5, 643, 644, 646), situates Hering and Zöllner in the same context (see Wundt 1877: 502–503). The debates about organic memory and evolutionary biology took place within the same intellectual field, pointing to the same underlying problem of how to naturalize humanity without falling into the trap of physicalist reductionism. But the debates about organic memory were also prefigured by theories about the inheritance of acquired characteristics which had emerged in the course of the eighteenth century, for instance, in the work of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, but which had a profound influence on German Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, including Schelling and Alexander von Humboldt.<sup>35</sup> This was, to be sure, a background with which both Nietzsche and Darwin were familiar.

It should therefore not be surprising that, despite his persistent criticism of the “English psychologists,” Nietzsche did indeed agree with Darwin’s assumption, expressed most fully in *The Descent of Man* (1871), that even moral conscience, somehow, could be inherited. Such a position, however, also had serious limitations. Darwin mainly reiterated earlier conjectures by Herbert Spencer that especially “virtuous tendencies” were inherited so that, at least in principle, the “standard of morality” was able to “rise higher and higher” (Darwin 1871, vol. 1: 102–103).<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche, on the other hand, was more skeptical:

These historians of morality (particularly, the Englishmen) do not amount to much: usually they themselves unsuspectingly stand under the command of a particular morality and, without knowing it, serve as its shield-bearers and followers, for example, by sharing that popular superstition of Christian Europe which people keep repeating so naively to this day, that what is characteristic of morality is selflessness, self-denial, self-sacrifice, or sympathy [*Mitgefühl*] and compassion [*Mitleiden*]. (GS 345)

Any attempt to extrapolate from evolutionary descriptions of the natural world a given set of moral claims was bound to unduly moralize the natural world, instead of naturalizing humanity (BGE 13). If it should really be the case, in contrast, that human individuals as much as societies and states should be seen as continuous with nature, as inherently belonging to the realm of organic life, then a view at some historical examples—from Cesare Borgia to Napoleon Bonaparte, perhaps—would show that the natural history of morality was not a history of virtue, at least not in the sense of Judeo-Christian virtue ethics, and that such a natural history knew no difference between altruistic selflessness and what we regard as its very op-

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<sup>35</sup> See Lamarck (1984: 113) and, for a full assessment of these eighteenth-century theories, Richards (1987: 37–39, 47–57).

<sup>36</sup> In this passage, Darwin is well aware that he is speculating without empirical evidence and refers back to remarks by Herbert Spencer that were reprinted in Alexander Bain, *Mental and Moral Science: A Compendium to Psychology and Ethics* (Bain 1868: 722).

posite. This becomes particularly obvious in a number of decisive passages at the beginning of *The Gay Science*:

Whether I regard human beings with a good or with an evil eye, I always find them engaged in a single task, each and every one of them: to do what benefits the preservation of the human race. Not from a feeling of love for the race, but simply because within them nothing is older, stronger, more inexorable and invincible than this instinct—because this instinct constitutes *the essence* of our species and herd. [...] Hatred, delight in the misfortunes of others, the lust to rob and rule, and whatever else is called evil: all belong to the amazing economy of the preservation of the species, an economy which is certainly costly, wasteful, and on the whole most foolish—but still *proven* to have preserved our race so far. (GS 1)

The self-preservation of human individuals, in other words, is based on an instinct, whose age shows that it is part of the evolutionary make-up of what it means to be human: human individuals are here understood primarily in terms of natural beings, and the economy Nietzsche speaks of is not an economy of crime, but it refers to the dynamics of evolution itself, reminiscent of Roux's argument about the self-regulation of individual organisms. But within this economy of nature—and this is when Nietzsche directly attacks British utilitarianism and its reliance on Darwin—there is no distinction between different kinds of moral values to be found, and it seems as though that which we tend to describe in morally negative terms is particularly important for our history as natural beings:

The strongest and most evil spirits have so far done the most to advance humanity: time and again they rekindled the dozing passions—every ordered society puts the passions to sleep—, time and again they reawakened the sense of comparison, of contradiction, of delight in what is new, daring, unattempted; they forced men to pit opinion against opinion, ideal model against ideal model. Mostly by force of arms, by toppling boundary stones, by violating pieties—but also by means of new religions and moralities! [...] Nowadays there is a thoroughly erroneous moral theory which is celebrated especially in England: it claims that judgements of “good” and “evil” sum up experiences of what is “expedient” and “inexpedient”; that what is called good preserves the species while what is called evil harms it. In truth, however, the evil drives are just as expedient, species-preserving, and indispensable as the good ones—they just have a different function. (GS 4)

In a similar way in which Hegel claimed that even the terror of the French Revolution ultimately served the wider self-assertion of the positive dimension of Enlightenment thought, such as human rights and political representation, Nietzsche suggests here on a much broader scale that the transgression of the status quo in any given social context belongs to the economy of nature mentioned above as a driving force for the evolutionary development of human individuals as natural beings (see Hegel 1999: 212–224). Nietzsche does not deny, it is important to point out, that what is regarded as “good” and “expedient,” in the sense of British utilitarianism, does in fact contribute to the very same development. But he remains unconvinced that whatever is useful, that is, whatever has a function within the evolutionary process, automatically has to be regarded as linked to pleasure and the greater social good and stabil-

ity of a community, as Jeremy Bentham had argued at the end of the eighteenth century (see Bentham 1996: 12–13, §§ 3–6).

Even though Bentham does not take recourse to evolutionary arguments, of course, it is this link between utility and pleasure, or rather: utility and happiness, that reappears, after Darwin, in the writings of Herbert Spencer. Bringing together Lamarck's notions of inherited characteristics as much as Darwin's theory of natural selection, Spencer clearly suggested that, over the course of human history, pleasure became increasingly associated with specific forms of behavior and that these associations were inherited physiologically until a commitment to the happiness of the majority becomes intuitive in the modern liberal state (see Spencer 1879a: 121, § 45; 133–134, §§ 48–49; and Richards 1987: 243–313). Seen from this perspective, Darwin's natural selection had to be extended into society as the survival of the fittest, which, for Spencer, did not at all imply some form of crude social Darwinism but rather referred to the stability of society at large (see Spencer 1866: 444–445, § 165).<sup>37</sup> Although Nietzsche largely shared the evolutionary framework of Spencer's argument—which like Darwin's theory of evolution and Nietzsche's own philosophical naturalism had hidden links to German Romantic *Naturphilosophie*<sup>38</sup>—he was not inclined to accept the link between evolutionary functions and moral goodness. But unlike G. E. Moore, who argued that Spencer committed what is known as the “naturalistic fallacy” by causally relating a natural property, i.e. survival, to a non-natural property, i.e. moral goodness, Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism still has to hold that moral goodness, in one way or another, remains part of the natural world. Thus, he is unable to deny, in the passage from *The Gay Science* cited above, that even so-called “good” actions have evolutionary functions. But he also has to hold that so-called “evil” actions have such functions. On the grounds of the evolutionary framework within which his argument operates, there is no qualitative distinction to be made with regard to “good” and “evil” actions.<sup>39</sup> They might have different functions, as he admits, but they have functions nevertheless.

Within the context of Nietzsche's argument in *The Gay Science*, it seems as though philosophical naturalism leads him to adopt a position that, in the restrictive language of meta-ethics, would have to be regarded as a moral anti-realism: moral properties, such as the “good” and “evil” of a particular action, cannot exist mind-independently, that is, they only make sense if we accept that they are not

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<sup>37</sup> For a fuller and more positive account of Spencer's social evolutionary ideas, see Weinstein (1998: 33–66, 139–180).

<sup>38</sup> See for instance the references to Goethe, Karl Ernst von Baer, and others in Spencer's early essay “Progress, Its Law and Cause” (Spencer 1868), first published in the *Westminster Review* of April 1857, two years before Darwin's *The Origin of Species*.

<sup>39</sup> This is also the reason why, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche is able to present selflessness as a variant of egoism (GS 21). Although Spencer (1879a: 210–218; §§ 75–81), also linked altruism and egoism, he merely noted that they are dependent on each other.

in nature.<sup>40</sup> On this account, Spencer's mistake is to be a moral realist in the sense that he has to assume that goodness exists independently of persons acting in ways that could be described as good. At the same time, however, Nietzsche attributes an evolutionary function to our belief in the existence of the good and to actions we tend to describe as good. Does this mean, then, that Nietzsche is a moral realist after all, in the sense that moral properties exist mind-independently?<sup>41</sup> It is certainly also possible to defend the view that he defends both moral anti-realism and moral realism, depending on the context and on the subject he is writing about.<sup>42</sup> The question is, however, whether his position can easily be described by the terms that mark the territory of contemporary meta-ethics: once we take serious his philosophical naturalism, as outlined above, the distinction between moral realism and moral anti-realism seems to become problematic, also in the sense that this distinction itself—at least this is how it would appear from Nietzsche's point of view—would need to be naturalized. Both moral realism and moral anti-realism belong to the history of those illusions “which were passed on by inheritance further and further” precisely because they are life-preserving and useful (GS 110).

The empirical value, then, of having moral norms lies in their usefulness after all. Of course, whatever proves to be useful does not necessarily need to be correct. But instead of merely pointing to self-preservation, including the self-preservation of any given community, as the guiding principle of evolutionary processes, as it can be found, for instance, in Spencer's more substantive naturalism, Nietzsche's claims are merely based on the assumption that an “*expansion of power*” governs the intra-active relationship between what we regard as the natural and social worlds. Not surprisingly, he equates the “will to power” with the “will to life” (GS 349). Against this background, the usefulness, or utility, of any given social practice or norm does not merely refer to the question as to whether any such practice is useful for us, in the here and now, or for some kind of greater social good. Rather, utility and usefulness refer to the function such a practice or norm has within the process of evolution, that is, within our history as natural beings.

It is precisely in this respect that Nietzsche's demand, in *The Gay Science*, “to *naturalize* humanity” can only be successful if it results in a conception of the natural world that is “completely de-deified” (GS 109), which is to say: a conception of nature that, firstly, includes what we regard as the social world and, secondly, does not attribute a moral perspective to natural processes. For Nietzsche, then, the world in which we are forced to live is not becoming morally better, or more “evil”—it is just becoming. Nietzsche, who in *The Gay Science* occasionally still uses quotation marks when he speaks about “‘naturalizing’ our humanity” (GS 109), drops these quotation marks only a few years later in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

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<sup>40</sup> For Nietzsche as an anti-realist about values, see Richardson (2004: 104–132), and Leiter (2002: 146–155).

<sup>41</sup> For Nietzsche as a moral realist, at least in some sense, see Hussain (2007).

<sup>42</sup> This is the view of Shaw (2007: 78–136).

To translate humanity back into nature; to gain control of the many vain and fanciful interpretations and incidental meanings that have been scribbled and drawn over that eternal basic text of *homo natura* so far; to make sure that, from now on, the human being will stand before the human being, just as he already stands before the *rest* of nature today, hardened by the discipline of science, [...]. (BGE 230)

In the end, genealogy has to ask about the results of such an attempt at naturalizing humanity. Nietzsche hints at this in a crucial passage of *The Gay Science*, when he describes what we might regard as the political effect of his naturalism. The latter forces us “to *become who we are*,” that is, “human beings [...] who give themselves laws, who create themselves” by being critically aware of the complex historicity of our normative commitments, socially and biologically speaking (GS 335). To naturalize humanity, then, is not merely a philosophical exercise. There is more at stake.

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## Part VI: **Ethics and “Life”**



Maria Cristina Fornari

## 13 “Shadows of God” and Neuroethics

Given the universality of moral systems, the tendency to develop and enforce them must be an integral part of human nature. (De Waal 1996: 2)

Wherever we encounter a morality, we also encounter valuations and an order of rank of human impulses and actions. These valuations and orders of rank are always expressions of the needs of a community and herd: whatever benefits it most—and second most, and third most—that is also considered the first standard for the value of all individuals. (GS 116)

My interest in the subject of this chapter was aroused by the Italian translation, “*Naturalmente buoni*”—in English: “good natured”—of the title of a famous book by Frans de Waal, whose subtitle, significantly, was “*The origins of right and wrong in humans and other animals*” (De Waal 1996). In this classic text, De Waal went back to Darwinism to illustrate in which sense animals, too, are “good”, possessing the same characteristics that distinguish us human beings (benevolence, sociability, altruism); and in which sense, in a very Darwinian way, there are in the last analysis only differences of degree in morality between man and his cousins, the primates. De Waal, along with James Rachel, Peter Singer and many others, is a witness and champion of a new version of Darwinism, that has led not only to the proclamation of various forms of *anti-speciesism*, but above all to new attempts to re-found ethics starting from our natural state.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, not only can the moral features of *Homo sapiens* be traced in his animal ancestry, but his “moral faculty” (in the sense of a tendency, potential and capacity to formulate and apply moral judgments and behaviour) is considered more and more often as an evolutionary consequence of particular cerebral structures, combined with a certain behavioural phenotype. This is the thesis, for example, of Giovanni Boniolo, who insists on the genesis of the moral *capacity* (which is not the same as the genesis of different moral *systems*) as possible only in beings that “Darwinianly” possess instinctive social behaviours and are at the same time subject to a suitable evolutionary process of certain cerebral-mental traits (Boniolo 2003). It is also behind Daniel Siegel’s “relational mind”, which emerges from the product of cerebral structures and functions with experiences of interpersonal relations, which in turn can influence and mould genetically determined programmes of the nervous system (Siegel 1999). I shall try to show further down how some authors, by sleight of hand, transform these formal “tendencies” and “capacities” to make moral judgments, which are now confirmed by neuro-

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<sup>1</sup> Singer, for example, is convinced that human ethics has its origin in evolved patterns of behaviour among social animals, and defines the preference for neighbours, reciprocity and altruism as universal and founded on good biological reasons (Singer 1981). Nevertheless, this kind of sociobiology (like Lumsden’s and Wilson’s) does not draw on the results of the recent neurosciences. Sociobiology was first established in the 1980s, and there was a recrudescence of so-called evolutionary ethics in the 1990s (See, e.g., Farber 1994, and Bradie 1994).

biological research and generally accepted, into the foundations of a normative ethics. Our post-modern period—“hyper-nervous” (as Nietzsche described his own)—is certainly just as driven by backward-looking forces and in need of certainties as previous centuries, and some research on the origins of morality by the neurosciences and philosophy of the mind seems once again to express “foundational” needs, or at least the need to be able to deduce an “ought” from an “is”, the “is” being, of course, the “facts” of our biological inheritance.

It may be that the wishful thinking underlying the search for a biological basis for our behaviour is the long-awaited confirmation of a “universal morality” that will enable us to overcome divisions and conflicts in the name of the species: a sort of “Enlightenment dream” of the equality of human nature, which we are now asking science to make true (cf. Boella 2008).

Once again “the shadow of God”, Nietzsche would say. As we know, he was a most acute critic of the naturalistic fallacy, which he found exemplified, if not embodied, in the moralists of his day—which was not so long ago, if it is true that many of the themes and problems facing us today (such as the physiology of perceptions or the biological bases of our behaviour) originated and were first formulated in Darwin’s century. So I think it should be interesting both to briefly show Nietzsche grappling with the debate on our moral faculty, a debate which at that time had been rekindled by evolutionary theory and new biological ideas, as Gregory Moore has shown (Moore 2002a), and also to recall his criticism of the misleading circularity of facts and values, and ask if it might not still be relevant today. It may be worth recovering Nietzsche’s disenchanted eye to guard against—or at least look critically at—certain present-day attempts to provide a foundation for morality that claim to be scientific, but that Nietzsche might have regarded as the work of the particular instincts and values of those who propose them.

As is generally known, Nietzsche was deeply involved in the burning scientific questions of the period. We also know how much he breathed the cultural climate of the Darwinian revolution. That “the moral man stands no nearer to the intelligible world than does the physical man” (HAH 37) was a given for the Nietzsche of *Human, All Too Human*; nor was he ever to abandon historical research (“which can no longer be even conceived of as separate from the natural sciences” (HAH 1)) in his unceasing attempt to establish the origin and nature of our moral concepts and values (cf. Moore 2002a). Nietzsche was a restlessly curious reader, and he had already turned to anthropology, ethnography and sociology: but it was Spencer’s brand of evolutionary theory that attracted him in the early 1880s and directed him towards a more openly biological understanding of the question of the genesis and development of morality (cf. Moore 2002b). The letters that Nietzsche sent his publisher as soon as he knew that Spencer’s *The Data of Ethics* (Spencer 1879) had been published demonstrate an undeniable interest in a man who was then considered one of the fathers of the new philosophy (L. to Schmeitzner, KGB II/5, L. 907 and 921); and if his final judgment was to be negative and cutting, that does not detract from the fact that Spencer played an absolutely central role for Nietzsche, and that his rejec-

tion of Spencer still reflected the powerful stimuli of Spencer’s thought, which was to a large extent the standard thinking and paradigm of the time (cf. Fornari 2005, 2006, and 2009). Spencer had already explained in a letter to John Stuart Mill that he was offering a strong position. This letter quickly became famous (and Nietzsche too had had the opportunity of reading it in the German translation of Alexander Bain’s *Mental and Moral Science*) (Bain 1874). It was a response to the “chemistry of the mind”, by which morality was the result of mechanisms of association of ideas reinforced by custom, education and social judgment, and his adversaries quickly accused him of “intuitionism”. For Spencer, our moral faculties are the result of the effects of original useful experiences that have gradually been capitalized on in the course of our evolutionary history and transmitted to later generations in the form of modifications of the nervous system. It is a sort of “psychophysical dowry” that the individual inherits from the experience stored up in the nerve fibres of a long chain of generations and that acts in him quite unconsciously. The nature of this change is clear. It is a position that reconciles nativism and environmentalism, psycho-physical automatism and the selective function of consciousness (genetics and epigenetics, we might say now). Not the result of mere associative processes; not accidental Darwinian variations, selected for their advantage in the struggle for life; but a gradual adaptation to needs and environmental influences—a *functional response* to the conditions dictated by nature, so to speak—and the transmission of the results, deposited in consciousness as unquestionable and lasting principles. As for Spencer, that “extoller of the finality of selection” (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[43]), life works for its own preservation and development, the outcome of this process can only be to fix in us instincts of altruism, benevolence and mutual care. What evolution perfects and our systems register are the results of acts designed to promote and develop the associated life (our specific environment); and if memory contains the moral dispositions formed in the course of evolution, morality will be the ratification and extension of what nature has produced, creating an incontrovertible equivalence between the useful, the natural and the virtuous. Nietzsche followed the question with interest in the thickly annotated pages of his copy of *Die Tatsachen der Ethik* (Spencer 1874 in Nietzsche’s library). That consciousness is structured by acquired ideas, feelings and categories becoming fixed in our nervous centres is an idea that can be found not only in Spencer and Espinas (one of the first to spread the concept of “gregariousness”) but also in Bain, Guyau and many other voices of the period. Indeed, Nietzsche found the idea that humanity stores up its “unforgettable experiences” of what it has once found “useful and in keeping with the end”, a more rational and tenable hypothesis than seeing the origin of moral imperatives in the oblivion of their original motives, an idea that he himself had held at the time of *Human, All Too Human*. “Therefore not closer to the truth”, says Nietzsche, who chal-



lenged the possibility of establishing this end unambiguously, and still more the supposed adaptive primacy of an altruistic instinct.<sup>2</sup>

The question also involves the problem of inheriting acquired characteristics (so-called “weak inheritance”), which the physiologist Wundt described as fanciful and untenable neurologically, particularly in the moral field,<sup>3</sup> but which is today seriously defended (cf. Jablonka and Lamb 2005). The idea that the organic changes induced by adaptation are handed down to later generations (partly in the form of ideas and feelings) was shared by many, including Bain, Hering and Haeckel: Nietzsche may not have fully accepted them, but he seems to admit that moral feelings are transmitted, at least in the form of strong tendencies of propensity or antipathy (See, e.g., M 34, M 35, and M 310). In any case, Nietzsche was more and more convinced by the idea that morality is closely linked to biological tissue. It was partly by reflecting on Spencer’s suggestions and on the dynamics of the instincts, which Spencer was sure were responsible for the teleonomic development of the evolutionary process, that Nietzsche identified the drives (*Triebe*) as the new authors of the tables of moral values. Drives and instincts determine the appearance of value (even that of by no means obvious “value of values”, life) (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[105]); it is the dominant instinct that gives life to an ethical system, which appears *a posteriori* to justify it.

Morality can only command—in other words, impose itself by fear (and so with the help of an instinct), or it can be legitimated with the help of another instinct: it already *presupposes*, al-

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2 “Secondly, however, and quite separate from the fact that this hypothesis about the origin of the value judgment ‘good’ is historically untenable, it suffers from an inherent psychological contradiction. The utility of the unegoistic action is supposed to be the origin of the praise it receives, and this origin has allegedly been *forgotten*: —but how is this forgetting even *possible*? Could the usefulness of such actions at some time or other perhaps just have stopped? The opposite is the case: this utility has rather been an everyday experience throughout the ages, and thus something that has always been constantly re-emphasized. Hence, instead of disappearing from consciousness, instead of becoming something forgettable, it must have pressed itself into the consciousness with ever-increasing clarity. How much more sensible is that contrasting theory (which is not therefore closer to the truth—) which is advocated, for example, by Herbert Spencer: he proposes that the idea ‘good’ is essentially the same as the idea ‘useful’ or ‘functional,’ so that in judgments about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ human beings sum up and endorse the experiences they *have not forgotten* and *cannot forget* concerning the useful-functional and the harmful-useless. According to this theory, good is something which has always proved useful, so that it may assert its validity as ‘valuable in the highest degree,’ as ‘valuable in itself.’ This path to an explanation is, as mentioned, also false, but at least the account is inherently sensible and psychologically tenable” (GM I 3).

3 “We may perhaps imagine that, in the course of evolution, associations have formed between some elements of the nervous system, and in this way a disposition for reflexes and automatic movements, fit for a certain end, can have been transmitted by inheritance. In fact, many observations support this opinion. But how moral intuitions can derive from these dispositions of the nervous system remains a mystery to us. Real neurology stands in relation to these conceptions of pure fantasy more or less as real astronomy and geography stand in relation to the journeys and discoveries of a Jules Verne” (Wundt 1886: 344–345).

ways, that it has immediately been demonstrated and possesses a power of conviction; *it comes, when an instinct and the evaluation of a certain kind already exist.* (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[123]; see also 6[127], and 6[130])

“This is so for all ethical systems” concludes Nietzsche, after his note has specifically refuted the supposed “Regulativ” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[123]) of Spencer’s physiological ethics.

What, then, are we to say of an ethical system whose aim is preserving and advancing life and that claims the physiological primacy of altruism? What is the powerful instinct around which this moral feeling has jelled, able to impose itself on the whole of European taste? For Nietzsche the anthropological dowry and natural basis of primitive morality was fear, which guided man in that terrible pre-historic period when he was subject to the fluctuations of a hostile environment and solitude was a terrible fate. Responses to this pressure, which are now so rooted as to seem natural, mean that even today the community still speaks to us more strongly than any individual voice. And if Spencer is partly right, there is nothing surprising in the specific dowry that resulted, which Nietzsche was to describe as *Herdeninstinkt*.

Whether I contemplate men with benevolence or with an evil eye, I always find them concerned with a single task, all of them and every one of them in particular: to do what is good for the preservation of the human race. Not from any feeling of love for the race, but merely because nothing in them is older, stronger, more inexorable and unconquerable than this instinct—because this instinct constitutes *the essence* of our species, our herd. (GS 1)

That a model of this kind emerged is undeniable. Even consciousness, the final refined product of the organic, proceeds from our gregarious nature, from the “*Genius der Gattung*” that speaks in us and that induces us to assimilate communal measures of value as a condition of survival. Nietzsche was certainly recalling the strength with which these results are inscribed in the species memory when he described the *Herdeninstinkt* as the “most essential breeding-ground” for our scale of values: the role of Spencer and his followers is, in my view, very strong here. But if this is true, paradoxically, it marked the end of Spencer as a moralist and moral historian. His physiological ethics were actually the symptom of an inescapable compromise with the herd instinct that supplies a norm for sociological value-judgments.<sup>4</sup> From this ethical system, claiming to be scientific—from John Stuart Mill’s “golden rule”, Comte’s “living for others”, or Schopenhauer’s *neminem laede*—an instinct spoke that had grown with the force of an ancient fear, and had now been passed down “into

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4 “My objection against the whole of sociology in England and France remains that it knows from experience only the forms of decay of society, and with perfect innocence accepts its own instincts of decay as the norm of sociological value-judgments. The decline of life, the decrease in the power to organize—that is, to separate, tear open clefts, subordinate and superordinate—all this has been formulated as the ideal in contemporary sociology. Our socialists are *décadents*, but Mr. Herbert Spencer is a *décadent* too—he sees in the triumph of altruism something desirable!” (TI Skirmishes 37).

flesh and blood”, erecting benevolence and mutual cooperation as values, and tying the individual indissolubly to the fate of his community and even of his species. “Mr Herbert Spencer is a *décadent*”: enveloped in a sort of “hermeneutic circle”, he is completely unreliable as a historian of values and moral concepts.

But let us return to the present. Today the biological bases of moral behaviour are taken for granted. From research by Damasio (1994) to Kandel’s theory (by which learning involves a permanent modification of the neural connections), everything converges to confirm the correlation of the individual’s cognitive, emotional and affective processes with the anatomical-physiological functioning of the nervous system. As the nineteenth century had to some extent anticipated, it really does seem possible that our moral capacities stem from mechanisms of selection and organization in the history of the nervous system: they are rooted in the appearance of particular cerebral structures that have led humans to develop *as social animals*, or as beings that seek and enjoy the company of other members of their species. This is borne out, for example, by the presence, next to our complex cortical system, of an affective system common to the primates (a hangover from our ancestral state) that can be activated in the presence of violations of socially significant behaviour (see, e.g., Jonathan Haidt’s “moral brain” (Haidt 2001)). The result is that moral behaviour may be intrinsic, where “intrinsic” means: possessing a particular biological and neural makeup that is formed by an interplay of genetic and epigenetic factors, and predisposes and directs us to act morally. As I wish to show, the concept “moral” that is used in these contexts is, in my view, still problematic.

The presence of others is recognized as a necessary condition for the development of consciousness and morality: *Homo sapiens* seems to possess a series of circuits programmed to relate with his fellows, as is also confirmed by recent neurobiological studies. Nietzsche would be astonished, for example, to discover how his theories of human relations—such as aphorism 354 of *Gay Science*—have been validated by present-day research, which has shown how in the type of interaction that best supports the development of consciousness there is an implicit perception of a fundamental equality or similarity between oneself and the other. There is also the well-known mirror-neuron theory, which explores the innate neurological bases of the capacity to imitate the deliberate behaviour of others, that is to say, the capacity to grasp intention in another’s gesture and reproduce it (here one might think, for example, of *Daybreak 26* and the fragments of that period, in which Nietzsche describes the whole moral phenomenon as “animal”, or as the desire to predict and guess others so as not to be surprised and damaged by them). But in my view we often infer from this natural capacity for empathy a *sympathy* of the kind described by Adam Smith—as an attitude of mutual care and protection, a sort of “natural goodness”—that transforms the search for the conditions of the moral *capacity* into the attempt to ratify a particular normative vision, a particular moral *system*. We move from the *fact* that the moral capacity is a result of evolution and biologically grounded, to a *theory* that, as a result, morality, as a system of specific values and judgments, is or can be biologically founded. This is, to say the least, bad philosophy,

if not ideologically based, an example of the fallacious circularity Nietzsche had identified, here in the form of an optimistic justification of our bio-moral structures.

Let us leave to one side the theories according to which altruism is a direct emanation of biology, as it is for Ruse (1986), Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1984) (for whom the categorical imperative is a biological inheritance that protects us from the danger of cultural relativism) or Wickler (1971) (who was not afraid to propose a *Biology of the Ten Commandments* not so long ago). I would rather take as an example Jean-Pierre Changeux, the author of the famous work *L'Homme neuronal* (1983). In asking in *La nature et la règle* “how can neuronal man be a moral subject” (Changeux and Ricoeur 2000: 8), he comes to what seems to me some important conclusions. Tackling the problem of the foundations of morality, Changeux places them midway between our biological and cultural legacies (2000: 179–211). There is no doubt that cultural data are transmitted epigenetically, mainly as a result of learning and experience, but the brain operates Darwinian selective processes on the material offered by the “genetic species memory”. Cortical memory stores up first of all faces, animals, and artefacts; then symbolic depictions, social conventions, and moral rules (“Why shouldn’t the same be true for the four truths of the Buddha, the tablets of the Law [...]?” (2000: 207) asks Changeux). These traces can be transmitted from one generation to another “by neurobiological mechanisms that constitute an obvious biological constraint on the transmission and the evolution of social and moral norms” (2000: 208). The exceptional length of a child’s development after birth makes it easier to place cultural (religious, symbolic and practical) representations in our brain; with its neuronal plasticity, the brain possesses “capacities for *ethical innovation* in the selection and transmission of the norms of moral life” (2000: 209).

Even though the mechanisms are still not wholly clear, “evolutionary (epigenetic) competition inside the brain takes over from the biological (genetic) evolution of the species and creates, as a consequence, organic links with the physical, social and cultural environment” (2000: 6): what Changeux terms “physiology of cultural imprints” (2000: 211), which takes over the task of genetic evolution.

This is exactly what happens with the so-called moral sense: this is how dispositions for altruism and cooperation could be embedded in our neurobiological structures, “selected” despite the risk of genetic variation and constantly involved in the course of our development. The Darwin of *The Descent of Man* confirms for Changeux that this is the development followed by nature—by our nature—and that altruism and compassion are no more than a “non-genetic” extension: “They [altruistic behaviours and compassion] would prolong by non-genetic means, and with a much more rapid dynamic, a suspended genetic evolution” (2000: 289). Changeux also insists on the cultural and normative renewal involved, which has the task of reinforcing and directing the development towards a universalistic ethics, with strongly Spencerian echoes.

For all the obvious simplifications, I think we can trace here a strong moral premise, not regarding the predisposition for moral evaluation but its content, sum-

med up in the *golden rule*: “Do unto others as you would that they do unto you”.<sup>5</sup> This is also the impression of Paul Ricoeur: commenting on Changeux’s position, he sees in it the deceptive effect of a retrospective glance. “Apart from our moral questioning, however, nature does not move in any direction” (2000: 193), objects Ricoeur: the previous recognition of the *golden rule* conditions the identification of the origins and path. Ricoeur is concerned that “[...] all questions concerning a natural disposition to morality are retrospective questions, the posited norm looking backward in search of precursors. Whether or not nature knows it, responsibility for imparting a bit of order to nature falls to us” (2000: 182). We seem not too far away from Nietzsche’s acute criticism of Spencer:

The value of altruism is *not* the result of science; but *the prevailing instinct [Trieb] of the day* induces men of science to believe that science confirms the desire of their instinct. Cf. Spencer. (NL 1880, KSA 9, 8[35])

Another example comes from the famous evolutionist Marc Hauser (2006).<sup>6</sup> In *Moral Minds* he claims we have an innate disposition for morality, similar to our linguistic competence.<sup>7</sup> Just as language requires us to distinguish between acoustic signs, we distinguish a moral dilemma from a neutral dilemma, and we possess unconscious, automatic means for decoding them, i.e. (innate) rules for their evaluation and for finding an immediate solution. In short, we adopt principles that we cannot justify rationally (for example, the so-called *principle of double-effect*<sup>8</sup>), and that indicate an original moral competence that can be regarded as the foundation of a moral universe.<sup>9</sup>

We evolved a moral instinct, a capacity that naturally grows within each child, designed to generate rapid judgments about what is morally right or wrong based on an unconscious grammar of action. Part of this machinery was designed by the blind hand of Darwinian selection millions of years before our species evolved; other parts were added or upgraded over the evolutionary

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5 Nietzsche’s criticism of the “golden rule” is particularly directed at John Stuart Mill’s utilitarianism; see, for example NL 1888, KSA 13, 22[1].

6 His views have given rise to various contributions in “Trends in Cognitive Sciences”, e.g., Mickhail (2007), and Dupoux and Jacob (2007).

7 Dupoux and Jacob (2007) view moral grammar (“a toolkit for building specific moral systems”) as similar to Chomsky’s and Steven Pinker’s theory of a universal grammar (cf. also Hauser 2006: XV–XVI).

8 According to the “principle of double-effect” we would never choose, for example, to sacrifice a healthy person to save five others by transplanting his organs (an advantageous result from a purely utilitarian point of view). This is so because, according to this principle, we tolerate causing harm in achieving a greater good only when this is a merely collateral effect, but not a means to that end.

9 “Thus, the intuitive knowledge underlying our moral judgments is like the intuitive knowledge of language, physics, psychology, biology and music [...] when it comes to our evolved moral faculty—our moral competence—it looks like we speak in one voice: the voice of our species” (Hauser 2006: 136–137).

history of our species, and are unique both to humans and to our moral psychology. (Hauser 2006: XV)

Hauser thinks aversion to the naturalistic fallacy has intimidated those who wanted to look at the results of the biological sciences and has made ethical naturalism suspect, “a perspective in philosophy that attempted to make sense of the good by an appeal to the natural” (2006: 5), while “the only way to develop stable prescriptive principles, either through formal law or religion, is to understand how they will break down in the face of biases that Mother Nature equipped us with” (2006: 7).<sup>10</sup> On this view, these biases are once again directed towards altruism and mutual care: looking after children, inhibiting violence and practising empathy—“the spark of human concern for others, the glue that makes social life possible” (2006: 32)—are universal moral principles whose natural matrix is certified by psychological and biological studies. The problem for many (from the Schopenhauer of *On the Basis of Morality* to the Dawkins of *The Selfish Gene*) has been explaining the existence of cooperative attitudes and genuine altruism despite the Darwinian struggle for life:<sup>11</sup> appeal to nature seems to be the most effective solution. Economics comes to our aid, too. Cooperative economic games (including the well-known *ultimatum game*) are seen as scientific evidence that “all humans share a universal sense of distribution fairness” (Hauser 2006: 91).<sup>12</sup> Faced with an economic dilemma, Hauser claims, along with John Rawls, an evolved mental faculty generates unconscious judgments about right and wrong, universal judgments of fairness that restrict the range of intercultural variations. Another moral principle, then, will be that if “the human mind has been designed to maximize payoffs—money, food, mates, babies”, nevertheless, “although we may have evolved as *Homo economicus*, we are also born with a deep sense of fairness, concerned with the well-being of others even when our actions take away from personal gain” (Hauser 2006: 86). Our “moral organ” contains principles of justice: and just as Darwin’s swallow was seized by a sense of remorse and guilt when it disregarded the impulse to nest, in the same way—warns Hauser—“if we re-

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**10** The social psychologist John Bargh, however, describes the fact that we are “designed to try our different colours to match our social partner’s substrate” as the “chameleon effect” (Hauser 2006: 33). How can one not be reminded of *mimicry of Daybreak 26*?

**11** Darwin had already observed anti-eliminatory tendencies, which Patrick Tort (2005) later summed up as the “reversve effect” of evolution.

**12** At Princeton University volunteers underwent brain imaging while taking part in the ultimatum game, which consists in accepting or refusing a money offer from a stranger who is willing to share a certain sum with us. The result showed that unfair offers caused emotional reactions irrespective of the gain (in practice, we prefer zero to what is perceived as an unfair distribution). Our “innate” sense of justice is offended and we desire to punish the violator of the rules of cooperation. Does punishment arise from an innate sense of justice? Nietzsche and Rée had already discussed this question, and also the observation (today seen as another “moral law”) that the idea that each one has of justice seems to entail a punishment proportionate to the seriousness of the effect. For Nietzsche’s denial of the latter, see Fornari (2006: 1.5.5).

ject them, deciding that other principles are more consistent with our sense of justice, we must be prepared for conflict and instability” (Hauser 2006: 77). The “strong reciprocity” that grafted itself on to a strongly selfish nature that we have inherited from our forebears, predisposes us to cooperate and punish those who violate its rules. It is a disposition that most economists and anthropologists regard as an essential characteristic of a uniquely human cognitive adaptation, and which for some theorists coincides with pure altruism (Fehr and Fischbacher 2003: 785–792). This reading, which Nietzsche might think prejudged the issue, ignores, for example, his suggestion that our sense of justice is tied to the measure of value that each of us subjectively represents. For Nietzsche, the desire to punish derives from the need to reconstruct a balance of power that is seen as damaged, and not as retaliation for a wrong suffered:

retaliation is due to someone who has hurt us because he has diminished our awareness of our power: it is a crime against the regard we have for ourselves. (HAH 92; WS 32; cf. NL 1883, KSA 10, 16[15])

Is it perhaps the same for the victim in the ultimatum game? Perhaps it is his sense of power that speaks, and not his innate moral sense. In short, it is worth asking, again with Ricoeur, if today “once again we make use of a retrospective gaze, which starts from what we suppose to be established morality, to emphasize the traits of behaviour that anticipate that morality” (Ricoeur 1998: 38). This is the bad genealogy, that of which Nietzsche accused his adversaries, and that Foucault identified so clearly: what genealogy shuns is seeking an origin that claims to safeguard in advance the essence of what is to be historically created (Foucault 1971).

If the debate on the natural bases of morality is still open, “the desires drawn from present-day ideals” are still strong. Nietzsche himself had hoped it would be possible to transform “the relationship between philosophy, physiology, and medicine, originally so aloof, so mistrusting, into the most friendly and fruitful exchange” (GM 1 17), but the philosopher must watch carefully over this. Nietzsche’s great lesson in genealogy seems to be more relevant than ever.

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Charlie Huenemann

## 14 Nietzsche and the Perspective of Life

Nietzsche clearly had problems with moralizers. He believed that those who advocate one lifestyle over another are doing nothing more than revealing their own psychological pathologies:

Finally, let us think how naïve it is to say, “this is the way people *should* be!”. Reality shows us an enchanting abundance of types, a lavish profusion of forms in change and at play: and some worthless idiot of a moralist sees all this and says: “no! people should be *different from the way they are*”!? ... He even knows what people should be like, this miserable fool, he paints a picture of himself on the wall and says “*ecce homo*!”. (TI Morality 6)<sup>1</sup>

From passages such as this one, we might well conclude that Nietzsche was an anti-realist about moral values: values are relativized to individuals, or to certain perspectives, and nothing is morally valuable in and of itself.<sup>2</sup> Support for this conclusion can also be found in Nietzsche’s numerous remarks about values being inherent in a perspective, or about a perspective being nothing more than a certain structure of values.

But at the same time, of course, Nietzsche’s philosophy is rife with valuations. He argues that the history of western civilization is the history of a sick and slavish morality, and he claims that his supreme project is a “revaluation” of all values—not a rejection or denial of all values. One might initially suppose that Nietzsche only intends to express his own values, or his own perspective. But it is hard to believe that he meant his moral critiques only as statements of his own opinion, with which others could respectably and legitimately disagree.<sup>3</sup> Many of his trenchant criticisms strongly suggest that he believed his own valuations had a special grounding the others lacked. But what could this grounding be?

The passage quoted above continues with a suggested answer:

Morality, to the extent that it is just *condemnation*, without *any* attention to, or interest in, or concern for life [*Hinsichten, Rücksichten, Absichten des Lebens*], is a specific error that you should not pity, *an idiosyncrasy of degenerates* that has caused incalculable damage! (TI Morality 6)

The suggestion is that a morality which condemns *with* “attention to, interest in, or concern for life” is not an error, and so presents a legitimate set of values. But what

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1 References are standard abbreviations of Nietzsche’s published books, followed by section number or by chapter and section number. Translations are those listed in the bibliography.

2 GS 301: “Whatever has *value* in the present world has it not in itself, according to its nature—nature is always value-less—but has rather been given, granted value, and we were the givers and granters!”

3 But for a plausible defense of a view like this, see Leiter (2002: 146–161).

can it mean to value from the interest in and concern for life? How can “life” have a valuing perspective? And how can Nietzsche privilege life’s perspective without becoming some “pathetic bystander of a moralist” himself?

In this article, with the aim of explaining Nietzsche’s view, I shall illustrate one way of making sense of a theoretical entity (called “Life”), which has values and a perspective. Then I will turn to Nietzsche’s perspectivism, with the hope of explaining why Life’s perspective should be in any way privileged. Finally, I will explain how trying to live from Life’s perspective would force us to change our values—and, in particular, disown the values we have placed in truth (at least for its own sake) and traditional morality.

## 14.1 “Life,” the Theoretical Entity

Without worrying just now about the legitimacy of such an entity, let us see what sort of features a theoretical entity called “Life” must have in order to have a perspective and do the philosophical work Nietzsche requires of it.

We will begin with the question of what it is to be a perspective-bearing entity. Broadly, we can identify two necessary features, which are jointly sufficient for having a perspective. First, an entity must be capable of placing an *interpretation* on experience. This need not require that the entity be conscious, but it does require that at least some of the entity’s behavior be best explained by adopting a low-level intentional stance toward it. In other words, the entity’s behavior must be best understood and explained (at least sometimes) on the basis of how it *represents* the environment to itself. This will clearly exclude all simple inanimate objects, but arguably will include any entity that is sensitively attuned to changes in its environment, such as corn plants, wasps, and some robots. Second, the entity must have *interests*, or preferred outcomes in its experience. These interests are revealed by dispositions to behavior: specifically, an entity with interests tends to behave so as to bring about a particular outcome, and strives to bring about that outcome in different ways, depending on the circumstance.<sup>4</sup> In short, the entity can be usefully regarded as “striving” toward certain outcomes. Any entity with a perspective both interprets and has interests, and any entity which both interprets and has interests has a perspective. We should further note, since it will become important shortly, that all living things have a perspective, on this understanding, since living things must interpret their environments and have interests in order to sustain themselves as living things. (Some complex things usually regarded as non-living—such as chess programs and national economies—may also count as having perspectives, depending on further specifications of the details of “interpreting” and “having interests.” We need not take up that task here.)

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<sup>4</sup> See Richardson’s helpful discussion of the plasticity of drives (2004: 74–75).

Now let us postulate an entity, “Life,” which behaves in the following ways. (1) It classifies every other entity in the world as either perspective-bearing or non-perspective-bearing. (2) It ignores all non-perspective-bearing entities. (3) Among all the perspective-bearing entities, it classifies their interests as either (a) likely to bring about an increase in the strength or number of perspective-bearing entities, or (b) unlikely to do so. And (4) it strives to promote interests in the (a) category. So, to put the proposal in simpler terms: Life strives to promote entities with perspectives, as well as the particular interests which promote entities with perspectives. Clearly, on this proposal, Life both interprets and has interests, and so, on our understanding, it has a perspective.

Life, so described, might sound like an implausible theoretical entity, but in fact something like it was proposed by the mid-nineteenth-century biologists whom Nietzsche read and studied with some enthusiasm. Moore (2002) cites Ernst Haeckel, Wilhelm Roux, and William Rolph as all promoting a kind of *hylozoism*, which maintained that living things are driven by an internal force or striving toward life and power. This force had no goal other than the promulgation of life. Such an internal force was believed to be a necessary supplement to Darwinian evolution, since it was difficult to see in the nineteenth century how else to explain the “drive toward life” that seemed manifest in organisms. Living things, it was believed, are not merely mechanical in nature, but have strong preferences, and strive even at the most basic level to express those preferences.

We can now turn to the philosophical work Life is supposed to do in Nietzsche’s adjudication of moral values. This can be explained quite straightforwardly. Nietzsche’s set of values are aimed at promoting Life’s interests, but the great majority of human moral systems, he argues, have been and are antithetical to Life:

Every naturalism in morality—which is to say: every *healthy* morality—is governed by an instinct of life [...] But *anti-natural* morality, on the other hand, which is to say almost every morality that has been taught, revered, or preached so far, explicitly turns its back on the instincts of life,—it *condemns* these instincts, sometimes in secret, sometimes in loud and impudent tones. (TI Morality 4)

On our interpretation, this is just to say that the interests promoted by traditional morality tend not to promote the numbers and strength of perspective-bearing entities. Nietzsche’s own set of values will promote them, and that, he believes, is what makes his values *healthy* (or in other words, “Life-advancing”).

The interests of Life would be shared by all healthy living things, since all living things, as we noted, are perspective-bearing entities, and Life strives to promote them and their strength. But it is also theoretically possible (and, as Nietzsche would say, “all too human”) for a living thing to condemn Life’s interests, and turn against its own interests as a living thing. A living thing may simply make a wrong judgment about what really is Life-advancing. Or a living being might become “infected” by an alien drive which is driven to promote its own flourishing, even at the expense of the host organism (think, for example, of alcoholism). Or an organism

might be placed in a context in which a normally healthy, Life-advancing drive might lead to values and behavior that are antithetical to Life. For example, imagine someone with a healthy drive to express their own power and gain the esteem of others. When this person is schooled within an ascetic, Christian society, then he comes to believe that he can satisfy that drive only by turning ambition against itself, outdoing everyone else in chastity, humility, and poverty. His impotence actually becomes a demonstration of his power. He may win the esteem of others. But as a result, in the lifestyle he has adopted, he has turned against his own interests as a living thing. The decision made by such a person, Nietzsche writes, “is just one of life’s value judgments,” made by a “declining, weakened, exhausted, condemned life” (TI Morality 5). This is a case of which, as we saw earlier, Nietzsche would say that “Morality, to the extent that it is just *condemnation*, without *any* attention to, or interest in, or concern for life, is a specific error that you should not pity, *an idiosyncrasy of degenerates* that has caused incalculable damage!” (TI Morality 6).

## 14.2 The Privilege of Life’s Perspective

So we can make sense of “Life’s perspectives and objectives.” But at the same time, Nietzsche himself would insist that there are many other possible perspectives. Christianity is a perspective, as is Aristotelianism and utilitarianism and Kantianism. Why should Life’s perspective have any greater moral authority than any other perspective?

We have just seen one possible reply. All living things share Life’s perspective, just in virtue of being living things. *Before* being moral, we might say, we need to satisfy Life’s concerns; for otherwise we are dead and questions about what we should or should not do are moot. So Life’s perspective is privileged because it is at a foundational level of who we are.

But this reply should not satisfy us for two reasons. First, who is to say that we should understand ourselves as fundamentally organic beings? At least some Christians and the Kantians think otherwise, of course, and they see our moral natures as rooted in something beyond nature. So why assume Nietzsche’s more naturalistic account of human nature? And, second, even if we are organic beings, why should the objectives of our organic nature take precedence over our objectives as moral beings? That is to say, why shouldn’t moral aims—whatever their source—take precedence over what Life urges us to do? Just as Nietzsche condemns traditional morality as being anti-natural, others would praise morality for allowing us to rise above nature’s dictates.

These questions force us to take a deeper look at Nietzsche’s perspectivism, and whether it is possible for any perspective to be privileged. According to Clark (1990), Nietzsche’s perspectivism should be seen as a consequence of his rejection of metaphysical realism. A metaphysical realist maintains that there exist things independently of any human knowledge, any possible human knowledge, and even any pos-

sible human concerns. That is to say, according to metaphysical realism, there could exist a theory which meets all of our cognitive interests (such as empirical testability, explanatory power, predictive success, comprehensiveness, and simplicity) but is still *false* in some way which we could never discover, and which could never matter to us, even in principle. Kant was such a realist, maintaining that even a maximally perfect scientific theory of the phenomenal world would not provide us with an adequate account of things in themselves. Clark argues that Nietzsche was such a metaphysical realist early on, around the time of “On Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense,” in which he claimed that what we call “truth” is only “a movable host of metaphors, [...] illusions we have forgotten are illusions” (TL 1; cf. Clark 1990: 65). Such epistemic pessimism can make sense only against a backdrop of metaphysical realism.

But Nietzsche gradually grew skeptical of the notion of the thing in itself and came to regard it as a human fiction. For a brief period, according to Clark, he inconsistently maintained that there is *no* thing in itself, and that our knowledge of *it* is skewed by psychological prejudices. Finally, he landed in perspectivism. According to perspectivism, human beings are capable of constructing many different mutually-incompatible theories, and are incapable of attaining or constructing any single objective, neutral theory which either accommodates or rules out all of the other possible theories. Nietzsche does not carefully explain exactly what perspectives are, or what structure they have, or how many there might be. But from what he does say, we can suspect that each perspective offers its own ontology, its own laws or forces, and its own valuations. In other words, each perspective tells a story about what exists, what makes it change, and which states are better or more valuable than others.

Schematically, a perspective may be said to have the following form:

$$P_n = \{O_n, L_n, V_n\}$$

where “O” is perspective *n*’s ontology, “L” is its laws, and “V” is its values. Each perspective focuses on and ignores different sets of things; each sees different kinds of forces animating the universe; and each has its own view of what *should* happen, or what should be avoided. But perspectives need not be incommensurable. They may overlap to varying degrees, and it will often be possible to compare perspectives, especially when they share the same values. Ptolemaic and Copernican astronomers both valued predictive accuracy, for example, and several generations weighed the advantages of each system for delivering what they valued.

Nietzsche’s radical point, however, is that there is *no* perspective which gets the ontology, laws, and values essentially *right*. The very notion makes no sense, according to Nietzsche, since all knowing is knowing from some perspective or other: “There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival ‘knowing’” (GM III 12). All we can ever do is work within perspectives, shifting and adjusting our beliefs and attitudes as “better” candidates come along, given the values which belong already to the perspectives we now inhabit. (This is essentially the point Quine frequently

made through his use of Neurath's boat analogy.<sup>5</sup>) We can try to ask questions about what in the world is causally responsible for making one perspective better than another, or one theory better than another; but the only answers we can supply will be in terms of the ontology and laws of some particular perspective or other. We cannot really conceive of our situation being otherwise, according to Nietzsche, since we have no genuine concept of nonperspectival knowing:

[L]et us guard ourselves against the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as "pure reason," "absolute spirituality," "knowledge in itself": here it is always demanded that we think an eye that cannot possibly be thought, an eye that must not have any direction, in which the active and interpretive forces through which seeing first becomes seeing-something are to be shut off, are to be absent; thus, what is demanded here is always an absurdity and non-concept of an eye. (GM III 12)

Knowing, Nietzsche claims, requires perspective; we have no concept of what it would be to know without actively interpreting, filtering, and valuing. Once we recognize this, the notion of a "thing in itself" falls away as an empty, impossible fiction. Still, by comparing different perspectives, we can argue meaningfully over the merits of Copernicus and Ptolemy, Protestantism and Catholicism, Schopenhauerianism and Kantianism, and so on, given the values shared by the occupants of each relevant perspective. Call these "in house" disputes, since they are disputes about the best perspective to adopt, given shared values. But we can also adopt a broader perspective and inquire into the values that are *not* shared. So (for a minor example) we can ask whether accurate prediction, a value shared by both the heliocentrist and the geocentrist, is as valuable to us as the value of believing in the literal truth of some passages in the Bible. Or (for a more significant example) we can ask about the different assessments of the nobility of human life implied by the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Kant, as opposed to that of the Homeric Greeks. When we try to assess these different values, we adopt a higher perspective, or a meta-perspective, and try to weigh perspectives against one another with respect to the values they advocate.

We can do this, however, only by adopting some further value. To see this more formally, we are now taking perspectives themselves as our domain; and we are asking which set of values inherent to these perspectives best meets some further, *special* value. Schematically, we now have something like this:

$$V_s (P_n, P_{n+1}, P_{n+2}, \dots) = P_?$$

where " $V_s$ " is this further, special value, " $P_n$ " and the others are various competing perspectives, and " $P_?$ " is the "winner," or the perspective which  $V_s$  selects as the one which best promotes it. We are carrying out a *valuation of values* inherent in various perspectives, determining to what extent each perspective's values promotes our

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the prefatory quote at the beginning of Quine (1960).

“special” value. This, of course, is the project Nietzsche began toward the end of his productive career.

To get a better feel for these special values, let us recall the sorts of large-scale values and perspectives Nietzsche actually saw as the principal contenders. We can identify “ $V_{\text{Christianity}}$ ” (or the values of Christianity), “ $V_{\text{Truth}}$ ” (or the values of truth), and “ $V_{\text{Life}}$ ” (or the values of Life). The first two special values, Nietzsche claims, are the ones that have weighed most heavily in the long history of our culture’s valuation of values; the third is one Nietzsche proposes as a new standard. In his genealogical account of morality, Nietzsche argues that for an excessively long time, the values of Christianity have reigned supreme, and they have been the criteria by which humans have decided to privilege one perspective over another (in particular, an ascetic perspective was privileged over all others). Over time, he goes on to argue, the asceticism of Christianity evolved into the asceticism of truth, or the scientism of Nietzsche’s day. But this has ended in value bankruptcy, according to Nietzsche: the dispassionate valuing of truth above all else reveals that no state of the world is inherently more valuable than any other, and thus no perspective is inherently more valuable than any other. This culminates in the problem of *nihilism*. In its wake, Nietzsche, through his philosophy, proposed a new special value, or a revaluation of all values: “ $V_{\text{Life}}$ ” or the values of Life, which promises to give us a different rank ordering of perspectives, on the basis of how Life-affirming each perspective is.

But where are these “special” values supposed to come from? It is tempting to claim that they lie buried within us, within our nature. But this is exactly the sort of move Nietzsche would suspect as being disingenuous, prompted by wishful thinking, and a possible feint toward some spiritual thing in itself. Given his perspectivism, Nietzsche cannot plausibly maintain that his special values are somehow deeper or fundamental to our natures or to the nature of reality. What he can propose, however, is that they are *legislated*, that is to say proposed, by philosophers, either knowingly or unknowingly. Nietzsche believed that, historically, all values have been super-added to the world, or placed upon our experience by human beings: “Whatever has *value* in the present world has it not in itself, according to its nature—nature is always value-less—but rather has been given, granted value, and we were the givers and granters!” (GS 301). This is simply a consequence of values being embedded in perspectives, which are constructed and placed upon experience by human beings. What is new, Nietzsche thinks, is that, with the advance of the higher types of human beings whom Nietzsche thinks are up and coming, values will be consciously and deliberately placed upon experience. Here is the “fundamental thought,” as he records it in a note from 1885:

Fundamental thought: the new values must first be created—we shall not be *spared* this task! For us the philosopher must be a legislator. New types. (How the highest types hitherto (e.g., Greeks) were reared: to **will** this type of “chance” *consciously*.) (NL 1885, KSA 11, 35[47] = WP 979)



This is the positive task of Nietzsche's revaluation of values. The negative task is revealing the unhealthy psychological motivations behind traditional values. The positive task is putting something new in their place, while at the same time knowing that we are not discovering value so much as legislating or proposing it.

The new legislations of value, however, are not entirely arbitrary. While there is nothing to stop a higher individual from proposing (say) a shallow hedonistic pursuit of pleasure as a new supreme value, Nietzsche supposes that these higher individuals will recognize the utility and explanatory power of Nietzschean psychology, and this psychology will predict that valuing shallow pleasures will lead by short route once again (like Christianity) to nihilism, despair, and suicide. Nietzsche's own project is to self-consciously propose a new value, designed specifically to stave off nihilism. The new value is grounded in his own peculiar ontology, which views nature as composed of various drives, and is bound by his own peculiar natural force, which is the will to power.<sup>6</sup>

Thus Nietzsche cannot do more than propose a further perspective to compete with existing perspectives. But he can muster a pragmatic argument in favor of his perspective. While he cannot demonstrate that  $V_{\text{Life}}$  is in some sense the ultimate or objective special value, he can argue that the other available special values lead to severe problems, and that his special value provides an escape from them. In effect, Nietzsche can say to us: "Be honest—do you not *in fact* value Life? And do you not recognize how  $V_{\text{Christianity}}$  leads to  $V_{\text{Truth}}$ , and  $V_{\text{Truth}}$  to nihilism? Do you not in fact wish to avoid nihilism? Do you have anything better to propose? If so, let us by all means hear it!" In making this reply, Nietzsche would be bound by the basic truth of perspectivism: that there is no supreme court of appeal, and it is up to us, within our perspectives, to select the values which seem to press most forcefully upon us. His wager is that, as living beings, Life's values will in fact press upon us most strongly, especially if we are convinced that the other alternatives result in nihilism.

The perspective-bound nature of Nietzsche's proposal is demonstrated when, in *Twilight of the Idols*, he acknowledges that, "for us"—presumably his devoted readers, who are on board with his project—we really have no means to demonstrate that the value of Life is objectively superior to all other values:

Even to raise the problem of the *value* of life, you would need to be both *outside* life and as familiar with life as someone, anyone, everyone who has ever lived: this is enough to tell us that the problem is inaccessible to us. When we talk about values we are under the inspiration, under the optic, of life: life itself forces us to posit values, life itself evaluates through us, *when* we posit values. (TI Morality 5)

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<sup>6</sup> For a full and systematic account of Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power, see Richardson (1996).

Nietzsche's claim here is that when we adopt his perspective, we take our values to be the values of Life ("life itself evaluates through us"); in other words, the will to power inherent in us as living beings compels us to value things according to the perspective of Life. To not see things this way would require us to put aside Life's drive—essentially, to consider the world from the perspective of non-living beings—and adopt a different perspective. This we cannot do. So, for us, the problem of revaluing the values of Life is "inaccessible." But this argument of course presumes the ontology of Nietzsche's own perspective, which a Christian or Kantian will not share. Perhaps, according to Nietzsche, they will consider sharing it, once they see that they have been backed into nihilism. Either that, or they will have to embrace nihilism, and take seriously the consequence that life is utterly of no significance.

It is precisely from this partisan perspective that Nietzsche criticizes the "miserable fool" who paints himself on the wall and pronounces, "*ecce homo!*" The so-called fool has not realized that his own unhealthy psychology is driving him to produce these moral pronouncements. Typically, such fools are trying unsuccessfully to get some approximation of Christian virtues on the basis of some ontology and set of laws, which in fact can result only in nihilism. Their hope is only wishful thinking, driven by psychological pathology, and they have neither the wit nor courage to face the true origin and consequences of their own perspective. The portraits they produce record only what they wish could be so, not what is so.

### 14.3 Living from Life's Perspective

Well: what makes Nietzsche so sure he is better off in this regard? His confidence in his perspective should be only as strong as the explanatory power of his psychology. If he has managed to provide a compelling account of human psychology, and if he seems right about the genealogy of morality, and about the nihilistic consequences of Christianity, then he is in an excellent position to provide an alternative set of values—at least, for anyone who does not want to embrace nihilism. On the other hand, if Nietzsche was fundamentally wrong about human psychology, or if his own mind was warped in ways his own psychology could not diagnose, then all bets would be off. Nietzsche must have recognized this as a possibility, since he wanted neither disciples nor "echoes" of his thinking, but daring and intelligent friends who would ruthlessly attack his ideas and try to out-think him.

But for the sake of argument let us suppose he was right and see where it takes us. What is the life lived from the perspective of Life? As we saw earlier, Life's interest is to promote and sustain the strength or number of perspective-bearing entities. This may translate into both individualistic attitudes and social attitudes.

As individuals, Life would prompt us to try to foster within ourselves as many healthy drives as possible. Indeed, we find such recommendations in Nietzsche's positive philosophy. As Richardson writes, Nietzsche's ultimate hero, the overman, "is that very rare person who can form a wealth of conflicting parts into a system

in which they all find expression, yet also are phases in an encompassing project” (1996: 69). Richardson illustrates this with a passage from one of Nietzsche’s notes:

The highest human being would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, and in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant human being shows itself strong, one finds instincts that drive powerfully *against* one another (e.g. Shakespeare), but are restrained. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 27[59] = WP 966)

“*Against* one another” in this passage indicates just how, in Nietzsche’s view, drives and living beings are fostered—namely, through opposition and challenge. Nietzsche understands strength and health as resilience, or an ability to rebound from threat and injury.<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare is an example of such a locus of warring drives inasmuch as he must have had a full population of wildly different characters within him. We may think of a great actor, too, who is able to assume many different characters and see life, as it were, from these many different points of view. But in any person so complicated, the drives must somehow be restrained and managed. Otherwise, warring drives will eventually consume one another, i.e., turn them toward their own end. The dynamic, complex manifold of warring drives must be stable over time, or harnessed together into a single, encompassing project.

As members of a society or community, Life would prompt us also to try to foster as many differing perspectives as possible. We find this too in Nietzsche’s positive philosophy, even as early as the second book of *Human, all too Human*. Here Nietzsche makes an explicit link between interpersonal differences and intrapersonal differences:

What is love but understanding and rejoicing at the fact that another lives, feels and acts in a way different from and opposite to ours? If love is to bridge these antitheses through joy it may not deny or seek to abolish them.—Even self-love presupposes an unblended duality (or multiplicity) in one person. (HH II 75)

This point is somewhat tamer than the points Nietzsche will make later, but the core idea is the same as Life’s central interest in fostering and preserving diversity in perspectives. The romantic way of putting this is that love requires us to preserve joyfully the differences existing between the lover and the beloved. The later, unromantic, Nietzschean way of putting the point is that only by preserving or even augmenting these differences can there be the conflict and struggle which is needed in order to strengthen the Life within us.

This latter point is important to note lest Nietzsche be understood as a selfless defender of cognitive or cultural diversity. Nietzsche is certainly no advocate of gentle toleration and mutual understanding. Rather, he consistently advocates *war* among differing perspectives, perpetual challenge and attack, and ongoing contest. “It is the

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<sup>7</sup> See Huenemann (2010).

good war that hallows any cause,” he writes (Z I 10). This is, again, because of his model of health and strength as resilience. Life’s aim is to strengthen and multiply perspective-bearing entities, and Nietzsche believes that the straightforward way of doing this is by challenging these entities with adversity, hardship, and misfortune.

So, overall, living from Life’s perspective means an active encouragement of healthy, regulated complexity and conflict, both within the individual and among individuals, with the strategic aim of promoting the strength and diversity of perspective-bearing entities. There are several elements in this proposal we should find attractive. It is courageous and powerfully life-affirming. It prizes self-knowledge and, in a certain sense, self-improvement. But adopting this grand goal on behalf of Life also means *not* placing as much stock in two values we have traditionally held: *truth*, and *morality*.

Of course, there are some truths an advocate of Life would value very highly—namely, truths about what promotes Life’s values, and what really does increase the strength and health of individuals, and so on. But apart from the truths which impact Life’s immediate concerns, Life is not all that interested in truth, particularly for truth’s own sake. Life is concerned primarily with advancing its own agenda, and not necessarily getting an accurate picture of the world:

We do not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment; this is perhaps where our new language will sound most foreign. The question is how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, how well it preserves, and perhaps even cultivates, the type. (BGE 4)

There may be many false beliefs which, in Nietzsche’s sense, promote and preserve life. Even Christianity, a perspective Nietzsche obviously loathes, can be said to have furthered Life’s cause; if nothing else, it certainly provided Nietzsche himself with a worthy opponent against whom to build his own strength.

This perspective upon beliefs—assessing their life-advancing qualities rather than their truth—accounts for the distinctive air of “connoisseurship” surrounding many of Nietzsche’s analyses of philosophical beliefs. Nietzsche rarely simply argues against the truth of a belief. He far more often tries to illustrate and denigrate the sort of person likely to have this sort of belief. The entire first chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example (where the above passage is located), is a series of attacks on various philosophies and philosophers, including Plato, Epicurus, the Stoics, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and modern-day materialism. In each case, Nietzsche tries to illustrate how the thinking has grown out of some ugly character flaw, or some irrational fear, or—most simply—*bad taste*. He assesses the thought aesthetically, but with an aesthetics of psychic health. He considers the beliefs in terms of the strength of spirit or mind they reflect, and not by the strength of the philosophical arguments behind them. He takes down Spinoza with the remark that, by arming and outfitting his philosophy in a “hocus-pocus of a mathematical form,” he only betrays his own “personal timidity and vulnerability” as a “sick hermit” (BGE 5). He supposes himself to have moved beyond the arena where arguments are supposed to decide whether

a philosophical belief is worth having. He looks instead to the sort of life the belief comes from, or the sort of life it fits into, and endorses or rejects the belief depending on how “life-advancing” or *noble* that sort of life is.

Life also has no concern for traditional morality. To be sure, Nietzsche thinks, certain conditions have favored traditional morality, where “favored” means “rendered Life-advancing.” But conditions change, and when they do, what was Life-advancing may become Life-stunting. Of course, this is precisely why Nietzsche takes his great task to be the revaluation of all values, or the legislation of values which, given our current conditions, will further promote Life. But what values, specifically, would Life legislate?

Overall, it seems that Life encourages us to see individuals as loci of power, and to feel obligated to do what we can to strengthen that power. If, as Nietzsche presumes, an individual’s power is strengthened by placing it in opposition to other forces or powers, then Life encourages us to seek out opposition for the sake of our power’s advancement. Life urges us to face both our fears and the values and perspectives with which we disagree, so that we strengthen in response to them. When it comes to the morality we have been taught, Life’s challenge may require us to act in ways we would traditionally view as cruel—for if we are challenging within ourselves the value we place on kind-heartedness, then we need to face cruelty as a genuine, lived experience. One imagines confronting others and ourselves with what we fear most, just so that we can face our fears and overcome them. We would look upon fearful, timid, or weak individuals in the way that we now look down upon unrepentant wrongdoers—with scorn and disdain. We would celebrate nothing more than a really good fight. We would value kind actions only so far as these qualities betokened a surplus of power on the part of the agent, and not any sort of weak pity or sympathy. It is for good reason that Nietzsche believed that many would find his revaluation of values shocking, disturbing, and even calamitous.

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## Part VII: *Redlichkeit* and Embodied Wisdom





Vanessa Lemm

## 15 Truth, Embodiment, and Probity (*Redlichkeit*) in Nietzsche

In the history of western philosophy, truth is typically associated with an activity of the mind or of the intellect.<sup>1</sup> For Nietzsche, instead, what distinguishes the human intellect is its capacity to produce errors and illusions (TL 1). However, seen from the perspective of life, errors and illusions are inherently life-preserving because they permit the social formations based on conventions that sustain life. Hence, for Nietzsche, the intellect is before all an instrument for the preservation of social and political forms of life rather than for the uncovering of truth. If error and convention are life-preserving, the relation of (philosophical) truth to life becomes a problem of uncertain solution. The value of philosophical life lived in pursuit of (non-conventional) truth is no longer unquestionable. Nietzsche reverses the traditional understanding of philosophy by putting forth the claim that truth does not have a value in itself, rather its value depends on whether it enhances or diminishes the power of life. In this chapter, I intend to show that for Nietzsche the concept of truth that enhances life is truth understood as *Redlichkeit* (probity). Additionally, I argue that *Redlichkeit* makes possible a conception of philosophical life that is political through and through and yet stands in critical tension with the conventional conception of truth that lies at the basis of social and political forms of life.

The following chapter is divided into four parts: in the first part (15.1) I present the relation between truth and embodiment in Nietzsche. I then distinguish, in the second part (15.2), between philosophical truth and conventional or political truth in order to show, in the third part (15.3), that these two conceptions of truth reflect two types of embodiment which represent two different conceptions of political life and of society with others. Whereas political or conventional truth lays the ground for a form of social and political life based on an equalizing domination of the other, philosophical truth produces a form of social and political life characterized by openness to the other. This openness to the other takes the form of an agonistic friendship favoring the (probe) pursuit of (philosophical) truth. I argue that according to Nietzsche, a society based on the equalizing domination of the other leads to a generalized “spiritual stultification [*Verdummung*]” of the human kind (HH I 224). Instead, a form of social and political life based on philosophical truth enhances its cultural and spiritual growth. In the concluding section of this chapter (15.4), I argue that such a life-enhancing idea of embodied philosophical truth is exemplified by Nietzsche’s conception of truth as *Redlichkeit*.

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1 See also Lemm (2015) for a Spanish version of this chapter.

## 15.1 Truth and Embodiment

In a note from the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche claims that the body allows us to distinguish what is life-enhancing from what is life-diminishing: “For the distinction between what turned out well [*Gerathenes*] and what turned out badly [*Mißrathenes*], the body is the best advisor, the body [*Leib*] can at least be studied [*mindestens ist er am besten zu studieren*]” (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[485]). Against those who see in “consciousness” the highest stage of human development, Nietzsche praises the body (*Leib*) as infinitely superior, as a “marvellous bringing together of the most multiple life [*prachtvolle Zusammenbringen des vielfachsten Lebens*]” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4]). Nietzsche recommends following the “guiding-thread of the body [*Leitfaden des Leibes*]” in all matters of scientific inquiry (*Forschung*) (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[432]), especially in relation to matters of the spirit (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[374], see also NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[91]):

If we assume that the “soul” was an attractive and mysterious thought, a thought which philosophers rightfully only gave up reluctantly—maybe what they have learned to receive in exchange for the “soul” is something even more attractive, even more mysterious: the human body. The human body, in which the whole far and recent past of all organic becoming is again alive and corporal, through, above and beyond which a tremendous unheard stream seems to flow: the body is a much more remarkable thought than the old “soul” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[35]).

Nietzsche’s treatment of the question of the value of truth for life follows the “guiding-thread of the body”: for him, truth is not a function of the intellect’s capacity for representation, but rather of the body’s capacity for incorporation.<sup>2</sup> From the perspective of the body, the crucial question of truth becomes whether and how truth can be embodied or incorporated.<sup>3</sup> Only when truth is lived and is manifested physically in and through one’s body does it constitute true knowledge rather than mere illusion. In the Platonic understanding of philosophy, life is indeed associated with error, and that is why truth can be attained only by the intellect transcending the body in the form of an immortal soul or spirit, and philosophical life becomes the practice of learning how to die. But once truth is understood from the perspective of life, as Nietzsche does, then the question becomes: how can life overcome its reliance on error and become truthful to itself while at the same affirming life itself. Nietzsche’s answer is that this is possible only for a form of life that is *redlich*, probe, in the sense of being entirely exposed to the laws of nature and frank in its opposition to social and political conventions.

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<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche distinguishes *Einverleibung* (incorporation or embodiment) from Darwin’s idea of assimilation (*Anpassung*). See NL 1882–83, KSA 10, 4[80] and also NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 7[9] on the difference between *Einverleibung* and *Anpassung* in Darwin.

<sup>3</sup> This question has been discussed by Keith Ansell-Pearson (2006), who pursues Heidegger’s question of what kind of truth it is that can or cannot be incorporated.

Nietzsche articulates the link between life, truth and embodiment in aphorism 11 of *The Gay Science* entitled “Consciousness [*Bewusstsein*].” The aphorism presents human consciousness as the “latest development of the organic,” an organ which would expose the human being to the danger of perishing and dying were it not counter-balanced by the “preserving alliance of the instincts” (GS 11). Nietzsche claims that

[t]he task of *incorporating knowledge* and making it instinctive is still quite new; it is only beginning to dawn on the human eye and is yet barely discernable—it is a task seen only by those who have understood that so far we have incorporated only our *errors* and that all of our consciousness refers to errors! (GS 11).

In GS 110 Nietzsche returns to the idea that errors (*Irrthümer*) are advantageous and species preserving (*arterhaltend*). On this account, the power of knowledge is not determined according to the degree of truth it reflects but according to its age, its degree of incorporation (*Einverleibtheit*) and its character as a condition of life (*Lebensbedingung*) (GS 110, see in comparison NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[247]). In comparison with the archaic (*uralt*), deeply incorporated life-preserving errors (*einverleibten Grundirrtümer*), philosophical truth is of recent occurrence and is the least vigorous form of knowledge: “It seems that one was unable to live with it; that our organism was geared for its opposite: all its higher functions, the perception of sense and generally every kind of sensation, worked with those basic errors that had been incorporated since time immemorial” (GS 110).

Nietzsche’s insight into the relation between life, truth and embodiment has important implications for his understanding of philosophy and of the figure of the philosopher. Truth is no longer the object of a doctrine or a science, but of a form of life in which thought and life must be considered in their unity.<sup>4</sup> From the perspective of life, the task of the philosopher who is motivated by a “pure and honest drive for truth” (TL 1) is to show that genuine truth is more life-enhancing and carries forth greater health than the deeply incorporated life-preserving errors that are a condition of life. This is a difficult task given that life needs errors and illusions more than it needs truth. The philosopher’s “new insights [*neue Erkenntnis*]” are dangerous and “damaging [*schädigend*]” for life (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[320]). The question of the embodiment of truth becomes a question of strength: “how much of the “truth” one could still barely endure—or to put it more clearly, to what degree one would *need* [*nöthig*] it to be thinned down, shrouded, sweetened, blunted, falsified” (BGE 39). The philosopher succeeds in this struggle against incorporated error if he or she can demonstrate that the need for errors and illusion as a means of self-preservation can be overcome into a new, higher and altered form of life, thereby proving that living according to truth is not only possible but also more life-enhancing. Such an overcoming presupposes that life and truth are inseparably linked to each other. It

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4 On the inseparability of life and thought in Nietzsche, see Derrida (1978).

requires affirming that truth and error are not opposites but are both inscribed in the same continuum of life: “The will to know [*Erkennen-wollen*] and the will to error [*Irren-wollen*] are like high and low tide. When *one* of them maintains absolute rule over the other, the human being perishes; and *with it* its capacity [for knowledge]” (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[162]). However, in the end, there can be no final overcoming of error and this is why for Nietzsche, the question of how far truth can be embodied remains an open question, an open experiment through which one simultaneously discovers and creates new forms of life (GS 110).

## 15.2 Truth and Politics

Nietzsche typically opposes the figure of the philosopher and his or her embodied truth to the figure of the *Gelehrte*, the scholar or scientist, whose truth is worthless precisely because it is not embodied: “I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example. [...] But this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books [...]” (SE 3). In those cases where the *Gelehrte* manages to embody his or her truth, it turns out to be a life-diminishing kind of truth: the *Gelehrte* is an inherently unfertile and unproductive type of being (SE 3, Z IV On the Higher Human Being). The *Gelehrte* faces the same fate as the metaphysician: “Metaphysics makes thought unnatural [*unnatürlich*], unfertile [*unfruchtbar*] (it does not grow together) it ends up thoughtless [*endlich gedankenleer*]” (NL 1878, KSA 8, 29 [14]). Besides the *Gelehrte* and the metaphysicians, Nietzsche also contrasts the figure of the philosopher and his or her embodied truth with the figure of the politician or religious leader as for example in *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

The opposition between philosophy and politics is already at stake in his early text *On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense*, where Nietzsche distinguishes between political or conventional truth, on the one hand, and philosophical truth, on the other.<sup>5</sup> These different notions of truth reflect two ways of life which are diametrically opposed to each other: political life represents the established form of life of any given social group in contrast to philosophical life which is typically represented by the life of the solitary one or hermit (*Einsiedler*). Given this contrast between sociability and solitude, it has often been overlooked that the philosophical life in Nietzsche competes with the political life not only on questions of truth but additionally provides an alternative conception of the political life itself. In the competition (*agon*) between these two ways of life and truth, political truth refers to a basic, normative presupposition of all social beings living together and all communicative action among them, and philosophical truth refers to the critique of these norms revealing their nature as mere illusion or opinion rather than truth. The task of the philosopher is to unmask power-formations and ideological constructs by expos-

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<sup>5</sup> For an earlier treatment of truth in TL, see Lemm (2009: 111–151).

ing how the domination of the human being is central to the establishment of a political truth that can function as the basis of civil society. Against political truth, the philosopher upholds the idea of philosophical probity (*Redlichkeit*) exemplified by a philosophical life that overcomes the domination of the human being occasioned by the political life and its effort to provide unquestionable foundations to social order and political power.

In *On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche introduces the emergence of political truth in the following way:

Insofar as the individual wishes to preserve himself in relation to other individuals, in the state of nature he mostly uses his intellect for concealment and dissimulation [*Verstellung*]; however, because necessity and boredom also lead the human beings to want to live in societies and herds, they need a peace treaty, and so they endeavor to eliminate from their world at least the crudest forms of the *bellum omnium contra omnes*. In the wake of this peace treaty, however, comes something which looks like the first step towards the acquisition of that mysterious drive for truth. For that which is to count as “truth” from this point onwards now becomes fixed, i. e. a way of designating things is invented which has the same validity and force everywhere, and the legislation of language also produces the first laws of truth (TL 1).

This passage is interesting because it shows that for Nietzsche, the foundation of society on conventions is “the first step towards the acquisition of that mysterious drive for truth” (TL 1). In other words, political truth precedes philosophical truth. Philosophical truth is inseparably entangled with political truth to the extent that its constitution or emergence cannot be thought outside of a social and political context. Accordingly, philosophical truth rather than reflecting an apolitical or asocial form of life, can only be thought from within the political realm of the *polis*.

A note of the *Nachlass* from the same period confirms this idea and provides additional insight into the nature of political truth and of life in society with others:

Faith in truth is necessary [*nöthig*] to the human being. Truth seems to be a social need [*soziale Bedürfnis*] [...] The need [*Bedürfnis*] for truthfulness begins with society. Otherwise the human being lives in eternal dissimulations. The foundation of the state stimulates truthfulness—The drive for knowledge has a *moral* source (NL 1872–73, KSA 7, 19[175], see also 19[229], 19[230]).

What stands in the foreground in this passage is the emphasis on the need of life for political truth, namely, the need to constitute and secure a social and political order which guarantees the preservation of human life. Here Nietzsche detects the utilitarian nature of political truth as a social norm or moral convention which individuals must respect if they want to enjoy the privileges of a secure life in the society of others.

Nietzsche pursues the intimate relation between politics and morality when he claims that in order for human beings to be able to live peacefully in society with others, they need to incorporate (*einverleiben*) a particular moral sensibility for “right” and “wrong,” “error” and “truth,” “justice” and “injustice” (TL 1). It is only through the bodily incorporation (*Einverleibung*) of such a moral sensibility

for (political) “truth” that these errors become effective as legally binding norms. The incorporation of conventional or political truth (i. e. error) has been successful when conventional or political truth is linked with a moral feeling:

[t]he feeling that one is obliged to describe one thing as red, another as cold, and a third as dumb, prompts a moral impulse which pertains to truth [*erwacht eine moralische auf Wahrheit sich beziehende Regung*]; from its opposite, the liar whom no one trusts and all exclude, human beings demonstrate to themselves just how honorable, confidence-inspiring and useful truth is (TL 1).<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche’s analysis of conventional or political truth reveals that politics and morality are inseparable from each other. Their value consists in their utility, not in their truthfulness.

While Nietzsche clearly distinguishes the need for political truth as a set of moral and legal norms or conventions required by human social existence from philosophical truth, the question of what kind of political life would enhance philosophical truth remains largely open at this stage in his thinking. Nietzsche advocates a return to the pre-Socratic ideal of philosophical life as an example of a “pure and honest drive for truth” (TL 1) but he does not specify how this return may allow us to rethink the role that truth plays in a form of life that overcomes the domination found at the basis of political power. I suggest that we follow “the guiding-thread of the body” to gain further insight into a conception of a philosophical life in community with others that overcomes the power-knowledge formations at the basis of social and political forms of life. In particular, we need to take a closer look at Nietzsche’s conception of embodiment (*Einverleibung*) and distinguish the incorporation of error from the embodiment of truth.

## 15.3 Politics and Embodiment

In Nietzsche’s conception of embodiment, one can distinguish between two types of embodiment which reflect two ways of relating to others and hence also two different conceptions of community.<sup>7</sup> According to Nietzsche’s genealogical discourse, the human being had to transform itself into a herd animal, an inherently social and group-oriented being, in order to survive. The constitution of social and political forms of life coincides with the task of protecting and preserving human life in response to a need, namely, the need to overcome the relative weakness and inferiority

<sup>6</sup> See also GM II 1–3, where Nietzsche argues that the capacity to make promises and live in society with others requires the forced memorization of a set of moral rules and norms.

<sup>7</sup> For an earlier treatment of the relationship among embodiment, truth and politics in Nietzsche, see Lemm (2013: 3–19) where I argue that Nietzsche’s conception of embodiment reflects both a strategy of immunity and of community that maps onto Roberto Esposito’s distinction between *immunitas* (Esposito 2011) and *communitas* (Esposito 2010).

of the human being with respect to its environment. Interestingly, the foundation of society also coincides with a movement of embodiment, where embodiment is defined as a process of appropriation (*Aneignung*) (AOM 317) and domination (*Herrschaft*) (BGE 259). It is by means of appropriation and domination that society seeks to overcome the perceived hostility and danger arising from its immediate environment. In this context, embodiment (*Einverleibung*) designates a process of life through which ever more powerful wholes (*Ganzheiten*) are constituted and preserved by the annihilating and excluding incorporation of the other.<sup>8</sup> As such incorporation lies at the basis of the foundation of social and political orders where the exploitation (*Ausbeutung*), subjugation (*Unterdrückung*) and domination (*Herrschaft*) of the other (whether human, animal and other) defines life in society with others.

Incorporation as a form of domination is not only at stake in the relationship between a society and its environment, its outside or other, but also characterizes the relationship among a society and its members. Nietzsche underscores that society is particularly successful in preserving the life of the group when it fully incorporates (*einverleiben*) each individual member of the group (HH I 224). In fact, he argues that the whole “social instinct” must be traced back to the individual’s insight into the necessity of incorporating (*einverleiben*) itself into a group (*Bund*) for the sake of survival (NL 1876, KSA 8, 19[115]). The appropriation of the individual by the group or State is complete when all individuals live according to the same “habitual and undisputable principles [*gewohnten und undiscutierbaren Grundsätzen*]” (HH I 224) or, as Nietzsche will later add in a note from the *Nachlass*, when “the State has incorporated its morality into the individual [*der Staat hat seine Moral dem Individuum einverleibt*]” (NL 1882, KSA 10, 1[44]): “Here [in the State] good sound custom grows strong, here the subordination of the individual is learned and firmness imparted to character as a gift at birth and subsequently augmented” (HH I 224). The appropriation of the individual by the State by means of the incorporation of the morality of the State into the individual provides an example of what I have so far been referring to as the embodiment of conventional or political truth, in other words, an example of the incorporation of error.

Embodiment as a form of domination of the other functions by means of equalization: “Embodiment as equalization [*Einverleibung als Gleichmachen*]” (NL 1886–87, KSA 12, 5[65]). Nietzsche speculates that “the judgment of the equal and similar and persistent [*das Urtheil des Gleichen und Ähnlichen und Beharrenden*]” must have something to do with the satisfaction of the nutritional needs of life, i. e. with the preservation of life (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[269]). *Einverleibung* as an equalizing and ordering force (*gleichmachende-ordnende Kraft*) allows for the incorporation of the exterior world (*Aussenwelt*) (NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[92]) which is then subsumed under the greater whole of society. Despite the fact that the judgment of equality is life-preserving, Nietzsche insists that this kind of judgment is erroneous

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<sup>8</sup> On the law as a mechanism of inclusion by way of exclusion, see Agamben (1998).



and unjust insofar as it undermines the irreducible singularity of the individual which cannot be subsumed under the same, equal and identical. From the perspective of a society which has no use for the otherness of the individual, individual virtues are nothing but instruments that serve the greater utility of the whole where individual virtues are conceived as “a public utility and a private disadvantage with respect to the higher private end” (GS 21).

The predominance of the social over the individual is also reflected in a note from the *Nachlass*, where Nietzsche insists that from the perspective of society as a function of organic life, the free individual (*freigewordener Mensch*) does not exist prior to the formation of society but reflects its latest development. In this account, the human individual begins as part of a whole which enables the existence of human beings as a herd. The individual is an organ of the community (*Gemeinwesen*) and has incorporated all its judgments and experiences: “As long as we are concerned with self-preservation, the consciousness of the ego is unnecessary [*unnöthig*]” (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[316]). Nietzsche therefore contests the idea of the social contract understood as an agreement between individuals, as if the latter could exist prior to society. Nietzsche rejects the idea of the social contract and the so-called “state of nature” for it denies the fact that the human individual is always already inscribed within the greater horizon of life and its conditions for preservation. Only later does the individual emerge, generally in times of corruption, when the ties of society are broken. The emergence of individual freedom reflects a weak form of life which stands in need of a complete re-organization and re-creation of its own conditions of life (see also BGE 262). Nietzsche welcomes the rise of individual freedom not because he is a defender of individualism but, on the contrary, because he believes that free individuals have an impact on the whole of humanity which may result in the re-organization and re-creation of the whole (NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[182]; see in comparison NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[193] and BGE 262).

Despite the unlikely nature of the emergence of the free individual, Nietzsche claims that such an individual constitutes the ultimate aim of society (and of nature), precisely because of what they give to the whole:

All wisdom and reason in our life, is the result of the development of singular individuals who slowly imposed, forced, disciplined, *embodied* their wisdom and reason into humanity—in such a way that nowadays it seems as if they would have always belonged to the essence of the human being (NL 1881, KSA 9, 12[90], emphasis mine).

Throughout his writing career, Nietzsche reflects on the question of how to bring forth such liberated and liberating individuals (*freigewordene Menschen*), on their conditions of existence (SE 3; BGE 262), and what may be required for their emergence to become a necessity rather than mere contingency. When we look at the conditions of existence that favor the becoming of individual freedom we find a different idea of embodiment that stands in contrast to embodiment as a dominating equalization.

Although Nietzsche acknowledges that the process of socialization responds to a need of life, he also warns against the dangers implied in the process of *Einverleibung* as a dominating equalization. The most immediate dangers are cultural stagnation and a kind of generalized “spiritual stultification [*geistige Verdummung*]” (HH I 224). In response to this problem, he points towards a different politics of embodiment which is not directed against the individual, but, on the contrary, sees in the irreducible singularity of the individual an occurrence of the new which enhances the cultivation of the whole. Here, the individual is not perceived as a danger to the preservation of society, but as an occasion for its cultural enhancement and spiritual growth. Nietzsche describes the kind of individual who may advance the whole of society as a weak and fragile kind of being, one who is freer and more refined (*zarter und freier*), and one who would likely perish without further notice (*ersichtliche Wirkung*) (HH I 224). However, from time to time, these weak and fragile types of beings may inflict a wound upon the whole, a wound which infects the whole of society. According to Nietzsche, this contamination of the whole by the free individual reflects not only a process of inoculation and ennobling elevation of the whole, but also an embodiment of truth.

In contrast to the politics of society and of the state, where *Einverleibung* designates a dominating equalization which includes the weak individual by means of exclusion, the embodiment of philosophical truth designates society’s openness to the other where the incorporation of the weak individual effects an inoculating alteration of the whole.<sup>9</sup> Inclusion no longer means the equalization of the individual but the pluralization and diversification of the whole. Here embodiment stands for a different idea of politics, where the underlying principle is not that of equality and equalization (*Gleichmachen*) but that of plurality and pluralization.<sup>10</sup> This alternative politics of embodiment is not exclusively geared towards self-preservation, but also towards cultural and spiritual growth where embodiment reflects a process of creative transformation (HL 1; NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[182]). The latter is associated with the constitution of a human community where the ennobling inoculation (HH I 224), differentiation and pluralization of life stem from the encounter with the other as precisely that force which resists or cannot be incorporated (*Einverleibung*) (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[22]). *Einverleibung* is now conceived as a process of life driven by a receiving and hospitable force, an openness to the other which furthers the multiplicity of life. In what follows, I argue that this different politics of embodiment is exemplified by Nietzsche’s conception of embodied truth as *Redlichkeit* which overcomes forms of social and political life based on the moral obligation to lie according to a determined set of rules.

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<sup>9</sup> See also Esposito (2011) on inoculating alteration as a strategy of community in Nietzsche.

<sup>10</sup> This idea of plurality in Nietzsche no doubt reminds us of Hannah Arendt who famously holds that freedom and plurality are indispensable conditions of politics, see Lemm (2008: 161–174) and Siemens (2005).

## 15.4 *Redlichkeit* as Embodied Truth

*Redlichkeit* in Nietzsche has commonly been interpreted as part of his morality or ethics.<sup>11</sup> It is thanks to Foucault's latest analysis of *parrhêsia*, i. e., frank speech or truth-telling, in classical Greek philosophy, and in particular in the Cynics, that we can appreciate the political importance of *Redlichkeit* in Nietzsche (Foucault 2008, 2009).<sup>12</sup> This political meaning of *Redlichkeit* has often been overlooked simply due to the fact that "*Redlichkeit*" has been translated as "honesty" and hence assigned to the realm of morality or of ethical virtues rather than to that of the political.<sup>13</sup> Instead truth as *Redlichkeit* always already presupposes the presence of another: it can always only exist in relation to the other. This is why truth as *Redlichkeit* takes on a public, common and shared character. Truth on this account can only exist within a public space and cannot be private or closed onto the realm of the individual. As Foucault saw, truth as *parrhêsia* or *Redlichkeit* is in many ways comparable to the free use of reason in Kant's famous essay "What is enlightenment," where freedom of thought is possible only in a public and open space shared with others.<sup>14</sup>

In the *Cours au Collège de France* from 1983 and 1984, Foucault distinguishes between political and philosophical *parrhêsia* and this distinction reflects in many ways what I have been referring to as political and philosophical truth in Nietzsche. According to Foucault, the Cynics exemplify an idea of the philosophical life in which truth is revealed or manifest in the material body of life (Foucault 2009: 159). Foucault, moreover, sets up the idea of the philosophical life as the true life in the Cynics against the Platonic-Socratic ideal of the philosophical life. On this view, the Platonic-Socratic tradition is characterized by the idea of the philosopher as someone who conducts or leads the human beings towards the truth of their souls understood as a metaphysical entity one discovers in the practice of care of self. In the tradition of Cynicism, we have the idea of philosophy as a challenge of life, where one continuously has to prove one's truth by giving one's life a certain style or modality. In the former tradition, philosophy places itself under the para-

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**11** This position has been advanced by Jean-Luc Nancy who argues that *Redlichkeit* in Nietzsche reflects a "moral exigency" and compares probity in Nietzsche to Kant's categorical imperative (Nancy 1983: 63).

**12** See also (Lemm 2014), for an earlier investigation of the problem of the embodiment of truth in Foucault's account of the Cynics through the lenses of Nietzsche's question of how can truth be embodied.

**13** See for example Nauckoff's translation of *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 2001), R. J. Hollingdale's translation of *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (Nietzsche 1997a). See also R. C. Solomon (1999) as well as Kaufmann's translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1995) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (Nietzsche 1966), to name just a few of them.

**14** Kant (1996) and Foucault (2008). On Nietzsche's radicalization of Kant, see also W. W. Sokoloff (2006: 501–518).

digm of knowledge of the soul where this knowledge becomes an ontology of the self. In the latter, philosophy is a challenge, an experiment or test of life, where life is the matter and object of an art of the self or an aesthetics of existence. Foucault claims that the Cynics were the first who truly took serious the problem of life as an object of the care of self and hence are the starting point of this different praxis of philosophical activity (Foucault 2009: 118 ff).

Under the Platonic-Socratic model of a philosophical life, the objective of the care of the self aims at a separation of the soul from the body where the soul is understood as an ontological entity distinct from the body. In other words, the Socratic idea of the philosophical life reflects an idea of truth, where the embodiment of truth has a separating function; where truth and life, soul and body are split from each other, and philosophy as form of life aspires towards the purity of the soul, protecting it from the deviating influence of the instincts and passions of the body. Truth-telling here becomes a metaphysical discourse on the nature or essence of the human being, laying the foundation for an ontological understanding of the human being from which an ethics or rules of conduct can be deduced (Foucault 2009: 147 f.). The metaphysical character of truth in the Platonic-Socratic idea of the philosophical life carries its contest (*agon*) against political life inwardly, as a retreat into the private sphere (the inner citadel), be it that of the individual soul or that of a particular prince, where the role of the philosopher is to lead or care for the soul of the prince (Foucault 2008: 169 ff.).

In contrast to the Platonic-Socratic tradition, truth-telling in the Cynics does not link up with a metaphysical discourse but rather with the necessity to give life a public or common form. Here truth-telling has to define the visible form a human being gives to his or her life. It requires the “courage of truth” to expose one’s physical existence to the challenge of giving it a form or a style. Moreover, this challenge comes along with a distinctly political task, namely, to overcome current social and political orders based on incorporated conventions, i.e. errors, towards a freer form of communal life open to truth. According to Foucault, in the Cynics this new idea of communal life takes on the form of cosmopolitanism exemplifying a non-dominating inclusive openness towards the other (the entire cosmos) that is in accordance with the laws of nature. In what follows, I argue that Nietzsche’s conception of *Redlichkeit* is (cosmo-)political and must be understood within the tradition of Cynic frank speech or truth-telling.<sup>15</sup>

Nietzsche upholds *Redlichkeit* as the highest form of truth: “I love all that looks bright [*hell blickt*] and speaks probe [*redlich redet*]” (Z IV Retired, see also Z IV Magician). “Probity, truthfulness and love of wisdom” belongs to the “genius of the

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<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche’s debt to the Cynics has been discussed extensively by Peter Sloterdijk (1987). For a good overview, see Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting (1996). See also Lemm (2017) for a more extensive discussion of knowledge, probity and the metamorphosis of human nature in Nietzsche and the Cynics.

heart,” Nietzsche’s vision of Dionysus as a philosopher (BGE 295). Nietzsche praises cynicism for having come closest to what he calls *Redlichkeit*:

Cynicism is the only form in which base souls approach probity; and the higher human being must listen closely [*Ohren aufzumachen*] to every coarse or subtle cynicism, and congratulate himself [*sich jedes Mal Glück zu wünschen*] when a clown without shame [*Possenreisser ohne Scham*] or a scientific satyr speaks out precisely in front of him (BGE 26).

Furthermore, the affinity between *Redlichkeit* and cynicism in Nietzsche is evidenced by his claim that it was, among other things, thanks to a “bit of cynicism, a bit of barrel” that he learned how to “talk like a hermit [*einsiedlerische Reden*]” (AOM Preface 5). In *Ecce homo*, he exclaims that cynicism counts among the highest achievements on earth in particular in regards to writing good books (EH Books 3).

*Redlichkeit* in Nietzsche has all the features of philosophical truth discussed throughout this chapter. First of all, just like philosophical truth and the free individual (*freigewordener Mensch*) (GS 110 and NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[316]), truth as *Redlichkeit* is a new and recent form of truth in comparison with incorporated error: “it is the youngest virtue, still very immature, still often misjudged and taken for something else” (D 456).<sup>16</sup> In a note from the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche insists:

This last virtue, our last virtue is called probity [*Redlichkeit*]. In all other matters we are simply the heirs and possibly also the squanderers of virtue which were not collected and accumulated by us (NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[145]).

Nietzsche identifies *Redlichkeit* as his virtue and as the virtue of the free spirits (BGE 227) because truth as probity does not describe an absolute or final idea of truth. Probity is “something in the process of becoming which we can advance or obstruct as we think fit” (D 456) and hence should not be confused with any kind of dogmatism of the moral, religious or metaphysical kind. As a form of truth in becoming, *Redlichkeit* overcomes the obligation to commit to institutionalized moral, political, religious or patriarchic values:

In matters of passion one can see how far probity before ourselves is missing: one makes presumptions and builds on marriage (with promises which *no probe person could hold against themselves* [*kein Redlicher gegen sich!*]) As in former times when the loyalty of the subject to the Prince, or to the Fatherland, or to the church required making an oath: one swore solemnly to give up probity against oneself! (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[223]).

*Redlichkeit* as truth in the process of becoming reflects Nietzsche’s affirmation of the pursuit of truth as an open experiment through which one simultaneously discovers

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<sup>16</sup> According to Ansell-Pearson, one of the distinguishing features of *Dawn* is that it includes “a call for a new honesty about the human ego and human relations, including relations of self and other and love, so as to free us from certain delusions” (2010: 138).

and creates new forms of life. The open and experimental nature of truth forms the core of Nietzsche's vision of *Redlichkeit* as a scientific attitude required in the honest pursuit of truth. Nietzsche finds this scientific attitude among philologist: "Praise of Philology: as the study of probity" (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[240]). Philology is probe because it acknowledges that the pursuit of truth requires an art of interpretation. Whereas the philologist is devoted to the study and interpretation of texts, the probe philosopher is devoted to the study and interpretation of experiences:

As interpreters of our experiences [*Erlebnisse*]. One type of probity [*Redlichkeit*] has been alien to all religion-founders and such: they have not made their experiences [*Erlebnisse*] a matter of conscience for their knowledge. [...] But we, we others, we reason-thirsty ones, want to face our experiences [*Erlebnisse*] as sternly as we would a scientific experiment [*wissenschaftlichen Versuche*], hour by hour, day by day! We want to be our own experiments and guinea-pigs [*Experimente und Versuchs-Thiere*] (GS 319).<sup>17</sup>

The reference to experience as the starting point for the probe pursuit of truth should not be misunderstood as a falling back into a realist conception of truth. For Nietzsche, our experiences do not reflect a given or underlying truth about human nature. On the contrary, facing individual experiences as a scientific experiment means acknowledging that all our individual experiences reflect interested value judgments which are not absolute but always historically situated:

The scope of the moral [*Umfang des Moralischen*]. As soon as we see a new picture [*Bild*], we immediately construct it with the help of all the old experiences [*Erfahrungen*] we have had depending on the degree of our probity [*Redlichkeit*] and justice. There are no experiences [*Erlebnisse*] other than moral ones, not even in the realm of sense perception (GS 114).

Probity requires affirming that our experiences reflect nothing but old and incorporated errors. Probity as the honest pursuit of truth therefore stands in tension with moral and political conventions: it calls for the overcoming morality (BGE 32). Nietzsche's idea of *Redlichkeit* as a form of truth that leads "beyond good and evil" (Z IV Retired) resonates with Emerson's notion of honesty: "I would gladly be moral [...] but I have set my heart on honesty."<sup>18</sup>

The problem of moral and conventional truth is, as discussed above, inseparable from the problem of embodiment. Let us recall that in Nietzsche as well as in the Cynics, the challenge of *Redlichkeit* is to overcome incorporated error and provide an example of embodied truth. For Nietzsche, *Redlichkeit* is an embodied truth. *Redlichkeit* is not external to the body, some kind of "verbal pomp [*Wort-Prunk*] and mendacious pomp [*Lügen-Putz*]" (BGE 230). *Redlichkeit* affirms the human being as a *homo natura* (BGE 167).

<sup>17</sup> On the lack of *Redlichkeit* in religious founders, see also NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[229].

<sup>18</sup> R. W. Emerson's essay "Experience," cited in Strong (1999: 1162). See also GS 107 and NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[191].

The relation between truth and life or truth and nature in Nietzsche's conception of *Redlichkeit* has various facets. First of all, Nietzsche contrasts the fact that the human being is inscribed in the continuum of life and hence part of nature with the conventional understanding of the human being as apart or above nature. For Nietzsche, affirming the naturalness of the human being means affirming the life of the body rather than hiding it behind illusions of a higher, moral origin. As in the Cynics, *Redlichkeit* requires that one unlearns shame (*Scham verlernen*) and affirms the naturalness of one's instincts (NL 1887, KSA 12, 10[45]). Nietzsche's motto of *Redlichkeit* is: "Let's be naturalistic [*Seien wir naturalistisch*] and let's not paint our inclinations and disinclinations [*Neigungen und Abneigungen*] in moral colors [*moralischen Farbtopfen*]" (NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 1[90]).

Truth as *Redlichkeit* prescribes living in conformity with the principles and laws of nature. The laws of nature as opposed to conventions are the only acceptable standard against which to measure a true life. This is why Nietzsche exclaims: "So, long live physics! And even more long live what *compels* us to her—our probity" (GS 335). From the perspective of probity, the needs and necessities of life are not considered as something that inhibits the becoming of freedom, rather the knowledge of all that is "lawful and necessary" (GS 335) unleashes the creative and transformative potential of the human being. As such truth as *Redlichkeit* leads to a transformation of the human being: living according to the laws and necessities of life liberates the human being's power to continuously create and re-create its own conditions of existence beyond the struggle of self-preservation towards a freer and more truthful form of life.

Furthermore, Nietzsche's conception of *Redlichkeit* reflects an embodied conception of truth insofar as he understands *Redlichkeit* as a drive (*Trieb*) (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[127]). Truth as *Redlichkeit* is not pure and cannot be abstracted from life:

The intellect is an instrument of our drives, it can *never be free*. The intellect becomes sharp in the contest between a variety of drives, and in this contest refines the activity of every single drive. In our greatest justice and probity is will to power [...] (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[130]).

Truth as *Redlichkeit* is will to power and as such it always presupposes a plurality of life forces in continuous struggle for and against each other. Nietzsche contests the idea of a single drive because a single drive always only exists in relation to a plurality of drives in competition with other drives. *Redlichkeit* as an embodied truth undoes the idea of the unity of virtue: *Redlichkeit* in a thinker, for example, points to a multiplicity of traits: "curiosity pride will to power gentleness greatness courage in regards to things that are for most people cold and abstract" (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6 [65]).

Finally, as an embodied truth, *Redlichkeit* means acknowledging life as a plurality of forces which are in themselves irreducible to each other: to be probe and just is to "acknowledge the right of opposite drives [*entgegengesetzte Triebe ein Recht anerkennen*]" (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[234]). *Redlichkeit* and justice go hand in hand insofar as

they overcome the domination and submission of the irreducibly singular to the same and identical. Nietzsche finds an ordering that acknowledges a plurality of irreducible singular drives exemplified in the organization of the body which he compares to social orderings: “our body is but a social structure composed of many souls” (BGE 19). When we follow the “guiding-thread of the body,” we realize that the human being is a

plurality of living beings [*Vielheit belebter Wesen*], which are partly fighting against each other, partly ordered and subsumed to each other, affirming their individual existence and involuntarily also the existence of the whole. Among those living beings there are some which are commanding to a higher degree than obeying, and among them again there exists fight and victory. The totality of the human being has all those characteristics of the organic, which remain in part unconscious and in part becomes conscious in the form of our *drives* (NL 1884, KSA 11, 27[27]).<sup>19</sup>

Commentators have often interpreted Nietzsche’s notion of the body and of organic life as if it were ordered hierarchically and have mapped this notion onto his vision of politics and society as another whole that is ordered hierarchically.<sup>20</sup> This is correct to some extent but the concept of “*Hierarchie*” needs to be understood against the background of Nietzsche’s more general notion of competition (*agon*). The possibility of competition however depends on a plurality of life forces that are ordered according to rank, where order of rank should not be confused with a traditional understanding of hierarchy.<sup>21</sup> Competition as informing the relation between obeying and commanding marks Nietzsche’s definition of life as

a continuous process of sizing up one’s strength, where the antagonists grow in unequal measure. Even in obedience a resistance subsists; one’s power is not given up. Similarly, in commanding there exists a concession that the absolute power of the rival is not defeated, not incorporated [*einverleibt*], not dissolved. ‘To obey’ und ‘to command’ are forms of competitive play (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[22]).

The fact that Nietzsche understands plurality in terms of competition is also exemplified in his conception of *Redlichkeit* as a form of life and truth turned against itself. Truth as *Redlichkeit* is anti-foundationalist: it means thinking against oneself, continuously undermining and questioning one’s so-called truth. For Nietzsche, this type of self-critical thinking is a sign of greatness: “I am not willing to acknowledge any kind of greatness which is not linked to *probity against itself*” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 7[53]). Interestingly, *Redlichkeit* as an engagement of the self against itself has all

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**19** On the body as a plurality, see also: “Along the guiding-thread of the body we learn, that our whole life is possible only due to the playing together of a plurality of different kinds of intelligences, that is due to a continuous and thousandfold obeying and commanding—speaking morally due to the continuous exercise of many virtues” (NL 1885, KSA 11, 37[4]).

**20** For a recent interpretation in this sense, see Richardson (2004).

**21** On this confusion, see Lemm (2011), and also Hatab (1995).



the features otherwise associated with the idea of (political) friendship as a competition between singular and free individuals:

To what extent the thinker loves his enemy. Never keep back or bury in silence that which can be thought against your thoughts! Give it praise! It is among the foremost requirements of the honesty of the thinker [*Redlichkeit des Denkers*]. Every day you must conduct your campaign also against yourself (D 370).<sup>22</sup>

However, it is important to note that this relationship of the self for and against itself is not a relationship of the self that is closed off to the other. Rather it is an agonistic relationship against oneself which according to Nietzsche allows for an open and honest relationship with the other: “Honest [*redlich*] against ourselves and whoever else is a friend to us” (D 556).<sup>23</sup> *Redlichkeit* as friendship implies a loving and giving relationship towards the other:

That love may be felt as love. We need to be probe [*redlich*] against ourselves and know ourselves very well if we are to be able to practice towards others that philanthropic dissimulation [*menschensfreundliche Verstellung*] called goodness and love (D 335).

The intimate relationship between *Redlichkeit* and agonistic friendship illustrates that truth as *Redlichkeit* is turned towards the outside. It is a form of truth that engages the other as that which cannot be assimilated to the same and identical. Accordingly, the greatness of a philosopher and artists depends on their practice of *Redlichkeit* as the exposure of the self towards the outside: “The end of all great thinkers and artist is dark [*duster*], when their probity against themselves has diminished. They lack the joyful living out [*freudige Ausleben*] and flowing out and into the other world [*Hineinströmen in die andere Welt*]” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[215]). Truth as *Redlichkeit* requires a specific and extended sensibility for the “foreign” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[67]), where the foreign, singular and irreducibly other is not simply appropriated and annihilated by means of incorporation but appreciated and respected as an elevating truth.<sup>24</sup> Nietzsche imagines an order of society founded on the probe recognition of the other and of the foreign: “Probity before ourselves [*Redlichkeit über uns*] and recognition of the foreign nature [*Anerkennung der fremden Natur*]” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[203]). Such a society would be life-enhancing for it would ac-

<sup>22</sup> On *Redlichkeit* as thinking against oneself, see also “Probity against ourselves is older than probity against others” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[236]).

<sup>23</sup> See also NL 1882, KSA 10, 3[1].

<sup>24</sup> See also “*My task*: sublimating all drives to such a degree that the perception for the foreign [*Fremde*] goes very far but still remains link with pleasure: the drive of probity against myself, of justice against all things, so strong that its joy would prevail over the value of other types of pleasure, where the latter may be entirely or partly sacrificed where necessary. Although perception without interest does not exist, that would mean total boredom. But the most subtle emotion would be sufficient!” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[67]). See also NL 1881, KSA 9, 11[63].

knowledge especially those individuals who spend themselves and give joy to others (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[203]). It would be a society based on the common and shared: on that which belongs to “all and none [*Alle und Keinen*]” as the subtitle of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* indicates, *A Book of all and none*.

The transformative power of *Redlichkeit* does not only concern the individual and its experiences but also the world and its values. Truth as *Redlichkeit* means the will to power and the will to overcome the world (BGE 227): it is indispensable for the transvaluation of all values. The theme of transformation and transvaluation is one of the main characteristic of the Cynics associated with their power to change the value of money and hence it is not surprising that also Nietzsche associates *Redlichkeit* with “the falsification of money [*Falschmünzerei*]” (NL 1884–85, KSA 11, 29 [46]).

Nietzsche believes that truth as *Redlichkeit* has the power to transform a “people of credulous emulation and blind and bitter animosity [*Volke des gläubigen Nachsprechens und der bitterbösen blinden Feindseligkeit*]” into “a people of conditional consent and benevolent opposition [*ein Volk der bedingten Zustimmung und der wohlwollenden Gegenerschaft*]” (D 167). Such a nation would learn that “unconditional homage to individual person is something ludicrous [*unbedingte Huldigungen von Personen etwas Lächerliches sind*]” (D 167). Nietzsche cites approvingly Carnot’s principle of republicanism: “*Ce qui importe, ce ne sont point les personnes; mais les choses*” (D 167). Let us recall that *res publica* designate public things, things which belong to “all and none” (D 167) and hence cannot be reduced to the liberal idea of property.

Nietzsche rejects the idea of property and claims that even what we commonly refer to as our “individual” or “own” experiences must be acknowledged as something that speaking with probity we owe to others:

Probity with respect to property obliges us to admit that what we are is entirely robbed together from other [*zusammengestohlen*] and that our feelings are all too dull and unrefined with respect to this matter. The individual has a false pride in relation to matter and colour: it can *paint a new image*, to the delight of the connoisseur—this is how it can make up for its interfering with the goods of the world! (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[166]).<sup>25</sup>

For Nietzsche, the probe ones give up the idea of the proper in the name of the common: they treat themselves as double and multiple (*Zwei und Mehrheit*) rather than as unified: “we cannot feel ourselves anymore as one thing [*Einzigkeit*] of the ego: we are always already among a multiplicity [*Mehrheit*]” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[80]). For them the individual keeps splitting and multiplying itself over and over again, acknowl-

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<sup>25</sup> See also: “An egoism that stick with itself and does not take over the other does not exist—accordingly, there does not exist anything like an ‘allowed,’ ‘morally indifferent’ type of egoism that people speak about. One’s promoting oneself always incurs ‘the expenditure of another person’; Life always lives on the expenditure of other life.—Those who do not understand this, have not yet made the first step towards probity” (NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[205]). See also NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[70].

edging the whole community of beings within itself. According to Nietzsche, such individuals embody even the cosmos: “we are the cosmos [*Kosmos*] insofar as we have understood [*begriffen*] and dreamt [*geträumt*] it” (NL 1880, KSA 9, 6[80]). Only those who have embodied the cosmos live according to the laws of nature and are able to confront political and conventional truth in an open and honest manner.

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Keith Ansell-Pearson

## 16 When Wisdom Assumes Bodily Form

There are not many of them, of these non-apologetic, truly non-religious philosophers in the history of philosophy: among the great philosophers, I can see only Epicurus, Spinoza (who is admirable), Marx, when he is properly understood, and Nietzsche. (L. Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*)

Epicurus has been alive in all ages and lives now, unknown to those who have called and call themselves Epicureans, and enjoying no reputation among philosophers. He has, moreover, himself forgotten his own name: it was the heaviest burden he ever cast off. (F. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and his Shadow* 227)

Epicurean doctrine has been greatly maligned and misunderstood in the history of thought.<sup>1</sup> One commentator on Epicurus's philosophy speaks of the 'slanders and fallacies of a long and unfriendly tradition' and invites us to reflect on Epicurus as at one and the same time the most revered and most reviled of all founders of philosophy in the Greco-Roman world (DeWitt 1954: 3). Since the time of the negative assessment by Cicero and the early Church Fathers, 'Epicureanism has been used as a smear word—a rather general label indicating atheism, selfishness, and debauchery' (Leddy and Lifschitz 2009: 4). It is the tradition of modern materialism in philosophy that is responsible for revivifying Epicurean teaching, including notable figures such as Hobbes, Spinoza, Diderot, and La Mettrie amongst others. Although rarely noted in the literature on Epicureanism, significant receptions of Epicurean philosophy take place in nineteenth century European thought. For Marx, writing in the 1840s, and in defiance of Hegel's negative assessment, Epicurus is the 'greatest representative of the Greek enlightenment' (Marx 1975: 73), whilst for Jean-Marie Guyau, writing in the 1870s, Epicurus is the original free spirit, 'Still today it is the spirit of old Epicurus who, combined with new doctrines, works away at and undermines Christianity' (Guyau 1878 : 280). For Nietzsche, Epicurus is one of the greatest human beings to have graced the earth and the inventor of 'heroic-idyllic philosophizing' (WS 295). Epicurus, along with the Stoic Epictetus, is to be revered as a thinker in whom wisdom assumes bodily form. The point is perhaps obvious: philosophy is not simply sophistry or mere *paideia* but an incorporated wisdom that enables the individual to negotiate and affirm the most demanding and challenging questions of existence, including, and notably including, the tests of the self, such as the fact of our mortality and how to live. Pierre Hadot has written instructively about the claims of wisdom and philosophy as a way of life. He echoes Nietzsche's concerns when he writes: 'Ancient philosophy proposed to mankind an art of living. By contrast, modern philosophy appears above all as the construction of a technical jargon reserved for specialists' (Hadot 1995: 272). As he notes, wisdom does not cause us to know but rather makes us *be* in a different way (1995: 265).

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1 Some of the material on Nietzsche in this essay was first presented in Ansell-Pearson (2013).

As a mode of being in the world and a way of life such wisdom brings a serene mind (*ataraxia*), inner freedom (*autarkeia*), and what he calls a ‘cosmic consciousness’.<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche will re-work all three ideas in his middle period, especially the first two.

There are some striking similarities in the reception and appropriation of Epicurus we find in both Marx and Nietzsche. Ultimately, however, the two diverge in their appropriations, with Marx locating in the teaching of Epicurus an abstract individualism and a contemplative materialism, whilst Nietzsche in his middle period writings prizes Epicurus for his teaching on a refined egoism and advocating social withdrawal. In what follows I shall attempt to illuminate these similarities and points of divergence. I shall begin first with Marx and illuminate some salient features of his interpretation of Epicurus; then I shall turn my attention to Nietzsche and highlight the character of his appropriation of Epicurus.

## 16.1 Marx on Epicurus

According to Michael Inwood, Marx’s aim in his doctoral dissertation of 1841 was to ‘redress Hegel’s injustice to Epicurus’ (Inwood 1992: 262). For Hegel, Epicurus does not make an original contribution to philosophy with his philosophy of physics held to be essentially that of Leucippus and Democritus. Hegel’s reflections on the loss of key manuscripts of Epicurus are highly telling:

The number of his writings is said to have amounted to three hundred; it is scarcely to be regretted that they are lost to us. We may rather thank Heaven that they no longer exist; philologists at any rate would have had great trouble with them. (Hegel 1995: 280)

In spite of this negative assessment, Hegel does recognise the importance of Epicurus as an ethical teacher, finding his ethics the most interesting part of his system and the best part of his philosophy. In Epicurus’s practical philosophy we find, as we do in the Stoics, ‘the individuality of self-consciousness’ with the end or *telos* of his ethics being one of psychic tranquillity and undisturbed pure enjoyment of itself. In Epicureanism, as in Stoicism, we find individuality as ethical principle but also a universality of thinking. Hegel concurs with the Epicurean teaching on conquering the fear of death and the fear of the future. He correctly notes the modesty of an Epicurean existence:

The principle of Epicurus is to live in freedom and ease, and with the mind at rest, and to this end it is needful to renounce much of that which men allow to sway them, and in which they find their pleasure. The life of a Stoic is therefore but little different from that of an Epicurean who keeps well before his eyes what Epicurus enjoins. (Hegel 1995: 303)

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<sup>2</sup> On this ‘cosmic consciousness’ see Hadot (1995), especially p. 273.

Simple dishes afford as much enjoyment as costly banquet, should they appease hunger, and this clearly indicates that in making pleasure our aim it is not the enjoyments of the gourmand we need to have in mind, but rather freedom from both pain of body and uneasiness of mind. In spite of the individuality and universality affirmed by Epicurean and Stoic philosophies, for Hegel the two systems of thought are ultimately opponents. However, both systems are one-sided and it is the Notion that can explain this and go beyond it, ‘abrogating fixed extremes of determination such as these, [it] moves them and sets from free from a mere state of opposition’ (Hegel 1995: 310). Marx does not depart from aspects of this ultimate assessment of Epicurus, but he does radically differ from Hegel in his overall appreciation of him.

The opening lines of the dissertation show the extent to which Marx is challenging received wisdom about ancient philosophy, namely, that it culminates and in fact ends with Aristotle. As Marx points out, the Hellenistics are often seen as tendentious and one-sided eclectics, with Epicureanism taken to be a syncretic combination of Democritus’s physics with an ethics derived from the Cynics, and Stoicism as a compound of physics of Heraclitus, a cynical-ethical view of the world, and some logic derived from Aristotle. Like Nietzsche after him, Marx will challenge received conceptions of the history of philosophy and how it is to be narrated. In particular both will identify what Marx calls ‘the setting of the sun’ and Nietzsche ‘the dawn’ in novel and fertile ways. Marx asks a series of fresh and novel questions, noting how the Roman philosophies attempt a synthesis of the pre-Socratic philosophy of nature with regard to physics and the school of Socrates with regard to ethics. All the schools are united in their belief that the aim of philosophy is to produce the wise man (the *sophos*), and this man is also the free human being.

Marx divides his dissertation into two main parts, first looking into the difference between the Democritean and Epicurean philosophy of nature in general and then, secondly, in detail. He adds an appendix in which he subjects to critique Plutarch’s polemic against the theology of Epicurus. Marx begins his dissertation by questioning the wisdom of the view that Greek philosophy came to an end with Aristotle and with the later schools, such as the Epicureans, Stoics, and Sceptics, to be treated ‘as an almost improper addition bearing no relation to its powerful premises’ (Marx 1975: 34). He notes in particular how these different schools are often portrayed as being one-sided and made up of tendentious eclecticism. Marx is keen to contest this reception and to revalue their relation to the older Greek philosophy. His focus is on the relation between the Epicurean and Democritean philosophy of nature and his principal aim is to contest the dominant reception of this relationship in which the physics of the two systems of thought have long been identified. One example given is the reading of Cicero who contends that most of the physics of Epicurus is already to be found in Democritus and where he adds to it he only worsens it. A similar negative appraisal can be found in Plutarch. Marx goes on to note the assessment of the Church Fathers, including Clement of Alexandria and who reinterprets the warning of Paul against philosophy in general into a warning against Epi-



curean philosophy in particular. If we turn our attention to the moderns we find a similar negative assessment of Epicurus, with Leibniz for example noting that what we know of Democritus is what we find borrowed from him in Epicurus and that this is unreliable since he did not always take what is the best. The consensus, then, as Marx reads the literature, is that Epicurus largely borrowed his physics from Democritus and that he is not a thinker who made significant innovations to the doctrine of atomism.

Marx now turn his attention to complicating the received picture of the relation between the two systems, noting that although the ‘principles’—notably atoms and the void—are the same, ‘they stand diametrically opposed in all that concerns truth, certainty, application of this science, and all that refers to the relationship between thought and reality in general’ (Marx 1975: 38). In fact, Marx sees the two philosophers opposed at every step. Democritus is a sceptic about sense perception and our knowledge of an independent external world, and Epicurus by contrast is a ‘dogmatist’. Where Democritus is only able to see the sensuous world as subjective semblance, Epicurus is able to conceive it as objective appearance. Marx elaborates further:

He who considers the sensuous world as subjective semblance applies himself to empirical natural science and to positive knowledge, and represents the unrest of observation, experimenting, learning everywhere, ranging over the wide, wide world. The other, who considers the phenomenal world to be real, scorns empiricism; embodied in him are the serenity of thought satisfied in itself, the self-sufficiency that draws its knowledge *ex principio interno* (from an inner principle). (Marx 1975: 45)

Whereas the sceptic considers existence and the world from the perspective of necessity, the dogmatist, places the emphasis on chance, with each one of them rejecting the opposing view with ‘polemical irritation’ (Marx 1975: 43). We do not need to follow the details of Marx’s interpretation here. The main point to note is that he is drawing attention to what we might call the ‘ethical imperative’ of Epicurean doctrine, in which physics is subordinated to ethics:

All that matters is the tranquillity of the explaining subject. Since everything possible is admitted as possible, which corresponds to the character of abstract possibility, the *chance of being* is clearly transferred only into the *chance of thought*. The only rule which Epicurus prescribes, namely, that ‘the explanation should *not contradict* sensation’, is self-evident; for to be abstractly possible consists precisely in being free from contradiction, which must therefore be avoided. (Marx 1975: 45)

As Marx goes on to note from this insight, the method of explanation sought by Epicurus aims at the *ataraxia* of consciousness, and ‘*not at knowledge of nature in and for itself*’ (Marx 1975: 45). And as one commentator explains, by chance here Marx means not so much pure chance, and as results from the throwing of dice, but rather the argument that recognises that the history of the universe is a contingent one and not one guided by design or providence (see Foster 2000: 45).

Why does Marx turn to Epicurus at this point in his intellectual development? According to John Bellamy Foster, Marx is interested in the relation of Epicureanism to the Enlightenment, evident not only in his doctoral dissertation but in his ‘Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy’ of 1839 (compiled whilst he was working on the dissertation) and subsequent writings such as *The Holy Family* (1845) and *The German Ideology* (1846). What Marx sees in Epicurus is an important moment in the unfolding of a philosophy of freedom, in which the human being frees itself from the bonds of fear and superstition and ‘becomes capable of forging his own happiness’ (Rubel and Manale 1975: 16–17, cited in Foster 2000: 33). In Epicurean doctrine ‘Individual will is asserted; an understanding of contingency becomes central to the wisdom of life’ (Rubel and Manale 1975: 16–17). A materialist ethics has its basis in the insights into mortality and finitude, in which the conquest of the fear of death promoted by established religion and superstition becomes paramount. Freedom begins only ‘when it was possible to ascertain by means of “natural science” the mortality of the soul and the individuals within it’ (Foster 2000: 36). Although, Epicurus advocated a ‘contemplative materialism’ this has to be seen in the context in which he was writing and operating, namely, the aftermath of the hegemony of Macedonia during which time the successors of Alexander fought it out over his empire, and so making political activity at this time seem highly ineffective (Foster 2000: 34). However, in spite of the contemplative aspects Marx was able to perceive in the doctrine radical, practical implications. In his reinterpretation of Epicurus, Marx contests the criticism we encounter in Francis Bacon (and whom Marx starts to read in the 1830s), which argues that Epicurus is an inferior philosopher to Democritus on account of his subordination of natural to moral philosophy. Marx, however, locates in this subordination a philosophy that places the emphasis on the primacy of practical freedom. Marx turns the perceived weakness of the Epicurean doctrine into its great strength and when compared with the Democritean philosophy and its explanation of all things in terms of an iron-clad necessity: ‘Like Bacon in *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, Marx coupled the image of Prometheus in his dissertation with the Greek atomists, though in Marx’s case it was Epicurus rather than Democritus who was to be Prometheus’ ancient counterpart’ (Foster 2000: 52).<sup>3</sup>

Epicurus is a thinker of evolution and for him freedom is something that evolves. This is his great significance for Marx. Although his thinking may have eccentric aspects, such as the doctrine of the swerve or the declination of the atom from the straight line, he succeeds in liberating philosophy from doctrines of determinism and necessitarianism. As Foster neatly puts it:

What fascinated Marx was the fact that Epicurean philosophy ‘swerves away’ from all restrictive modes of being, just as the gods in Epicurean philosophy swerve away from the world—a world of freedom and self-determination over which they hold no sway. In Epicurus ‘the law of the

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<sup>3</sup> For a recent attempt to read Epicurus in the light of his Democritean background, and focused on ethics, see Warren (2002).

atom' is 'repulsion', the collision of elements; it no longer needs fixation in any form. (Foster 2000: 55)

For Marx, the essential insight here is contained in Lucretius when he notes that the swerve or declination breaks the *fati foedera* or the bonds of fate (Marx 1975: 49). Nietzsche too, we may note, comes to appreciate Epicureanism as a liberating doctrine on the importance played by the role of chance in both human affairs and the history of the universe (see D 13, D 33, and D 36). As Pierre Hadot notes, for the Epicurean sage the world is the product of chance, not divine intervention, and this brings with it pleasure and peace of mind, freeing him from an unreasonable fear of the gods and allowing him to consider each moment as an unexpected miracle. Each moment of existence can be greeted with immense gratitude (Hadot 1995: 252). So, whereas for Democritus the world is characterised by necessity, in Epicurean doctrine the emphasis is placed on chance, contingency, and the evolution of freedom. For Marx, Epicurus places the emphasis on a doctrine of freedom that knows no final constraints; his importance is that he frees philosophy both from determinism *and* from the teleological principles of religion (Foster 2000: 56). Of course, Epicurus does not deny necessity completely, since this would mean that everything could come from anything; rather, his aim is to affirm the possibility of freedom that breaks with the bounds of such necessity (2000: 56).

For Marx, Epicureanism shows that sensuousness is a temporal process, indeed, that human sensuousness is what he calls '*embodied time*' in which our perception through the senses is only possible because we are active beings in the world and in relation to nature (Marx 1975: 64). The human being is the site of the disclosure of nature: 'In hearing nature hears itself, in smelling it smells itself, in seeing it sees itself' (1975: 65). At the same time we also experience nature and life as the passing away of all things: the senses are activated by external stimuli that are transitory. This means for Marx that the pure form of the world of appearance is time, and it's on the basis of such an insight that it's possible to credit Epicurus with being the first philosopher to truly grasp appearance as appearance, namely the 'alienation of the essence, activating itself in reality as such an alienation' (1975: 65).

This is a significant move to make and of great importance for our appreciation of the history of philosophy and the events that inform it, such as the Epicurean moment. Typically we associate materialism with a mechanical determinism and that places human beings in a passive relation to nature and the world. We then identify idealism with the counter-doctrine that places the emphasis on our active constitution of nature and the world. Epicureanism is a strict materialism but it is one, on Marx's interpretation, that clearly sees the active dimension of human existence, in which sensation is related to change and passing away, in short, to finitude. As Foster writes:

Already there is an understanding of the existence of alienated self-consciousness, and of knowledge involving both sensation and intellectual abstraction (a complex relation that

Marx was to refer to in his notes as ‘the dialectic of sensuous certitude’). Moreover, in Epicurus is found even the view that our consciousness of the world (for example, our language) develops in relation to the evolution of the material conditions governing subsistence. (Foster 2000: 55)

This explains why Marx is able to say that in spite of its contradictions the philosophy of atomism reaches an apogee with Epicurus in which it is completed as ‘*the natural science of self-consciousness*’. In Epicurus, then, human beings are no longer depicted as being either the products of simple nature or of supernatural forces; rather than relating to a different form of existence they relate to each other, and so instead of providing an ‘ordinary logic’, as Hegel claimed, Epicurus provides this dialectic of self-consciousness, albeit in a contemplative mode. Epicurus is the great teacher for both Marx and Nietzsche of liberation from fear, especially the inner fear that is so hard to extinguish, and in which the human being finds itself incapable of self-determination. This, for Marx, is the greatest sin of religion: to hold back the human being from its freedom, or at least its potentiality for freedom. In this respect Epicureanism is a deeply subversive, and radically atheistic, philosophy, one that Christianity despises and seeks to combat. In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels will praise Epicurus for overthrowing the gods and trampling religion underfoot.

Let me draw this section on Marx to a close by noting a key point: for Marx, Democritus and Epicurus represent two different intellectual types. Democritus is in search of knowledge and is an encyclopaedic seeker; by contrast, Epicurus is ‘*satisfied and blissful in philosophy*’ (Marx 1975: 41). Marx cites Epicurus when he suggests that to serve philosophy is freedom itself. The study of philosophy is not something to be delayed and it is never too early or too late to undertake this study. Democritus is prepared to sacrifice philosophy for the positive sciences modelled on an ideal, and idealised, conception of empirical knowledge. Epicurus, by contrast, has contempt for the positive sciences and is essentially self-taught. And, furthermore, whilst Democritus travels the corners of the world in search of this encyclopaedic knowledge, Epicurus leaves his garden rarely. The rumour is that Democritus blinds himself at the end of his life on account of feeling despair over the acquisition of knowledge, whilst Epicurus, who felt the hour of death approaching, took a warm bath, called for some wine, and advised his friends to remain faithful to philosophy. Philosophy, for Epicurus, is not *paideia* but an *ethopoiesis* in which wisdom assumes bodily form.

## 16.2 Nietzsche on Epicurus

In a note from 1872–73 Nietzsche describes Democritus as ‘the freest human being’ (NL 1872–73, KSA 7, 23[17]). Nietzsche had been preoccupied with him in the 1860s, especially the period 1866–68, in his so-called ‘Democritea’ project where his main concern was with establishing the authenticity of his corpus. As James Porter notes, the story of his involvement with Democritus has been a matter of near total neglect and yet the encounter is of major importance since, in Porter’s words, ‘Nietzsche

trades heavily on the critical potentials of atomism' (Porter 2000: 23). According to Porter, a recuperation of Democritean doctrine from the fragments means inevitably recuperating some of its critical and subversive force—Plato is completely silent on Democritus and atomism, which is an omission noted in antiquity. However, the middle period Nietzsche shows little interest in the innovations of Epicurus's atomism and focuses his attention largely on how Epicurus represents a new ethical awakening.<sup>4</sup> For Nietzsche, Epicurus's teaching can show us how to quieten our being and so help to temper a human mind that is prone to neurosis. Nietzsche confesses to having dwelled like Odysseus in the underworld and says that he will often be found there again. As a 'sacrificer' who sacrifices so as to talk to the dead he states that there are four pairs of thinkers from whom he will accept judgement, and Epicurus and Montaigne make up the first pair he mentions (AOM 408).<sup>5</sup> Epicurus, along with the Stoic Epictetus, is revered as a thinker in whom wisdom assumes bodily form (HH II 224). Nietzsche admits at this time to being inspired by the example of Epicurus whom he calls one of the greatest human beings to have ever graced the earth and the inventor of a 'heroic-idyllic mode of philosophizing' (WS 295). It is heroic because conquering the fear of death is involved and the human being has the potential to walk on the earth as a god, living a blessed life, and idyllic because Epicurus philosophised, calmly and serenely, and away from the crowd, in a garden. In *Human, all too Human* Nietzsche writes of a 'refined heroism' 'which disdains to offer itself to the veneration of the great masses ... and goes silently through the world and out of the world' (HH I 291). This is deeply Epicurean in inspiration: Epicurus taught that one should die as if one had never lived. There is a modesty of human existence in Epicurean teaching that greatly appeals to the middle period Nietzsche.

In his late writings, such as *The Anti-Christian*, Epicurus is depicted by Nietzsche as a decadent, indeed, a 'typical' decadent (A 30),<sup>6</sup> and in one note Nietzsche informs his readers that he has presented such terrible images of knowledge to humanity that any Epicurean delight is out of the question and only Dionysian joy is sufficient: he has been the first to discover the tragic. In the neglected middle period texts, however, the picture is quite different with Nietzsche drawing heavily, if selectively, on the example of Epicurus and core aspects of Epicurean teaching. The question is: for what ends and for what ultimate purpose does he do this in these texts? To answer this question we need to understand further something of the set of con-

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<sup>4</sup> It should perhaps be noted that Nietzsche has engaged with Democritean atomism in his early philosophy, notably his lectures on the pre-Platonic philosophers. In his middle period writings he does not take up the philosophy of atomism again and Epicurus is appropriated as an essentially ethical thinker. See Nietzsche (2001: 120–131) and also Caygill (2006).

<sup>5</sup> The other three pairs are: Goethe and Spinoza, Plato and Rousseau, and Pascal and Schopenhauer. On Montaigne's relation to Epicurean doctrine see Jones (1992: 159–62).

<sup>6</sup> For insight into this characterisation of Epicurus we encounter in the late Nietzsche, see Choulet (1998). On decadence, see McCarthy (1994), and Conway (1997), especially chapter two.

cerns and anxieties he has in his middle period. My contention is that these concerns and anxieties have not been sufficiently attended to in the literature, so that we fail to understand the extent to which an ethos of Epicurean enlightenment informs these texts. Let me list what I see as some of Nietzsche's principal concerns in his middle period writings and that serve to inspire him to pursue an Epicurean path:

- A critique of commercial society and an emerging consumer culture.
- A commitment to stable pleasures and mental equilibrium over the need for *constant* change.
- An attempt to live free of the delusions of human exceptionalism, and free from the gods, especially the fear of the gods.
- An emphasis on a therapy of slowness and the *vita contemplativa*, including a tempering of the human mind in order to liberate it from moral and religious fanaticism.
- The search for a simpler existence purified of the metaphysical need with an attention to the importance of the closest things.
- A care of self that is intended to be coextensive with the whole of life, suggesting an ecological rather than atomistic approach to the art of living.
- The need to conquer unjustified fears and to reinstitute the role played by chance and chance events in the world and in human existence. As Pierre Hadot (1995: 252) notes, for the Epicurean sage the world is the product of chance, not divine intervention, and this brings with it pleasure and peace of mind, freeing him from an unreasonable fear of the gods and allowing him to consider each moment as an unexpected miracle. Each moment of existence can be greeted with immense gratitude.
- In contrast to a teaching on the salvation of the soul Nietzsche favours one that attends to the needs of the body and that takes the body as its starting-point. A neglect of the body, for example, through a teaching of pure spirituality, leads one to self-hatred and produces melancholic individuals.

In his middle period, then, Epicurus is one of Nietzsche's chief inspirations in his effort to liberate himself from the metaphysical need and to aid humanity in its need to now cure its neuroses. Some of the 'heroic-idyllic' aspects of Epicurean philosophising are captured in the appreciation we find in Marx's doctoral dissertation of 1841. Marx notes, for example, that 'embodied' in Epicurus 'are the serenity of thought satisfied in itself' (Marx 1975: 41, 45). Here Marx is referring to Epicurus's subordination of physics to ethics, that is, that the method of explanation 'aims only at the *ataraxy of self-consciousness, not at knowledge of nature in and for itself*' (1975: 45). This is also part of Nietzsche's appreciation of Epicurus in his middle period. Epicurus and Nietzsche are both profound liberators of human life from religious superstition and mystification, and both place ethics at the centre of philosophy. Both are educators and despise the mere erudition of the scholar (see Knight 1933: 437).

Let me say something about the character of Nietzsche's thinking in his middle period. What's going on in these texts? Is there a core project being developed? There is and it centres on Nietzsche's efforts to temper emotional and mental excess. This concern explains Nietzsche's commitment to an enlightenment project. The task of philosophy, as Nietzsche sees it at this time, is to help cool down the human mind. He writes in 1878:

... shouldn't we, the *more spiritual* human beings of an age that is visibly catching fire in more and more places, have to grasp all available means for quenching and cooling, so that we will remain at least as steady, harmless, and moderate as we are now, and will thus perhaps become useful at some point in serving this age as mirror and self-regulation? – (HH I 38)

Epicurean philosophy can play a key role here. Along with science in general, it serves to make us 'colder and more sceptical', helping to cool down 'the fiery stream of belief in ultimate definitive truths', a stream that has grown so turbulent through Christianity (HH I 244). In *The Wanderer and his Shadow* Nietzsche describes Epicurus as 'the soul-soother [*Seelen-Beschwichtiger*] of later antiquity' who had the 'wonderful insight' that to quieten our being it is not necessary to have resolved the ultimate and outermost theoretical questions. To those who are tormented by the fear of the gods, one points out that if the gods exist they do not concern themselves with us and that it is unnecessary to engage in fruitless disputation over the ultimate question as to whether they exist or not. Furthermore, in response to the consideration of a hypothesis, half belonging to physics and half to ethics, and that may cast gloom over our spirits, it is wise to refrain from refuting the hypothesis and instead offer a rival hypothesis, even a multiplicity of hypotheses. To someone who wishes to offer consolation—for example, to the unfortunate, to ill-doers, to hypochondriacs, and so on—one can call to mind two pacifying formulae of Epicurus that are capable of being applied to many questions: 'firstly, if that is how things are they do not concern us; secondly, things may be thus but they may also be otherwise' (WS 7).

In the middle period, Nietzsche turns to Epicurean teaching in a concerted effort to advance the cause of a renewed enlightenment. However, it's not an enlightenment in support of a revolutionary transformation of society but one that favours change through 'slow cures' and 'small doses' (D 462, D 534). Nietzsche is an admirer of the critical and rationalist spirit of the Enlightenment, of both the eighteenth-century version, as we find it in the likes of Voltaire and Lessing, and earlier incarnations, such as we find it in the likes of Epicurus, Petrarch, and Erasmus.<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche shares many of the ideas and commitments of the modern Enlightenment, including the attack on superstition, religious dogmatism, rigid class structures, outmoded forms of governance and rule, and so on. He does not deny that revolutions can be a source of vital energy for a humanity that has grown feeble, but he contests

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<sup>7</sup> For insight into the relation between Epicureanism and enlightenment thinking, see the classic study by Gay (1966). More recently, see Leddy and Lifschitz (2009).

the idea that it can work as an organiser and perfecter of human nature. He thus appeals to Voltaire over Rousseau, that is, in his eyes to a nature that knows how to organise, purify, and reconstruct, as opposed to a nature that is full of passionate follies and half-lies. It is the spirit of revolution that frightens off the spirit of enlightenment and of progressive development, and it is this spirit Nietzsche calls upon his readers to cultivate and nurture. Nietzsche locates in the French Revolution's 'histrionicism', a 'bestial cruelty', as well as a 'sentimentality' and 'self-intoxication', and holds Rousseau responsible for being its intellectual inspiration and for setting the Enlightenment on 'its fanatical [*fanatische*] head' and with 'perfidious enthusiasm [*Begeisterung*]' (WS 221). He sees the Enlightenment as being, in fact, alien to the Revolution, which if it had been left to itself would have 'passed quietly along like a gleam in the clouds and for long been content to address itself only to the individual' (WS 221).

It is certain that at this time Nietzsche sought to found a philosophical school modelled on Epicurus's garden. In a letter of 26 March 1879 he asks his amanuensis Peter Gast: 'Where are we going to renew the garden of Epicurus?' In 306 BC Epicurus founds his school in Athens, and this remains a presence in the city until the second century A.D. In contrast to the Stoics who philosophised in the agora of Athens, never far from the public eye, Epicurus and his followers did philosophy in a garden which bore the injunction 'live unnoticed'. Another injunction was 'do not get involved in political life' (Clay 2009: 16). The school took the form of a community of friends who lived within the walls of the garden and worked together, studying under Epicurus, writing philosophical works, and growing their own food: going against the mores of the time it was open to both slaves and women. So, the school was a community based on friendship and friendship was considered by the Epicureans to be the most important thing of all. As one commentator has written:

Members of the school were actively engaged in self-improvement and the improvement of others by mutual admonition and correction. The aim was to inculcate goodwill, gratitude, respect for wisdom, self-control, frankness, openness and moderation in all things. Arrogance, greed, jealousy, boastfulness, and anger were faults to be removed by gentle correction rather than by coercion or punishment. (Campbell 2010: 222)

Epicureanism was an apolitical or even anti-political philosophy. The ideal mental state to attain for the Epicurean is *ataraxia* (freedom from disturbance, or imperturbability), and to achieve this the philosopher had to withdraw from the disturbances of everyday life as much as possible, including public affairs, which were seen as a particular cause of mental disquiet and disturbance. This apolitical, even anti-political stance, is reflected in the ethos Nietzsche adopts in his middle period texts. He writes at one point:

Live in seclusion so that you *can* live for yourself. Live in *ignorance* about what seems most important to your age ... the clamor of today, the noise of wars and revolutions should be a mere murmur for you. You will also wish to help—but only those whose distress you *understand* en-



tirely because they share with you one suffering and one hope—your friends—and only in the manner in which you help yourself. I want to make them bolder, more persevering, simpler, gayer. (GS 338)

‘Our age’, Nietzsche writes at one point in *Dawn*, ‘no matter how much it talks and talks about economy, is a squanderer: it squanders what is most precious, spirit’ (D 179). He succinctly articulates his concern in the following manner: ‘Political and economic affairs are not worthy of being the enforced concern of society’s most gifted spirits: such a wasteful use of the spirit is at bottom worse than having none at all’ (D 179). Today, he goes on to note, everyone feels obliged to know what is going on every day to the point of neglecting their own work or therapy and in order to feel part of things, and ‘the whole arrangement has become a great and ludicrous piece of insanity’ (D 179). The therapy Nietzsche is proposing in *Dawn* is, then, directed at those free spirits who exist on the margin or fringes of society and seek to cultivate or fashion new ways of thinking and feeling, attempting to do this by taking the time necessary to work through their experiences.

The view that Epicureanism advocates an apolitical posture is in need of some refinement. It might be suggested that the philosophy of Epicurus offers an alternative way of organising communities, promoting practices—such as justice, friendship, and economic co-operation—that are genuinely useful to people’s needs and eliminating all that promotes false conceptions of values and places our happiness in danger (see Long and Sedley 1987: 137). What is the case, however, is that Nietzsche appropriates Epicureanism for the end of an ethical reformation. Although he anticipates ‘numerous novel experiments’ taking place in ‘ways of life and modes of society’ (D 164), his model at this time for the practice of self-cultivation is Epicurus’s garden.

In 1882 Nietzsche writes in a beautiful aphorism entitled ‘Epicurus’:

Yes, I am proud of the fact that I experience the character of Epicurus quite differently from perhaps everybody else. Whenever I hear or read of him, I enjoy the happiness of the afternoon of antiquity. I see his eyes gaze upon a wide, white sea, across rocks at the shore that are bathed in sunlight, while large and small animals are playing in this light, as secure and calm as the light and his eyes. Such happiness could be invented only by a man who was suffering continually. It is the happiness of eyes that have seen the sea of existence become calm, and now they can never weary of the surface and of the many hues of this tender, shuddering skin of the sea. Never before has voluptuousness [*Wollust*] been so modest. (GS 45)

As Monika Langer has recently noted in her interpretation of this aphorism, although clearly a paean of sorts to Epicurus, Nietzsche does not elaborate on the origin or nature of his happiness and suffering, but rather tacitly encourages the reader to consider various possibilities. In the end she argues that Nietzsche is reading Epicurus as a figure who whilst standing securely on firm ground, gazes at the sea and is able to enjoy the possibility of uncertainty it offers. She writes, ‘Literally and figuratively he can float on the sea’ (Langer 2010: 67). Epicurus is depicted as the antithesis of modernity’s shipwrecked man since such is his liberation and serenity he can

‘chart his course or simply set sail and let the wind determine his way’ (2010: 67). Although he might suffer shipwreck and drown or survive he does not live in fear of dangers and hazards: ‘In taking to the sea he might lose his bearings and even his mind’ (2010: 67). In contrast to modern man who is keen to leave behind the insecurity of the sea for the safety of dry land, ‘Epicurus delights in the ever present possibility of leaving that secure land for the perils of the sea’ (Langer 2010: 67).

This interpretation misses the essential insight Nietzsche is developing into Epicurus in the aphorism. Rather than suggesting that the sea calls for further and continued exploration, hiding seductive dangers that Epicurus would not be afraid of, Nietzsche seems to hold to the view that Epicurus is the seasoned traveller of the soul who has no desire to travel anymore and for whom the meaning of the sea has changed. Rather than serving as a means of transportation or something that beckons us towards other shores, the sea has become an object of contemplation in the here and now. It is something to be looked at for its own sake and in a way that discloses its infinite nuances and colours.<sup>8</sup>

Nietzsche champions Epicurus, then, as a figure who has sought to show mankind how it can conquer its fears of death. Identifying the goal of a good life with the removal of mental and physical pain Epicureans place ‘the eradication of the fears of death at the very heart of their ethical project’ (Warren 2004: 6). As a therapy of anguish Epicureanism is a philosophy that aims to procure peace of mind, and an essential task here is to liberate the mind from its irrational fear of death. It seeks to do this by showing that the soul does not survive the body and that death is not and cannot be an event within life. There are gaps, potentially significant ones, in Nietzsche’s appreciation of the Epicurean teaching with regards to death. For example, he never subjects to critical analysis the effectiveness of Epicurus’s arguments but simply assumes that the rediscovery of the certainty of death within modern science, along with the demise of the Christian afterlife, is sufficient to eliminate mortality as a source of anguish. But the triumph of the Epicurean view that we are mortal and need not live in fear of an after-life is not necessarily a triumph for the Epicurean view that we should not fear death: one can eliminate fear of the after-life by exposing it as a myth, but this does not liberate us from the fear of extinction. Nietzsche does not make it clear whether he thinks the Epicurean arguments suffice to console us for the fact of our mortality, though there are places in his corpus where he appears to be offering new post-religious consolations, such as the consolation we can gain from the recognition that as experimental free spirits the sacrifices we make of our lives to knowledge may lead to a more enlightened humanity in the future (others may prosper where we have not been able to).

What is clear, though, is that Nietzsche is attracted to the Epicurean emphasis on the modesty of a human existence. Nietzsche admires Epicurus for cultivating a modest existence and in two respects: first, in having ‘spiritual joyfulness [*Freudigkeit*] in

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<sup>8</sup> Thanks to Beatrice Han-Pile for inspiration here.

place of frequent indulgence in single pleasures' (NL 1879, KSA 8, 41[48]), and, second, in withdrawing from social ambition and living in a garden as opposed to living publicly in the market-place (Young 2010: 279). As Nietzsche stresses, 'A little garden, figs, little cheeses and in addition three or four good friends—these were the sensual pleasures of Epicurus' (WS 192).<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche is appreciative of what one commentator has called the 'refined asceticism' we find in Epicurus, which consists in the enjoyment of the smallest pleasures and the disposal of a diverse and delicate range of sensations (Roos 2000: 298).

In this period Epicurus is deployed by Nietzsche as a way of breaking with fanatical enthusiasms and intoxications, including quite possibly Nietzsche's own early Dionysian ones. The serene teaching of Epicurus provides Nietzsche with one way of shedding his previous skin, that of *The Birth of Tragedy*, and now conducting the patient labour of self-analysis and self-cultivation as a therapy of body and soul. Nietzsche finds in Epicurus a victory over pessimism in which death becomes the last celebration of a life that is constantly embellished (Roos 2000: 299). This last of the Greek philosophers teaches the joy of living in the midst of a world in decay and where all moral doctrines preach suffering. As Richard Roos puts it, 'The example of Epicurus teaches that a life filled with pain and renunciation prepares one to savour the little joys of the everyday better. Relinquishing Dionysian intoxication, Nietzsche becomes a student of this master of moderate pleasures and careful dosages' (Roos 2000: 309).

For what ends might we wish to promote an Epicurean Nietzsche today? The principal end is one of demonstrating that Nietzsche is an enlightenment thinker seeking the liberation of humanity from its neuroses and unjustified fears and anxieties. In the middle period we encounter a Nietzsche quite different to the legend that circulates in popular culture and even academic culture. This is a Nietzsche committed to human emancipation through individual and social enlightenment and experimentation—but a project that stresses the need for slow cures and small doses. In several respects Nietzsche shares in the appreciation of Epicurus and Epicurean enlightenment we find in the young Marx. The main difference, of course, is that Marx sees the incendiary political effects of Epicurean philosophy, whilst Nietzsche places the emphasis on a moral—or immoral—avant-garde of free spirits. Nietzsche stresses that his 'campaign against morality' is *not* a gunpowder campaign; rather, and provided we have the necessary subtlety in our nostrils, we are to smell in it much sweeter scents. Nietzsche sees social change coming about gradually through small-scale individual experimentation and a free-spirited avant-garde who aim to provide a new ploughshare of potential universal benefit (D 146). He writes of the need to constitute ourselves as small, experimental states in which we aim to fashion out of ourselves a way of being that others will behold with pleasure, providing 'a lovely, peaceful self-

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<sup>9</sup> Young describes the asceticism advocated by Epicurus as a 'eudaemonic asceticism', which is clearly very different to ascetic practices of world denial and self-denial (Young 2010: 279).

enclosed garden' and with a gate of hospitality (D 174). In his middle period Nietzsche is not a political thinker: he is appropriating Epicurus for specific ends, ones centred on an ethical reformation. By contrast, Marx is locating a revolutionary potential in Epicurus's teaching. Although Marx is correct to see in Epicurean doctrine a largely 'contemplative' materialism and an appeal to a principle of abstract individuality, he is also correct to locate in it a genuinely revolutionary force, one that has the potential to radically transform the world and grant the human being a specifically human form of freedom, entailing liberation from religious fear and superstition. Epicurean philosophy disillusiones the world, freeing us from fear of the gods, and shows us that the world is our friend. However, as Marx recognises, serenity can only be construed an end goal when philosophy has helped to create a world in which once again it feels at home (Breckman 1999: 270).

### 16.3 Late Nietzsche

Nietzsche appreciate Epicurus as one of those rare spirits who remain true to the earth by demythologising nature, embrace human mortality, and accept human non-exceptionalism. What Nietzsche does seem ambivalent about in the course of his writings is the kind of 'happiness' symbolised by Epicurean delight. Sometimes he depicts this, as in *The Gay Science*, as a happiness that is hard-won, conscious of its precarious character, and inseparable from suffering: the sea of existence has become calm but, as one commentator has put it, 'its continued calmness cannot be guaranteed, and the "shuddering skin of the sea" is a constant reminder of the turmoil that may return' (Bett 2005: 63). At other times, especially in his late writings, he depicts it as a form of tranquillity, a kind of Schopenhauerian release from the turmoil of existence and the cravings of the will. When he reads it in these terms it is viewed as an expression of decadence (A 30). Only in his late writings does Nietzsche come to express a disquiet over the contemplative aspects of the Epicurean doctrine on philosophy as a way of life. Nietzsche articulates two main concerns over Epicurean teaching in his late writings: that its promotion of contemplation as a way of life amounts to a form of nihilism, or a flight from the realities of existence; and, second, it is a decadent teaching. Let me look at the critical and clinical point about decadence first.

In *The Anti-Christian* Epicurus is described as a decadent, indeed, as a 'typical decadent' whose decadence prepares the way for the coming religion of love. (A 30) In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche refers to both Epicureanism and Christianity as offering a medicine that tranquillises (BGE 200), whilst in the *Genealogy* he refers to the super cool but 'suffering Epicurus' as one who may have been hypnotised by the 'feeling of nothingness' and the 'repose of deepest sleep', that is, the promise of the absence of suffering (GM III 17). In Epicurus himself, Nietzsche claims, there is a fear of pain that leads to the religion of love. He thus interprets Epicurus as a philosophical figure whose doctrine conceals an aversion to aspects of reality and an in-

ability to affirm life at its most terrible and questionable. In *The Gay Science* we encounter a basic contrast between the human being that is richest in the fullness of life ('the Dionysian god and human being') (GS 370), and the one who suffers most and is poorest in life; the former can afford the sight of the terrible and questionable as well as the terrible deed and luxury of destruction and negation; the latter, however, needs first and foremost goodness in thought and deed.<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche contends that those who are poorest in life are the ones who need mildness and peacefulness, as well as logic, or the 'conceptual understandability of existence' since this gives calm and confidence, providing a 'warm narrowness that keeps away fear and encloses one in optimistic horizons' (GS 370). It is insight into this type, Nietzsche confides, that enabled him to *gradually* learn to understand Epicurus, 'the opposite of a Dionysian pessimist; also the "Christian" who is actually only a kind of Epicurean ...' (GS 370). The 'tragic' is for him essentially what allows for a greater attachment to life and signifies the affirmation of life beyond good and evil: it affirms and wants the total economy of life.

Nietzsche further argues contra Epicurus that a doctrine of redemption grows on the basis of physiological realities; in the case of Epicureanism, which contains a strong dose of Greek 'vitality and nerves', we find a refined development of hedonism on a morbid foundation. For Nietzsche it is 'decadent' to suppose that we can attain a life of permanent delight and free of the need to grow through the pain of existence and the stimulus to life such pain gives rise to. As he recognises as early as the first edition of *The Gay Science* if one desires to diminish and lower the level of human pain, one has at the same time to want to diminish and lower the level of our capacity for joy. Nietzsche is of the view that 'new galaxies' of joy are available to us (GS 12).

Let me look, all too briefly, at Nietzsche's concern over the contemplative life. In his text *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932) Bergson expresses the worry that there is too much contemplation in philosophy and in particular he locates self-absorption in both the Epicurean and the Stoic practices of philosophy. Nietzsche expresses the same concern, although he registers his concern in a different style to Bergson. Consider this note from 1885–86 that runs:

As a great educator, one would have to scourge such a race of 'blessed people' mercilessly into unhappiness. The danger of dwarfing, of relaxation is present at once: —*against* Spinozistic or Epicurean happiness and against all relaxation in contemplative states. (NL 1885, KSA 12, 1 [123] = WP 911)<sup>11</sup>

**10** See also the modified version of this aphorism in *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, 'We Antipodes'.

**11** With regards to Spinoza Nietzsche no doubt has in mind here his intellectual love of God which he describes in GS 372 as 'bloodless'. However, I would argue that this misses the chief innovation of Spinoza's love. Although one can see what Nietzsche means (since it is a highly intellectual love), it seems to me to miss the significance of what Spinoza has done with respect to God: when we know God adequately and properly, that is, as a substance of immanence and completely de-anthropomorphised, we experience joy for Spinoza. The more we know of nature/God and of ourselves as a part of nature, the more we feel empowered and thus experience joy. This joy in our own power is

My view is that in his later writings Nietzsche is expressing a particular concern over contemplation as a *way of life* and as the *telos* of life. For him to set as the goal of life the attainment of a state of perfected beatitude is to fall prey to nihilism and a negation of life. We, however, need to ask the question: is this the right way to view Epicurus's teaching?

Nietzsche's criticism of Epicurus, especially his claim that he is a decadent, indeed a 'typical' one, seems to miss the aim of his teaching on pleasure, namely, and as James Porter so instructively brings out, that being more than a principle of simple happiness the state of serenity or cheerfulness operates as a formal principle of life, shaping a life that is lived and enjoyed. According to the teaching of Epicurus the practice of virtue entails experiencing a precious attachment to the world and an insight into—from our point of view—into its highest reality. In part, this is what Nietzsche captures in his beautiful paean to the name 'Epicurus' in *The Gay Science*: kind of 'happiness' attained by the true Epicurean is precarious but also the most profound and it gains its richness from the fact that it is born of suffering. Virtue is not so much 'power' for Epicurus, but more a way of being in the world. We see this in Nietzsche's depiction of Epicurus in GS 45. The scene he depicts for us is one of Epicurean illumination or enlightenment: Epicurus is not estranged from nature and recognises his kinship with animals and the elements of nature. Rather than deploying his contemplation of the sea to bolster his own ego (thinking of his own safety or taking pride in fearlessness), Epicurus abandons his sense of self altogether so that he can open himself up to the sea of existence, and perhaps here we find an alternative to Dionysian ecstasy, entailing a more peaceful and less grandiose loss of the self into the *Ur-Eine* (see BT 1, 4, 5, 6, 22). Unlike Christ, Epicurus does not walk on the water but floats serenely on the sea, buoyed up by it and even cradled by it, happy with the gifts life has to offer, and existing beyond fear and anxiety even though he is opening himself up to troubling realities, such as the approach of death and his personal extinction. As Epicurus reminds us in 'Vatican Sayings' 14: 'We are born once and cannot be born twice, but we must be no more for all time.'

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related to God (to an understanding of the world) and yields a free and unselfish love, one that is neither grasping nor insecure. As Spinoza says, we don't expect to be loved by God in return: strictly speaking, God neither loves nor hates anything (*Ethics* Book V, P 17). Moreover, as the highest good that follows from the dictate of reason, and as something common to all human beings, this love cannot be stained either by envy or by jealousy (P 20). Contrast this with the idea of God found in the Judeo-Christian tradition: God as divine judge in which the believer has the needy desire to be loved by God and is jealous if others are loved more. Here one is led to fear the divine wrath, to disdain the adherents of other sects, and to construct elaborate rituals to appease the wrath of God and secure his favour. For Spinoza all of this is superstitious nonsense: the thought of God should be a source of strength and joy, not anxiety, fear, envy, and jealousy. It is this conception of God that Spinoza overturns in his idea of the intellectual love of God: rather than being bloodless, it comes from genuine (rational, scientific) knowledge and an extra-human joy (because we have transcended the level of mere animal need and desire, including a fixation on our own self-perpetuation and narrow perspectives). See Cook (2007: 136–137).

Perhaps it is best to locate in Nietzsche's 'Epicurus' what one commentator has described as an ambivalent decadence (Shearin 2014: 72). On the one hand, Nietzsche construes Epicurus as the inventor of the heroic-idyllic style of philosophising and, on the other hand, describes him as a typical decadent who suffered from a fear of pain. Whatever we make of Nietzsche's final ambivalence towards Epicurus and his legacy, it is clear that in his middle period writings he is profoundly inspired by his teaching and example: he makes inventive use of it so as to mount what we can call an ethics of resistance, an ethics that works contra the normalising and disciplinary logic of modernity and what Nietzsche calls in *Dawn* our 'stressed, power-thirsty' societies (D 271). Although certainly not read by Nietzsche as providing a revolutionary doctrine, Epicurean teaching contains for him invaluable resources for a substantial ethical reformation.

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# Index

- Abel, G. 1, 18, 26, 29f., 38, 40–44, 64, 76, 88, 97, 116, 118, 130, 149, 240
- Acampora, C. D. 6f., 27, 40, 64
- actio* 131, 154, 195
- action 2–4, 19, 22–25, 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 50f., 55–60, 63, 65f., 93, 98, 118–121, 123, 126f., 129, 131f., 134f., 137–139, 151, 163, 165, 167, 177f., 185, 187, 190, 195, 231, 237, 239, 242, 244, 251f., 261, 264, 268f., 284, 292
- adualistic 116
- aesthesis* 73
- aesthetics 10, 66, 166, 189, 197, 203, 217–228, 230f., 238, 283, 299
- affect
- of command 113–120, 125, 127, 129, 133–135
  - of superiority 113–115, 127
  - of the will 221, 224, 228, 230
- affective orientation 49, 53f., 59f., 65, 67
- after-life 321
- Agamben, G. 295
- agency 10, 20, 24, 59, 77, 96, 98, 100, 105, 109, 163f., 238, 243, 247
- conception of 8, 20, 24, 27, 37, 164
- agential powers 24f., 37
- agnosticism 7, 88
- agon* 147, 292, 299, 303
- aletheia* 74
- Alexander the Great 313
- alienation 66, 314
- Allison, D. 193
- Altes i Aguilo, F. X. 57
- Althusser, L.
- *Philosophy of the Encounter* 309
- altruism 10, 236, 249, 251, 261, 263–265, 267–270
- physiological primacy of 265
- analytic 21f., 26, 152
- anamnesis* 75
- Anders, A. 226
- Anderson, R. L. 33, 36, 68, 94
- animal 2f., 50, 52f., 58f., 63, 74f., 95–99, 102f., 132, 150, 157, 184f., 199f., 204, 207, 244, 261, 266f., 295, 320, 325, *see also* herd animal; human animal; social animal
- Anpassung* 290
- Anschauung* 9, 217, 220–228
- Ansell-Pearson, K. 11, 151, 290, 300, 309
- anthropology 1, 28f., 200, 247, 262, 265, 270
- anthropomorphism 80, 87, 150, 205, 324
- anti-foundationalism 303
- anti-idealism 29
- anti-mechanism 129, 132
- anti-reductionism 167
- anti-speciesism 261
- Antonio 226
- Apollonian 190, 192, 201, 222f.
- appearance 43, 73, 80, 97, 124, 132, 151, 157f., 160, 165, 167, 172f., 188, 196, 264, 266, 312, 314
- apprehension 58, 158f., 185, 188, 221–223, 227, 230
- intuitive 222
- appropriation 9, 12, 189, 295, 310
- Aquila, R. E. 187
- Aristotelianism 276
- Aristotle 195, 198f., 311
- *Rhetoric* 198
  - *Rhetoric* 197
- art 7, 20, 39, 63, 65f., 88, 135, 147, 188f., 191, 196, 198, 202f., 221–228, 230, 299, 301, 309, 317
- artificial intelligence (AI) 23, 63, 72
- artificial network 78f.
- artificial system 63
- artist 86, 136, 139, 147, 188, 191, 206, 221, 223–226, 228, 304
- artistic instinct 198
- asceticism 67, 74, 220, 229f., 276, 279, 322
- assimilation 52, 108, 133, 170, 209, 229, 242, 265, 290, 304
- ataraxia* 310, 312, 317, 319
- Athens 319
- atom 8, 35, 88, 125, 128, 130, 146f., 151f., 155, 157, 160, 168, 184, 312–314, *see also* time-atom
- of will 151
- atomism 8, 35f., 124, 132, 135, 152, 155, 184, 312f., 315–317
- materialistic 132
  - of the soul 88, 124, 132
- atomon* 120, 128
- autarkeia* 310
- authority 136, 241f., 276

- automatism 58, 60, 126, 134, 192, 201, 206,  
 211, 250, 263f., 268  
 autonomy 137, 139, 235, 241f., 245, 247  
 autopoiesis 147f.  
 awareness 30, 56, 64, 81, 95–97, 102, 125f.,  
 148, 150, 159, 184, 186, 188, 190, 270  
 Aydin, C. 37, 41f.
- Bacon, F. 235, 313  
 Baer, K. E. von 251  
 Bailey, T. 113  
 Bain, A. 263f.  
 – *Mental and Moral Science* 249, 263  
 Barbera, S. 225  
 Barcelona, A. 211  
 Bargh, J. 269  
 Bayertz, K. 241  
 becoming 2, 8, 17, 52, 139, 145, 150–154, 158,  
 173, 183, 187, 191–193, 208, 290, 300  
 Beer, R. 21, 23, 25  
 behavior 10, 21, 24, 43, 54, 71, 83, 93, 103,  
 108f., 116, 138, 186, 190, 193, 208, 251,  
 261f., 266f., 270, 274, 276  
 Behler, E. 198, 205  
 being 8, 74, 122, 133, 145, 148, 150f., 153,  
 172f., 208  
 – in itself 172f., 176  
 – primordial 148f., 224  
 belief 25, 52, 57, 63, 73, 81, 95, 103f., 108f.,  
 127, 177, 277, 283f.  
 – conscious 55, 67  
 – empirical 84  
 – false 32, 283  
 – perceptual 82  
 – religious 145, 209  
 – true 75, 83  
 – unconscious 55  
*bellum omnium contra omnes* 199, 293  
 benevolence 99, 219, 261, 263, 265f., 305  
 Bentham, J. 251  
 Bergson, H. 156, 159  
 – *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*  
 324  
 Berkeley, G. 158f.  
 Bertino, A. Ch. 196  
 Bett, R. 323  
*Bewusstsein* 95, 106, 120, 187, 291  
 Bible 278  
 biogenetic law 245  
 biological sciences 243, 269
- biology 1, 10, 21, 25, 30, 35, 37, 55, 96, 200,  
 229, 242–244, 246, 261f., 264, 266–268  
 – evolutionary 243, 249  
 Black, M. 204  
 blinking 50f.  
 Block, N. 96  
 Blondel, E. 17, 29f., 43  
 Blumenberg, H. 199f.  
 body 1, 6, 10, 17, 19–23, 28–31, 33–37, 39,  
 41–43, 53f., 58, 71–74, 83, 85f., 88f.,  
 116f., 121, 124, 126f., 133, 157, 169–172,  
 176, 191, 204, 206, 210, 218, 230, 235,  
 243–246, 290, 299, 301–303, 311, 317,  
 321f., *see also* values: body  
 – and mind 36, 71, 75, 86f., 121, 124, 163  
 – and soul 73, 85, 115, 117, 191, 299, 322  
 – guiding-thread of the 17, 127, 167, 170, 207,  
 290, 294, 303  
 – human 17, 20, 35, 75, 247, 290  
 – importance of the 17, 22, 28f., 169  
 – material 9, 132, 230, 298  
 – role of the 21f., 31, 68  
 body consciousness 44  
 body-mind 36  
 Boella, L. 262  
 Boniolo, G. 261  
 Borgia, Cesare 249  
 Borsche, T. 196  
 Boscovich, R. 132, 149, 167, 171f.  
 Bradie, M. 261  
 brain 19, 21–26, 28, 34f., 37–39, 41, 44, 58f.,  
 72, 76–78, 83, 86–88, 157, 199, 203, 210,  
 218f., 226f., 240, 248, 266f., 269, *see*  
*also* cognition: brain-based views of  
 – structures 10, 19, 22  
 Branco, M. J. M. 113, 132  
 Brandom, R. 237  
 Bréal, M. 197  
 Breckman, W. 323  
 Brobjer, T. H. 226, 238  
 Brusotti, M. 113, 130  
 Buchheim, T. 149  
 Büchner, L. 240  
 Burckhardt, J. 88  
 Burkhardt, A. 211
- Calder III., W. M. 223  
 Came, D. 223  
 Campbell, G. 319  
 Caneva, K. L. 130

- Caneva, K. L. 130  
 Caneva, K. L. 131  
 Caramazza, A. 63  
 Carnap, R. 76  
 Carnot, L. 305  
 Carruthers, P. 107  
 Cartesianism 20, 54, 73, 85, 125, 147, 218, 243  
 Cartwright, D. E. 217  
 Cartwright, D. E. 217  
 Caspari, O. 238  
 Cassin, B. 200  
 Catholicism 278  
*causa finalis* 129  
 causal center 36, 39f., 42  
 causal efficacy 5, 9, 33, 40, 54, 93, 104, 107f., 119f., 165, 174, 230  
 causal power 100, 105, 109f., 122  
 causal role 7, 18, 108, 165  
 causality 8, 105f., 127, 131f., 164, 176–179, 191f., 218, 224, 227  
 causation 107, 118, 231  
 – conscious 7, 94, 101, 104, 106f.  
 – mental 163  
 – principle of 87  
 cause  
 – directing 5, 54, 68  
 – driving 5  
 – external 134, 147  
 – final 147, 169, 176, 178  
 – primary 169, 175f., 178  
 – secondary 122, 165, 168f., 172, 174–176  
 cause and effect 3, 128, 130, 176–178, 204, 208  
 cause of acting 5, 130  
 Caygill, H. 316  
 Caysa, V. 218  
 central nervous system (CNS) 22  
 certainty 129, 223, 312  
 – inner 114f., 133  
 Chalmers, D. 22, 24–27, 42, 44, 68  
 chameleon effect 269  
 Changeux, J.-P. 267f.  
 chastity 220, 276  
 Chiel, H. 21  
 children 25, 57, 74, 85, 88, 95, 186, 192, 241, 267–269  
 Chinese room 27  
 choice 8, 36, 58, 113, 122, 137, 139, *see also* freedom of choice  
 – deliberative 59  
 Chomsky, N. 268  
 Choulet, P. 316  
 Chouraqui, F. 8  
 Christ 325  
 Christianity 10, 67f., 249, 276, 279–281, 283, 309, 315, 318, 321, 323f., *see also* values: of Christianity  
 Church Fathers 309, 311  
 Churchland, P. M. 6, 36, 71–73, 75–86, 89  
 – *Eliminative Materialism* 71  
 – *New Epistemology* 77, 84  
 Cicero 195, 309, 311  
 – *De Oratore* 197f.  
 Clark, A. 17, 20–22, 24–28, 37, 42, 44, 68  
 Clark, M. 18, 31, 76, 127, 168, 225, 276f.  
 Clay, D. 319  
 Clement of Alexandria 311  
 coercion 319  
 cognition *see also* embodied cognition  
 – brain-based views of 6, 17–21, 27, 37, 39, 44  
 – conception of 6, 19f., 22, 26, 28, 31, 33, 40  
 – ecological 31  
 – human 18f., 21f., 27, 37, 95  
 – situated 17, 23, 25  
 cognitive activity 19–22, 24, 27f., 31, 33, 39, 42, 44, 71, 227  
 cognitive power 31f., 36  
 cognitive process 19, 24, 26  
 cognitive science 9, 19, 21, 63f., 74, 184, 237  
 cognitive system 22, 24, 26f., 60, 63–65, 210  
 command 113–121, 125–127, 129, 132–135, 138, 249, 264, 303  
 common sense 63, 71, 73, 76, 82, 147  
 communicate  
 – ability to 98  
 – need to 2, 40, 99, 185  
 communication 99f., 107, 121, 126, 165, 176, 185, 188f., 192, 195, 200  
 communication sign 9, 99, 185  
 community 59, 79, 98f., 103, 121f., 124, 131, 223, 245, 251f., 261, 265f., 282, 294, 296f., 306, 319f.  
 compassion 219, 228f., 249, 267  
 compatibilism 136  
 competition 267, 292, 302–304  
 compulsion 56, 133f., 188, 191, 228

- computation 19, 22f., 27, 63  
 concepts  
   – abstract 29f., 196f., 210  
   – basic 20, 28–30  
   – body-based 29  
   – formation of 20, 30, 59  
   – moral 241, 262, 266  
   – observational 82  
   – perceptual 102  
   – recognitional 102  
 conceptual association 197, 204  
 conceptual content 94  
 conceptual framework 72f., 77–79, 81, 84f., 87  
 conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) 209, 211  
 conceptual structure 33, 35  
 conceptual web 72, 81  
 conceptualization 29f., 32, 34, 71, 77, 93f., 100–104, 106–109, 145, 165, 168, 230  
 conscience 49, 56f., 60–62, 133, 140, 167, 242, 301  
   – bad 3, 34, 107f., 133, 230  
   – good 120, 228  
   – moral 246, 248f.  
*conscientia* 186f.  
 consciousness *see also* self-consciousness  
   – and language 8f., 40, 98f., 103, 183, 186–188  
   – as a surface 7f., 93, 116f., 123, 230  
   – conception of 1f., 7, 54, 96f., 99f., 106, 109, 125, 165, 168, 174f., 179  
   – cosmic 310  
   – phenomenal 96  
   – problem of 1f., 94, 184  
   – views on 8, 33, 93, 96, 113f., 116  
 consolation 318, 321  
 Constâncio, J. 1f., 7f., 102, 108, 110, 116, 120, 122, 217  
 contemplation 84f., 199, 220f., 224f., 230, 310, 313, 315, 321, 323–325  
 contingency 25, 42, 82, 207, 243, 296, 312–314  
 continuum 38, 43, 116, 125, 132, 153, 155, 203, 292, 302  
 continuum model 44, 118  
 conventions 176, 189, 199, 203, 267, 289f., 293f., 299, 301f., *see also* truth: conventional  
 Conway, D. W. 163, 316  
 Cook, T. J. 325  
 Cooper, D. E. 229  
 Copernicus 167, 277f.  
 cortical system 37, 266  
 cosmopolitanism 299  
 cosmos 87, 299, 306  
 coupled system 24  
 coupling 24f., 28, 42, 55, 64–66, 192, 313  
 cowardice 55  
 Cox, C. 235  
 creativity 188–190, 228  
 crime 250, 270  
 culture 20, 26, 30, 52–55, 57, 61, 66–68, 79, 81, 184, 189f., 205, 209–211, 236, 240, 242f., 279, 317, 322  
 Curtius, G. 198  
 cynicism 298, 300  
 Cynics 298f., 301f., 305, 311  
 Dahlhaus, C. 192  
 Damasio, A. R. 266  
 Darwin, C. 236, 243, 245f., 249–251, 262, 269, 290  
   – *On the Origin of Species* 246, 251  
   – *The Descent of Man* 249, 267  
 Darwinism 10, 157, 240, 245, 251, 261–263, 267–269, 275  
 Daston, L. 242  
 Dautenhahn, K. 64  
 Dawkins, R.  
   – *The Selfish Gene* 269  
 De Waal, F. B. M. 261  
 death 52, 57, 155, 310, 313, 315f., 321f., 325  
 decadence 42, 64, 66, 316, 323–326  
*décadent* 265f.  
 Democritus 86, 310–316  
 Dempsey, L. 36  
 Derrida, J. 291  
 Descartes, R. 36, 124, 154, 171, 186, 244, 283  
 desire 10, 50, 53, 57, 59, 95, 100, 103–105, 108f., 127, 166f., 176, 199f., 219, 221f., 229, 242, 266, 268–270, 321, 324f.  
 determinism 128f., 192, 313f.  
 DeWitt, N. W. 309  
 dialectic 195, 315  
 Diderot, D. 309  
 Dijksterhuis, A. 184  
 Dionysian 190–192, 201, 222–224, 227, 316, 322, 324f.  
 Dionysus 300  
 Dirven, R. 211

- discontinuity 124, 150–153, 155, 157, 159f.  
 disgregation 42  
 displeasure 58f., 125  
*dispositio* 195  
 disposition 53, 55, 58, 68, 105, 199, 264,  
 267f., 270, 274, *see also* moral: dispositi-  
 on  
 dissimulation 293, 304  
 Djurić, M. 226  
 dominance 30, 114f.  
 domination 11, 117, 289, 293–295, 303  
 double-effect, principle of 268  
 Dove, C. M. 76  
*doxa* 75, 201  
 drama 151, 191  
 Dretske, F. 105  
 Dries, M. 6, 38, 57, 60, 110, 116, 149  
 – *Nietzsche on Time and History* 149  
 drive  
 – based 52, 54  
 – control 6, 55  
 – heuristics 52f., 55  
 – to truth 247  
 drives  
 – historical 52, 55–57, 62f., 65–67  
 – hunger 53  
 – instinctive 184, 190  
 – intelligent 134  
 – organic 116, 126  
 – plurality of 302  
 – unconscious 3, 109, 116, 118, 120, 122, 125–  
 127, 134, 138, 198, 201, 243  
 Du Bois-Reymond, E. 86f., 243  
 dualism 20f., 71–73, 76, 80, 85, 87f., 124,  
 147f., 163  
 – Cartesian 147  
 – Platonic 74f., 89  
 Dudrick, D. 18, 31, 76, 127, 168  
 Dupoux, E. 268  
 duration 152f., 156f., 159f., 188  
 dynamical system 24, 78  
*dynamis* 167, 198  
  
*ecce homo* 273, 281, *see also* Nietzsche, F.:  
*Ecce Homo*  
 echo 66, 171, 267, 281  
 economics 269  
 ecstasy 217–219, 221–224, 226f., 230f., 325,  
*see also* self: ecstatic; ekstasis  
 education 56, 61, 67, 74, 198, 263  
 educator 317, 324  
 ego 40, 88, 124, 148, 150, 183, 186, 218, 229,  
 296, 300, 305, 325  
 egoism 51, 219, 251, 305, 310  
 Eibl-Eibesfeldt, I. 267  
*eidoi* 220  
 Einstein, A. 155  
*Einverleibung* 108f., 170f., 290, 293–295, 297  
*ekstasis* 191  
 eliminativism 72, 85, *see also* materialism:  
 eliminative  
*elocutio* 195  
 embodied  
 – individuality 219, 230  
 – mind 1, 10, 72, 226  
 – perception 219  
 – time 314  
 – truth 292, 297f., 301f.  
 – values 57  
 – will 9, 220, 226, 230  
 embodied cognition 6, 17–23, 28–31, 33–35,  
 38, 41–43, 49, 63–65, 67, 225  
 – criticism of 35–38  
 embodied cognition theory (ECT) 18–23, 28,  
 30f., 33–41, 43f.  
 embodiment 6, 17–21, 29, 49, 63–67, 171,  
 225, 290, 294–298, 301, *see also* truth:  
 and embodiment  
 – deep 65f.  
 – semantic 6, 50, 62, 65–67  
 – types of 11, 289, 294  
 Emden, C. J. 1, 10, 17, 26, 29–31, 86, 196f.,  
 201f., 227, 235, 247f.  
 emergence 21f., 28, 38, 41, 43f., 84, 157, 183,  
 185, 192, 236f., 244, 246, 293, 296  
 – of normative order 236, 246  
 Emerson, R. W. 61, 301  
 emotion 19, 34, 51, 95, 103, 107, 190, 196,  
 226, 230, 244, 269, 304  
 empathy 228f., 266, 269  
 Empedocles 86  
*Empfindung* 8, 146, 148, 150–154, 157  
 empiricism 29, 244, 312  
 – constructive 82  
 energy 5, 81, 130f., 155, 160, 188, 191, 193,  
 318  
 Engels, F. 315  
 England 249f., 265  
 engram 248  
 enjoyment 228, 310f., 322, *see also* joy

- enlightenment 11, 119, 196, 250, 262, 298, 309, 313, 317–319, 322, 325
- environment 21–25, 27, 32f., 36, 40, 44, 53, 55, 63–65, 67, 80, 97, 102, 117, 134f., 186, 200, 207–209, 243, 263, 265, 267, 274, 295
- environmentalism 263
- Epicetetus 309, 316
- Epicureanism 11, 309–326
- Epicurus 11f., 283, 309–326
- epigenetics 10, 263, 266f.
- epiphenomena 4, 33, 40, 68, 72, 109, 165f., 168f., 174–177, 179, 184
- epiphenomenalism 7, 68, 94, 101, 106, 109f., 120, 122, 165f., 168, 175f.
- episteme* 75, 198, 201
- epistemology 7, 10, 18, 31, 33, 53, 71–73, 75–79, 83, 208, 235, 237f., 243, *see also* naturalism: epistemological; realism: epistemological
- naturalized 76, 78, 85–89, 237
- equalization 11, 169, 289, 295–297
- Erasmus 318
- error 3–5, 21, 36, 75, 185, 187f., 191, 208, 273, 276, 289–295, 299–301
- Erzieher* 217, 231
- Espinas, A. 243, 263
- Esposito, R. 294, 297
- esse est percipi* 149
- essence 8, 114, 124, 146f., 150, 152, 158, 160, 163, 165, 170, 199, 201–203, 205, 207f., 223f., 228, 244, 250, 265, 270, 296, 299, 314
- eternal recurrence 107, 145, 155, 164, 168f., 191
- ethical
- judgments 235, 237, 239
- life 217, 219f.
- norms 235f., 247
- reformation 12, 320, 323, 326
- system 264f.
- ethicist 12
- ethics 1, 10, 76, 217–219, 222, 231, 249, 261f., 265, 267, 298f., 310–313, 317f., 326, *see also* meta-ethics
- ethopoiesis* 315
- etymology 195
- Euripides 191
- Europe 50, 247, 249, 265, 309
- evaluation 50, 75, 77, 79, 81, 89, 117, 123, 265, 267f., 280f.
- events
- homogeneity of 163, 166
- internal 177
- mental 88, 170
- physical 175, 179
- evil 224, 229, 250–252, 265, *see also* good: and evil
- evolution 32, 51, 55, 96, 156f., 167, 209, 243, 245f., 248–252, 261, 263f., 266–269, 275, 313f.
- evolution theory 10, 29, 245f., 251, 262
- evolutionary ethics 261
- evolutionary process 81, 246, 248, 250, 252, 261, 264
- existence
- conditions of 204f., 209, 296, 302
- questions of 309
- experience
- basic 206
- bodily 29f., 42, 206
- conception of 156, 301
- conscious 19, 126
- human 8, 42, 50, 183, 236, 238, 243, 279
- inner 97, 99, 127
- interpretation of 192, 301
- object of 146
- of willing 115, 127
- perceptual 103, 210
- sensible 156
- sensual 30, 73f., 95
- subject of 146, 168
- experience sensible *see also* sense experieece
- exploitation 67, 206, 295
- expressivism 4, 39f., 119
- extension 23, 26, 28f., 36–38, 152, 245, 263, 267
- externalism 24, 42
- active 24, 42
- passive 24
- face-discrimination 79f.
- faculties 4, 58, 74, 95, 137, 165, 225, 269, *see also* imagination: faculty of; moral: faculty
- falsification 7, 32, 80, 93f., 100–104, 106, 109, 291, 305
- falsification claim (FC) 7, 93f., 99f., 104, 106, 109
- falsification thesis 31, 39

- Farber, P. L. 261  
 fatalism 129  
*fati foedera* 314  
 fear 11f., 57, 59, 187, 264f., 283f., 310, 313–318, 321–326  
 Fechner, G. T. 156  
 feedback 21, 23, 35  
 feeling 2, 8, 60, 94, 97f., 105, 114–118, 120f., 123, 125, 129, 133f., 146, 148, 150f., 153f., 167, 184f., 196, 229f., 238, 250, 263–265, 305, 315, 320, 323, *see also* force: feeling of; freedom: feeling of; moral: feeling; power: feeling of  
 Fehr, E. 270  
 fetters 189, 219, 230  
 Feyerabend, P. K. 76  
 Fichte, J. G. 124  
 firstling 50f., 66  
 Fischbacher, U. 270  
 Foglia, L. 17  
 folk psychology 27, 71–74, 77, 85, 89, 100, 109  
 force  
 – catalytic 130  
 – concept of 167, 171  
 – directing 5, 131, 137  
 – discharge of 126, 131, 133f.  
 – driving 5, 137, 250  
 – feeling of 127  
 – fields of 132, 149  
 – internal 134, 275  
 – natural 245, 280  
 forces  
 – multitude of 238, 302  
 – opposing 148, 172, 178  
 Fornari, M. C. 10, 263, 269  
 Foster, J. B. 312–315  
 Foucault, M. 163, 237, 270, 298f.  
 – *Cours au Collège de France* 298  
 Fraassen, B. C. van 71, 80, 82f.  
 frame problem 63  
 France 196, 265  
 Franco, P. 129  
 free individual 296f., 300, 304  
 free will 8, 58, 68, 113, 119f., 123, 128, 131, 169, *see also* freedom of will  
 freedom 128f., 133–140, 148, 183f., 192, 226, 297f., 302, 310f., 313–315, 319, 323  
 – absolute 135  
 – conception of 8, 113, 134  
 – creative 189  
 – feeling of 136  
 – individual 296  
 – inner 310  
 – practical 12, 313  
 – relative 135f.  
 – universal 183  
 freedom of choice 8, 137–139  
 freedom of will 4, 119f., 129, 134–136, 138, *see also* free will  
 French Revolution 250, 319  
 Freud, S. 184  
 Friedman, M. 237  
 friendship 11, 289, 304, 319f.  
 Fries, Th. 198  
 functionalism 37, 55  
*Funktionsidentität* 201  
 Fürst, G. 196  
 Galison, P. 242  
 Gallagher, S. 40  
 Galton, F. 248  
 Gast, P. 319  
 Gauss, C. F. 160  
 Gay, P. 318  
 Gebhard, W. 238  
 Geeraerts, D. 197  
 Gehlen, A. 200  
*Gelehrte* 292  
 Gemes, K. 1, 50, 68, 168  
 genealogy 10, 77f., 89, 165f., 235f., 247f., 253, 270, 279, 281, 294  
 generalization 93, 100–104, 109, 123  
 genetics 75, 78, 80, 263, 266f.  
 genius 99, 134, 217, 221–224, 226, 228, 299  
 Gerber, G. 202, 205, 226  
 Gerhard, M. 241  
 Gerhardt, V. 85, 240  
 Gerratana, F. 198  
 Gersdorff, C. von 200  
 gestalt-shift 78  
 goal 5, 50, 68, 114, 130, 151, 163, 283, 321, 323, 325  
 God 57, 196, 200, 241, 244, 324f.  
 – shadow of 262  
 gods 313–318, 323f.  
 Goethe, J. W. von 56, 61, 65, 139, 245, 251, 316  
 golden rule 265, 268  
 Goldman, A. I. 60



- Goldman, A. I. 60  
 good 200, 250–252, 261, 264 f., 269  
 – and bad 44, 229, 264  
 – and evil 44, 250 f., 301, 324  
 – doing 219  
 – greater 268  
 – highest 325  
 – making 79 f.  
 – social 250, 252  
 goodness 251 f., 266, 304, 324  
 goods 305  
 – table of 123  
 Gori, P. 132  
 Gould, S. J. 245  
 Grady, J. E. 210  
 grammar 39, 72, 77, 104, 183, 187, 193, 195,  
 197 f., 205, 231, 268  
 Greece 197  
 Greek  
 – atomists 313  
 – culture 51, 64  
 – enlightenment 309  
 – philosophical schools 311, 319  
 – philosophy 298, 311, 322  
 – poetry 189  
 – tragedy 145, 192  
 Greeks 51, 77, 191 f., 200, 226, 278 f., 324  
 Green, M. S. 226  
 group formation 2  
 Guhrauer, H. 223  
 guiding-thread 42, 207, *see also* body: gui-  
 ding-thread of the  
 guilt 107 f., 269  
 Guyau, J.-M. 263, 309
- Haase, F. 197  
 Haaz, I. 209  
 Hacking, I. 240  
 Hadot, P. 309 f., 314, 317  
 Haeckel, E. 245, 264, 275  
 – *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen* 245  
 Hagner, M. 240  
 Haidt, J. 266  
 Hamann, J. G. 196  
 – *Aesthetica in Nuce* 196  
 Han-Pile, B. 321  
 happiness 50, 119, 251, 313, 320, 323–325  
 – pursuit of 183  
 Hartmann, E. von 198
- Hartshorne, C. 147 f., 150  
 – *The Zero Fallacy* 147  
 Hatab, L. 8 f., 303  
 Hatfield, G. C. 236, 239  
 Haugeland, J. 239  
 Hauser, M. 268–270  
 – *Moral Minds* 268  
 health 50 f., 54, 60, 63, 139, 193, 228, 268,  
 275 f., 281–283, 291  
 Hegel, G. W. F. 196, 239, 250, 309–311, 315  
 Heidegger, M. 51, 237, 290  
 Heit, H. 6 f., 10, 86  
 Hellene 191  
 Helmholtz, H. von 20, 86, 95 f., 100, 102, 202,  
 226, 243  
 – *Handbuch der Physiologischen Optik* 86,  
 202  
 Henning, B. 186  
 Heraclitus 148, 311  
 herd 1, 99, 139, 184, 229, 245, 250, 261, 265,  
 293, 296  
 herd animal 139, 245, 294  
 herd instinct 265  
 Herdeegen, F. 197  
*Herdeninstinkt* 265  
 Herder, J. G. 196, 200  
 Hering, E. 248 f., 264  
 hermit 283, 292, 300  
 heroic-idyllic 309, 316 f., 326  
 heroism 316  
 Hesse, M. B. 132  
 heuristics 52 f., 86, 128, 238, 241, 246  
 higher-order representation (HOR) 97, 105  
 higher-order thought (HOT) 97 f., 107, 109  
 Hill, R. K. 149  
 Hill, R. K. 149 f., 159  
*Hinterwelt* 208  
 historians 66, 249, 265  
 – critical 65 f.  
 historical sense 52 f., 55, 65–67  
 history 1, 20, 50 f., 55 f., 62–67, 151 f., 160,  
 184, 210, 238, 244, 246, 250–252, 273,  
 279, 312, 314  
 Hobbes, Th. 235, 309  
 Hödl, H. G. 202, 218  
 Holbrook, P. E. 206  
 Hollingdale, R. J. 67, 298  
 Homer 228, 278  
*homo economicus* 269  
*homo natura* 253, 301

- homo sapiens* 261, 266  
 honesty 241, 298, 300f., 304  
 Housman, L. 221  
 Huenemann, C. 11, 282  
 human  
   – exceptionalism 150, 317  
   – existence 42–44, 314, 316f., 321  
   – non-exceptionalism 323  
   – thought 145  
 human animal 2f., 5, 54  
 humanity 3, 49–52, 56, 67, 184, 196, 208,  
   249f., 252f., 263, 296, 316–318, 321f.  
 Humboldt, A. von 249  
 Humboldt, W. von 198  
 Hume, D. 127, 176, 235  
 humility 55, 276  
 Hussain, N. J. Z. 18, 31, 93, 252  
 Husserl, E. 173, 240  
   – *Logical Investigations* 173  
 Hutchins, E. 25–28  
 Hyland, D. 223  
 hylozoism 275
- IBM 23  
 idealism 146, 149, 159, 171f., 236, 314  
   – transcendental 173  
 ideas, innate 244  
 identity 36f., 40, 74, 119, 123, 166, 183f.,  
   189, 219, 227, 229f.  
 identity-hypothesis 76  
 illusion 3, 87, 104, 119–121, 123, 132, 134,  
   169, 176f., 210, 219, 224, 238, 247, 252,  
   277, 289–292, 302  
 imagination 60, 160, 171f., 188, 196, 206,  
   245, 248  
   – faculty of 171  
 imitation 192, 206, 222, 225  
 immediacy 9, 173f., 190–193  
 impulse 134, 183, 196, 218, 222, 225, 261,  
   269, 294  
   – blind 125f., 134, 221  
   – sensible 137  
 inanimation 108, 146, 274  
 incommensurability 147, 163, 171, 177, 277  
 incorporation 62f., 65, 68, 108f., 133, 138,  
   170f., 176, 209, 290f., 293–297, 299–301,  
   303f., 309  
 indifferentiation, principle of 163  
 individual  
   – atomic 8, 184  
   – human 244f., 249f., 296  
   – sovereign 8, 113, 137, 139f.  
 individualism 8, 184f., 296, 310  
 individuality 139, 185, 188f., 217, 220, 230,  
   310f., 323  
 inference  
   – abductive 80  
   – conscious 107  
   – to the best explanation 80  
   – unconscious 86, 96, 100, 225  
 influx, massive 62f.  
 inspiration 40, 191, 225, 227, 280, 316  
 instinct 2f., 10, 53f., 89, 122f., 126, 133, 136,  
   138f., 167, 184, 189f., 205, 209, 235, 243,  
   246, 250, 262–265, 268, 275, 282, 291,  
   299, 302  
 integration 42, 65  
 intellect 9, 58–60, 83, 96, 124–126, 137–139,  
   163, 199, 206, 218f., 226, 230, 244, 289f.,  
   293, 302  
   – human 199, 242, 244f., 289  
 intelligence 116, 126, 134, 221, 303  
 intention 4f., 68, 104f., 107, 137f., 163, 177,  
   196, 199, 201, 229, 266  
 intentionality 5, 108f., 149, 176, 274  
 interaction 8, 19–24, 27, 34, 36, 39–42, 63,  
   65, 103, 134, 149, 151, 154, 159, 164, 177,  
   197, 207, 221, 237f., 242, 244, 248, 266  
 interactivity 22, 24, 28, 36, 38  
 interdisciplinarity 1, 6  
 interests 29, 39, 86, 172, 219, 243, 274–277  
 internal states 165  
 internalization 9, 108f., 133, 185f., 247  
 intoxication 191, 319, 322  
 intuition 95–97, 197, 204, 220f., 225f., 228–  
   230  
   – aesthetic 217, 222, 225  
   – intellectual 218  
   – sensible 95, 103  
 intuitionism 263  
*inventio* 195  
 Inwood, M. 310
- Jablonka, E. 264  
 Jaeschke, W. 241  
 James, W. 41, 95, 156f., 159  
   – *The Principles of Psychology* 156  
 Janaway, C. 127, 193, 225  
 jealousy 319, 325

- Jean Paul  
– *Lessons of Aesthetics* 196
- Jensen, A. K. 9, 217
- Johnson, M. 18, 20, 29f., 41, 209–211
- Jones, H. 316
- Jordan, L. 60
- joy 3, 178, 229, 282, 304f., 316, 321f., 324f.,  
see also enjoyment
- Judeo-Christian tradition 249, 325
- Kail, P. 38, 52
- Kant, I. 32, 78, 137, 171, 173, 175, 196, 220,  
239, 241, 277f., 283, 298
- Kantianism 72, 113, 139, 242, 276, 278, 281  
– neo-Kantianism 173, 210  
– post-Kantianism 226
- Katsafanas, P. 1f., 4, 26, 33f., 38, 40, 50,  
53f., 60, 67, 88, 93f., 100–102, 104, 107–  
110, 113, 122, 165, 168
- Kaufmann, W. 114, 192, 298
- Keeley, B. L. 76, 83
- Keller, E. F. 243
- Keller, H. 186
- Knight, A. H. J. 317
- knower 85, 193
- knowledge 6, 22, 30, 32, 49f., 52, 55f., 58f.,  
61, 63, 71, 73–75, 77–80, 82, 84, 124, 150,  
173, 175, 186f., 191, 193, 195, 198f., 201,  
203, 206, 208, 210f., 217f., 220–222, 224,  
230, 239, 241, 244, 247, 268, 276–278,  
290–294, 299, 301f., 312, 314–317, 321,  
325  
– acquisition of 63, 72f., 206, 315  
– perceptual 73  
– practical 61, 65–67
- Kofman, S. 30
- Kopij, M. 218
- Kopperschmidt, J. 198f., 201
- Kornblith, H. 237
- Korsgaard, C. M. 241f.
- Kremer-Marietti, A. 209
- Krieger, W. H. 83
- Kuhn, T. S. 243
- Kunicki, W. 218
- La Mettrie, J. O. de 309
- Lacoue-Labarthe, P. 201, 205, 208
- Lakoff, G. 18, 20, 29f., 209–211
- Lamarck, J.-B. 249, 251
- Lamb, M. J. 264
- Lange, F. A. 87, 202, 226  
– *Geschichte des Materialismus* 243
- Langer, M. M. 320f.
- Langer, M. M. 320
- language 26f., 29f., 35, 38f., 44, 59, 71f., 75,  
79, 87, 99, 103f., 147, 164, 168, 175, 183,  
185–190, 192f., 195–205, 207, 210, 227,  
247, 251, 268, 283, 293, 315  
– creative 9, 187–189, 191  
– everyday 203, 210f.  
– figurative 196, 203  
– formation of 202f.  
– natural 23, 87  
– private 99  
– use of 164, 195, 197, 202, 208
- language-dependence 101–103
- language and consciousness see conscious-  
ness: and language
- last human 49–51
- Lavoisier-Priestley case 77
- laws 76, 88, 132, 136f., 139f., 167, 176, 191,  
196, 209, 238, 253, 269, 277f., 281, 293,  
295, 302, 313  
– of nature 129, 154, 247, 290, 299, 302, 306  
– universal 88, 197
- learning 75, 78f., 266f., 290, 312
- Leddy, N. 309, 318
- Leib* 17, 127, 169, 171f., 235, 244, 290
- Leibniz, G. W. 94–98, 103, 109, 157f., 172,  
312
- Leiter, B. 1, 4, 40, 61, 76, 93, 97, 101, 120,  
122, 165f., 168f., 174, 247, 252, 273
- Lemm, V. 11, 246, 289, 292, 294, 297f., 303
- Lenoir, T. 246
- Lessing, G. E. 318
- Leucippus 310
- Levin, M. 30
- Liebmann, O. 95  
– *Analysis der Wirklichkeit* 95f., 102f.
- life  
– advancing 275f., 283f.  
– conception of 10f., 72, 274f.  
– diminishing 290, 292  
– enhancing 11, 289–291, 304  
– everyday 204, 210, 319  
– forces 183, 187, 190, 302f.  
– forms of 11, 134, 168, 190, 219, 229, 242,  
289–292, 294, 296, 299, 301–303  
– human 44, 61, 72, 145, 186, 278, 293f., 317  
– phenomenon of 127

- philosophical 11, 289f., 292–294, 298f.
- political 11, 289, 292–294, 297, 299, 319
- preserving 199, 252, 289, 291, 295
- values of 279–281, 283
- way of 309f., 323, 325
- life's perspective 11, 274, 276, 281, 283, 289–291
- lifestyle 273, 276
- Lifschitz, A. S. 309, 318
- lightning 177, 188
- linguistics 1, 8f., 26, 80, 99, 102f., 107, 109, 116, 118, 125f., 168, 177, 183, 185–187, 191f., 197, 201, 204, 208–211, 227, 268
- Llibre Vermell de Montserrat* 57
- Locke, J. 196, 235, 243f.
- logos* 75
- Long, A. A. 320
- Loukidelis, N. 88, 95, 218
- Lupo, L. 97, 99, 113, 116
  
- Macedonia 313
- Mach, E. 86, 243
- Machtquanta* 33, 40
- Maglio, P. 24
- Mahon, B. Z. 63
- Malebranche, N. 172, 244
- Manale, M. 313
- Marx, K. 11f., 309–315, 317, 322f.
  - *The German Ideology* 313, 315
  - *The Holy Family* 313
- mask 226
- master 113, 115, 135f., 209, 226
- materialism 86, 147, 236, 240, 243, 313f.
  - contemplative 310, 313, 323
  - eliminative 6, 19f., 36, 71, 76f., 81, 85
  - modern 283, 309
  - reductive 166
  - scientific 235, 240
- matter 8, 88, 123, 128, 132, 146–148, 167, 171, 174, 305, *see also* mind: and matter
- Maturana, H. R. 64, 66
- May, S. 247
- Mayer, J. R. 130f.
- McCarthy, G.°E. 316
- McDowell, J. 236, 242
- meaning 20, 29, 41, 63, 65, 76, 99f., 168, 171f., 186, 189, 192, 196f., 202, 204, 210
- mechanism 57f., 60f., 73, 88, 108, 127f., 130–133, 139, 166f., 170f., 176, 191, 242,
  - see also* anti-mechanism; physico-mechanism; willing: as mechanism
- medieval 6, 49, 56–58, 60f., 67f.
- Meijers, A. 202
- memento mori* 6, 49, 56–58, 60f., 67f.
- memento vivere* 6, 49, 56f., 61, 67
- memorization 195, 294
- memory 8, 22f., 25, 106, 146, 206, 246f., 263
  - organic 247–249
  - species 265, 267
- mental act 33, 163, 175
- mental and physical 8, 43, 147, 163f., 170–172, 174–176, 179, 321
- mental attitude 95f., 98, 100, 103–106, 108f.
- mental equilibrium 317
- mental image 102, 197, 202f., 206
- mental life 33, 94, 103, 105, 107, 109
- mental realm 21, 33, 44, 147, 163, 170, 172, 174f., 179
- mental simulation 57, 60
- mental sphere 202
- mental states 6, 19, 41, 60, 74, 77f., 86, 88, 93f., 96–101, 105–109, 122, 163, 229, 319
  - conscious 5, 7, 34, 54, 68, 95, 98f., 101, 104f., 107f., 116, 119f., 122, 126f., 137f., 168
  - self-conscious 54, 103
  - unconscious 5, 34, 94f., 97f., 101, 105, 107f., 122
- mentality 149f., 156
  - universal 149
- Merleau-Ponty, M. 23
- Mersenne, M. 244
- meta-ethics 10, 236, 247, 251f.
- metaphor theory 30, *see also* conceptual metaphor theory (CMT)
- metaphors 7, 26, 29f., 33, 41, 87f., 97, 109, 121, 131, 164, 188, 191, 196f., 199, 201–206, 208, 210f., 227, 238f., 243, 277
  - conceptual 210
  - descriptive 44
  - linguistic 210
  - ontological 210
  - origin of 87
  - primary 210
- metaphysical faith 85, 241
- metaphysics 6, 40, 43, 53, 88, 124, 127, 218, 222, 239f., 243, 247
- metonymy 87, 197, 201, 203, 205f., 208, 211
- micropsychism 157
- Mill, J. S. 263, 265, 268

- mimicry 192, 269
- mind
  - and matter 78, 147, 239
  - conception of the 20, 37, 170
  - disembodied 65
  - extended 6, 17, 22–24, 26, 37, 40, 44, 68
  - human 2, 6, 145, 156 f., 197 f., 205, 269, 316–318
  - relational 261
  - theory of 28, 33, 99 f., 104, 169
- mind-body problem 36, 71, 147
- mind and body *see* body: and mind
- mindfulness 147 f., 150, 159
- mirror-neuron theory 266
- misrepresentation 31 f., 77
- mnemonics 60, 246
- modernity 196, 320, 326
- moderns 49–51, 61–63, 65–68, 312
- Moleschott, J. 240
- monad 128, 158
- monism 76, 163, 168, 229
- monitoring 4, 96, 106
- Montaigne, M. de 316
- Moore, G. 17, 29–31, 226, 243, 262, 275
- Moore, G. E. 251
- moral
  - anti-realism 10, 236, 251 f., 273
  - behavior 266
  - dilemma 268
  - disposition 10, 229, 263, 268
  - faculty 10, 261–263, 268
  - feeling 264 f., 294
  - instinct 268
  - intuition 264
  - judgment 10, 55, 235, 241, 261, 268
  - sense 267, 270
  - system 261, 266, 268, 275
- moralist 262, 265, 273 f.
- morality 1, 61, 108, 123, 139, 184, 228 f., 236, 241 f., 244, 247, 249, 261–268, 270, 273, 275 f., 279, 281, 283 f., 293–295, 298, 301, 322, *see also* concepts: moral; conscience: moral; norms: moral; realism: moral; values: moral
  - instinctive 123, 139
  - of custom 139 f.
  - origins of 10, 262
  - traditional 11, 274–276, 284
  - universal 262
- moralizer 273
- moral realism *see* realism: moral
- Morin, A. 186
- morphology 30, 197, 199, 244 f.
- mortality 3, 57, 89, 309, 313, 321, 323
- Most, G. 198
- motivation 3, 57, 222, 280
- motive 58 f., 93, 107, 225, 263
- Müller-Lauter, W. 42, 51, 115, 130, 244
- multiplicity 1, 24, 42, 89, 114, 116–118, 121, 123–126, 132, 134–136, 183, 206 f., 225, 282, 297, 302, 305, 318
- music 4, 166, 168, 190, 192, 201, 220, 268
- musicality 192
- mysticism 217 f., 221, 223, 225, 228 f.
- mythology 4, 239
  
- Nägeli, C. von 243
- Nancy, J.-L. 298
- Napoleon Bonaparte 249
- Narayanan, S. 210
- nativism 263
- natural being 10, 236–238, 240, 250, 252
- natural history 94–96, 229, 249
- natural selection 83, 236, 246, 248, 251
- natural world 199, 227, 235–239, 243, 249, 251 f.
- naturalism 8, 10, 43, 52, 71 f., 76–78, 85, 87 f., 163 f., 166, 169, 173, 176, 225 f., 229 f., 235–240, 242 f., 248, 253, 275 f., 302
  - epistemological 237, 239
  - ethical 269
  - metaphysical 166
  - methodological 166, 168, 238 f.
  - philosophical 10, 72, 235–241, 243, 245 f., 251 f.
  - pragmatic 237 f.
  - substantive 236, 238, 252
- naturalistic fallacy 10, 251, 262, 269
- nature
  - embeddedness in 245
  - human 185, 261 f., 276, 319
  - second 190, 235
  - state of 293, 296
- Nauckoff, J. 298
- Naumann, G. 86, 243
- necessitarianism 313
- necessity 19, 33, 128 f., 132, 134, 136, 140, 191 f., 196, 293, 296, 302, 312–314
- Neeley, G. S. 220

- negation 324f.
- Nehamas, A. 4, 193, 223, 240
- Nehaniv, C. L. 64
- neminem laede* 265
- Nerlich, B. 197, 211
- nervous system 3, 21, 261, 263f., 266, *see also* central nervous system (CNS)
- neural activity 41, 78
- neural network 6, 72, 75, 77f., 80, 83, 87f.
- Neurath, O. 278
- neuro-computational perspective 77f., 81, 83
- neurobiology 72, 75, 262, 266f.
- neuron 75, 78f., 267
- neurophysiology 22, 186, 210
- neuroscience 1, 10, 22, 76, 86, 89, 184, 210, 261f.
- neurosis 316f., 322
- new life sciences 10, 248
- Newton, I. 157
- Neymeyr, B. 218
- Niehues-Pröbsting, H. 299
- Nietzsche, F.
- *Beyond Good and Evil* 18, 31, 88f., 99, 209, 235, 240f., 247, 252, 283, 298, 323
  - *Dawn* 266, 269, 298, 300, 320, 326
  - *Ecce Homo* 93, 191, 193, 300
  - *Human, All Too Human* 205, 239, 241, 262f., 282, 316
  - N.'s mature period 128
  - N.'s middle period 12, 217, 310, 316–319, 322f., 326
  - *Nachlass* 71, 97, 101, 117, 126f., 137, 145f., 164, 171, 188, 206, 235, 290, 293, 295f., 300
  - *Nietzsche contra Wagner* 324
  - *On the Genealogy of Morals* 3, 86, 108, 193, 229, 235, 243, 246, 248, 292, 323
  - *On the Origin of Language* 198
  - *On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life* 49
  - *On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense* 87, 188, 199f., 202f., 225, 277, 292f.
  - *Presentation of Ancient Rhetoric* 198, 200, 203
  - *The Anti-Christ* 316, 323
  - *The Birth of Tragedy* 145, 190, 201, 222, 224, 239, 322
  - *The Gay Science* 4, 8, 93–95, 129, 240, 242, 250–253, 266, 291, 298, 323–325
  - the late N. 316, 323
  - *The Wanderer and His Shadow* 190, 309, 318
  - *Thus spoke Zarathustra* 1, 85, 88, 121, 136, 139, 154, 171, 191, 298, 305
  - *Twilight of the Idols* 75, 104, 134, 208, 242, 280
  - *Untimely Meditation* 50, 52, 163
- nihilism 50, 279–281, 323, 325
- Nöe, A. 20, 22
- non-consciousness 149, 172, 184, 186
- non-reductionism 6, 76
- Norman, J. 114
- normative questions 79
- normativity 10, 77f., 80, 83, 89, 158f., 235f., 238–242, 244, 246–248, 253, 262, 266f., 292
- conception of 10
  - normative claims 237, 241, 247
  - normative questions 241
  - of social practices 238
- norms
- legal 294
  - moral 246, 252, 267, 294
  - social 293
- noumena 173
- noumenal 32
- Nyhart, L. K. 243f.
- obedience 113–115, 117–119, 121, 126f., 129, 131–136, 140, 303
- object
- empirical 224
  - spatio-temporal 220, 222
- objectification 177f., 217–219, 224, 226
- observables 82, 163, *see also* unobservables
- Odysseus 316
- Olympus 191
- ontogeny 244f.
- ontology 8, 35, 42, 76, 82f., 86, 88, 145, 151f., 154–161, 163, 166, 168, 177, 179, 200, 210, 277f., 280f., 299
- phenomenological 171, 174
  - Platonic 80
  - power 32f., 35
- opinion 62, 74, 201, 250, 292
- false 74
  - true 74f.
- organ 3, 10, 55, 74, 83, 121, 220, 244f., 248, 268f., 291, 296, *see also* sensory organs
- organic being 238, 244, 276

- organism 3, 25, 28, 32f., 35, 41f., 44, 55, 58, 83, 116–126, 128–131, 133, 136, 138f., 170, 239, 245, 250, 275, 291
- concept of the 35, 41f.
  - human 24, 123, 125f., 136, 139, 184
- organization 22, 24f., 28, 32, 35–38, 40–44, 61, 64–66, 68, 88, 116–118, 120f., 123f., 137, 152, 168, 209f., 246–248, 266, 296, 303
- cognitive 205
  - functional 41
  - living 6
- organizational model 27, 41–43
- ornatus* 195
- Orpheus 219
- Orsucci, A. 226, 247
- Otis, L. 248
- Ottmann, H. 115, 135
- ousia* 74
- overload 6, 49, 62f., 65, 67
- overman 281
- paideia* 309, 315
- panexperientialism 146
- panpsychism 8, 146–149, 151, 153–160
- Panther, K.-U. 211
- Papineau, D. 32, 65, 102
- Parmenides 200
- parrhêsia* 298
- Pascal, B. 316
- pathology 52, 62, 65, 134, 273, 281
- pathos 115, 133, 147f., 150f.
- Patton, P. 136
- Paul, Apostle 311
- Payne, E. F. J. 217
- peace of mind 314, 317, 321
- perception 19, 32, 34–36, 58, 73–75, 77f., 81, 86f., 94f., 97, 101f., 104, 115–118, 132f., 145, 151, 156, 158, 172, 202, 204, 206, 209f., 220, 222, 227, 248, 266, 291, 304
- capacity of 74
  - conscious 102, 109, 172
  - physiology of 201, 262
  - sense 58, 301, 312, 314
  - unconscious 102, 109, 116
- perceptual judgment 77, 84
- perfection, unconscious 4
- personification 210
- perspective-bearing entities 274f., 281, 283
- perspectivism 7, 11, 41, 72, 85, 89, 116f., 123, 125, 149, 154, 159f., 225, 274, 276–280
- perturbation 64
- pessimism 217, 222, 277, 322, 324
- petites perceptions* 94f.
- Petrarch 318
- Pfeiffer, R. 63
- phenomenal 32, 64, 87, 96, 124, 170, 173–176, 219–221, 224, 277, 312
- phenomenalism 173, 208
- phenomenology 5, 23, 34, 59, 145, 164, 166, 168, 171, 173f., 176, 178f., 236
- philology 197, 223, 301
- philosophy
- Ancient 73, 309, 311
  - Greco-Roman 309
  - of mind 1f., 6f., 10f., 18f., 21f., 32f., 35, 38, 63f., 71–74, 76, 78, 85, 88, 97, 149, 217
  - of nature 148, 238, 311
  - of science 240
  - recent 71, 173
  - Roman 311
  - Western 77, 289
- phylogeny 245
- physical grounding 32
- physical realm 8, 21, 27, 44, 147, 163, 170–172, 174f., 179, 220
- physicalism 10, 43, 85, 88, 157, 170, 236, 238, 249, *see also* materialism
- physicist 132, 149, 160
- physico-mechanism 87, 108
- physics 30, 84, 130, 132, 154f., 158, 168, 171, 242, 268, 302, 310–312, 317f.
- physio-psychological 7, 108
- physiological processes 84, 108, 202
- physiology 55, 72, 86, 88f., 94–96, 121, 127, 184, 201f., 209, 235, 240, 242, 244f., 248, 262, 264, 267, 270
- Pickering, A. 240
- pictorial sign 102f.
- Pinker, S. 268
- Pippin, R. B. 4, 50, 119
- Planck, M. 155
- plasticity 22, 28, 38, 267, 274
- Plato 6, 72–75, 77, 80, 83, 85, 89, 200, 220, 228, 283, 290, 298, 316
- Gorgias 74
  - *Phaedrus* 74, 200
  - *Politikus* 200
  - *Theaetetus* 72–75, 79

- Platonic-Christian tradition 73  
 Platonic-Socratic tradition 298f.  
 pleasure 50, 54, 58–60, 117–121, 125, 129, 147, 192, 199, 228f., 250f., 280, 304, 310f., 314, 317, 322, 325  
 pluralism 72, 85  
 plurality 88f., 118, 120, 221, 230, 297, 302f.  
 Poellner, P. 132  
 poet 191, 196f., 223  
 poetry 12, 79, 87, 189–192, 196f., 225  
 politics 65, 135, 292–294, 297, 303  
 Pörings, R. 211  
 portability 22, 28, 38  
 Porter, J. 315f., 325  
 poverty 49, 63, 276  
 power  
 – actual 136  
 – decrease of 133, 135f., 265  
 – differences of 167  
 – feeling of 114, 119, 121, 127, 133–136  
 – monopoly of 135  
 – political 293f.  
 power relations 35, 114f., 118, 123, 136  
 predicate 104, 177, 183, 207  
 prehension 158f.  
 prejudice 74, 85, 187, 196, 277  
 preservation 130, 136, 167, 184, 250, 263, 265, 289, 291, 296, *see also* self-preservation  
 – of life 199, 243, 265, 293–295  
 – of society 297  
 – of species 199, 250, 291  
*principium individuationis* 201, 218, 220, 224  
 Prinz, J. 19, 35f.  
 probity 11, 289, 293, 298–305  
 Prometheus 313  
 property, idea of 305  
 propositional  
 – articulation 7, 60, 94, 100, 103–107, 109  
 – attitude 72, 77, 104, 106  
 – content 103, 199  
 – knowledge 74, 193  
 Protestantism 278  
 psychism 157  
 psycho-physical 8, 164, 171  
 psychological 95, 103, 105, 108f., 127, 156, 210, 248, 264, 277, 280  
 – events 106  
 – pathology 273, 281  
 – phenomena 76, 93  
 – principles 197  
 psychologist 89, 235, 240, 249  
 psychology 1, 22, 71, 123, 145, 183, 192, 201, 235, 240, 246, 268, 280f., *see also* folk psychology  
 – developmental 9, 186  
 – drive 8, 53  
 – empirical 165  
 – experimental 237  
 – human 32, 281  
 – moral 19, 35f., 246, 269  
 – of perception 156  
 psychophysical 41, 101, 171, 175f., 179, 263  
 Ptolemy 277f.  
 punishment 60, 269f., 319  
 – corporeal 246  
 purpose 5, 54f., 114, 129, 131, 137f., 147, 151, 166f., 192  
 Putnam, H. 24, 239  
 Pythagoreanism 107  
  
 quale 166–168  
 quanta of time 159  
 quantum 5, 8, 40, 114, 130, 155, 159f., 166f., 178  
 quantum gravity 155  
 quantum leap 160  
 quantum theory 155  
 Quick, T. 64  
 Quine, W. V. O. 237, 277f.  
 Quintilian 197  
 – *Institutio Oratoria* 197f.  
  
 race 250, 265, 324  
 Rachel, J. 261  
 Radden, G. 211  
 Rawls, J. 269  
 realism 80–83, 301  
 – epistemological 81, 83  
 – metaphysical 276f.  
 – moral 10, 236, 252  
 – scientific 7, 72, 80, 82f.  
 reality 9, 31f., 72, 81, 84, 124, 128, 146–148, 150–152, 156, 158, 164, 172–174, 178, 188, 191, 195, 199–202, 206, 208f., 211, 219, 221, 228, 237, 239, 242, 273, 279, 312, 323, 325  
 – conception of 8, 35, 151  
 – enduring 80  
 – objective 73, 209



- reason 58 f., 71 f., 75, 83, 106, 137, 167, 196–198, 208, 224, 226, 238, 242, 247 f., 296, 298, 325
- conception of 220
  - great 1, 54, 71, 85, 88
  - pure 278
  - small 1, 88
  - universal 201
- reasoning 22, 41, 74, 86, 151
- Redlichkeit* 11, 289 f., 293, 297–305, *see also* probity
- reductionism 10, 43, 71, 76, 88, 235–237, 240, 246, 249, *see also* anti-reductionism; non-reductionism
- Rée, P. 269
- reflection 137 f., 174, 185, 190, 193, 196, 242
- reflex 51, 126, 134, 264
- reflexivity 96–98
- Reginster, B. 50, 217
- reification 165, 210
- Reisig, C. K. 197
- religion 12, 50, 61, 67, 145, 209, 241, 246, 250, 267, 269, 292, 300 f., 309, 313–315, 317 f., 321, 323
- Rembrandt van Rijn 66
- renunciation 219, 228, 322, *see also* self-renunciation
- representation 7, 23 f., 31–35, 37, 40, 58, 60, 72, 75, 80 f., 84, 95, 97, 106–109, 125, 156, 172, 174 f., 178 f., 201, 206, 208 f., 221 f., 224, 226, 237, 248, 250, 267, 290
- abstract 28
  - cognitive 78 f.
  - conscious 165
  - content of 60
  - internal 23, 185
  - mental 31, 59, 98, 202 f., 227
  - model of 19
  - public 108 f.
- representational power 19, 31, 95
- representational resources 23
- res cogitans* 124, 218
- res extensa* 85
- resignation 129, 219
- resistance 114 f., 117, 123, 126 f., 129, 134–136, 139, 238, 242, 303, 326
- overcoming of 115, 117, 136–138
  - triumph over 118, 120 f.
- responsibility 25, 36 f., 39, 268
- ressentiment* 34, 145
- retaliation 270
- Reuter, S. 86, 96, 202, 208
- rhetoric 9, 195–202, 205 f., 208, 210
- rhetorica recepta* 195
- rhetorical *dynamis* 198, 208 f.
- rhetorical strategy 9, 201, 203
- Ribot, T. 119, 126, 139, 248
- Riccardi, M. 2, 4, 7, 18, 31–33, 54, 60, 64 f., 93, 102
- Richards, R. J. 204, 245 f., 249, 251
- Richardson, J. 1, 29, 31, 35, 53–55, 67, 136, 166, 168 f., 246, 252, 274, 280–282, 303
- Ricoeur, P. 205, 267 f., 270
- Riegler, A. 64–66
- Risse, M. 163, 166, 169, 242
- Ritschl, F. 198
- Roberts, G. 64
- Robertson, G. C. 249
- Robertson, S. 113
- robot 23, 274
- robotics 22 f., 25
- Rolph, W. H. 243, 275
- Romans 66, 204, 311
- Romanticism 196, 217
- German 245 f., 249, 251
- Roos, R. 322
- Rosen, S. 79
- Rosenberg, A. 238
- Rosenthal, D. 97–99, 105, 107–109
- Rouse, J. 237 f., 240–242, 244, 246–248
- Rousseau, J.-J. 196, 316, 319
- Roux, W. 55, 243–245, 250, 275
- *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* 88
  - *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* 243
- Rovelli, C. 155
- Rubel, M. 313
- ruler 3
- Ruse, M. 267
- Saar, M. 136
- sacrifice 219, 246, 249, 268, 316, 321
- sage 314, 317
- Salaquarda, J. 127, 218
- salience 23, 52
- Saturnalia 226
- Sceptics 311
- Schacht, R. 85, 129, 169, 235
- Scheier, C. 63
- Schein* 173 f.
- Schelling, F. W. J. 148 f.

- Schelling, F. W. J. 148, 220, 249  
 – *Freiheitschrift* 148  
 – *Von der Weltseele* 148  
 schema 29, 62, 65, 106 f., 171, 206–208, 210  
 – cognitive 205 f., 209  
 Schlechta, K. 226  
 Schlimgen, E. 1, 120 f.  
 Schmeitzner, E. 262  
 Schneider, G. H. 243  
 Schopenhauer, A. 9 f., 58 f., 86, 95 f., 99 f.,  
 124 f., 127, 130, 134, 148, 163, 173, 184,  
 198, 217–231, 265, 278, 316, 323  
 – *On the Basis of Morality* 269  
 – *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will* 58  
 – *The World as Will and Representation* 86,  
 124, 217  
 Schulz, W. 218  
 Schuster, P. R. 248  
 scientific method 235, 237 f.  
 scientific revolution 83  
 sea 320 f., 323, 325  
 Searle, J. 27  
 Sedley, D. N. 320  
*Selbsttäuschung* 229 f.  
*Selbstverleugnung* 218, 221–225, 227–230  
 self  
 – autonomous 183  
 – conception of the 1, 52, 54, 217 f., 231  
 – ecstatic 217 f., 222, 224, 226, 231  
 – empirical 217, 219, 228  
 – individual 8, 27, 54, 57, 188, 224  
 – phenomenal 219–221  
 self-awareness 9, 148, 186–189  
 self-consciousness 1–5, 7, 9, 41, 54, 58, 60,  
 72, 96 f., 99, 103 f., 106, 109, 148, 184–  
 187, 193, 242, 280, 310, 314 f., 317  
 – developmental thesis of 2  
 – metaphysical conception of 4  
 self-control 6, 49, 60, 67, 319  
 self-creation 8, 137, 139  
 self-denial 219, 249, 322  
 self-determination 313, 315  
 self-development 183  
 self-identity 150 f., 174  
 self-initiation 146  
 self-knowledge 185, 283  
 self-organization 21, 37, 67 f., 117  
 self-preservation 55, 250, 252, 291, 296 f., 302  
 self-reflection 74, 184 f.  
 self-regulation 55, 242, 244, 250, 318  
 self-renunciation 218, 220–222, 225, 229 f.  
 self-system 49, 51, 54 f., 57, 60–65, 67  
 selfhood 8 f., 183, 186–188, 193, 218  
 semantic change 197  
 semantics 65, 197  
 semasiology 197, 210  
 sensation 19, 30 f., 34, 62, 74, 77, 101 f., 116,  
 146, 151–154, 203 f., 208 f., 230, 291, 312,  
 314, 322  
 sense apparatus 199  
 sense data 74, 204, 206, 209  
 sense experience 72, 83, 199, *see also experi-*  
*ence: sensible*  
 sense organs *see* sensory organs  
 senses 3, 18, 29, 31–33, 35, 51, 99, 102, 150,  
 196 f., 199, 203, 206, 209, 314  
 sensorimotor system 19, 22, 28, 31, 35  
 sensory organs 29, 31–33, 73 f., 77, 201, 227  
 sensory template 32, 102 f.  
 sensualism 18, 31  
 sentience 96, 148, 150, 159, 166  
 Shakespeare, W. 282  
 shame 300, 302  
 Shani, I. 36  
 Shapiro, L. 17, 20, 23, 28  
 Shaw, T. 252  
 Shearin, W. S. 326  
 sickness 66, 139, 273, 283  
 – historical 6, 49–52, 62, 67  
 Siegel, D. J. 261  
 Siemens, H. 113, 297  
 sign 9, 100, 116, 121, 138, 165, 185, 187,  
 195 f., 206–208, 247, 268, *see also com-*  
*munication sign; pictorial sign*  
 sign language 139, 247  
 Sigwart, C. 95  
 Simmel, G. 222  
 Simon, J. 116, 226  
 Singer, P. 261  
 skepticism 42, 82, 85, 201, 312  
 skull 22–24, 26 f., 37, 40  
 slave 113, 115, 135 f., 193, 209, 226, 273, 319  
 Sloterdijk, P. 299  
 Small, R. 151, 226  
 Smith, A. 266  
 Smith, L. 25  
 social  
 – social animal 185, 261, 266  
 – social being 292  
 – social contract 296

- social control 246 f.
- social instinct 295
- social practice 209, 238, 244–248, 252
- social role 209
- social withdrawal 12, 310
- society 3, 11, 54, 98, 103, 116 f., 199, 229, 236, 244–247, 249–251, 265, 276, 282, 289, 293–297, 303–305, 318, 320, 326
- commercial 317
- sociobiology 261
- Socrates 73 f., 79, 191, 200, 239, 294, 298 f., 311
- Sokoloff, W. W. 298
- Solomon, R. C. 298
- Sophists 200 f.
- sophos* 311
- soul 1, 5, 17, 29, 44, 52, 55, 62, 71, 74 f., 85 f., 88 f., 104, 115–117, 148, 198, 200, 220, 230, 240, 290, 298–300, 303, 313, 317 f., 321
- immortal 75, 88, 290
- mortal 89
- soul and body *see* body: and soul
- space 132, 160, 168, 187, 210, 224
- space and time 8, 30, 151 f., 155, 158, 218
- spacetime 155, 159
- species 99, 103, 184, 188, 199, 207, 209, 229, 245, 247, 250, 262, 265–269, 291
- speech 9, 189, 192, 195 f., 198, 202, 204, 298 f.
- embodied 192
- figure of 195, 197
- forms of 196
- inner 186
- private 186
- Spencer, H. 10, 199, 236, 249, 251 f., 262–268
- *The Data of Ethics* 236, 262
- Spinoza, B. de 166, 171, 240, 283, 309, 316, 324 f.
- Spir, A. 226
- spirit 3, 29, 137, 140, 167, 170, 209, 250, 283, 290, 309, 318, 320, 323
- free 189, 300, 309, 320–322
- spontaneity 105, 133–135, 138, 190, 193
- Sprachwissenschaft* 209
- Stack, G. J. 128
- Stegmaier, W. 116, 128
- Stevenson, C. 168
- stimulus 23, 58, 79 f., 86, 94, 102, 123, 125, 129–131, 133–135, 138, 209, 263, 324
- external 207, 211, 314
- nerve 30, 87, 202 f., 206
- perceptual 203
- sensory 30, 78
- Stingelin, M. 198, 202
- Stoicism 310 f.
- Stoics 283, 309–311, 316, 319, 324
- Strawson, G. 157
- strength 3, 54, 126, 193, 275, 281–283, 291, 303, 325
- discharge of 114, 130 f., 137, 140
- explosion of 114, 118, 120, 129, 133, 140
- Strong, T. B. 223, 301
- struggle 10, 114 f., 117, 122, 172, 174, 178, 183, 193, 199, 207, 230, 263, 269, 282, 291, 302
- struggle* 118
- Struktursidentität* 201
- stultification, spiritual 289, 297
- subconscious 119, 174
- subject 23 f., 39–41, 68, 98, 104 f., 107, 121–123, 126, 128, 138, 172, 176–178, 183, 203, 217, 219–221, 223, 225, 227, 229 f., 238, 267, 312, *see also* experience: subject of
- subject-object relation 39, 230
- subjectivity 24, 156, 168, 201, 204, 207, 209, 217 f., 222, 224–231, 312
- subjugation 295
- substance 21, 32, 35, 40, 43, 77, 86, 120, 123 f., 146, 165 f., 168, 183, 191, 208 f., 324
- biological 71
- feeling 146
- material 20, 36
- mental 20 f.
- spiritual 21, 36
- Suchman, L. 25
- suffering 107 f., 136, 147, 208, 219–221, 226, 320, 322 f., 325
- sufficient reason, principle of 80, 217, 219–221
- Sullivan, S. 36
- superficiality 7, 93, 109, 131
- superficialization 93, 100
- superfluousness 7, 93 f., 98, 100, 105, 107–109, 167
- superfluousness claim (SC) 7, 93, 100, 104, 107, 109

- superiority 126 f., 129, 134 f., 280, 290, *see also* affect: of superiority  
 supernatural 58, 166, 240, 315  
 superstition 12, 56, 89, 127, 249, 313, 317 f., 323, 325  
 supervenience 21  
 supremacy 135  
 – relations of 114 f., 118, 123, 126 f.  
 survival 98, 136, 187, 199–201, 207, 210, 241, 251, 265, 294 f.  
 symbol 19, 27, 34, 41, 63, 192  
 symbolism 23, 40, 169, 190–192, 267  
 sympathy 219, 228 f., 249, 266, 284  
 synecdoche 197, 201, 203, 205–208, 211  
 synthetic 120, 152
- Tasso, T. 226  
 Tebartz-van Elst, A. 203, 206  
*techné* 198  
 teleology 55, 129, 166 f., 169, 192, 314  
 teleonomy 264  
*telos* 310, 325  
 temporality 152–154, 156, 160, 219–221, 245, 314  
 Thelen, E. 25  
*theoresai* 198  
 theory-ladenness 82  
 thing in itself 124, 224, 230, 277–279  
 Thornburg, L. 211  
 Thüring, H. 198  
 time *see also* quanta of time  
 – jump in 154  
 time-atom 145, 150 f., 153–157, 159  
 time-point 151–153  
 time and space *see* space and time  
 Tongeren, P. van 120  
 Tort, P. 269  
 tragedy 61, 145, 192, 222–224  
 transcendence 149, 159, 200, 220, 247 f., 290  
 transposition 202 f., 206  
 transvaluation 72, 81–84, 305  
*Trieb* 10, 43, 264, 268, 302, *see also* drive  
 trope 9, 195–197, 202 f., 209–211  
 truth  
 – and embodiment 11, 289, 291, 294, 297, 299  
 – concept of 11, 289, 302  
 – conventional 11, 289, 292, 294 f., 301, 306  
 – idea of 299 f.  
 – philosophical 11, 289, 291–294, 298, 300  
 – political 11, 292–294  
 – pursuit of 300 f.  
 – scientific 88  
 truth-telling 298 f.  
 Turner, M. 210 f.
- Übertragung* 202, 205 f.  
 ultimatum game 269 f.  
 un-freedom 133–136  
 unconscious processes 9, 101 f., 116, 184, 206, 211  
 unconsciousness 30 f., 33 f., 52, 60, 68, 94–96, 105, 110, 114, 116–121, 125 f., 165, 179, 184, 190, 198, 201–205, 268 f., 303, *see also* drives: unconscious; inference: unconscious; mental states: unconscious; perception: unconscious; values: unconscious; will: unconscious  
 under-souls 117 f., 121, 125  
 under-wills 117 f., 121, 123–126  
 unification 158 f., 227  
 universe 8, 145, 147, 149–153, 156–158, 178, 239, 277, 312, 314  
 – punctiform 151, 159 f.  
 unobservables 82, *see also* observables  
*Ur-Eine* 230, 325  
 Urpeth, J. 223  
 utilitarianism 250, 268, 276, 293
- valuation 74, 84, 108, 117, 123, 138 f., 230, 243 f., 261, 273, 277–279  
 value judgment 82, 85, 264 f., 276, 301  
 values  
 – agent 53 f., 57, 60  
 – body 53 f., 57, 60  
 – conscious 49, 54, 138  
 – highest 50  
 – human 49, 243  
 – moral 1, 54, 205, 219, 228–230, 239, 248, 250, 264, 273, 275  
 – of Christianity 279 f.  
 – revaluation of 29, 68, 135, 139, 273, 279–281, 284  
 – social 54  
 – traditional 68, 280  
 – transvaluation of 71, 83, 145, 305  
 – unconscious 49, 54  
 – valuation of 278 f.  
 valuing 54, 67, 274, 278–280  
 Veil of Maya 224

- Verne, J. 264  
*Vernunft* 58 f., 208  
*Verstand* 58 f.  
Vickers, B. 195  
Vico, G. 196  
violence 3, 62, 247, 269  
virtue 219, 242, 249, 281, 296, 298, 300, 302 f., 325  
*vita contemplativa* 317  
vocation 5  
Vogt, C. 86, 240  
void 312  
volition 104, 119, 126, 146, 218  
Voltaire 318 f.  
*Vorstellung* 95, 106, 197, 202, 208
- Wackernagel, W. 197  
Wagner, R. 223  
Wallack, F. B. 160  
Warren, J. 313, 321  
weakness 59, 66, 294  
Weinrich, H. 196  
Weinstein, D. 251  
Welshon, R. 5, 55, 64, 68, 96, 100 f., 106  
*Weltansicht* 9, 202 f., 205  
Whitehead, A. N. 158–160  
Wickler, W.  
– *Biology of the Ten Commandments* 267  
Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, U. von 223  
will *see also* free will; freedom of will  
– act of 113, 116, 119, 121, 123, 133  
– conception of the 7 f., 113, 124–126, 149, 178  
– empirical 220  
– individual 219, 313  
– strong 124 f., 137 f., 140  
– un-free 4, 128, 131  
– unconscious 124 f.  
– weak 54, 124 f., 137 f.  
will to nothingness 133  
will to power 8, 113–115, 117–119, 123–128, 132–135, 145–149, 151, 155, 158, 163–168, 170–179, 206, 208 f., 230, 252, 280 f., 302, 305
- Williams, B. 235  
willing 2, 4, 58 f., 67, 94, 113–119, 121, 123, 125–134, 136 f., 139, 146, 157, 184, 218, 227, 230, 269  
– as mechanism 6, 49, 58 f., 61, 67  
– conception of 7, 52, 113, 115  
– conscious 117, 122  
– phenomenon of 113, 120, 123 f., 126–128, 131 f.  
willlessness 219  
Wilson, M. 23, 43  
Wilson, R. A. 17, 36  
Winsler, A. 186  
Wio-wani 221  
wisdom 11, 88, 222, 296, 299, 309–311, 313, 315 f., 319  
wishing phase 59  
Wittgenstein, L. 37  
world  
– as will 217, 221, 223  
– conception of the 145, 151  
– external 208, 227, 312  
– inner 72, 97, 123, 208  
– outside 37, 203 f., 209 f.  
– phenomenal 174–176, 221, 277, 312  
worldview 71 f., 76, 78, 81, 85, 88, 146, 167, 222  
Wotling, P. 121, 126  
Wundt, W. 95, 243, 248 f., 264
- Young, J. 221 f., 228, 322  
young people 51, 63, 65 f.
- Zavatta, B. 9, 197, 201 f.  
Ziemke, T. 64  
Zöllner, G. 218, 221  
Zöllner, J. C. F. 202, 226, 249  
– *Über die Natur der Cometen* 243, 248

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