WILL TO POWER, NIETZSCHE'S LAST IDOL

Jean-Etienne Joullié

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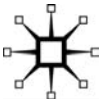

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To my wife and daughters
A labour of love is easily discharged under their demanding gaze.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Contradictions abound in Nietzsche's works. To overcome this situation, Nietzsche scholars have traditionally resorted to one of two strategies: either they have identified a dominating theme and explained anything found in the corpus running against what Nietzsche allegedly 'really meant', or they have argued that the value of his philosophy lies precisely in his contradictions, that Nietzsche's inconsistencies are deliberate and part of a philosophical project of a higher order.

Neither solution is particularly convincing. The latter has a strong odour of unfalsifiability, since it transforms whatever new evidence of incoherence in Nietzsche's thought into second-degree evidence supporting the initial position; the former conveniently forgets that Nietzsche dismissed any sort of philosophical dogmatism, which he considered infantile and fit for beginners. Both ignore that Nietzsche was exasperated by the inconsistencies the works of his predecessors and contemporaries contained. It will come as little surprise that, after over a century of scholarship based upon such starting points, no interpretation of Nietzsche's work has emerged as undisputed.

Readers of Nietzsche should remember that, although he produced pages that have been recognised as belonging to the Western philosophical canon, he had bottomless contempt for academic philosophy. He did not care to, or perhaps could not, support his insights and elaborate their consequences with the depth and rigour the discipline expects. Attempting to supplement Nietzsche's texts with what is not found in them may well be a valuable enterprise as far as academic philosophy is concerned, but it is bound to misrepresent his thought.

This book tries to do more justice to Nietzsche's works by proposing a critique of his late writings as if proposed by Nietzsche himself; a critique, it is argued, that Nietzsche made towards the end of his intellectual life. To understand Nietzsche, rather than to explain away inconsistencies or to force meaning upon him, his readers should take his texts for what they are and not for what they wish they were. Read respectfully but without charity, Nietzsche's last works lead one to conclude that he was failing in the ambitious project which was to find its expression in the book he did not write (*The Will to Power*) and in which the eponymous notion would have been developed. Moreover, while reconstruction of unexpressed motives must remain speculative, there are good reasons to

believe that Nietzsche knew of his philosophical stalemate, explaining the changing literary intentions of his final productive months. If this is the case and account taken of the dangers of commenting on the finger that Nietzsche waved at the moon, then the solution to the riddle of Nietzsche's philosophy is that there is no riddle; there remains a thinker capable of the greatest insights and most lucid prophecies but, contemplating a paralysing failure, found solace in insanity.

* * *

The substance of this study took shape during my doctoral research and because of this I owe much to my former supervisor, Professor Robert Spillane of Macquarie University. Thank you Robert for your patient trust and wise reading suggestions but above all for your inspiring lectures; your infectious passion made it all happen. I am also very grateful to the International College of Management, Sydney, for its continuous and generous support. I am confident the present volume will be the first of a long list that the College will produce.

I am deeply indebted to Brendan George of Palgrave Macmillan who has, against all odds and reason, believed in the manuscript of a previously unpublished author.

Grateful acknowledgements are made to Random House, Penguin Books, Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press for permissions to quote from the copyrighted works of Friedrich Nietzsche as translated by Walter Kaufmann, R.J. Hollingdale and Marion Faber

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to all without whose love and friendship this project would have never come to fruition. No need to name them; they know who they are.

Abbreviations and Conventions

Throughout the text, references to Nietzsche's translated works follow conventions widely used in the literature. Roman numerals refer, where relevant, to main parts of Nietzsche's books (the special case of *Ecce Homo* is explained below) and Arabic numerals refer to section numbers, not pages. For instance, GM-III 12 refers to the twelfth section of the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. I have relied on translations of Nietzsche's works by Walter Kaufmann, R. J. Hollingdale, Anthony Ludovici, Marianne Cowan, Kate Surge and Marion Faber (appearing below as WK, RJH, AL, MC, KS and MF).

AC	*The Anti-Christ* (translation RJH)
BGE	*Beyond Good and Evil* (translation MF)
BT	*The Birth of Tragedy* (translation WK)
CW	*The Case of Wagner* (translation WK)
D	*Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudice of Morality* (translation RJH)
EH	*Ecce Homo* (translation WK)
EH-I	'Why I Am So Wise'
EH-II	'Why I Am So Clever'
EH-III	'Why I Write Such Good Books'
EH-IV	'Why I Am a Destiny'
	The other chapters of this work are referred to using the abbreviations mentioned here; for instance, EH-BT points to the chapter dedicated to *The Birth of Tragedy*
GM	*On the Genealogy of Morals* (translation WK)
GS	*The Gay Science* (translation WK)
HH	*Human, All Too Human* (translation RJH)
	I: first volume IIa: 'Assorted Opinions and Maxims' IIb: 'The Wanderer and his Shadow'
NCW	*Nietzsche contra Wagner* (translation AL)
PTAG	*Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (translation MC)
TI	*Twilight of the Idols* (translation RJH)
U	*Untimely Meditations* (translation RJH)
	I: David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer II: On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for life

III: Schopenhauer as Educator
IV: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth

WLN *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (translation KS)
WP *The Will to Power* (translation WK)
Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (translation RJH)

Wherever possible, Nietzsche's posthumous fragments are referenced by their entry in the readily available *The Will to Power*. Where doing so is not possible, the convention employed in *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (edited by Rüdiger Bittner) is followed; for example, WLN 34[3] refers to notebook 34, fragment 3.

Schopenhauer's main work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, generally known to English readers as *The World as Will and Representation*, is referred to as WWR-I to WWR-IV. References to this work follow the same logic used for Nietzsche's: Roman numerals indicate the book, Arabic numerals the section. Where mentioned, page numbers refer to the 1966 two-volume edition of E. F. J. Payne's translation (marked i and ii). Note that WWR-II does *not* refer to the second volume of the English translation but to book II of Schopenhauer's work.

References to other works, provided in the footnotes but not in the text, follow the author-date system, completed by page numbers if appropriate; full details of all works quoted or referenced are provided at the end. The rare translations of French quotations are all mine.

Nietzsche (and after him his editors and translators) regularly uses ellipses – that is, '…' – as a rhetorical device to indicate a pause in speech, an unfinished thought or an aposiopesis (a deliberate invitation to the reader to complete the sentence by himself). In selective quotations from Nietzsche, to avoid confusion with the content of his texts, omitted words appear as ellipses enclosed in square brackets: […]. Simple, unbracketed ellipses are Nietzsche's own.

In this book, the substantives 'man', 'individual' and 'human' are employed interchangeably; they mean 'people', 'men and women'. Similarly and only as a matter of convenience, masculine pronouns (he, his, him) are used to refer generically to an individual. There is no intention to convey a value-laden agenda; any such impression left by the text is as involuntary as it is unfortunate.

One repays a teacher badly if one remains a pupil.
And why, then, should you not pluck at my laurels?

Thus Spoke Zarathustra I 22 (3)

1
Introduction: Writing on Nietzsche

1. The first challenge that a commentator on Nietzsche faces, even before attempting to make a case for the relevance of his work, is to justify the work's very existence among a flooding tide of literature. It was observed in 2006 that over nineteen thousand books and articles about Nietzsche the man, his life or his philosophy had been published since 1960.[1] Judging from the trend of the last few years, the flood shows no sign of abating and this figure must be now well exceeded. In about fifty years, the pendulum has thus swung from Marx to Nietzsche, the two almost contemporary authors of the end of the nineteenth century. The disgrace of the former has paralleled the seemingly unstoppable rise of the latter. The tangible symptoms of this phenomenon are plain to see. In the postmodern West, if a diffuse but perceptible nostalgia for a tighter community lingers, the emphasis is more than ever on individual aspirations. One is constantly urged to strengthen one's personal values to resist the centrifugal forces of an atomised society. 'What does not kill me, makes me stronger',[2] Nietzsche's famous but often unattributed defiant catchcry, has become everyone's motto. Oxymoronic as it may sound, the expression 'popular philosopher' seems to fit Nietzsche to perfection.

Not that Nietzsche's influence is limited to those who, in their overwhelming majority, have never read him. Nietzsche's name has long hypnotised many who have engaged his works, if only superficially. They read Nietzsche's acute critiques of Western postmodernity and his prescient prophecies of its unfolding plights like rabbits staring at a spotlight, paralysed by fear and awe. The fact is that Nietzsche uncannily

[1] Brobjer (2006, 279).
[2] TI-I 8.

predicted, here joyfully, elsewhere with despair, the rise of scientism, the weakening of the Christian credo and the collapse of cultural, moral and epistemological standards. His strident warnings have proven so prescient that one would have grounds to accuse him of single-handedly inventing the never-ending fin de siècle atmosphere that marks the West today. Technology is the new god; Eucharist is celebrated over an Apple. Victims are no longer ostracised: they are honoured for holding a secured debt over society. Underneath the pseudo-existentialistic varnish of consumerism's spoilt children, the victory of bad conscience over personal responsibility seems complete. The legacy of the Enlightenment, for all its shortcomings, has been mercilessly liquidated even in what used to be its strongest bastions. The absence of culture is still culture. Junk is now art. Nihilism prevails. Modernity has given way to acclaimed postmodernity: the 'last man' has triumphed.

This much is, for many, more than enough to vindicate Nietzsche's phenomenal popularity. Whether Nietzsche, who declared, genuinely or to put a brave face on the commercial failure of his works, that he wrote only for very few 'free spirits', would have enjoyed this irony of fate is a moot but intriguing point. Everything that Nietzsche wrote has been the subject of repeated, if not always rigorous, analysis. Some hundred and twenty-five years after his collapse in near-absolute anonymity and indigence, Friedrich Nietzsche has become 'Nietzsche', *the* worshipped icon of the twenty-first-century intellectual landscape, whose name has been associated with every possible agenda.[3] Yet beyond his current popularity or topical relevance, there is another and more compelling reason to read and write on Nietzsche. It relates to the very peculiar state of the secondary literature dedicated to his works.

2. After the eclipse that followed World War II and the accusations that were levelled in its aftermath, many commentators resolved to restore Nietzsche's reputation through novel interpretations of his writings. On the Continental side, Nietzsche's name became utterable again in the 1960s mainly thanks to the works of such French philosophers as Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida and Kofman. They made him appear a liberating alternative, not only to Sartre's attractive but impossibly demanding concept of freedom, but also to Platonic-Kantian world dualisms and their exacting notion of absolute Truth. For these authors, the 'death of God' and the ensuing disappearance of Being enabled the dissolving of antiquated moral values unmasked as contemptible

[3] Even economists have claimed Nietzsche as one of their own (see Backhaus and Drechsler 2006).

servants of ideologies. The same events also made possible the jubilant overthrowing of all epistemological certainties, which were revealed as illusory, arrogant and oppressive. Instead of logical or empirical truth – so this reading of Nietzsche argues – one can pursue only a never-ending upturning of masks and deciphering of metaphors, knowing that behind each one there will always lie another. Explanation is described as a vile grab for power, for knowledge is the expression of vested interests. Liberation is to be achieved through antidialectics; epistemology is displaced by perspectivism and deconstruction; ontology is blurred into genealogy; metaphysics is demoted to metanarrative. Philosophers' traditional quests fade into irrelevance. There remain collective and individual texts that are to be analysed, interpreted and re-interpreted.

Paradoxically, in the English-speaking world, Nietzsche's now enormous fame has been largely ignited by Walter Kaufmann's translations and influential study of his philosophy that followed the broad wake of Jaspers' interpretation. These works, which preceded the French revival, helped create a picture of Nietzsche as an audacious proto-existentialistic, yes-saying and experimental philosopher advancing further the romantic agenda, successfully exploding with his hammer the idols of mainstream philosophy and opposing the stifling traditions of Christianity. According to that reading of Nietzsche's texts, meaning and value are not to be discovered in this world or lie in another but can be produced through a resolute and joyful affirmation of power. This task, if daunting, is within human reach; in fact, such a project is humanistic and reinvigorating. It forms the ground upon which human existence and freedom are to be justified, nihilism defeated and through which moral and epistemological standards can be re-established, if necessary by reaching back to the Renaissance and pre-Socratic philosophy. Nietzsche's perspectivism is circumscribed to existential angst. The contrast with the postmodern reading could hardly be stronger.

To add further confusion to the debate, a third interpretive line has more recently emerged and taken firm hold, especially within English-language Nietzsche scholarship. It is advocated by commentators who, following the impulse of Richard Schacht, recognise in Nietzsche an heir of the tradition exemplified in the works of John Locke and David Hume. Nietzsche is here said to write as a naturalist – if not always in his convictions, especially those regarding the goals and consequences of science – at least in his methods and starting points, which are analysed as compatible with those of empiricism and nominalism broadly understood. In this outline, Nietzsche emerges as a resolute opponent of world dualisms; his metaphysical-sounding writings, mostly found in

the posthumous fragments, are deflated to inconsequential thought experiments that a more lucid Nietzsche subsequently discarded. This reading, which staunchly rejects the postmodern one, leads to ontological consequences in direct opposition to those implied by Nietzsche's existentialism (if existentialism there is), however, for naturalism leads to behaviourism and psychological determinism by dissolving the self, redefined as 'human nature', into the body.

The difficulty is, to be sure, that the views outlined above and many more find rewards aplenty in Nietzsche's writings, especially when these are expanded to the posthumous texts. Even a casual reader cannot fail to note that Nietzsche wanted to do away with the dominant metaphysical and epistemological frameworks of his time while praising the methods of natural science and peppering his writings with numerous biological metaphors, that he opposed Christian with Homeric ethics and that he extolled the creative power of the great individual. As a result, the Nietzsche literature is not unlike a colourful but unassembled jigsaw puzzle: rich and attractive yet, above all, fragmented and seemingly irreconcilable, even if there are some rare elements of consensus.[4] The fracture lines appear today more multiple and gaping than ever, if at times obfuscated by debates on countless ancillary themes, among which are Nietzsche's 'immoralism', his stance on language and his cryptic Übermensch figure, not to mention the issue, always simmering in the background if now seldom directly raised, of his possible anti-Semitism and proto-Nazism. Beyond what can or cannot be found in Nietzsche's texts, however, the divides as they exist in the specialised literature today appear as miniature replicas of the much broader 'analytic' versus 'postmodern' chasm that scars Western philosophy as a whole and that Nietzsche's works have, if not triggered, at the very least fuelled.[5] Resolutions of the current controversies appear nowhere in sight; one can predict with a reasonable degree of certitude that the literature on Nietzsche is to remain in its fragmented and intellectually unsatisfying state for many years to come.

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[4] Thus Gillespie argues that, as far as understanding what nihilism is, 'we are almost all Nietzscheans' (Gillespie 1995, xii).

[5] See Bernstein (1986, 1–20), for an account of the genesis of the 'analytic' versus 'postmodern' schism in Western philosophy and a discussion of Nietzsche's influence and location in this divide. Poellner argues that Nietzsche anticipated and influenced the 'phenomenological turn' that characterises early twentieth-century Continental philosophy (Poellner 2006).

This frustrating state of affairs is all the more likely to endure as all parties to the current debates – exchanges of name-calling would be a better description in some instances – claim to *interpret* Nietzsche correctly, accusing their opponents of seriously misreading him. Exceptions to this mostly uncritical stance are rarely found in the literature, with almost all authors following, in the words of Julian Young, either the 'quasi-biblical' or the 'perspectivist' approach to Nietzsche's texts.[6] Examples of either type of exploration are too numerous to mention. The former takes the Nietzschean corpus to be a source of enduring truth (mostly of a proto-existentialistic or naturalistic type) uncovered by Nietzsche along his philosophical journey. The latter holds that Nietzsche's true message rests precisely in the absence of overall unity in his writings, that Nietzsche achieved coherence and lasting significance exactly through his resolute incoherence, which a recent commentator reads as a voluntary aporetic stance.[7] The way Nietzsche expressed his thought, of which his famed aphoristic and metaphoric style is reputed to be a crucial feature, becomes here more important than its actual content. If such is the case, Nietzsche's work is a textbook example of McLuhan's expression 'the medium is the message'.

Beyond their differences, both approaches thus embrace the same overall method and objective: ordering and presenting Nietzsche's writings as leading to either a somehow first-degree coherent vision or to an altogether inconsistent whole still forming a second-degree coherent vision by virtue of its very incoherence. In these enterprises, the philosophical sophistication brought to bear on Nietzsche's texts finds no equivalent in a corpus better known for its literary brilliance than for its structured arguments. In all of them, Nietzsche is described as pursuing a philosophical quest that he could, for one reason or another (failing health is a good candidate), only imperfectly or incompletely develop but that has lasting importance. Whatever the case, although no one is able to formulate an interpretation without being exposed to vehement rebuke as to what the core of Nietzsche's thought is, all current readings, from the postmodern to the most rigorously analytic, rest on a common but unstated assumption. They all believe that the work of the most influential philosopher of the day still requires the enlightening comments of modern interpreters for its message to be revealed and the genius of its author to be appreciated.

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[6] Young (1996, 2).

[7] Gardner (2010, 29).

Perhaps. Nietzsche's aphoristic style, his frequently unconventional use of terms and his love of metaphors notwithstanding, there is no obvious reason why writing on Nietzsche has to limit itself to perspectivist or 'biblical' exegesis as opposed to rigorous critical evaluation. To this observation, since Poellner's noted study,[8] the Nietzsche literature appears to have become more sensitive. The possibility, beyond all the fascinating insights which illuminate Nietzsche's best pages, that no general philosophical 'message' could be extracted from Nietzsche's writings has not received much currency, if any at all. Nietzsche was not a trained philosopher, but an expert philologist.[9] To the frustration of his readers, he did not care to, perhaps could not, develop his philosophical insights and their consequences as these deserved. Except for what I believe to be a unique and controversial exception,[10] commentators have not seriously contemplated the possibility that Nietzsche was failing, let alone knowingly failing, in whatever project he was pursuing – assuming he was. Could it be that Nietzsche's condescension for systematic thinking, his conviction that he would be understood only by a few and his recommendation that one is to approach problems only swiftly, as if taking a cold bath,[11] were not as philosophically noble as one would like to think but hypocritical and self-serving? Could it be that Nietzsche practised what he once wrote: 'I don't respect readers anymore: how could I write for readers?'[12] Could it be that Nietzsche, he who was so indignant about the dominant ethics and epistemology of his time, spoke of himself when he observed: 'no one lies as much as the indignant do'?[13] These questions are not to be raised; the altar of the iconic idol-smasher stands not to be desecrated.

This overall respectful stance is surprising, for a failure on Nietzsche's part could at least prima facie explain some of the most visible contradictions in his texts. It is in any case supported 'from within' by the belief, based on a claim often made by Nietzsche himself, according

[8] *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (hereinafter Poellner 2007, initially published in 1995).

[9] Nietzsche gained his Basel professorship in philology on the back of publications in leading journals (completed by a recommendation from Friedrich Ritschl, his mentor and teacher) without submitting a doctoral thesis.

[10] Young argues that, with regard to art, 'Nietzsche's philosophy ends in failure' for lacking a central, consistent theory (1996, 148; see also page 1).

[11] GS 381.

[12] KGW VIII/2 9(188) 114, quoted and translated in Williams (2001, 70); see also Z-I 7.

[13] Last sentence of BGE 26.

to which he is the most intellectually honest, transparent and self-critical philosopher that there is.[14] Since he never admitted failure or even difficulties, it must be the case that Nietzsche was successful in his endeavours. This assumption is almost uniformly taken for granted and contradictions in Nietzsche's thought as well as his open contempt for systems are said to flow precisely from their author's rare qualities. Given the fragmented contents and particular style of the works at hand, this contention has direct interpretive consequences however: whatever the objective of the alleged Nietzschean project, the conclusion to either 'only apparent incoherence' or to 'coherence through intrinsic incoherence' is already included in the 'success' premise and vice versa. If one takes Nietzsche as successfully, even if metaphorically, pursuing a philosophical project, one is bound either to explain away the contradictions found in the corpus as signs of his philosophical (or psychological)[15] development or to interpret the same contradictions as forming an integral part of Nietzsche's philosophy. For the 'analytic' commentator, it is only because Nietzsche is taken to be successfully, if confusedly, pursuing a coherent objective that this objective can possibly be extracted from his writings; once and however this is achieved, the conclusion is then used as evidence for the premise. Similarly, if the 'perspectivist' commentator opens Nietzsche's books and notebooks with the conviction that there is an overall consistent 'message' to be obtained through and because of their deliberate incoherence, then this very same incoherence is interpreted as proof of Nietzsche's success, success that subsequently justifies the initial intentions of the commentator. Either way, the loop is swiftly closed. Commentators are virtually condemned to argue for their conclusion independently of the material upon which they comment because their conclusion includes their premise. From such starting grounds,

[14] This, of course, is not an original position on the part of commentators about the author subject of their inquiry; see Magee (1987) with regard to Schopenhauer or Ferry (2006) with regard to Kant. Although unstated, this stance pervades Kaufmann's landmark study and Safranski's (2000) biography; it is explicit in Poellner's critical work (2007, 8–9). Many commentators also point out that Freud held that Nietzsche 'had a more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was ever likely to live' (quoted in Magee 1987, 266). For rare examples of dissenting opinions, see Young (1996, 92 and 151–152), or Anderson (1996), in which Nietzsche's good faith toward his readers is indirectly challenged.

[15] Parkes (1994, 21).

dogmatism looms fast; little wonder that Nietzsche is so many things for so many people.[16] The poor quality of the Nietzsche literature, often lamented yet even more often observed, stems in large parts from these intertwined and self-fulfilling hypotheses.[17] Besides, a direct consequence of the assumption to the existence of an overall stable and successful core in Nietzsche's thought (be it existentialistic, naturalistic, postmodern or otherwise), despite or because of its apparent inexistence, is that his decision to abandon a projected great work, *The Will to Power*, becomes quite puzzling – unless, of course, one believes that by the end of 1888, Nietzsche had said all he wanted to say. There is more to say on these points.

3. From the foregoing, two points deserve to be highlighted: (1) the field of Nietzsche studies is marked by a series of controversies fuelling an ever-growing and ever more fragmented body of literature claiming support from Nietzsche's texts; (2) satisfactory resolutions of these debates appear all the more remote that Nietzsche's works are taken, by all parties, to form a coherent because successful whole. If these observations have any value, one can only conclude that the 'success' premise must now be questioned. As long as this assumption remains taken for granted, any hope of making a worthy contribution to the field, let alone of closing the debates, appears vitiated from the outset. More importantly for the present inquiry, given the overwhelming volume of literature built on that premise, the very interest of a yet again 'new' interpretive reading of Nietzsche, aiming at presenting 'what Nietzsche really meant', is, to put it mildly, less than evident. If one is to comment on Nietzsche today, one must start from grounds that do not include the 'success' premise. This, of course, does not mean that Nietzsche should be taken to be inconsistent throughout, for such an assumption would prohibit reading him altogether. This critical reading does mean, however, that on a few important themes Nietzsche's works do not need to be received as coherent, either beyond

[16] Thus Magnus observes: 'Nietzsche [required] of the reader that he himself provide the missing ligature which unifies his books. In consequence, the reader's constructed ligature both establishes and, paradoxically, dissolves authorial identity and intention. 'Nietzsche' becomes 'Nietzsche-as-read-by-x-on-occasion-y' (Magnus 1988a, 155). For all that, the assumption that Nietzsche's works miss a ligature that the reader must provide seems itself taken for granted.

[17] Stegmaier (2009, 11); Stegmaier, pushing this line of thought to its extreme, considers *any* attempt at ordering Nietzsche's works, even along irreconcilable lines (as is proposed here), as 'antiphilology'.

or because of their incoherence, but as containing some intractable inconsistencies vitiating the extraction of an overall philosophical message.

The present study thus does not aim at bridging the various divides as they exist in the Nietzsche literature. Quite the contrary: the ambition that sparked and fuelled this book is a willingness to show that Nietzsche's writings form a friable edifice. Moreover, although certainty is out of reach on matters pertaining to unexpressed beliefs and motives, I argue that, undeniable intellectual and literary brio aside, Nietzsche was grappling with great difficulties that, in his last productive years, he recognised but did not plainly admit. Forceful rhetoric was for him a means to cover the fragility of his contentions. In other words, evidence is presented here to conclude that not only was Nietzsche failing in the major themes of his late philosophical work but also that he knew, if perhaps only confusedly, that he was failing. This is so because many arguments that Nietzsche vehemently pressed against his predecessors can be pressed against him. Holding that he did not realise this is tantamount to calling him stupid.

In his criticisms and dismissals of the 'idols' of Western philosophers, Nietzsche ignored or minimised the differences between Christianity, Cartesianism and Kantianism. In his writings, the main tenets and concepts of these philosophies are considered indiscriminately, as coming out of the same Platonic mould. For Nietzsche, there was no distinction to be made between, say, Kant's noumenon and the realm of God or Descartes' soul and Kant's transcendental subject or Plato's and Christ's definitions of the good and of the true. Whether or not these amalgamations are fair to these concepts and their respective exponents, bad faith on Nietzsche's part or a reflection of his lack of formal training in philosophy is open to debate; nowhere is this lack of refinement more visible than when it comes to matters pertaining to the problem of free will, explored in Chapter 4. Fruitful as it no doubt is, this debate is not ventured into in this study. In what follows, Nietzsche is taken on his own terms, on his own ground, on his own vehement and at times simplistic or incomplete arguments; if philosophical sophistication is at places found wanting, the blame lies with Nietzsche.

In this overall context, the present study is not so much a critique of Nietzsche's works (which of course it is) as an attempt at a 'self-critique'. What is attempted here is a critique of Nietzsche by Nietzsche himself, from within, a critique which, it is argued, Nietzsche in fact made in some form but did not share with his readers. As Ferry and Renaut

observed, to think against Nietzsche, one is to think with Nietzsche.[18] Doing this has at least the merit of deflecting the charge of dogmatism highlighted above, for the agenda brought to bear against Nietzsche is that which emerges from his works; if dogmatism there is in the arguments offered below, it is Nietzsche's own. Attempting to supplement Nietzsche's texts with what is not found in them is perhaps a valuable enterprise, but when it is combined with the claim that the results of such investigations represent what Nietzsche was trying to express, it is bound to misrepresent his works. When reading Nietzsche then, 'charity is to be overcome'.[19] As he himself noted, charity only thinly veils contempt; reading Nietzsche as suggested here amounts to paying a tribute he would have not only accepted but almost certainly welcomed.[20]

Additionally, this overall approach to Nietzsche's texts has the immediate and not negligible advantage of deflating the unceasing and rather tiresome debate about the priority to be granted to the posthumous material, the so-called *Nachlass*. The question whether what, between the published or unpublished material, represents Nietzsche's latest or genuine position on this or that issue, a question often crucial for the Nietzsche interpreter, is now irrelevant. Whatever Nietzsche has written is taken to be significant. The *Nachlass* is analysed as a mirror of Nietzsche's thought, a mirror either reflecting contentions he truly held – or wanted to appear as holding when these are in agreement with the published or near-published material – or exposing what he considered only provisional or better kept unknown to his readers. In fact, uncovering the reasons for his restraint now emerges as the central concern of the Nietzsche commentator, for they represent as many insights into weaknesses in his thought.

4. There are, at the outset, many ways through which the project broached in the foregoing could be attempted. The secondary literature overflows with themes identified as genuinely Nietzschean, at the forefront of which stand art, truth, ethics and metaphysics. These four themes are, on their own standing, promising starting points for any inquiry into Nietzsche's thought and all have received considerable attention. Setting out on any of these paths in the hope of catching Nietzsche in a difficult but self-conscious position is bound to be a risky enterprise, however. Beyond the general agreement about their importance

[18] Ferry and Renaut (1991a, 8).
[19] Anderson (1996).
[20] As the last sentence of BGE 22 implies.

to Nietzsche and to philosophy in general, what is notable is that, to an extent not applicable to any of his predecessors, Nietzsche's texts on these themes have resisted consensual synthesis as to their precise meaning. Besides, if many commentators have pointed out the inconsistency or even obscurity of some of his contentions, Nietzsche himself never went so far as merely hinting at possible difficulties or qualms with regard to their contents. Given the intense scrutiny to which these themes have already been subjected, one hesitates at embarking on paths that have been so much travelled. To maximise the likelihood of identifying and exhibiting areas where Nietzsche knowingly met possibly unresolved difficulties, one would rather engage the debunking enterprise outlined above on a theme important to his philosophy but that he failed to develop or signalled as misguided. Ideally, the theme retained would be also one that has not received overly generous attention in the literature.

Romanticism and will to power are such themes. Both are, if at opposite ends of Nietzsche's philosophical 'career', important components of his thought. Romanticism pervades *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's first book, yet is, in his 'late' period,[21] subjected to some of the harshest criticisms the entire corpus has to offer, being amalgamated with Christianity, nihilism and decadence. As for the concept of will to power, it is one that the late Nietzsche associated with terms like 'values', 'life', 'truth' and 'world', no less, but markedly refrained from developing, to the extent that a projected work bearing that title and meant to dwell on these matters is abandoned. On the surface, this similarity of fate is unsurprising; as will be shown, romanticism and will to power are distantly connected through the Schopenhauerian concept of 'will'. It would appear understandable that after having vehemently distanced himself from his youthful enthusiasm for romanticism, Nietzsche eventually dismissed the notion of will to power. The reality is of course more complex, as the discussion will show.

In the quest for a theme through which Nietzsche's thought can be critically analysed 'from within', the concept of will to power offers

[21] After Kaufmann, the convention is to consider Nietzsche's works up to and including *The Birth of Tragedy* as belonging to the 'early period' and those from the *Untimely Meditations* up to the fourth book of *The Gay Science* as part of the 'middle' period; the 'late' or 'mature' period starts with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This division is debatable but is retained here because it is both well established and convenient.

a distinct advantage over romanticism, an advantage it also presents over art, truth, morality or metaphysics. In relative terms, will to power is a component of Nietzsche's thought which has received limited sustained attention from commentators. When they do analyse the concept, they disagree. Heidegger considered it the basis of Nietzsche's theory of art, epistemology and metaphysics, paving the way towards his own philosophy of Being. What Richardson analyses as a teleological principle unifying human existence is a mere existential 'mirror' for Williams.[22] While Reginster specifically denies the notion any psychological content, Clark and Leiter see in will to power a second-order psychological drive; the same authors dismiss any ethical or epistemological implications, while Anderson reads the concept as an epistemological doctrine enabling the unity of science.[23] Moore insists on its biological connections and implications; Porter and Staten propose rare critical forays in various dimensions of the idea.[24]

This relative restraint on the part of commentators is somewhat unexpected because the concept, apart from being philosophically rich on its own standing, is also a well-known signpost to one of the most evident yet enduring riddles in Nietzsche's thought. For despite all that the secondary literature has to offer, one nagging mystery in Nietzsche's life and works remains. This mystery takes the shape of a glaring omission in his corpus, one that Nietzsche's readers are to accept quietly and to which they are to become accustomed. On the one hand, one is supposed to engage seriously with an ambitious and self-conscious philosopher, the son and grandson of Lutheran ministers born in the heartland of German Protestantism,[25] a theology student in his youth proclaiming high and loud that 'there is no truth', that 'God is dead' and that Western civilisation is bound to nihilism and internal collapse. On the other hand, one is to tolerate the overbearing fact that *none* of the questions such alarming findings cannot fail to trigger finds sustained, unambiguously spelt-out answers in the works of the same author. Nietzsche's critiques of modernity and uncanny prophecies aside, how much philosophical weight is one to grant an author who declares that he intends to provide new bases for 'truth and value in a

[22] Richardson (1996); Williams (2001).
[23] Reginster (2006, 132ff); Clark (1990, 211–227); Leiter (2003, 138–144); Anderson (1994).
[24] Moore (2006a); Porter (2006); Staten (2006).
[25] Nietzsche's two grandfathers were Lutheran ministers and his mother was descended from five generations of Lutheran pastors.

godless world'[26] and who finally forsakes altogether any intention to do just that? While Nietzsche never reneged on his sinister warnings about the inevitable onset of European nihilism, he never attempted to justify why he finally abandoned his project to formulate new foundations upon which Western civilisation could be rebuilt. On a less grandiose scale, even though he insistently celebrated 'free spirits' and praised 'higher men', he never clearly articulated how these could be identified. Not only is Nietzsche's work glaringly unfinished, but it appears also knowingly so. If there is one gaping contradiction in Nietzsche's thought, surely it must be this one.

Montinari believes that 'Nietzsche's collapse in Turin came when he literally was finished with everything'.[27] As Brobjer shows, however, there are very solid reasons to hold that Nietzsche seriously entertained the intention to write a capstone work during the last years of his active life.[28] This work, the inception of which can be dated to 1885, was to be a systematic synthesis as well as an ambitious development of his philosophy aiming at 'explaining all events' and 'revaluing all values'. Before 1888 and more actively during that year, Nietzsche prepared, carefully reviewed, numbered (an exceptional practice for him) and set aside a great number of notebook entries in view of his great work.[29] Yet he finally decided in November 1888 not to proceed with this project, stating without any clear or direct justification that *The Anti-Christ*, initially heralded as the first main part of the upcoming work, was in fact its entirety[30] – an implausible claim by any account. A few weeks later, on the morning of January 3, 1889, Nietzsche collapsed in tears in a street of Turin, interposing himself between a horse and an angry cart driver. Although Nietzsche the man survived until

[26] An expression borrowed from the title of Cussen (2001).

[27] Quoted in Brobjer (2006, 280).

[28] The ample reason for this claim, in the published works as well as in Nietzsche's notebooks and private letters, has been collected in Brobjer (2006). The clearest signs of Nietzsche's intentions are the subtitle of *Beyond Good and Evil* – '*Prelude* to a Philosophy of the Future' (emphasis added) – the declaration to that effect made in GM-III 27, the allusion to an upcoming work in §7 of *The Case of Wagner* and the various outlines Nietzsche penned down in his notebooks in view of an ambitious work.

[29] Magnus (1988b, 222–225).

[30] The main evidence for believing that *The Anti-Christ* had become for Nietzsche the entire planned great work is EH-TI 3 and a private letter to Georg Brandes (dated November 20, 1888). In both texts, Nietzsche refers to *The Anti-Christ* as the whole of *Revaluation of All Values*, expression which by then had become the title of the envisioned great work. Nietzsche's intentions were quite shifting, since he had previously claimed that *Twilight* was its first part (see the note as the end of the Preface).

August 1900, Nietzsche the philosopher died on that winter day. Whatever reasons he had for not proceeding with his project, these have never been exposed plainly in his writings; they have not received much attention in the literature either. Given his overall intellectual acuity, one has strong reasons to suspect that behind the minor publishing mystery lies a broader and more compelling philosophical stalemate.

As Brobjer observes,[31] one very probable explanation for this omission on the part of commentators is the existence of the posthumous 'non-book', *Der Wille zur Macht*. This 'work', known in the English-speaking world as *The Will to Power*, was edited in various forms between 1901 and 1911 by Nietzsche's sister Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche and his life-long friend and literary confident Heinrich Köselitz ('Peter Gast'), who presented it as Nietzsche's posthumous but genuine capstone work. The contents of these successive editions can be approached only with great care, for although the latest instalment is presented along an outline drafted by Nietzsche, it is made of notebook entries that Nietzsche had discarded and about which he had left clear instructions that they be destroyed.[32] Not only that, but the integrity of the texts collated is questionable. Among the dubious editing practices employed under the direction of Nietzsche's sister, the chronological order of the notes (which in some instances remains unclear to this day) has been ignored; a few of them were chopped up as various, allegedly independent, 'aphorisms'; others, crossed out by Nietzsche, were nonetheless included.[33] *The Will to Power* is thus not even remotely the book that Nietzsche intended. In such an unfavourable context, it is unsurprising that Nietzsche's intentions and his reasons for changing them have been in the main overlooked. If only because of this, even assuming that the final edition of *Der Wille zur Macht* provides a representative sample of Nietzsche's late notebooks,[34] its very existence remains one of the worst kinds of disservice one can do to a brother or friend for whom one otherwise apparently genuinely, if perhaps not wholly altruistically, cared. The same can be said of its translation, insofar as it sanctioned the text as a subject of scholarship for English readers.

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[31] Brobjer (2006).

[32] Hollingdale (1985, 172).

[33] Such is the case of the often quoted WP 1067. See Magnus (1988b) and Williams (2001, 68), for more examples of Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche's unscrupulous edits.

[34] The 1911 edition, in its English version, contains 1,067 'entries'. According to the indications provided by Kaufmann and Hollingdale, 120 of them were written in 1886, 252 in 1887 and 525 in 1888 alone.

In any case, an unquestionable point is that the concept of will to power was to figure prominently in the envisioned great work. Until at least August 26, 1888, Nietzsche's project was to be titled *The Will to Power*, with 'Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values' as a possible subtitle. By September 30 at the latest, the subtitle had become the main title; shortly after that date, the whole project was abandoned. Yet Nietzsche had nourished high expectations for his concept; its presence in *Zarathustra*, in *Beyond* and in the *Genealogy*, as well as its regular appearances in the notebooks from 1885 onwards (i.e., from the time the idea of a grand work has taken shape) are unexplainable otherwise. The upshot remains that after having his much-cherished character saying that 'where there is life there is will to power' and having contemplated in *Beyond Good and Evil* the possibility that 'the world is will to power', Nietzsche never explained in his books what he meant by such puzzling expressions. The only serious attempts at giving partial substance to such statements are found in the *Nachlass*. Worthy of note is that Nietzsche first dropped *The Will to Power* as the tentative title for his great work and then, shortly after, abandoned his project altogether; the demise of the concept appears to have closely prefigured the demise of the project of which it was to be an important part. Why then did Nietzsche decide not to proceed with his ambitious intentions? Did he form other plans in which the notes initially set aside were to be eventually used? Or did he realise the impossibility of the task he had assigned to himself? Some say that questions like these 'will never be answered definitively'.[35]

5. Definitive answers are indeed out of reach since Nietzsche nowhere provided them. Reasonable ones can be attempted, though – indeed must be attempted, if the comments proposed earlier have any value. One can suspect that Nietzsche's changing intentions hide aspects of his thought that he preferred to withdraw from public scrutiny. His keeping strictly to himself the reasons for his about-face (reasons not alluded to even in his private letters) pleads strongly for such inference. A popular opinion on these questions is simply that Nietzsche recognised that his notes were not of philosophical interest. Realising the weakness of the contents of his notebooks and being careful of his nascent reputation as philosopher and stylist (thanks to the efforts of the Georg Brandes), he did not want to expose himself to unnecessary criticism. Nietzsche thus decided, so the argument goes, that these notebooks were unworthy of publication and his readers should better leave them at that and ignore

[35] Williams (2001, 2).

them altogether.[36] This view is often accompanied by the claim that the *Nachlass* does not contain much of value beyond whatever has already found its way into the published works. An alternative dominant in the literature if more restrained, is that the posthumous material can be used to complement the ideas presented in the finished works. In all cases, the assumption that Nietzsche thought less of his notes than of his books is taken for granted, but the reasons for such demotion are brushed aside.

The claim that the *Nachlass* contains little of philosophical interest is barely tenable. Even without endorsing Heidegger's extreme opinion that *The Will to Power* is the expression of Nietzsche's final and proper thought, one must recognise that its notebook entries cannot be dismissed completely, if only because they offer many contentions identical or very close to those Nietzsche published. When relevant to epistemology, the ideas found in the notes have been described as better argued than their equivalent in the published works.[37] More importantly, if the late finished works contain numerous critiques of his predecessors, Nietzsche's positive contributions, much rarer, are found predominantly in the notebooks. The *Nachlass* proposes genuine philosophical material that is to be found nowhere else, especially when it comes to inquiring into the ultimate nature of actuality; as for the doctrine of eternal recurrence, its developments into a cosmological theory are exclusively found in the posthumous fragments.

One must also remember that Nietzsche regularly suffered from acute migraines and terrible eye pains that often prevented him from writing. When in such agony, he would spend substantial parts of his days walking (especially at Sils-Maria and later in Turin), rehearsing and working mentally through his ideas for several hours, before briefly putting them on paper when he could, dictating them when he could not. Although not ruling out altogether the production of philosophical nonsense, this two-step practice makes it unlikely, especially from a thinker like Nietzsche. Such disciplined habits also make the sudden realisation that many entire workbooks, representing months if not years of work, contain absolutely nothing of value a near impossibility. Moreover, if it was difficult for Nietzsche to write because of his poor eyesight and migraines, then he must also have found it difficult to read his own handwriting, which is barely legible to a modern reader

[36] Such is the view notably of Hollingdale (1985, 169–172), and Clark (1990, 25–27).
[37] Poellner (2007, 11).

trained to continental European script, as I am. It is a lot more reasonable to hold that Nietzsche progressively came to see that his thought rested on contradictions vitiating his grand project. This awakening must have taken place between the time he penned the *Genealogy* (at the end of which the project is publicly announced) and the end of his intellectual life, as he was recopying and sifting through his notebook entries. This suggests a Nietzsche coming to term with his work before eventually reaching an impasse. If this is the case, then evidence of this gradual appreciation should be detectable in the books and notebooks produced during the same period. At any rate, even if Nietzsche improbably managed to go very quickly through his own raw material in the last quarter of 1888, holding that he suddenly realised it to be of little worth is only superficially attractive, for the reasons behind Nietzsche's epiphany-like realisation are still to be provided.

6. The most recent explanation – to my knowledge the sole sustained explanation – for Nietzsche's decision not to write *The Will to Power* is that proposed by Young.[38] According to it, Nietzsche's motives are manyfold, indeed as many as there are versions of the eponymous doctrine (versions that Young labels 'cosmological', 'psychological' and 'biological'), but all hinge on Nietzsche's late rejection of the parsimony principle. The cosmological doctrine – the attempt at explaining all events – is rejected when the parsimony principle itself is, as Nietzsche realises that the will to simplicity is just another name for the will to a system. That is, Nietzsche came to understand that the principle according to which simple explanations are to be preferred already includes the conclusion that the world must be explained through a simple notion. When the former is dismissed, so is the latter. The psychological doctrine – the theory that all aspects of human life are driven by a will to more power – is rejected notably because Nietzsche finally recognised that pity could not be subsumed into a quest for domination. Nietzsche's tendency to be overwhelmed, thus harmed, by feelings of compassion, drove this insight home. As for the biological doctrine – the view that all organic life is will to power – it is set aside because Nietzsche finally saw that will to power is a means to the will to life and not the reverse. Nietzsche had initially claimed that the will to life was an expression of will to power when he wanted to transpose the psychological doctrine to the non-human realm, again in the name of the parsimony principle. When this principle is abandoned, together with the psychological doctrine, the biological version of the doctrine is

[38] Young (2010, 540–547); the points summarised below are all extracted from this section of Young's biography.

also rejected. Young argues that all these rejoinders progressively emerged and took hold in Nietzsche's thought between 1885 and the beginning of 1888. All references to will to power as explanatory concept were muted in the books written in 1888; the notion was demoted to a principle of demarcation between healthy and decadent life. Nietzsche is here depicted as realising that his philosophical synthesis was unfeasible because the central concept that was to be used in his project contained intractable weaknesses and as remaining quiet about these issues. Young's account is a noticeable addition to the simpler, commonly accepted but incomplete view according to which Nietzsche rejected the contents of his notebooks (and his project) but which fails to provide reasons for this rejection.

While Young's arguments are consistent with the contents of Nietzsche's books, they are less easily aligned with those of his notebooks and private letters. As these indicate, Nietzsche was still contemplating the concept of will to power as the 'character of all [organic] change'[39] or as a tentative explanation for 'pleasure [and] unpleasure'[40] in notes dated March–June 1888. In a fragment written in the same months, Nietzsche was still arguing against the then dominant mechanical world view, preferring instead a dynamic vision of the world seen as a dynamic 'quantity of force [and] centres of force'.[41] While will to power is not mentioned by name in this note, the proximity with some ideas it was meant to include is clear. Besides, as evidenced by some of his letters and notes, Nietzsche still entertained the project of 'revaluing all values' until late November 1888; again, while the connection between the 'psychological doctrine' of will to power and such an objective is not direct, it is not difficult to draw. In any case, it is implausible that Nietzsche would retain this ambitious objective unchanged if he had abandoned the concept that he planned to use in his enterprise.

The chronology of Nietzsche's posthumous fragments is not to be considered definitive evidence, however. Despite the best efforts of his scrupulous biographers, this chronology remains based on speculative reconstructions of Nietzsche's use of his notebooks (a few of which were loose-leaf portfolios, making a chronological reordering of their contents even more difficult), which was by many accounts unconventional and logic-defying.[42] In any case, Young's reconstruction of Nietzsche's

[39] WLN 14[123].
[40] WLN 14[173].
[41] WP 1066.
[42] E.g., Nietzsche often but not always used his notebooks back to front; for more details on these aspects, see Magnus (1988a, 222–224), and Williams (2001, 63–64).

understanding of the limitations of some of his own contentions is an invitation to build an argument more in proportion with the ambitions Nietzsche nourished with his projected great work. Surely it must have taken Nietzsche more than the realisation of the fragility of the parsimony principle (if fragility there is) to abandon his project. It is difficult to see Nietzsche renouncing an announced ambitious work, in view of which hundreds of notebook entries had been carefully numbered and set aside, merely because he discovered a flaw in one of his contentions, albeit perhaps a consequential one. For a thinker like Nietzsche, a cluster of well-identified and connected difficulties acts as a powerful stimulus, spurring the development of other ideas destined to overcome the newly perceived hurdles. No direct admission of such issues is perceptible in *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-Christ* or *Ecce Homo* however. The reverse is in fact the case: Nietzsche comes across in these works as more assertive and forceful than ever. Not that this observation should be surprising: these books were the first (and last) that Nietzsche wrote knowing of his emerging fame. One does not want to appear timid or indecisive in one's convictions when one's name finally attracts attention. For all that, it is still possible to believe that the last months of 1888 mark for Nietzsche the end of a slow and gradual awareness of problems coming from the core of his thought rather than the abrupt discovery of a limited set of important difficulties. These problems were so damaging to his philosophy as a whole that he could simply not admit them publicly and tried to hide them behind fierce rhetoric.

It is to the uncovering of these deep-seated but paralysing problems in Nietzsche's late thought that the present study is dedicated, taking the concept of will to power as Ariadne's thread. Young's explanations for Nietzsche's change of plan have been considered the seminal seed from which the inquiry is to grow. Young's account not only highlights the possibility that Nietzsche identified difficulties within his own thought; it also hints at a possible taxonomy of these difficulties. These can be read as related to psychological, cosmological and epistemological matters (the parsimony principle belonging to the last category). The present study takes its cue from this classification but seeks to broaden its themes to engage with Nietzsche's thought in as many aspects as possible. The discussion is structured along three very broad lines: epistemology and ethics, metaphysics and finally ontology. As will become clear throughout the discussion, this classification is only partially satisfying and the themes regularly overlap; yet it has the merit of guiding and simplifying an exploration of what will soon be revealed as a complex and rich subject.

The concept of will to power is first analysed in terms of its relation to a theme that Nietzsche designated through another of his trademark expressions: the 'ascetic ideal'. In this puzzling phrase, Nietzsche encapsulated concerns that progressively took centre stage in his thought – that is, the roles of what he held to be Platonic-Kantian epistemology and Christian ethics. For him, these were historically and logically inseparable conceptions inescapably leading to the onset and rise of nihilism. At the end of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche announced (but did not develop) will to power as the main concept with which he intended to revalue all values and propose a naturalistic alternative to the ascetic ideal. In this enterprise he faced self-referential problems that have been debated in considerable detail in the literature. Although serious, these issues are so obvious that Nietzsche simply could not have ignored them when working on his project. They cannot explain on their own standing his late decision not to proceed with it. Chapter 2 argues that much deeper difficulties with the concept of will to power and its associated epistemological and ethical refoundations can be identified, flowing from Nietzsche's simultaneous but incompatible penchants for ancient heroism and romanticism. Nietzsche was aware of these issues yet endeavoured not to disclose them in his books. He refrained from publishing contentions (found only in the notebooks) which, although in line with other well-known arguments of his, would have made latent but fatally damaging contradictions all too manifest. The chapter can be read as a critique from within of salient contentions of chapter IX of *Beyond Good and Evil* and of *On The Genealogy of Morals*.

Chapter 3 turns to Nietzsche's stance towards metaphysics and analyses how he intended to account for the ultimate nature of the world through his concept of will to power. Beyond the debate pertaining to the status and value of the posthumous fragments and the even more contested one focusing on Nietzsche's final stance on metaphysics, chapter 3 argues that Nietzsche seriously, if only temporarily, attempted to develop a novel theory of actuality. This project, brief signs of which are identifiable in the published works, rested on the 'mature' Nietzsche's aversion for world dualisms; it was also triggered by his conviction, inherited from Schopenhauer and Lange, that materialism is a one-sided and logically untenable world view. Yet for all his acuity with regard to the failings of materialism and despite his late aversion to romanticism, Nietzsche's own tentative vision of the world as will to power is itself laden with intractable problems inherited from these two world views that Nietzsche attempted to synthesise. They made him abandon and withdraw striking contentions from

the scrutiny of his readers. The chapter is thus a critical evaluation of notes 617–639 and 1053–1067 (and a few others) of *The Will to Power*, partial and dimmed echoes of which can be heard in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

The discussion subsequently considers the role that Nietzsche most openly attached to his concept of will to power: that of a drive shaping life in general and human existence in particular. In the books, this view finds its most transparent expression in the claim, first proposed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and repeated in *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy*, that 'life is will to power'. Its culmination is Nietzsche's forceful if indirect declaration, found only in the posthumous fragments, to the effect that, in crucial aspects, 'man is will to power'. The extent to which Nietzsche was committed to that contention is open to question, but that he wanted to redefine psychology as the study of the 'evolution and morphology of will to power' and re-establish the discipline as queen of sciences is not. Yet this ambitious programme is nowhere carried out nor even properly started in the published works; judging from the notebooks, one may reasonably suspect that substantial parts of his projected grand work were to be dedicated to this momentous project. In any case, the magnitude of the task envisioned could not hide for long the tensions that exist between psychology and physiology. Nietzsche's calls for the advent of a physio-psychology had to be muted. He could obfuscate only so long the collision between romanticism and proto-existentialism on one side, ancient heroism on the other. These themes, together with Nietzsche's probable realisation of the difficulties he was facing, are explored in Chapter 4 of this inquiry, which can be read as a critical exploration of chapter I of *Beyond Good and Evil* and of book V of *The Gay Science*.

The conclusion is an uncharitable reading of *Twilight of the Idols*. In that work, Nietzsche's grand ambitions can be seen coming to a head and crashing down under the weight of their internal contradictions. Nietzsche's rage and despair, palpable in most pages, are not exclusively directed against the idols to which he takes his contemporaries to be attracted; they also take their source in Nietzsche's likely realisation of his failures. The final twilight is not that which is promised in the book's title, but is that of the concept Nietzsche had held dear and through which he had hoped to capture the main lines of his positive thought: will to power.

7. As transpires from the above outline, Nietzsche encapsulated rich and complex themes in the expression 'will to power'. The concept is proposed, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes alternatively, as basis

for epistemology and ethics, as foundation for a theory of actuality, as psycho-physiological drive and as ontological substratum. The discussion proposed here intends to remain as faithful as possible to the richness (and to the contradictions flowing therefrom) of the theme. For this reason and in keeping with Nietzsche's overall but not always uniform aversion to essentialism, decision has been taken to avoid any reification of the concept. In English, the definite article *the*, as opposed to the German *der*, implies the idea of a thing; 'will to power' has thus been preferred to the expression '*the* will to power' which is found in all English translations of Nietzsche's texts (unaltered when quoted here) and in most discussions of the notion.[43] Similar precautionary intentions have resulted in preferring a non-hyphenated spelling (will to power) over a hyphenated one (will-to-power), even if this latter terminology is not without merits and is even hinted at by Nietzsche himself. The hyphenated spelling conveys, however, the idea that Nietzsche managed to extricate his new concept from that of 'will'. It will be shown that this is not consistently the case. Besides, to name his concept, Nietzsche coined the expression *Wille zur Macht*, not *Wille-zur-Macht* and not *Macht-Wille* either;[44] a hyphenated spelling is thus more likely to depart from Nietzsche's intentions. Whatever these were, however, the terminological and typographical choices made here should not be granted more importance than they really have, even if they point indirectly to vast issues. What truly matters is to remember the wide range of concepts that Nietzsche designated and tried to subsume under a single expression.

Given its sheer volume and bewildering variety, a complete synthesis of the literature on any recognised Nietzschean theme is now beyond the reach of a single project. Such syntheses have not been attempted here. The primary focus has been placed on Nietzsche's texts, although references to the secondary corpus are naturally proposed where deemed relevant. Beyond this mere tactical choice, the emphasis of this study is on the tensions identifiable in Nietzsche's works. These are not subsumed into an alleged coherent whole, be it through its intrinsic incoherence, but explicated in terms of intractable problems at the core of Nietzsche's thought, problems he finally recognised as such. What is aimed at here

[43] A notable exception is Williams (2001), which has influenced the current choice; see p. 2 for a more detailed discussion of the dangers of reifying the concept. When quoting commentators, the article *the* has been left if employed in the text quoted.

[44] *Macht-Wille*, found in BGE 44, is rendered as 'power-will' in Kaufmann's and Faber's translations.

is an account of Nietzsche's late works that elucidates the genesis and contents of some of his well-known texts, showing how and why these form an unfinished – because unstable thus unfinishable – philosophical project. In the same vein, divergences with the existing literature have not been systematically highlighted or defended against all the counterarguments that could be adduced against them. Considerably more primary and secondary material could have been called up in support of the views presented here; concision remaining an overarching objective, it is hoped that the arguments offered below speak for themselves. In the last analysis, the variety of interpretations of Nietzsche's texts proposed in the secondary literature makes indirectly the case for the overall argument offered. That Nietzsche means so many things to so many commentators validates the idea that he attempted to combine a great diversity of views; that these commentators appear unable to agree on anything of substance with regard to the core of his thought strongly suggests that he did not succeed in his attempts. Nietzsche, despite his insistent denials, was a thinker of his time.[45] The many lines of thought that criss-cross his works can all be connected to themes alive in the literature of his century. At the expense of losing the overall tapestry from sight, almost all these interwoven threads can be made to look like his dominating pattern. This is precisely what I have striven to avoid doing, to highlight the absence of an overall unifying motif. It remains, however, an enduring Humean insight that from a finite set of data (in this instance, Nietzsche's texts), an indeterminate number of internally consistent theories (readings) are possible but that these theories can differ widely and even contradict one another.

8. Nietzsche's inclination for romanticism is to play an important role in the overall argument offered below. As complement to the introductory considerations proposed above, a summary of the movement's origins and main contentions is thus in order.

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[45] The first sentence of BGE 20 argues that every philosophy develops in a particular historical context; if this is the case, one does not see why Nietzsche's should be an exception. On this very rich theme, see Heidegger (1991), Stack (1983), Small (2001), Leiter (2003, 31–72), Moore (2004; 2006a, esp. 193ff; 2006b), Brobjer (2004a, 2004b), Hill (2005), Young (2007, 4–5, 209–215) and again Doyle (2009). While these authors' views diverge greatly and do not necessarily reconcile with those defended here, they all converge in showing that Nietzsche's thought cannot be dissociated from its historical and philosophical background. See also the study of Nietzsche's private library proposed by Brobjer (2008a), which lists the numerous works (about 1,200) and authors known to have been studied by Nietzsche.

Left undefined, any term ending in *-ism* is very broad, perhaps to the point of insignificance. Romanticism presents this difficulty at a heightened level because it points to a rich philosophical, artistic and political movement the origins and ramifications of which are diverse and heterogeneous. Not only does romanticism contain internal contradictions that any definition is bound to obfuscate, but also there is no consensual definition of romanticism – indeed there cannot be one. Authors who had a determining influence over the movement often disagreed, sometimes in very direct terms. This irreducibility is intrinsic to romanticism: it stems from an underlying rejection of universalism, which, allowing for the self-referential paradox that such a qualification entails, can be analysed as *the* common thread of romanticism.[46] Romantic thought has also the particularity of having been, if not ignited, at least invigorated by a philosopher who, although respected or even revered by romanticism's main theoretical exponents as their spiritual father and as the movement's grandfather, came to regard it with disgust. Above all, however, romanticism was a reaction to the Enlightenment, more specifically to the French Enlightenment as it was enacted in the Parisian salons of the aristocratic and wealthy. For romanticism finds its roots in poor, divided, politically non-existent and then culturally snubbed Germany.[47]

In their overwhelming majority, the French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century, like their British predecessors and contemporaries, shared strong but generally unexpressed beliefs, all distant legacies of Plato and Aristotle. They all considered that the world preceded man's understanding of it and that reason (as opposed to religious faith) was the sole and sure way to achieve that understanding. They were also convinced that this understanding would eventually prove to be complete and coherent. In such an outlook, what Newtonian science had achieved for the world of moving objects, philosophy was to do for that of men and their affairs. The explicit ambition of the Enlightenment was to secure a perfect knowledge of men's goals and of their inner workings so as to arrive at a just, harmonious and peaceful society. That ideal society would necessarily be agreeable to all men since it was to be conceived through an objective, science-like approach. Of this programme, the rationalisation and secularisation of Christian ethics, what MacIntyre

[46] Cf. Berlin (2001, 119ff).

[47] The following section on the origins of romanticism is extracted from Berlin (1998, 553–580), Berlin (2001, 21–450), Magee (1987, 253–261) and Gillespie (1996, 104–110).

calls 'the Enlightenment project',[48] was perhaps the most significant and influential component. This overall agenda was accepted in one form or another by virtually all political, intellectual, artistic and social European elites, including the French-influenced intelligentsia of what was to become Germany.

Not everyone subscribed to this utopian vision, however. Proponents of what came to be called the Storm and Stress movement rebelled: French thinkers were aristocratic; German rebels took pride in their modest origins. French philosophers dreamed of universalism; German authors had only contempt for it, favouring instead minorities and their different, locally bred aspirations.[49] Thinking could not be separated from language, hence different languages generated different ways of thinking. French intellectuals revered reason and objectivity; German insurgents, finding on this account support in the works of Rousseau, refused their supremacy. Rather than to rationality, which they saw as cold, petty and only concerned with calculating man's means, these men turned to the power of sensibility, of subjectivity, of freedom, of personal commitment and of life in general. Hamann, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Fichte and their followers saw the proud, inexhaustible, untameable and possibly unconscious human will as determining man's ends at the exclusion of any other consideration.[50]

Unwillingly and to his subsequent horror, Kant unleashed the power of this new and as yet unstructured vision by providing it with a seemingly unassailable and systematic philosophical framework. By insisting that through the workings of a free subject, the phenomenal world is arrived at from an unknowable but logically required underlying noumenal world, Kant in effect granted his students permission to consider that man's understanding of the world does not follow from his experience. Rather, in crucial aspects events follow the reverse order: the world man knows is shaped according to man's sensory and cognitive apparatus. The world is man's creation. Fichte, wanting to 'improve' on Kant, pushed to its extreme his teacher's 'Copernican (counter) revolution'. He considered that man's conception of the world has no empirical origin and that this absence of empirical

[48] MacIntyre (2008).

[49] A view not exclusively German in its inception, since Montesquieu had broached a climate theory of ethics in his *Lettres persanes* (*Persian Letters*, 1721), subsequently developed in *De l'esprit des lois* (*The Spirit of the Laws*, 1748).

[50] On the importance of the concept of the unconscious within the Storm and Stress movement, see Bishop (2010).

contingency is what freedom really means. Both Descartes and Locke were mistaken: 'I' is neither a given nor a blank slate to be imprinted by experience; it is the result of man's actions, the product of the human will encountering resistance. Opposing any teleological or supranatural ethical source, Fichte held that human ends and values are neither revealed nor to be discovered within man but are simultaneously created and imposed by way of resolute action. Since the phenomenal has no intrinsic order, utilitarianism's 'rational happiness' becomes an oxymoronic, pusillanimous and contemptible notion. Absolute, unique 'goodness' gives way to ethical relativism; between peace and harmony by way of subjection to a natural order and the possibility of chaos and war out of freedom, Fichte and his followers enthusiastically preferred the latter.

Schopenhauer, although lambasting Fichte's arguments to the effect that 'I' is the basis upon which the world is built, further strengthened the theoretical grounding of this impassioned world view. For him, 'will' is not only the defining element of human existence; it is also the ultimate substratum of the world, blind and constantly striving. A bleak and chaotic development is therefore not merely a potentiality, a nihilistic price to pay for Fichte's unbounded freedom; rather, such a future is inscribed in the very nature of a world red in unquenchable teeth and claws, meaningless, evil, the source of endless and pointless suffering. Furthermore, since the world is not a given but the product of will, pretending to represent it faithfully becomes an absurd, nonsensical claim; classicism's rigid canons are smothering constraints that one is to reject. Beyond Schopenhauer's scorn for Fichte, in both men's vision the new hero is the artist, the creator, he who imposes structure and form on whatever lies around him, objects and people alike. Science and technology, insofar as they expand the reach of man's power and contribute to his world-shaping enterprise, are acceptable allies as long as they remain docile servants of the will. At the same time, inspired by Rousseau's nostalgia of man as a naturally free and virtuous savage corrupted by society, thinkers like Schelling opposed scientism and the progressive industrialisation of society that marked the nineteenth century. They saw man as increasingly alienating himself from nature, indulging in frantic consumerism at the price of demeaning and chaotic social atomisation and analysed these features as legacy of the Enlightenment's toxic enthralment with reason. In their works, while ancient heroism's conception of the individual, condemned to excel only in and through the straightjacket of his peers' expectations, is thoroughly reversed,

Homeric man is glorified because construed as being closer to Mother Nature. Among others, Friedrich Hölderlin and Richard Wagner called for a refounding of civilisation, taking Ancient Greece as an unrivalled cultural and artistic model, to be not simply imitated or restored but re-created as a contemporary reality. For them, Antiquity-inspired art is a cure to Western civilisation's sickness and as redemption from its wretchedness.

The stage was set for Nietzsche's unruly entrance, first as romanticism's enthusiastic disciple, later as its vociferous opponent. Nietzsche's encounter with romanticism was in no way automatic or necessary though; philology, the discipline he formally studied in his youth, cannot be described as a natural pathway to romanticism's main areas of concern. Yet when this encounter did eventuate in 1865, after Nietzsche purchased, allegedly on impulse,[51] a copy of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, it was for the young Nietzsche a life-defining event, setting him on his philosophical 'career'. Nietzsche's enthusiastic conversion to Schopenhauer's romanticism is difficult to understate; for the following ten years he described himself as Schopenhauerian and still called Schopenhauer his 'educator' in 1874. His meeting and relationship with Richard Wagner, another devout admirer of Schopenhauer, did nothing to tame Nietzsche's enthusiasm for romanticism in general and Schopenhauer in particular. To the contrary: Nietzsche sacrificed his budding academic reputation by applying romanticism to philology. His first book, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, is an ardent defence of Wagner's musical works by way of an exploration into the origin and demise of Greek tragedy.

'Forcing romanticism into philology' would be a more accurate description of Nietzsche's work. Not only does romanticism have little in common with philology, but the latter also insists on what the former precisely disregards (i.e., meticulous scholarship and rigorous analysis of texts within the strict framework of empirical contingency). *The Birth of Tragedy* is a book without footnotes or bibliography, making regular references to Goethe's and Schopenhauer's works but proposing not a single

[51] There are reasons to believe that Nietzsche had already been exposed to Schopenhauer's philosophy when he was a student in Bonn, before his 'chance' acquisition of a copy of *The World as Will and Representation* in the second-hand bookshop of his landlord in Leipzig; cf. Cartwright (1998, n. 129), on this point. In any case, since by 1865 Schopenhauer's name and work had well emerged from the near-absolute obscurity in which they had remained until 1853, it is difficult to believe that Nietzsche had not heard of them.

quotation from original Greek texts.[52] The work is an essay on art, not a philological treatise. Even if Nietzsche's thesis on the role of Dionysian cults has gained wide currency since its controversial proposal,[53] his contemporary critics could legitimately ask what philology had to do with the whole affair.[54] Peter Sloterdijk, who reads *The Birth of Tragedy* as 'centauric literature' and as one of the most influential texts of modernity, concedes that it is the work of 'a reckless Greek scholar'.[55] It was to destroy Nietzsche's reputation in philology.

In *The Birth*, Nietzsche contended that art comes in two major forms. The Apollonian form is said to focus on symbolic, external manifestations 'through which alone the redemption in illusion is truly to be obtained';[56] opposing it, the Dionysian form represents the way to the 'primordial unity',[57] the 'innermost heart of things', 'the will itself' of which music is considered 'an immediate copy'.[58] Nietzsche's main thesis is that the Greeks' artistic genius was their ability, through songs, dance and music, to harness the 'grotesquely uncouth power'[59] of Dionysus with the help of Apollo to gain access to the all-powerful and frightening 'Mother of Being' in a manner that was meaningful and pleasant, intoxicating yet controlled.[60] Such were the origins of Greek tragedy; the subsequent influence of the 'scientific', 'mystagogue' and 'truth-obsessed' Socrates signalled the demise of the Greek artistic achievements, however.[61] Apollo was then favoured, Dionysus ignored; tragedy became an object of contempt, for it was then considered too simple, insufficiently theoretical, philosophical or logical. With Socrates, the quest for art was replaced by the quest for truth for its own sake, equating

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[52] There is only one passage in translation (a few lines from Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*) in §3.

[53] In Nietzsche's time, the Greeks were thought to be an Apollonian people and Greek tragedy to be an Apollonian phenomenon. Nietzsche helped change that perception. For a broad discussion on Nietzsche's influence on the meaning and importance of the concept of tragedy, see Porter (2005).

[54] Most notably Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, Nietzsche's former fellow student at Pforta and future prominent classicist; see Porter (2011) and Groth (1950) for detailed accounts of Wilamowitz's reaction to and critique of *The Birth*.

[55] Sloterdijk (1989, 3 and 23), respectively.

[56] BT 16.

[57] BT 1.

[58] BT 16.

[59] BT 2.

[60] BT 16.

[61] The qualifiers are found in BT 14 and 15.

wisdom with science and setting the West on its route to anthropocentric scientism. Under the same impulse, content was irretrievably disconnected from appearances, knower from meaning and good from evil.[62] The book's conclusion is that only a return to pre-Socratic art, as exemplified by Richard Wagner's works, can save Western culture. Good art – that is, art of the sort that can justify the existence of the world[63] – is to be obtained through a union in equal parts of Apollonian structure (lyrics) and Dionysian content (music). Used throughout the work, the expressions 'Dionysian' and 'Apollonian' (that Nietzsche borrowed from August Schlegel and Richard Wagner, respectively) convey 'metaphysical' as well as aesthetical meanings.[64] This much seems unambiguous throughout a book otherwise not known for the straightforwardness of its argument or the lightness of its style.

Nietzsche dismissed some of these views later in his life in blunt terms. He associated romanticism with decadence and Christianity, putting in his attacks on the movement as much rhetorical energy as he had invested in its fervent defence. The sincerity and the consistency of these dismissals with other no less vigorous late claims of his are sounded in the course of this inquiry. One can already note, however, that Nietzsche's early love affair with romanticism was not as intellectually pure as he wanted his readers to believe. For regardless of its merits or demerits, the thesis put forward in *The Birth of Tragedy* had already been proposed, in its most important contentions, by Richard Wagner, before and after his encounter with Schopenhauer. Past the obsequious prefatory dedication to Wagner, though, Nietzsche never acknowledged his Wagnerian inspiration.[65] The essay is a thinly disguised tribute to

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[62] BT 15 and 19.

[63] BT 5.

[64] BT 1; in this section, Nietzsche defended his use of the same words to convey what he saw as different but related meanings.

[65] According to Young, the only possible claim to originality of *The Birth* resides in its attempted resolution, by way of a simple juxtaposition, of the contradictions that exist between Wagner's pre- and post-Schopenhauer theses on art in general and on the birth and decline of Greek tragedy in particular (Young 2010, 112–134). The originality of Nietzsche's work cannot be dismissed, though, for Wagner's philosophising is neither always clear nor convincing. An otherwise admiring commentator of Wagner, the noted French musicologist Lucien Rebatet, qualifies Wagner's philosophical effort as the work of an amateur, poor in philosophical vocabulary and dialectics (Rebatet 1988, 459). Moreover, the charge of anthropocentrism that Nietzsche levelled against Socrates and science can be analysed as one of a few distinctly Kantian and Goethean themes of *The Birth* (Miller 2006, 61–68).

the master in the form of an alleged historical study into the origin of Greek tragedy. As for philology, one can, perhaps cynically, wonder whether it did not conveniently serve as a mask hiding Nietzsche's lack of recognised expertise on *The Birth*'s subject matters, for its author had been formally trained neither in art history nor in philosophy.[66] The late Nietzsche's inclination to conceal weaknesses in his thought behind a rhetorical smokescreen, a penchant highlighted throughout this enquiry, has early origins.

9. Romanticism's vision and Nietzsche's thesis on the birth of tragedy could not have been more opposed to the 'Enlightenment's project' which culminated in Kantianism. Kant's initial intentions were of a very different nature, his 'transcendental idealism' having been arrived at from an epistemological perspective.[67] As the introduction to its second version makes clear, *The Critique of Pure Reason* is a deliberate and meticulous response to a possibly unintentional yet radical challenge to the core tenet of the Enlightenment, one taken for granted by all its proponents: the possibility of securing knowledge at all. It remains among Kant's greatest merits to have been the first to appreciate the full significance of Hume's attack on empiricism and rationalism and to assign to himself the task of finding answers to its ominous conclusions.

For even though Hume closed his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by reminding his readers of the superiority of 'experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence', his arguments brought about a devastating self-destruction of empirical epistemology.[68] If all knowledge is to be arrived at exclusively from experience, a posteriori, any attempt to systematise it adequately through scientific theories is illusory. Any theory is a generalisation; as such, it moves beyond experience and cannot be proven. Scientific statements, if they are to be formally true, must be true a priori. That is, they must be disconnected from experience. In agreement with Hume's scepticism, science, insofar as it intends to establish general, natural truths about the world arrived at exclusively from experience, must fail. The universal, natural science that Hume celebrated and that the Enlightenment's thinkers enthusiastically pursued cannot be differentiated, on his own arguments, from theology; that is,

[66] Nietzsche presented himself as 'Full Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Basel' on the cover page of the work's first edition.

[67] Gillespie's is a much more detailed account than that proposed here (Gillespie 1996, 68–74).

[68] The quotation is found in Hume's *Enquiry*, end of §132.

from 'sophistry and illusion'. It was to overcome this catastrophic conclusion that Kant, although then teaching Newtonian astronomy, had to break decisively from naturalism and devised, by way of the 'antinomies', his 'categories of the understanding'.[69] A true philosophical grail, the categories were conceived of as 'synthetic a priori' propositions, true by definition yet still relevant to man's knowledge of the world since pertaining to the means and framework through which the world is perceived and understood. Hume's conclusions were endorsed: the laws of physics that science seeks to discover and codify do not logically follow from facts since no number of factual observations can possibly prove them. Crucially, however, facts follow, indeed must follow, from laws of physics if these are true; it was this revolutionary insight that Fichte would later seize. Kant's 'world as it is in itself' flows backward from the 'categories', it being demanded to render them 'synthetic a priori'. Combined with an underlying Christian faith never questioned (the safeguarding of which is in fact among Kant's stated objectives), this scheme then led to the Kantian conception of the transcendental free subject bound by the 'categorical imperative'. Expressed differently, Hume dismissed Descartes's a priori 'clear and certain' ideas, holding instead that knowledge can be arrived at only from experience, but by insisting that the future cannot be observed, he pulled out the mat underneath empirical science's feet. To replace the missing mat and anchor science on a firm, time- and man-independent basis, Kant offered his noumenon. Romantics dismissed such concerns as inconsequential; what there is to know, what can be known, Rationalists', Empiricists' and Kant's common obsessions inherited from Plato, were for the Romantics no longer the relevant questions. What mattered to them was what man could *will*. This was conceived as an ethical, artistic and proto-existentialistic quest on top of being an epistemological one. All these contentions were what Nietzsche tried to synthesise, through his Apollonian-Dionysian vision of his early years and his concept of will to power of his later ones.

Despite the late Nietzsche's denials, the link from Kant's noumenon to Fichte's 'I' to Schopenhauer's will to Nietzsche's Dionysus of *The Birth of Tragedy* and later to his concept of will to power is tenuous but patent.[70] Owing to its existence and because Nietzsche made regular

[69] For a recent review of Kant's break from naturalism and its echoes in modern philosophy, see Zammito (2008).

[70] Gillespie (1995, 201–203; see also 241ff). The Storm and Stress movement, the seed from which German romanticism grew, is alluded to by Nietzsche in BT-Attempt 2.

(mostly negative) allusions to Kant's main ideas throughout his works, it is impossible to read Nietzsche if one does not have at least an elementary understanding of Kant's and Schopenhauer's works. Now since Kant himself initially responded to Hume's conclusions, romanticism can also be analysed as an answer to the great sceptic's challenge. Without Hume's conclusions, romanticism's revolutionary answer may never have been formulated. If only because of this, Hume can be considered one of romanticism's great-grandfathers.[71] Even if this study makes the argument that Nietzsche cannot be read as a committed naturalist, many of his contentions have a strong Humean flavour and knowledge of Hume's ideas is of great benefit to readers of Nietzsche. For example, Nietzsche followed Hume in denying to causation the status of empirical observation and he mimicked Hume in his rejection of the self as subject. Where Hume argued that induction moves beyond observable properties and is thus unjustifiable, Nietzsche insisted that the Kantian notion of an 'in itself' of things, deemed to be the unconditioned and unchanging substratum of these things' properties, is a laughable fabrication. In *Human, All Too Human*, in the course of a critical discussion of Kantian and Schopenhauerian metaphysics, scepticism is said to be the only viable philosophical stance.[72] In *The Anti-Christ*, in the context of yet another dismissal of Kant, scepticism is once again praised.[73] In these instances and many others, Hume's presence is perceptible but remains unacknowledged. In Nietzsche's books, direct references to Hume are very scarce[74]; merely four references are made in the posthumous entries collected in *The Will to Power*. For all that and quite surprisingly, the extent of Nietzsche's knowledge of Hume's works and their exact influence on his thought remain unsettled questions, for a comparative study of the thought of Nietzsche and of Hume is still lacking. By outlining a few areas where the proximity of the two thinkers' thoughts is striking and others where they stand at extreme ends, this book hopes to shed indirectly some light on this question.

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[71] The link from Hume to the romantic authors does not necessarily go through Kant. Swain and Berlin argue that Johann Georg Hamann, the founder of the Storm and Stress movement, saw in Hume's antirationalism an ally and precursor of his own thought (Swain 1967; Berlin 2001, 40–41).

[72] HH-I 21.

[73] AC 12.

[74] In the published material, Hume's name is found only in U-II 1, BGE 252 and NCW 2.

2
Will to Power and Ascetic Ideal

1. Among the many targets Nietzsche aimed at in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, one is the focus of an entire essay: the 'ascetic ideal'. Through this expression, Nietzsche encapsulated several of the themes that preoccupied him in earlier works and continued to do so in later ones, even if the expression itself disappeared from his vocabulary.[1] These themes include his criticisms of the dominating epistemology of his time and his charges against the Christian ethic and its derivatives. Nietzsche analysed them as the two faces of the same historical and logical coin, distant but toxic legacies of Platonism. He saw these belief systems as being based on other-worldly and inhuman absolutes, resulting in a devaluation of earthly life, a demeaning of the body and a debasement of culture and civilisation by way of a domination of the elites by the masses. The ascetic ideal was for Nietzsche leading Western civilisation towards nihilism – that is, the collapse and rejection of all values and especially of the ancient heroic ones.

A few pages before the end of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche alluded to a this-worldly, naturalistic concept introduced in the second essay: will to power, said to be life's principle, with which he believed he could counter the ascetic ideal's march. Surprisingly, however, the concluding lines of the third essay do not refer at all to the concept and the reader is left somewhat puzzled as to what exactly the book's overall conclusion is. Despite Nietzsche's statement that the last essay is mere repetition

[1] The etymological proximity of 'ideal' and 'idol' in *Twilight of the Idols* is absent from the original book title (*Götze-Dämmerung)*. Although it is likely that in the work's title Nietzsche implicitly referred to Bacon's 'idols', he preferred the German '*Götze*' to the possible '*Idol*' to coin an ironic reference to *Götterdämmerung*, the title of the fourth opera in Wagner's *Ring* cycle.

and exploration 'from the beginning' of what has already been said,[2] the *Genealogy*'s last pronouncements do not readily unite the three essays, at least not as clearly as one would have hoped. Philosophically dense as the concluding sections of third essay are, one closes the *Genealogy* with a diffuse but pervasive sense that the book is neither really finished nor complete in important ways.

As passages of published texts indicate (and numerous posthumous notes confirm), Nietzsche intended to use his conception of will to power to rebuild ethics and epistemology. The most prominent hurdles he faced in this enterprise have been debated in considerable detail in the literature; they pertain mostly to the notorious self-referential and self-serving problems implied by epistemological and ethical theories based on relative notions rather than on absolute foundations. The expression 'will to (more) power' suggests the idea of a continuous process as opposed to a fixed norm. Why should Nietzsche's readers accept his epistemological theory as true since it can, on its own terms, at best claim only to be truer (even if to nature) than other theories of truth? Very similar charges can be levelled against will to power as a basis for ethics, for it is unclear whether moral systems are possible at all without an absolute value underpinning them. Do not such ethical doctrines fall prey to destructive relativism and eventually to nihilism, precisely what Nietzsche wanted so much to avert? Naturalisation appears again of little recourse, for even redefined naturally, 'better' cannot be taken to mean 'good'.

It is difficult to believe that by themselves these much-discussed problems explain why Nietzsche abandoned his revaluation project and the accompanying concept of will to power. Although serious, they are so immediate that Nietzsche could not be ignorant of them when working on the *Genealogy* and later texts; solid, if brief, evidence in his works suggests that he was aware of these difficulties. A closer analysis reveals that the concept of will to power as ethical and epistemological foundation is laden with problems of a magnitude such that they cannot be overcome without Nietzsche executing an about-face. Before an argument to that effect can be proposed, one can already note that 'ascetic' is one of the many terms that Nietzsche used with progressively evolving meaning and tone throughout his works. The word is used neutrally and conventionally in the early works but is given a mostly negative intent in the later ones, especially when it is coupled with 'ideal'. This evolution is a miniature of that; Nietzsche's thought on the themes that will come to dominate his final years. It is worthy of a brief exposition.

[2] Last words of GM-III 1.

2. Nietzsche's first uses of 'ascetic' and 'asceticism' remain marginal and do not attract particular attention. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, asceticism is associated with contemplative spirituality, benevolence, charity and a sense of duty; it is opposed to exuberance and psychological frenzy.[3] In the *Untimely Meditations*, the concept, used in relation to Christianity and sainthood, is described as constitutive of a psychological state.[4] The term receives more sustained interest in *Human, All Too Human*, as is to be expected of a work containing a chapter entitled 'The Religious Life'. In these sections, the earlier associations of the notion with holiness, self-control and denial of emotions are extended to the more Schopenhauerian line of subordination and quieting of will.[5] Nietzsche's tone when discussing asceticism becomes progressively negative throughout the book; even if the contemplative, idle life is said to be required for the scholar,[6] 'ascetic morality' is accused of fragmenting man into two parts.[7] It leads one to become defiant of oneself and to invent an 'enemy within'.[8] In the fight against this imaginary foe, the ascetic saint looks to himself as evil; he oppresses and tortures himself. Seeking to reach a full 'narcoticising of [his] human ills', he obtains an illusory feeling of power over them.[9] This approach to life, characteristic for Nietzsche of religions (Christianity in particular), was for him a negation of nature, born 'out of fear and need' to explain the unexplained,[10] an 'aberration of reason'.[11] Nietzsche held, moreover, that asceticism biased the agenda of philosophers and scientists by framing their explorations right from the outset, making these appear convergent while, understood properly, they are distinct: 'In reality there exists between religion and true science neither affinity, nor friendship: they dwell on different stars'.[12] Works from *Daybreak* to book V of *The Gay*

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[3] BT 3.
[4] End of U-I 6 and beginning of U-I 7, respectively.
[5] Schopenhauer employed the words 'ascetic' (*asketisch*) and 'asceticism' (*Asketismus*) regularly in book IV of WWR, with 'ascetic' being associated with *Tendenz* (trend), *Geist* (mind or spirit), *Grundsätze* (principle), *Richtung* (direction) and *Moral*; the expression 'ascetic ideal' (*asketische Ideale*) is never used in WWR; it seems to be Nietzsche's original coinage.
[6] HH-I 284.
[7] HH-I 137.
[8] HH-I 141.
[9] HH-I 108.
[10] HH-I 110.
[11] HH-I 135.
[12] HH-I 110; see also HH-IIa 98, in which science is praised for the benefits of its methods as well as for the 'utility' of its results and the 'joy' their knowledge generate.

Science (writings that include *Beyond Good and Evil*) confirm these disapproving views, presenting asceticism as a distortion of life and human experience.[13] The ascetic is depicted as a sort of martyr: he may triumph over himself but at the cost of exterminating his sensual drives,[14] eventually destroying his body.[15] At the same time, Nietzsche acknowledged that asceticism is a form of contemplation and introspection that can be practised to great effect, as the philosophers of ancient Greece used to do.[16] He admitted of a positive conception of asceticism as a quest for knowledge through an overcoming of appearances, resting on self-imposed suffering and mutilation.[17]

To this point, asceticism was hence for Nietzsche double-edged. While it was acknowledged as inseparable from the search for knowledge, it was also indicted for its implied but covert essentialism, for being a path towards another world which denies value to *this* one and to earthly life in general. When compared to the wealth of other subjects discussed (among which are art, science, ethics), however, 'ascetic' and 'asceticism' remain peripheral matters in the above-mentioned works. The concepts suddenly take centre stage in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, a text in which Nietzsche combined many of the strands of thought he had explored earlier into an overarching concept: the 'ascetic ideal'.[18] Even though Nietzsche did not make explicit how he came to forge the expression and did not provide a direct definition for it, one can deduce its lineage through the two broad themes that structure Nietzsche's discussion. The ascetic ideal exemplified for him the epistemological and ethical quests (the 'ideals') that Western philosophy inherited from Plato via Christianity, all of them presupposing in his eyes specific ('ascetic') psychosocial tenets. Nietzsche attacked the ascetic ideal chiefly because he found both the objectives pursued and the way these were pursued to be life-denying and nihilistic. After the sustained development found in the *Genealogy*, the expression 'ascetic ideal' disappears from Nietzsche's books,[19] but the underlying criticisms remain present in *Twilight* (especially in 'The Four Great Errors' chapter)

[13] 'Ascetic' is not part of Zarathustra's vocabulary. The theme is, however, present in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* through that of the 'despisers of the body'.
[14] D 113 and 331.
[15] GS 131.
[16] D 42 and 195.
[17] BGE 229; see also D 114.
[18] Nietzsche switched from the plural to the singular form in the course of the essay; by §5 the singular form dominates.
[19] Bar a unique and undeveloped mention in NCW.

and in *The Anti-Christ* (most visibly in the first sections). They have been enormously influential and reverberate in philosophy to this day.

This evolution of the meanings attached to 'ascetic' and 'asceticism' is to be compared with those attributed to 'romanticism'.[20] Nietzsche offered an account of his changing conception of the latter term in his 1886 preface to the second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which he attempted to justify his 1872 work by way of a self-critique. Nietzsche's romanticism, in the *Birth*, takes the form of a rejection of anything purely rational, intellectual or restrained (that which Nietzsche called 'Socratic' when it refers to knowledge, 'Apollonian' when it is about art) in favour of inspiration from the Dionysian – that is, unrestrained or even barbaric imagination and feelings. Schopenhauer's insistence that art's greatness is measured through its capacity to connect with the will, to be 'the faithful mirror of life, of man, of the world', even in their more violent aspects, is plain; so is the Schopenhauerian theme that the purpose of tragedy, the 'high-point of literature, [...] is to present the terrible side of life'.[21]

Nietzsche later indicted Schopenhauer for his morbid pessimism and abandoned the Dionysian versus Socratic opposition, said to be the result of a superficial analysis, in favour of a Dionysian versus Christian one.[22] The real struggle, Nietzsche insisted, was between hostility to life and affirmation of life, now revealed as the true meaning of the Dionysian.[23] In a dramatic reversal of perspective, Nietzsche associated romanticism with Christianity, possibly the greatest mark of infamy in his late thought. The two approaches are said to be equal in potential power and destructiveness, but Dionysian man proceeds out of a will to affirm life, while romantic man out of a desire to negate it. Romantic man is in reality 'a man of strong words and attitudes, a rhetorician from *necessity*, continually agitated by the desire for a strong faith *and* the feeling of incapacity for it'.[24] Romanticism is decadence, for its pessimism leads to nihilism.[25] This designation of romanticism in Nietzsche's

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[20] The extent to which, in Nietzsche's thought, 'asceticism' can be conflated with 'ascetic', as in the expression 'ascetic ideal', is, just like almost everything else with him, a point of debate in the literature. It is returned to below.

[21] Both quotations are from WWR-III 51.

[22] The accusation is detailed in GS 370.

[23] BT-Attempt 5; in this section and the following ones Nietzsche went so far as to affirm that 'Dionysian' is to be granted this meaning in the body of *Birth*. This claim is not supported by the text.

[24] TI-IX 12; emphases in original.

[25] See CW Epilogue, EH-II 5, GM-II 21 and III 4, AC 7 (see also WP 1.7 and 1.8). While Nietzsche's views find justification in the case of Schopenhauer's version of romanticism, they are difficult to reconcile with Fichte's (see Berlin 1998, 469ff).

writings is to be compared with the noticeable rise of the figure of the heroic individual that culminates in the character of Zarathustra and in the possibly Aristotelian figure of the Übermensch that the prophet's disciples must strive to become.[26] Thiele argues that, for Nietzsche, 'the hero is the *agonal* spirit incarnate'[27] and this vision is sustained through Nietzsche's frequent direct or indirect references to Homer, his 'master', individuals of pre-Christian times, his 'higher men' and his obsession with nobility and courage. Nietzsche's hero is put forward as antithesis of the 'ultimate man' and scarecrow for the meek, weak, Christian, romantic, rabble or herd type.[28]

On the one hand, then, Nietzsche's conception of asceticism is in his late thought twofold: while ascetic as meaning other-worldly was for him a wholly negative attribute, asceticism as a method remained positively associated with the elevation of man through greater knowledge and self-discipline that it makes possible. On the other hand, Nietzsche's growing admiration for heroic values is to be paralleled with his developing contempt for romanticism and Christianity, both being doctrines towards which Nietzsche had earlier been attracted but which he finally rejected, seeing them as the two faces of the same ascetic coin. It is against this overall backdrop that Nietzsche's attacks on the ascetic ideal can be analysed. His charge sheets will now be considered in turn, starting with epistemology.

3. Over the last decades, Nietzsche's texts on truth have emerged as forming one of the most fecund aspects of his thought, often referred to in the literature as perspectivism or antifoundationalism.[29] Some have read Nietzsche as arguing a proto-postmodernist position, but this reading of Nietzsche, although a source of a self-contained body of scholarship, has proven to be polemical. Beyond the controversies, however, it is now accepted that Nietzsche's texts on truth must be received in light of his criticisms of metaphysics and especially of Kantian metaphysics. They consist first in a vigorous denial that truth is an understanding of how

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[26] The link between Aristotle 'great-souled man' as outlined in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Nietzsche's Übermensch was first stressed by Kaufmann in his classic study (see Kaufmann 1974a, 382ff); later commentators have either accepted it (Solomon 2003) or dismissed it (Magnus 1980). On the possibility of reading Nietzsche as a virtue ethicist, see Daigle (2006).

[27] Thiele (1990, 12).

[28] Ironically, it is possible to construe Nietzsche's Übermensch as a master rhetorician and unscrupulous liar, that is, as embodying the 'qualities' that Nietzsche most objected to in Romantic man; on this theme, see Martin 2006.

[29] It is termed 'individualistic epistemology' in Thiele (1990, 31).

things really are, combined with the view that the expression 'how things really are' is in no way meaningful. More precisely, Nietzsche's epistemological critique is built upon four distinct but related contentions: (a) there is no such thing as absolute truth for there is no 'thing in itself' to which it could correspond; (b) knowledge is an attempted fixing of a world of becoming but is an error; (c) such error is a basic condition of life because (d) life demands knowledge even if obtained through error.[30]

For Nietzsche, the belief in absolute, unique and ultimate (i.e., Platonic) truth flows from the belief in another world (the noumenon, that of God or some other supernatural Being) taken as ultimate epistemological objective and substratum. The will to such a truth, endorsed by the Church,[31] takes it as a value but it is a will to death,[32] leading one to devalue earthly life and its imperfections.[33] This overestimation of the value of truth stems from failing to recognise that knowledge is necessarily perspectival because it is subjective and of sensuous origin: it is mediated and framed by the sensory apparatus. There is no knowledge without presuppositions and prerequisites, some of which are of biological origins.[34] Deriding Kant, Nietzsche found laughable and 'utterly incomprehensible' the idea according to which there should be an 'intelligible character of things' upon which all knowledge should be based but from which reason should be strictly excluded.[35] He ridiculed Kantian truth for lying 'in the womb of existence, in the imperishable, in the hidden god, in the 'thing in itself' – and nowhere else!'[36] Kant's epistemology – that is to say, in Nietzsche's day the most widely celebrated attempt to rescue knowledge from Hume's attack – was thus in Nietzsche's eyes no less than a resounding and absurd failure since it led to a self-annihilating conclusion: truth as correspondence with an entity that is by definition unreachable and unknowable. Like any belief for which there is no empirical evidence, such truth was supposed

[30] See HH-1 2; GS 260, 265; BGE 4, 16, 24, 34, 211; A 56; amongst others. These claims are put forward in more condensed fashion in the *Nachlass* (see, e.g., WP 454, 493, 531, 532).
[31] GS 123; see also HH-IIa 8.
[32] GS 344.
[33] BGE-Preface and 1.
[34] A recurring theme in the Nietzschean corpus, summarised in GM-III 12 and III 24. It is found in embryonic form in the unpublished essay *On Truth and Lies in the Extra-moral Sense* (written in 1873) and explicitly in D 117. See also GS 54, 57–59, 109–111, 335.
[35] GM-III 12; WP 448 captures this idea in a few words: 'Philosophy defined by Kant as "the science of the limitations of reason"!!'
[36] BGE 2.

to sustain itself 'out of the swamp of nothingness'.[37] This epistemology, added Nietzsche, inspires nothing but pity.[38]

The above has striking consequences when it comes to science, which progressively emerges in Nietzsche's writings as the most sophisticated form of the will to truth. In *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche saw in science an ally against religion and metaphysics;[39] later, he made a sharp distinction between the methods of natural science (which he praised) and its goals. From *The Gay Science* onwards, science is indicted for its faith in knowledge as an unquestionable objective and in truth as a value beyond all other values.[40] Science is nihilistic because the will to truth is the continuation of Christianity's will to Platonic 'transcendental goodness'.[41] Science's truth for truth's sake is described as an ascetic illusion that turns 'life against life'[42] by transforming what was previously mysterious into something merely unknown – that is to say, knowable and waiting to be known, soon to be taken for granted.[43] Nature and man are reduced to contemptible and then to transformable, usable and disposable items; this was for Nietzsche the unavoidable outcome of the ascetic and unchecked will to truth endorsed by his predecessors and contemporaries. Opposing this perspective, he was adamant that if life demands knowledge, life must dominate knowledge, for without life the concept of knowledge becomes itself nonsensical.[44] Rather than try to explain life at all costs, it is much wiser, Nietzsche contended, to adopt the 'profound superficiality' the 'Greeks' had made theirs.[45] Men would be better advised to remain in the mystery,[46] to take the infinite as a bearing point and source of endless perspectives and interpretations.[47] Truth is a woman:[48] one should not want to uncover her at all

[37] BGE 21.
[38] BGE 204.
[39] Nietzsche returned to this position for tactical reasons in *The Anti-Christ*.
[40] GM-III 23–27.
[41] BGE-Preface; see Müller-Lauter (1999, 58–65), and Brobjer (2004b, 29ff), for further explorations of this theme.
[42] GM-III 13.
[43] GS 373.
[44] U-II 10.
[45] GS-Preface 4. 'Greek' usually means in Nietzsche's texts 'pre-Socratic' and in that case is always associated with praise; TI-X ('What I Owe to the Ancients') makes this point clear if indirectly. See Morley (2004) for a critical discussion of Nietzsche's liberal use of 'the Greeks', in *Twilight* and elsewhere.
[46] GM-III 25.
[47] GS 374.
[48] BGE-Preface, GS-Preface 4; see also TI-I 16 ('Is [truth] not an outrage on all our pudeurs?').

costs as science impudently and noisily pretends to have the right to do.[49] Feyerabend would later make Nietzsche's words almost exactly his own.[50]

Beyond these trademark views and their polemical postmodern interpretations, there is another point to Nietzsche's epistemological critique. Nietzsche contended that the vision of a God-like truth leads to denying and erasing not only cognitive differences but also differences between individuals. If truth is absolute and independent of man, then it is irrelevant of culture, location or period; everyone is equal before it, everyone has an equal claim to it. Everyone can access truth if one is adequately educated and trained in the practice of truth-seeking. This, for Nietzsche, was an unforgivable, repugnant offense. He called Socrates and Plato anti-Greek agents of decay, promoters of base instincts: 'With [...] dialectics the rabble gets on top'.[51]

Nietzsche's defence of perspectival knowledge and his attacks on absolute truth had hence another target: egalitarianism.[52] Absolute truth leads to absolute equality among those who look for it. This conception brings about pleasing feelings of equality amongst the lowly but also, crucially for Nietzsche, leads to the levelling and potential reversal of social categories.[53] The egalitarianism flowing from and the moral presuppositions underpinning the will to (absolute, Platonic) truth were, for Nietzsche, what make it plebeian, Christian, lowly and life-denying: 'ascetic'. The choice of pure rationality, of reason, of truth as an objective in itself is an ethical choice, for it results in moral and social consequences.[54] This insight, at which Nietzsche arrived very early on in an unpublished essay[55] and which is stated again in a late note,[56] makes

[49] GM-III 23.

[50] Thus Feyerabend writes that '[science] is conspicuous, noisy and impudent but is inherently superior only for those who have already decided in favour of a form of a certain ideology or who have accepted it without having ever examined its advantage and its limits' (Feyerabend 1975, 295).

[51] TI-II 5; WP 435 expresses a similar line (see also WP 437).

[52] Ferry and Renaut (1991b, 139–142).

[53] On this theme, see also BGE 22, where Nietzsche derided the 'humanitarian concoction' made with the physicists' 'laws of nature', proposed to please the 'democratic instincts' of modern man.

[54] Boyer (1991, 32).

[55] 'From the sense that one is obliged to designate one thing as 'red' [...] there arises a moral impulse in regard to truth' (*On Truth and Lies in the Extra-moral Sense*, §1, ¶10).

[56] WP 578.

of Nietzsche 'the first moralist of knowledge'.[57] It highlights what now appears as a self-evident conclusion: accepting the notion of absolute truth is a moral decision since it cannot be an empirical one. Not only does it lead one to see human beings as equal before it, but it also relies on the idea that there is a quasi-divine order to be discovered in nature or as flowing from 'the world as it is in itself'. This is assuming the point that is still to be proven, however.[58] Nietzsche hence considered that a philosophy that took to itself the task of revaluating truth automatically placed 'itself beyond good and evil'.[59] This contention also explains why Nietzsche's critique of epistemology received its most pungent expression (most ostensibly in the third essay of the *Genealogy*) in the broader context of his exploration of the history of Christian morals and their alleged dangers. It is to this exploration that the discussion now turns.

4. For Alasdair MacIntyre, Nietzsche 'is *the* moral philosopher of the present age'.[60] The ever-growing body of secondary literature flowing from Nietzsche's views on Christian morals indicates this assessment. The following does not propose a synthesis of these contributions (if such a synthesis is at all possible) but merely exposes the reasons why Nietzsche depicted Christian morality as prejudicial and consubstantial to the ascetic ideal.

The outline of Nietzsche's criticism of Christian ethics parallels that of his critique of epistemology. Nietzsche's intentions were here again to question what is taken for granted and absolute, in this instance the values of good and evil. His enquiry into the genealogy of morality is proposed as a genuine historical analysis going back to a great reversal.[61] As was the case for truth, that Plato is said to have set 'on its head',[62] Nietzsche saw the origin of Christian values in a 'slave revolt in morality'.[63] Whereas Christianity was indicted for having endorsed and deified Plato's conception of truth, it is now accused of having inverted ancient heroism's 'master' values of good and bad into their respective opposites of evil and good.[64] Accordingly, physical strength

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[57] Heller 1988, 8.
[58] WP 471.
[59] Last words of BGE 4.
[60] MacIntyre (2008, 114); emphasis in original.
[61] An analysis qualified by a commentator to be 'superior to any other available' (Geuss 1999, 22).
[62] BGE-Preface; the charge is repeated word for word in GM-III 24.
[63] BGE 195 and GM-I 10.
[64] Such is the main thesis of the first essay of the *Genealogy*, for which Nietzsche offers etymological arguments.

is now condemned, weakness becomes a synonym for abnegation, meekness is taken for virtue and previously unknown or disregarded feelings, such as pity and compassion, take the high moral ground. This inversion of values is accompanied by another inversion, no less important in the eyes of Nietzsche: that of the mode of valuation. Whereas the master moral attributes were attached first to the individuals and then (as a matter of automatic consequence) to their actions, in the Christian perspective the moral qualifiers are attached first to actions and then ascribed to what is thought to be their origin, the soul. This ethical-ontological foundation is for Nietzsche doubly erroneous: it assumes (a) that the origin of behaviour is to be found in the soul, a supernatural entity that makes all men equal beyond their physical differences; and (b) that this soul is gifted with free will. These two mistakes had for him the same origin: the belief that there is a free 'in itself' of man, the existence of which remains by definition beyond the reach of empirical confirmation.[65] Nietzsche insisted: 'there is no such substratum, no "being" behind doing', for one is only one's actions.[66] One cannot hold against an eagle that it behaves like an eagle, even if lambs entertain such '*ressentiment*'.[67] Moreover, like the Platonic-Christian-Kantian will to truth, which assumes the existence of a world beyond the everyday one with which correspondence is to be established, for Nietzsche Christian ethics relied on the Platonic notion of 'transcendental goodness' towards which men must also strive.[68]

In Nietzsche's view, these two misconceptions (will to other-worldly truth and goodness) compose the birth certificate of Christianity. More originally, he saw them as leading to its self-annihilation, for he believed that merely asking, in the name of the former, the question of the justification of the latter amounts to destroying them both.[69] Yet this confrontation between the Platonic will to truth and Christianity's ontological and ethical foundations was for him unavoidable. He predicted that this collision would lead to a final rejection of all ethical and epistemological

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[65] To summarise claims made in BGE 12, 32, 54 and GM-I 13.

[66] GM-I 13; see Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of this aspect of Nietzsche's thought.

[67] According to Kaufmann, Nietzsche used this French word as a reference to the 1789 revolutionaries, whom he saw as driven by this feeling (Kaufmann 1989, 8).

[68] BGE-Preface.

[69] GM-III 25.

values for lack of firm bases over which to establish them.[70] Nihilism is for Nietzsche inscribed in the fabric of the Christian creed.[71]

In the introduction to the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche left no mystery as to what he thought of the efforts of the psychologists and philosophers who probed the origins of morality before him. He charged them with overlooking the importance of history in the development of moral values. He ridiculed the idea that 'good', as a moral qualifier, could have ever meant 'un-egoistic', since un-egoistic actions are usually harmful.[72] As for the concept of 'utility' as a means to inquire into the content of morality, Nietzsche believed it irrelevant, for the purpose of a practice is not the way to its origin. 'Utility' as a universal moral basis also assumes that there is such thing as a 'general good' that could be applied equally to everyone – another dangerous delusion that ignored the differences between man and man.[73] The works in which such theories were developed were for Nietzsche nothing but attempts by their authors to validate their own Christian values, mere 'personal confessions' revealing existential problems.[74] He held that approaching morality scientifically and trying to rebuild ethics upon reason is absurd; since reason is a tool and not a value, it cannot ground ethics.[75] MacIntyre, acknowledging his debt to Nietzsche, argues that the 'Enlightenment project', which intended to provide a rational and secular account of morality, failed because it had to.[76] Whether MacIntyre himself succeeds in overcoming the difficulties that he uncovers is open to debate, but his and Nietzsche's analyses of the Enlightenment's intentions and achievements with regard to moral philosophy start from a shared diagnosis.[77]

The consequences of Christianity's ethical misconceptions are for Nietzsche no less perverse than those he attributed to divine, absolute truth: he saw Christian morals as leading Western civilisation to its downfall. With arguments reminding one of Machiavelli's,[78] Nietzsche believed

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[70] Gillespie (1995, 211).
[71] AC 6–7; see also BGE 10. This claim is made in various forms in the first book ('European Nihilism') of *The Will to Power*.
[72] GM-I 2–3.
[73] BGE 228; see also GS 335, where the point is extended to Kant's categories.
[74] BGE 6 (see also HH-IIa 19), BGE 186, 187, 190
[75] Connecting points made in BGE 186 and 191.
[76] MacIntyre (2008, 256).
[77] Bernstein (1986, 117–126), argues that MacIntyre fails in his enterprise and makes the case for Nietzsche's arguments only stronger.
[78] See the *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*, book II, section 2.

that by insisting that its morality is the only one that there can be,[79] by devaluing physical strength and courage, by attributing the highest moral worth to submissiveness, humility and powerlessness and by preferring passive reaction to creative action, Christianity corrupts the notion of justice and brings about a degeneration of life.[80] Nietzsche believed humankind to be made of eagles and lambs; he called the former the 'higher men', the latter the 'herd', and he considered that different people should obey different values. For him, Christian morals, advocated by the 'ascetic priests', smother and nip in the bud the proud, strong, value-creating, culture-enhancing higher men by holding their superiority against them.[81] Superior individuals can only be superior through their actions, however; if they stop behaving like superior individuals, they cease to be superior. The ascetic ideal is thus 'anti-nature',[82] not because it is coercive,[83] but because it denies and strives to annihilate a basic and natural fact about people: their inequality. It 'castrates' humanity of its own heights.[84] With the victory of Christian morality, the slave values have triumphed everywhere: democracy and socialism, these secular forms of Christianity according to which power to rule is handed over to the masses of herd individuals, will be Western civilisation's doom.[85]

In Nietzsche's eyes then, the ascetic ideal is nihilistic because it is built on assumptions that ignore or deny the existence of cognitive perspectives and ontological differences. In this context, a remedy presents itself readily: identifying, reaffirming and re-establishing these perspectives and differences through new conceptions. This objective is the dominating component of Nietzsche's positive philosophical project as it is visible in his finished works. It is announced as such in his last productive years: 'given *it is the problem of order of rank* of which we may say it is *our* problem, we free spirits'.[86] This 'problem' of establishing hierarchies haunted Nietzsche; it comes back in his notebooks and books as an obsessive mantra. This is acutely the

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[79] BGE 202.

[80] GM-II 11 and III 13, respectively.

[81] These claims are repeated in Nietzsche's middle to late works; see, e.g., D 164; BGE 62, 206, 228; GM-Preface 6 and III 14; AC 43, 52; EH-III 5; see also WP 27. For more details about their articulation, see Leiter (2003, 113–125).

[82] GM-III 3.

[83] One of its rare positive aspects for Nietzsche; see BGE 188.

[84] TI-V 2; see also the long BGE 62, entirely dedicated to this theme, which is also that of the last sections of *The Anti-Christ*. In BGE 242, Nietzsche posited that from this chaos will emerge 'exceptional men of the most dangerous and attractive qualities'.

[85] AC 43, 51.

[86] HH-I Preface 7 (1886); emphases in original. See also WP 287: 'my philosophy aims at an ordering of rank'.

case in *Beyond* and in the *Genealogy* but was Nietzsche's central concern from early on: hierarchy of art forms and artistic expressions in *The Birth of Tragedy*; of cultures, emotions, actions, manners and goods in *Human, All Too Human*; and finally of individuals, morals, philological methods and descriptive propositions from *Beyond Good and Evil* onwards.[87]

Distance and difference thus emerge as two central concepts in Nietzsche's works, calling for a new differentiating basis.[88] The ascetic ethical and epistemological valuation modes must be overthrown and replaced simultaneously since, in Nietzsche's eyes, the two could not be separated. No wonder his projected grand work was tentatively subtitled 'a revaluation of *all* values'. Surprisingly, however, Nietzsche never articulated in his books why exactly hierarchy should be a free spirit's obsession. Even if a principled answer (like that just provided) appears transparently available, Nietzsche did not elaborate it; nor did he delineate clearly the ground over which hierarchy or hierarchies could or should be established. From one work to the next, the basis for establishing new orderings of rank changed to suit his purposes. In *The Birth*, the ability to 'justify the world' is the attractive if unclear criterion that Nietzsche used to distinguish good art. In *Human*, Nietzsche relied on concepts such as energy, toughness, spiritual force and physiological health as differentiating factors to separate actions or cultures but did not clarify these loose notions.[89] It is only in *Beyond* that a new criterion to rank individuals, moralities and propositions about the world, briefly hinted at in *Zarathustra*, appears to be later on confirmed in the *Genealogy*: will to power.[90] The direction of will to power was Nietzsche's yardstick for valuing morals and individuals; intensity of will to power was his epistemological ranking criterion. Both scales were intended

[87] In BGE 204, hierarchy is said to be 'so elevated a question'; see also BGE 9: 'Doesn't life mean weighing, preferring, being unjust, having limits, wanting to be different?'

[88] A conclusion proposed by Deleuze (1983, 2) and by Sloterdijk (1989, 39). Whereas Deleuze argues from the basis of Nietzsche's late critique of morality (as expressed in the *Genealogy*), Sloterdijk arrives at it from Nietzsche's early critique of truth (as found in *The Birth*) and more precisely from its existential implications. According to Sloterdijk, Nietzsche believed truth to be unreachable because it is unendurable. In this context, one's distance from truth is a fundamental ontological marker. The two approaches can be combined in the concept of will to power as an ethical and epistemological concept, as is proposed here (a possibility Sloterdijk hints at, 45–46).

[89] See, e.g., HH-I 224, 250, 262, 263. Nietzsche's pervasive biologism is the focus of Moore (2006a).

[90] Notes WP 855–858 propose this line of thinking more explicitly.

to be acceptable by a naturalist. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to substantiating and qualifying these contentions. Reasons why Nietzsche refrained in the end from elaborating on his proposed remedy to fight the ascetic ideal are then proposed, together with explanations as to why he remained silent about these reasons.

5. It is in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that moral values and individuals are linked with a concept that is then introduced. This is done in two very well-known passages:

> [Zarathustra] has discovered the good and evil of many peoples.[...] No people could live without evaluating [...] A table of values hangs over every people. [...] it is the voice of its will to power.[91]

Later in the work, Zarathustra continues:

> Where I found a living creature, there I found will to power; and even in the will of the servant I found the will to be master.[92]

Will to power is found in all living beings, weak or powerful; will to power is life's principle.[93] The moral code of one society is an expression of its members' will to power; will to power is a natural moral grounding.[94] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche complemented these views: 'diversity in humans is revealed [...] by the diversity of their table of goods'.[95] Human beings' moral values, as well as human beings themselves, are expressions of will to power and this concept can be used to segregate individuals as well as their morals. Masters have a master morality; slaves have a servant morality. This is Nietzsche's radical opposition between aristocracy and plebs and their respective moralities, to which the entire first essay of the *Genealogy* is dedicated.

Although in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche spoke of 'strong and weak wills',[96] his moral criterion is not the intensity of will to power but its direction.[97] As Nietzsche detailed in an oft-quoted section, 'in every act

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[91] Z-I 15.
[92] Z-II 12.
[93] In addition to Z-II 12 just quoted, see also BGE 13 and GM-II 12.
[94] Schacht (1985, 348–349; see also 354–356).
[95] BGE 194.
[96] BGE 21.
[97] A more developed version of the argument about to be offered can be found in Williams (2001, 24–38).

of willing there is [a] moving away from [and a] moving towards'.[98] The noble individuals are in Nietzsche's conception 'active', resilient, affirmative, 'moving towards' people: their existence and valuation modes are self-contained. They are value-givers and do not need to refer to anything or anyone but to themselves to evaluate.[99] The base or common individuals, in contrast, are submissive, passive, 'reactive',[100] 'moving away from' people. They have value only in reaction and opposition to the masters' mode and bases of valuation. Yet all individuals (masters, slaves, nobles or base) are equally powerful in principle: all express and exhibit will to power.[101] Similarly, both moral codes are equivalently powerful, at least in principle; in reality, the Christian morality is stronger than the master one since it has triumphed over it.[102] As the closing sentences of *On the Genealogy of Morals* insist, the ascetic will which underpins Christian ethics is perhaps a degenerate form of will to power, 'a will to nothingness, an aversion of life, but it is and remains a will!'[103] Master and Christian moralities are equivalent as far as their make-up (will to power) is concerned but differ in the direction of their willing. One affirms life, the other negates it, yet both do so as an instinct because it is their very nature.[104] 'Life *in its essence* means appropriating, injuring, overpowering those who are foreign and weaker':[105] whatever their type, moralities and individuals themselves exert these activities at the expense of the other type.

Nietzsche's open preference for moral values that affirm life was in keeping with his admiration for the Homeric moral code. As MacIntyre explains, 'a man in Heroic societies is what he does. [In the Epics] a man and his actions become identical'.[106] One's determination in performing what one is to do is what truly matters in such a context; the crucial opposition is between courage (possibly to the point of foolhardiness) and cowardice. The former is the precondition

[98] BGE 19.
[99] BGE 211, GM-I 10 and II 17.
[100] GM-II 11.
[101] GM-III 14: 'where can it not be discovered, this will to power of the weakest!'
[102] GM-I 16.
[103] GM-III 28; see also CW-Epilogue.
[104] Nabais traces this typology of wills back to the fourth book of *Zarathustra* and its 'ugliest man' and 'beggar' characters (among others) opposing the Übermensch (Nabais 2006a, 124–125).
[105] BGE 259; emphasis in original. GM-II 12 makes the same point indirectly.
[106] MacIntyre (2008, 122), quoting in parts Hermann Fränkel's *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, published in 1973 (first edition in German published in 1951).

of one's social standing and glory in case of excellence; the latter leads one to inglorious death or social exclusion. Both courses of action require physical force and power; fleeing can be as physically taxing as fighting, but only fighting receives a positive moral evaluation. What discriminates between them is where one directs one's physical power. It was this ethical criterion that Nietzsche endorsed and proposed as an alternative to the ascetic one. With regard to a new basis for epistemology, however, it was the intensity of will to power that was Nietzsche's differentiating factor. To show this, it is necessary to return to Nietzsche's texts on truth.

As was broached above, in his late works, Nietzsche rejected the idea of truth as correspondence with the 'thing in itself' and promoted perspectival knowledge in its stead. As far as a general agreement on what Nietzsche wrote on epistemology, these trite statements are perhaps as far as one can reasonably go. Precisely at this point, the notorious self-referential problem surges ominously; beyond it, the Nietzsche literature has embarked on a journey from which it has yet to return. Not all the insights gained since this aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy has emerged to prominence can faithfully be presented here. Some of them deserve to be discussed, for they clarify the link between truth and will to power.

Taken to the letter, Nietzsche's texts on truth appear to refute themselves irretrievably. If 'there is no truth' or if 'truth is an error', as his writings appear often to be saying in one form or another, then these statements, by way of what they affirm, cannot claim to be true and should therefore be considered false. Yet if they are false, then the possibility that they are true is reopened. Facing this problem, Nietzsche scholars have entertained one of two solutions. Either they follow the postmodernist reading and embrace the dismissal of the excluded middle principle; or they reinterpret Nietzsche's texts pointing towards antifoundationalism by way of radical scepticism. In this latter case, they propose interpretations of these texts in which the self-refutation disappears or is substantially weakened. The methods through which such-minded commentators do so vary, but all start from a common observation: Nietzsche's epistemological critique appears in plain contradiction with the fabric of his works. It seems indeed difficult to deny that Nietzsche advanced in his writings many sorts of claims (about women, Wagner, operas, Christian morals, etc.), all openly pretending to be true, including of course those to the effect that truth is an error. One solution is then to highlight the naturalist-leaning and empiricist-friendly contents of Nietzsche's texts, as well as his regular

praises for science's methods.[107] These features, it is argued, render Nietzsche's works incompatible with radical scepticism, since radical scepticism rules out, as a matter of principle, the epistemological superiority of any claim made about the world, while empiricism starts from the consideration that sense experience should receive epistemological preference.[108] Accordingly, it is impossible to be simultaneously a radical sceptic and an empiricist, as Nietzsche sometimes seems to be claiming. He cannot be a radical sceptic and must accept, if not the existence of truth, at least its possibility.

In this outline, Nietzsche is described as differentiating two classes of claims. One class is said to belong to an epistemic kind such that it is eligible to a truth status owing either to the artistic, empiricist, naturalistic or positivist method that underpins it or to the general objective at which it aims. This objective is broadly defined as 'life'[109] or, more precisely, as the 'conditions of existence within which human beings [have to] maintain themselves'.[110] The other class of claims is conversely deemed not to be eligible to this truth status and to belong to another epistemic class by application of the same principle (that is, these claims are considered to be unartistic, unempirical, non-naturalist, non-positivist or not conducive to 'life').[111] According to these interpretations, Nietzsche's various claims to the effect that 'truth is an error' belong to the first category and thus can be said to be true in one sense (artistic, positivist, empirical or naturalist), while the philosophical positions he attacked belong to the second category and are thus false in this same sense.[112] Worthy of note is that these solutions to Nietzsche's critique of

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[107] See HH-I 630; BGE 15, 134; GM-III 23; TI-III 2, 3. Empiricism was often referred to as 'sensualism' in Nietzsche's time (as is done in BGE 15).

[108] Among commentators, Leiter argues this line most vigorously (Leiter 2003, 6ff; see 14 for a direct expression). Wilcox (1974) and Schacht (1985) can be read as precursors.

[109] As in Danto (1980, 230).

[110] Poellner (2007, 12), echoing WP 175, 494, 505.

[111] Magnus (1988a, 154–155), complements this list with 'good and [vs.] bad perspectives, useful and unhelpful ones, simplistic and informed ones, thoughtful and superficial ones, well-argued and badly argued ones, intelligent and stupid ones, subtle and crude ones, deep and shallow ones'.

[112] Proponents of this broad interpretive line include Wilcox (1974, 171); Schacht (1985, 7, 53ff); and Hussain (2007), among many others. Poellner's interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemology, if reaching further than the current classification, hinges on a similar distinction (cf. Poellner 2007, 12–14, for a summary of this view). Richardson's solution, which defines 'limits' to Nietzsche's perspectivism so that it does not refute itself, is also consistent with this method (Richardson

truth are supported by evidence found almost exclusively in the posthumous fragments.[113] In any case, beyond the textual evidence that can be adduced to such readings of Nietzsche's epistemological critique, the fact is that they do not address the self-referential quandary outlined above. Their weakness is revealed when one tries to decide to which epistemological category the statements proposing the classifications belong, for it remains to be shown that they fall within the class of statements deemed to be of superior epistemic value.[114] For example, appealing to the artistic value or utility to life of a claim (assuming these criteria can be sufficiently clarified) does not overcome the self-referential problem, because it still must be explained why such a differentiation is itself artistic or useful to life.

Maudemarie Clark has proposed a second interpretive exit, broadly compatible with the empiricist readings just mentioned, which has contributed significantly to the renewed interest in Nietzsche's texts on truth. It proposes to diffuse the contradictions found in Nietzsche's writings by analysing them chronologically, so that if they still contradict each other taken as a whole, they cease to do so when read in self-contained historical periods. Clark argues that, in the course of his philosophical 'career', Nietzsche overcame the radical scepticism of his youth by separating, in his late works, his denial of the possibility of truth from his rejection of Platonic and Kantian world dualisms. Nietzsche's early 'falsification thesis' (Clark's coinage for Nietzsche's claims to the effect that 'truth is an error') is said to rely implicitly on a Kantian metaphysical realism inasmuch as it presupposes the existence of a noumenal world about which no truth can be obtained. Once the idea of a noumenal world is rejected, the possibility of truth about and within a unified world can be restored. Nietzsche, after some intermediary steps occurring between *Beyond* and the *Genealogy*, came to realise this. As Clark summarises, Nietzsche ended up 'reject[ing] the

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1996, 220ff). Some postmodernist readings of Nietzsche (e.g. Kofman 1972; Nehamas 1985) are broadly compatible with this general approach.

[113] WP 515 and 530 notably. Nietzsche, as if to rob his readers of the last possibility of making his thought at least partially consistent, denied elsewhere (GS 121) that life could be an argument for truth.

[114] A point made in Boyer (1991, 24–25), and Williams (2001, 98): differentiating epistemic classes 'simply pushes the original problem back one level rather than circumventing or eliminating it' (Williams 2001, 98). Clark mentions this issue when commenting on Kofman's and Deleuze's readings (Clark 1990, 16–17, 151).

existence of metaphysical truth – correspondence to the thing in itself – but not truth itself'.[115] Although including novel elements coming from a historical account of Nietzsche's critique of epistemology, Clark's solution concludes on a familiar tone: metaphysical monism is said to lead to distinguishing two classes of statements, one deemed epistemologically superior to the other.[116]

Clark's thesis has proven to be controversial and solid arguments have been produced for and against it.[117] Beyond its alleged merits or demerits, however, Clark's summary leaves the classification problem mentioned earlier untouched. A claim to the inexistence of other-worldly truth, based in this instance on a rejection of Kantian idealism, assumes itself a specific world view, namely monism. It is self-contradictory to accept the existence of empirical truth while rejecting the very notion of 'metaphysical' truth at the same time, when the former is defined in opposition to the latter. Even strict nominalism does not escape this charge, if only because it makes assumptions with respect to the universal inexistence of universals. In both cases, it remains to be shown why these world views are epistemologically superior to dualism and idealism if not by virtue of their respective definition of 'epistemologically superior'. Nominalism and monism are true on their own terms. When it comes to refuting the existence or validity of a type of truth, the self-refutation quagmire is a difficult one to avoid. It was obfuscated here by the ambiguity, very common in the literature if seldom lamented, of the term 'metaphysical', which can mean 'cosmological' (but natural) as well as 'supernatural'.

A third solution to the tension flowing from the coexistence of Nietzsche's sceptic-friendly texts and his philosophical practice has been more recently suggested. It is related to the first approach outlined above but incorporates elements of Clark's thesis. Nietzsche is read as rejecting the noumenal-phenomenal distinction while retaining the existence of an epistemic barrier between (a) the objects of the world as these can be known through various cognitive perspectives and (b) the same phenomenal objects independent of these perspectives. According to this interpretation, Nietzsche allowed for a version of positivism combining

[115] Clark (1990, 21).

[116] First class: empirical statements; second class: metaphysical statements.

[117] Clark's thesis has been endorsed by, e.g., Leiter (2003, 14–21) but resisted by Poellner (2007, 22–25, 79ff), Anderson (1996), Hussain (2004). For its detractors, Clark's interpretation can be argued on the basis of Nietzsche's published writings but becomes difficult (impossible for Poellner) to sustain in light of his posthumous fragments.

falsification from the senses with metaphysical monism.[118] The possibility of knowing objects as they are 'in themselves' is of course rejected, since the very existence of an 'in itself' of objects is ruled out, but so is the possibility of knowing the phenomenal objects (the existence of which being accepted) independently of any perspective grounded on particular interests. One cannot see an apple from nowhere or from all directions at the same time. In other words, the theoretical existence of empirical truth is not denied, but its practical possibility is. As was the case for the previous solutions, some of Nietzsche's texts can be analysed as lending themselves to this interpretation.[119] Its transparently neo-Kantian implications remain nevertheless difficult to reconcile with the late Nietzsche's vehement attacks on Königsberg's 'fatal spider' and more importantly with his unambiguous rejections of the idea that 'things' can have an existence independent of their perception.[120]

There is, as alluded to earlier, yet another solution to the problem under discussion. Simon Blackburn argues that the only consistent way to survive the 'recoil argument' implied by epistemological perspectivism is to apply the scepticism it contains unto itself with utmost rigour and thus to deny language any claim to knowledge.[121] Actuality becomes an illusion to be dissolved in a web of continuous and overlapping interpretations and epistemology is reconceived as an endless 'genealogical' exploration of interpretive layers. This is, in essence, the postmodern reading signposted by Derrida, Kofman, de Man and Nehamas (to name only a few), which finds support in some of Nietzsche's most striking posthumous notes.[122] Although strictly speaking consistent,

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[118] Hussain 2004. This is also in (very) broad outline the approach suggested in Stack (1983) and Anderson (2005). Doyle's reading of Nietzsche's epistemology, called 'internal realism', can be analysed as pursuing this overall solution further (Doyle 2009, ch. 2).

[119] Most notably WP 569.

[120] See WP 557, 558, e.g. While the ad hominem comment mentioned (found in AC 11) is made with regard to Kant's ethics and not to his epistemology, Nietzsche's use of Bacon's 'spider' image is an indirect reference to Kant's idealistic stance. One must acknowledge, however, that Stack's study (1983, esp. 195ff; but see also 102ff, 112ff) of Lange's influence on Nietzsche can be read as a sustained defence of Nietzsche's underlying if unwilling neo-Kantianism since Lange was himself openly neo-Kantian.

[121] Blackburn (2005, 42–44, 47).

[122] E.g., the well-known WP 481: 'Against positivism, which halts at phenomena – "There are only facts" – I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations' (importantly, however, this note continues with 'We cannot establish any fact 'in itself'': perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing', making

this approach has the outline of a Pyrrhic victory: rather than a way out of perspectivism, it looks like a way in, towards a black hole from which no definitive meaning-bearing statement can ever emerge – including, of course, postmodernism's own antifoundational foundational claims. Whatever the case, it remains difficult to accept that Nietzsche, beyond the perspectivist overtones undoubtedly present in his texts, was really the first postmodernist. His assertive opinions on matters ranging from cuisine to opera, not to mention his polemical account and critique of Christianity, do not readily fit within a postmodernist picture. If Nietzsche's passionate philosophical practice is in tension with his perspectivism, it is even more so with a postmodernist reading of these works that precludes definitive factual or evaluative statements. It seems reasonable to conclude that Nietzsche's perspectivism, if perspectivism really is Nietzsche's final position, cannot extricate itself from the self-refutation trap. If anything, the vitality of the ongoing controversy in the secondary literature is a clear sign of this difficulty. Yet if one can only speculate whether Nietzsche imagined the immense echo his views would later receive when he penned the texts that are today so vigorously debated, one can also suspect that he would have greeted the spectacle of the philosophical excitation he triggered with a malicious chuckle. On this theme, Nietzsche's philosophical good faith is less than stellar. There are several reasons to hold such views.

One must first note that it is a striking feature of Nietzsche's texts that they are laden with heavy philosophical implications that he regularly acknowledged or gesticulated towards but did *not* pursue, at times even casually dismissing their scope or their consequences. This is particularly the case for his texts on the illusory nature of human beliefs. The ironical snippet at the end section 22 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, the overall tone of section 34, not to mention the claim made in section 43 of the same work to the effect that truth is personal, are solid indications that Nietzsche was well aware that his own arguments could be returned against him.[123] Similarly, when Nietzsche wrote in *Twilight of the Idols*, '"All truth is simple" – Is that not a compound lie?',[124] elsewhere 'what would truth, all our truth, be then? – An unconscionable falsification of

it likely that what Nietzsche is attacking is the notion of 'in itself' of facts and not the existence of facts qua facts). Nietzsche's rejection of Aristotle's law of contradiction in WP 516 is another argument supporting the postmodernist interpretation.

[123] See also the last line of BGE 231.

[124] TI-I 4.

the false?'[125] or again 'from the standpoint of morality, the world is false. But to the extent that morality itself is a part of the world, morality is false',[126] it is impossible to believe that he was oblivious to the Cretan paradox these 'arrows' exemplify. It is consequently very difficult to hold that Nietzsche was not aware of the self-refutation problem his denial of truth or his dismissal of systems contained. If he ignored or half-jokingly derided the self-contradicting aspect of his epistemological critique, it is not because he was unaware of it. More plausibly, he chose to disregard such issues altogether, in keeping with his mistrust of logic and language.[127]

Nietzsche endorsed Hume's conclusions and criticisms of the claims that there are methods available through which men can discover something more about the world than that which can be experienced. For Nietzsche, if epistemology is conceived of as an attempt at securing an ultimate, man-independent and stable basis for knowledge, it is bound to fail.[128] Such basis is by definition beyond human experience, which can attest only to an ever-changing world.[129] These convictions, proposed from *Human* onwards, form the basis of an underlying if undeveloped empiricism that he never rejected. More to the point of the present discussion, however, Nietzsche, just like Hume, remained unconcerned by the tensions his critique of knowledge generated within his own thought. Hume's argument about the limitations of human knowledge owing to the impossibility of going beyond experience is itself an all-encompassing statement going further than present experience. Like the Greek Sceptics, Hume held that knowledge is impossible as someone who *knew* that it is such. Unlike Kant, Nietzsche did not oppose rationalism in the hope of rescuing human knowledge from Hume's conclusions. His provocative 'there is no truth' is merely, if disingenuously, intended as a rejection of Kant's epistemology, for if the phenomenal world is not and cannot be a faithful representation of the 'world as

[125] WP 542.

[126] WP 552.

[127] In WP 516, Nietzsche rejected Aristotle's law of contradiction on the ground that logic only applies to a fictitious world. Irrelevant of the importance one should grant to this note, its existence makes it very difficult to believe that Nietzsche was blind to the self-refuting tension his works contained.

[128] This claim is transparently made in WP 530 and is a regular theme for the late published works. In addition to the sections of *Beyond* referenced above, see TI-III ('"Reason" in Philosophy') and TI-IV ('How the Real World at Last Became a Myth').

[129] See TI-III 2, 3 and 5 notably; see also WP 580–583, among many others.

it is in itself', then indeed truth as correspondence to the latter is out of reach.[130] For Nietzsche it was not so much that there is no absolute truth because there is no secure and firm bedrock available to human cognition. It was not so much that trying to establish truth on a concept unthinkable (yet said to be 'intelligible') by construction is absurd. It was primarily that, for Nietzsche, such an attempt backfired as nihilism, as a throwing away of the baby with the bathwater. Truth as an objective value is not only civilisation-destructive; it is also self-destructive. A will to a Platonic truth is for him bound to destroy everything in its frenzied quest for its foundations, dislodging and annihilating every possible belief, including that in the very existence of truth.[131]

In countless variations, Nietzsche asked why truth is so ardently desired. Knowledge, logic and reason are only human tools,[132] mere means to serve human ends.[133] For Nietzsche, so is truth, for truth is an expedient, utilitarian process.[134] Calling truth an 'error' is then beside the point: to speak anachronistically in Ryle's terms, such a qualification betrays a 'category mistake'. A tool or process fulfils its intended use or it does not, depending on the circumstances and the objective pursued. Truth is no more an error than it is a truth; for Nietzsche, truth is not an epistemological concept and is to be dissociated from knowledge.[135] Truth is not a value, nor is it the bearer of value, but knowledge can be valuable. Another argument of Nietzsche's is that truth is not to be confused with the nature of experience itself, to which it is not applicable.[136] Experience is neither true nor false: it simply *is* but must be interpreted.[137] Reason is a poor guide in this enterprise because

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[130] Stack (1983, 222).

[131] Heller (1988, 6).

[132] BGE 191; see also the first lines of the late WP 584 ('the aberration of philosophy is that, instead of seeing in logic and the categories of reason means towards the adjustment of the world for utilitarian ends'); WP 480: 'knowledge is a tool of power'; WP 494: 'it is improbable that our 'knowledge' should extend further than is strictly necessary for the preservation of life'. See also WP 492.

[133] GS 112 develops this line to science itself.

[134] WP 552: '"Truth" is therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered – but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process'. WP 584: 'The "criterion for truth" was in fact merely the biological utility of such a system of systematic falsification; [...] The means were misunderstood as measures of value'. This anthropomorphic and utilitarian reading of Nietzsche's epistemology is detailed in Stack (1983, 112ff).

[135] Boyer (1991, 19).

[136] Nietzsche would thus presumably not accept truth as correspondence defined in a Humean sense; i.e., as correspondence to sense data.

[137] TI-III 2, 3. See also WP 625: 'The concept "truth" is nonsensical. The entire domain of "true-false" applies only to relations, not to an "in-itself"'.

language (through which reason is exercised) adds abstract references and assumptions because of its reliance on universals.[138]

If Nietzsche had written in the terms employed above, the current controversies about his texts on truth would have little reason to exist. An important feature of Nietzsche's writings is that they do not delineate clearly between knowledge and truth; the two notions constantly overlap in his works. In many instances, when Nietzsche wrote 'truth', he meant 'knowledge'. This confusion makes his texts resistant to definitive exposition because his critique of epistemology amounts to precisely the idea that one must be differentiated from the other. On the one hand, one of Nietzsche's central contentions is that knowledge can be obtained independently of the traditional conception of truth; on the other hand, many of his texts ignore this distinction altogether, using the two terms interchangeably. The current controversies find their origins in Nietzsche's ambiguous texts.[139] Beyond this frustrating lack of coherence, however, it is patent that Nietzsche's critique of truth was mostly intended to end a long period of philosophical self-deception. When Nietzsche wrote that 'truth is an error', he coined intentionally a catchy but knowingly self-contradicting expression with which he hoped to shock his contemporaries.[140] He took them to be mired in conceptual confusions that he tried to make even more visible, irrespective of the self-refutation problem and the first-level tensions with his own philosophical practice that his critique of truth generates. Self-refutation was for Nietzsche as evident as it was irrelevant; he was aware of it but remained thoroughly, if cynically, unconcerned. Philosophical rigour gave way to rhetorical ardour.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the foregoing considerations help make sense of sections 21 and 22 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, otherwise notable for their extreme density, in which Nietzsche argues that the 'laws of physics' are not to be found in nature: they are fictions built on the no less fictitious and fabricated notions of 'cause' and 'effect'. They find their justification as power tools: they are interpretations and descriptions of the phenomena about which they are proposed and which they seek to make predictable. Plato equated truth with virtue; Nietzsche, like Bacon before him, equated truth

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[138] A claim made in TI-III 5, if not in these terms.

[139] Anderson (2005, 186).

[140] Poellner (2007, 2; see also 137–138) calls this claim an example of 'Nietzsche's provocative and rhetorically overstated paradoxes'. A century after it was first published, its impact on commentators had not diminished: 'Nietzsche's way with the implications of this [conviction] is at each stage the cavalier one of putting forward solutions which are really problems' (Magee 1987, 275).

with power over nature. His conception of truth cannot be dissociated from that of power.[141] Nietzsche's truth is gradable:[142] the more accurate the prediction, the truer it is because the more power is conferred upon him who utters it. Knowledge is a fixing, a simplifying of a world in becoming,[143] while 'interpretation itself is a form of the will to power'.[144] Truth is part of the toolbox deployed in this continuous attempt at controlling the world: its purpose is to rank-order descriptions of the world based on their descriptive, that is to say predictive, power. In contradiction to his contempt for the utilitarian moralists,[145] Nietzsche's is a protopragmatic, Sophist-inspired approach to truth.[146] Moreover, truth 'is a word for the "will to power"' and 'will to truth is – will to power'[147] even if the will to truth is a weak sort of will to power, that used by the impotent ones.[148] Power is proficiency[149] and so is knowledge: 'knowledge works as a *tool* of power'.[150] Nietzsche's is a 'naturalised epistemology'[151] at the service of life, for knowledge is a natural expression of will to power.[152] As section

[141] WP 616 puts this line very succinctly: 'that previous interpretations have been perspective valuations by virtue of which we can survive in life, i.e., in the will to power, for the growth of power [...] this idea permeates my writings'. The entire 1886 preface to *The Gay Science* can be read as a development of this general theme, which is also found in numerous posthumous fragments, such as WP 534, WP 584, WLN 43[1], WP 142, WP 614. See also WP 589 and 590 for early and undeveloped forms of this line of thinking.

[142] See BGE 34.

[143] A regular theme in the published and unpublished texts; see, e.g., HH-I 19, GS 112, BGE 230, TI-III; see also WP 538, 552, 580.

[144] WP 556.

[145] Partly because of this tension, Poellner considers Nietzsche's position with regard to utilitarianism one of his 'weakest critical strategies' (Poellner 2007, 18).

[146] For discussions on the Sophists' influence on Nietzsche, see Stack (1983, 144ff); Leiter (2003, 39ff).

[147] WP 552 and BGE 211.

[148] WP 585.

[149] GS 110 is a long development on this theme.

[150] WP 480; emphasis in original.

[151] Poellner (2007, 138ff). Poellner further argues that Nietzsche's epistemology can be qualified as evolutionary in the sense that it is rooted in the morphology (the sense apparatus and its evolving limitations) of the subject of knowledge and in the biological utility of this knowledge to the subject.

[152] WP 608.

22 of *Beyond* shows, Nietzsche, calling himself an 'interpreter' (just like the scientists he derided but with whom he admitted to sharing the same explanatory objective), is unconcerned by, yet aware of, the self-serving and self-contradicting aspects of his position. Protopragmatism takes precedence over philosophical coherence.

In summary, to fight the ascetic ideal and its perceived dangers, Nietzsche proposed in *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals* naturalistic conceptions, inspired by the epic cycle, of ethics and epistemology built upon his concept of will to power. In his view, actions are to be morally evaluated on the direction of will to power they exhibit, with positive qualifications directed to actions affirming life and negative ones to those negating it. Simultaneously, the descriptive and predictive use of expressions of will to power was Nietzsche's anti-ascetic epistemological foundation: the more power a statement about the world yields, the truer it is. Obvious self-referencing problems were of no relevance for Nietzsche. Despite his claims that he was not, nor wanted to be, a system thinker, within his perspective ethics and epistemology were closely related yet neatly delineated along two distinct dimensions of will to power: direction and intensity. One cannot but grant Nietzsche some overall coherence. Yet it is precisely when one attempts to bring more firmly together the pieces of Nietzsche's anti-ascetic solution that serious issues make themselves apparent.

6. The parallels between Nietzsche's 'master' morality and the moral code exemplified in the *Iliad* have been briefly mentioned: both equate 'good' with 'noble', 'strong' and 'proud', both value above all the powerful individual who conceives of himself as belonging to a well-delineated social group.[153] Importantly, however, in Homer's poems, if one's moral distinction is achieved through superior performance, this performance is to be achieved within the strict limits of the role defined by one's birth and environment. Nietzsche acknowledged the first part of the above proposition[154] but remained oblivious to its qualification. In this oversight lies a tension that is fatal to his anti-ascetic edifice.

In Homeric societies, the moral worth of an individual depends on how his peers perceive him.[155] It does not rest, as Nietzsche would have liked his readers to believe, with the individual himself. The heroic

[153] The oft-quoted passages of the *Iliad* supporting this reading are XI 782–784 and VI 206–210.

[154] Z-I 15: 'You should always be first and outrival all others [...] this precept made the soul of a Greek tremble: in following it he followed his path to greatness'.

[155] Long (1970, 126); Spillane (2007, 19–20).

characters survive only by their immersion in a web of social obligations, which they have no choice but to accept if they are to exist at all. Homer had no word for the self.[156] He could not conceive of his heroes striving towards self-affirmation, as modern heroism demands; social affirmation is the only possible objective. As Nietzsche knew, the Homeric hero does not, indeed cannot, aim at overcoming his social condition or the established social order because he exists only through and because of it.[157] Changing society would mean for Homer's characters throwing away the performance standards that define their existence. They exist only insofar as they achieve what their peers expect them to achieve; turning against the social order brings about infamy, exclusion and death. The philologist Nietzsche did not ignore these differences between ancient and modern heroism and pressed against Christianity that the individual as individual is a moral and grammatical concept, not an empirical one.[158] Accepting such a concept as a basis for ethics only begs the question of its moral justification, a question to which Homeric and Christian ethics provide mutually excluding answers. The former's is anchored in the group, the latter's in the individual taken in isolation, sole bearer of ultimate moral responsibility before God. Nietzsche knew of this opposition and commented upon it in *Beyond* and in the *Genealogy*.[159] His philological rigour was selective, however, for he stated, in plain contradiction to Homer's texts and his own reading of them:

> the noble type of person feels *himself* as determining values – he does not need approval, [...] he *creates values*. [He] reveres the power in himself, and also his power over himself.[160]

As MacIntyre critically comments and as Thiele notes, 'the distinction between Nietzschean and classical heroism is precisely the radical autonomy of the modern individual. [Nietzsche's hero] speaks only for himself'.[161] Nietzsche's version of heroism relies on the individual's ability to invent, by himself and perhaps only for himself, new moral

[156] See Snell (1982, 8–14), for a detailed discussion of this point.
[157] WP 782, 783. For a broader discussion on this aspect of ancient heroism, see MacIntyre (2008, 126ff).
[158] In BGE 12 and 17 most notably (see also BGE-Preface).
[159] See BGE 260 and GM-I, §§5–7.
[160] BGE 260; emphasis in original. See also AC 11.
[161] Thiele (1990, 42); on this theme, see also Ferry and Renaut (1991b). For MacIntyre's critique, see, e.g., 2008, 129, 257–258.

values. This vision lands Nietzsche into a proto-existentialistic outlook that is irreconcilable with that of ancient heroism since it conceives of the individual as free to reject what the established social order imposes and values. Nietzsche's obsessive extolling of the autonomous and value-creating individual is a sure sign of his underlying romantic vision of man as gifted with the power to endow the world with form and personal values. Moreover, by framing power and self-reliance in subjective and arbitrary terms, Nietzsche placed his ideal within the reach of any self-deluded individual. His mythologised ancient heroism is a romanticised one, distorted and belittled. In the harsh terms he employed in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, one is tempted to qualify it as 'ancient heroism for the people'.

In Nietzsche's outline, the true difference between masters and slaves (and between their moralities) is no longer the direction of will to power that these individuals exhibit but the force or intensity of their will. Despite his contention, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that willing is a complex phenomenon comprising at least two components of opposing directions,[162] Nietzsche could not help observing in the next section that 'in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills'.[163] Even assuming that the will's strength is assessed pragmatically after the event, this conception cannot be reconciled with the dualistic one that was proposed a few lines before. This is the case because if intensity alone is sufficient to qualify and classify all exhibitions of willing, then will or will to power must be conceived as unitary.[164] Similar comments apply to later expressions such as 'undermin[ing] the will to power' and 'the will to power declines' found elsewhere,[165] all of which demand that will to power be thought of as one-dimensional and progressive. Nietzsche's frequent uses of terms like 'character' or 'spirit', said to be either 'strong' or 'weak', pertain to the same conception of man as reducible to and gradable along a single dimension.[166] Nietzsche's 'higher men', whom

[162] Expressed in BGE 20.

[163] BGE 21; emphases in original.

[164] Intensity demands measurability and implies that what is measured can be collapsed along the axis of measure, even if this axis can itself be decomposed along various subdimensions. E.g., measures of volumes are one-dimensional in the sense that they measure one single dimension or concept – in this instance, space. This is impossible if what is measured is characterised by two incompatible dimensions, e.g., volume *and* colour.

[165] TI-IX 20, 38; AC 17.

[166] See also WP 47, where the differences between psychological health and sickness are said to be 'only differences in degree' and not differences in essence.

he promoted as symbols of his new aristocracy, confirm this analysis. On the one hand, Nietzsche enlisted exceptional men – Goethe, Beethoven, Napoléon Bonaparte[167] (and possibly Julius Caesar, Cesare Borgia, Dante and Michelangelo)[168] – as examples of such great individuals. On the other hand, however, the criteria that Nietzsche provided to define his 'higher men' can be made to suit almost everyone. Among other characteristics, the higher men are described as readily accepting responsibilities and solitude when required,[169] as exhibiting 'the passion of their tremendous will',[170] as setting the scale of newly discovered (hence purely personal) values[171] and as affirming life through self-reverence.[172] Such criteria, unsurprisingly, allowed Nietzsche to see himself as representative of the higher type of men.[173] Even though he was adamant that Buddha, Schopenhauer and all 'pessimist moralists' after him did not fit into this category,[174] the reasons for such exclusions are unclear, for surely Buddha and Schopenhauer complied with all requirements in their own ways. Conversely, as Nietzsche admitted in posthumous notes, Beethoven, for all his 'higher man' attributes, belonged to the Romantics' camp.[175] Romanticism's vision of man gifted with an indomitable will irreducible and superior to reason matches Nietzsche's depiction of the higher type to perfection.

In a series of notes, initially penned in 1887 but revised the following year, attesting to the durable attention paid to their subject matter, Nietzsche tried to exonerate himself from the charge of transforming Homer's hero into the 'good man' of the herd ethics, mild and submissive. In words that Max Stirner would have endorsed, he observed:

> True heroism consists, in *not* fighting under the banner of sacrifice, devotion, disinterestedness, but in *not fighting at all* – 'This is what *I* am; this is what *I* want: – *you* can go to hell!'[176]

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167 BGE 199.
168 BGE 197; BGE 200; WP 1018.
169 TI-IX 49; BGE 26 and 212.
170 GS 290.
171 GS 55.
172 BGE 287.
173 As he tried to show in EH-I 2.
174 BGE 56.
175 WP 106 and 838.
176 WP 349; emphases in original. See also WP 782 and 784.

Heroism is the proving ground of the higher men because – or so Nietzsche would have his readers believe – it demands standing against the crowd and refusing to bow before its demands. This is, again, a complete reversal of the ethical model obeyed by Homer's characters, for which rejection of social standards is equivalent to suicide. Nietzschean heroism, despite Nietzsche's statements to the contrary,[177] is deeply marked by individualism, its ethical aspects included. Thiele labels this aspect of Nietzsche's thought 'heroic individualism'.[178] Although such a qualification is legitimate in light of the foregoing, 'heroic individualism' is either a contradiction in terms (if 'heroic' is meant to refer to Homer's poems) or a pleonastic expression (if the same terms are interpreted from a romantic perspective). Similar comments can be extended to Georg Brandes's coinage 'aristocratic radicalism' (a qualification Nietzsche enthusiastically endorsed as an overall description of his late philosophy) if by this expression is meant 'radical individualistic aristocraticism'.[179] One cannot advocate aristocraticism and radical individualism at the same time. Aristocracy, is the cultivation of a difference (real or imagined), before being a status. The master demands the existence of a slave to exist as a master and vice-versa. A radical individualist refuses to enter into any sort of sustained relationship, even of domination, however. He recognises no peers and is indifferent to his environment. At best, he considers others as his property, as useful objects; Max Stirner would have dismissed Brandes's qualifier.

The roots of this tension extend beyond Nietzsche's works. Romanticism was a reaction to the rise of scientism, the progressive industrialisation of society and its accompanying increasing alienation of man from nature, all features analysed as flowing from the Enlightenment's infatuation with reason. Nietzsche, with his lifelong aversion to what he called in his early years the Socratic and in his later ones the ascetic, was indebted to that tradition. On this account as on many others, Nietzsche remained a thinker of his time. Despite his strident attacks on romantic authors like Wagner and Schopenhauer, he shared with them a visceral contempt for egalitarianism, the mechanisation and the massification of culture of European societies, which were in his lifetime becoming democracies.[180] He saw these features as demeaning and degrading and

[177] Cf. WP 287: 'My philosophy aims [...] not at an individualistic morality'.
[178] Thiele 1990; the expression is not found in Nietzsche's texts.
[179] Cate (2005, 510–511).
[180] GM-III 18.

longed for an alternative model of development, a new cultural basis.[181] Like that of some of his contemporaries,[182] however, Nietzsche's admiration for ancient Greece's world view and values remained at bottom an irrational call to return to a mythologised civilisation which had little to do with the historical one. Despite all its supposed merits, as Nietzsche knew only too well,[183] the Greece of Athens and Sparta started its decline well before Christianity appeared, even if some of its features survived through the Roman Empire. Christianity itself is not incompatible with imperial rule, as the Eastern Roman Empire demonstrated until the fifteenth century.[184] Although avowedly inspired by the heroic tradition, Nietzsche's moral ideal was thus romantic in form and in content. In one of his notes written in 1885, Nietzsche duly observed, virtually admitting his own romanticism, that

> the most fundamental form of *romanticism* [...] there has ever been [is] the longing for the best that never existed. One is no longer at home anywhere; at last one longs back for that place in which alone one can be at home, because it is the only place in which one would want to be at home: the *Greek* world![185]

More generally, Nietzsche was well aware of the difficulties there are in using ancient heroism as a cultural reference. In his first book, he already noted the illusions entertained by anyone referring to Homer's characters as existential models:

> At the Apollonian stage of development, the 'will' longs so vehemently for this existence [under the gaze of gods], the Homeric man feels himself so completely at one with it [...]. Here we should note that this harmony which is contemplated with such longing by modern man, in fact, this oneness of man with nature (for which Schiller introduced the technical term 'naive'), is by

[181] As evidenced, e.g., in GM-III 9 and TI-IX 37.

[182] Most particularly Hölderlin's, about whom Nietzsche had rare but only positive comments (U-I 2 and HH-I 259); for the influence of Hölderlin on Nietzsche, see Brobjer (2001).

[183] WP 1042.

[184] Nietzsche was not the first author to conveniently pass over this fact in silence; the Eastern Roman Empire is barely mentioned in Machiavelli's *Discourses* (only one mention in the preface to Book II) and receives no attention at all in *The Prince*. As is the case with the Florentine Secretary, with Nietzsche rhetoric takes precedence over historical accuracy.

[185] WP 419; emphases in original. A very similar and equally telling admission is made in WP 463, in which Nietzsche describes his position as having

> no means a simple condition that comes into being naturally and as inevitably. [...] Only a romantic age could believe this, an age which conceived of the artist in terms of Rousseau's *Emile* and imagined that in Homer it had found such an artist Emile, reared at the bosom of nature.[186]

For all that, Nietzsche, like Rousseau, still believed that cultural, ethical and social progress demanded a return to an origin portrayed as opposing his contemporaries' vision. This general inclination is particularly noticeable in section 21 of *The Gay Science*, in which Nietzsche argued that such Christian virtues as obedience, chastity and piety are harmful to man. They transform the noble autonomous individual into a member of the herd: Christianity dehumanises because it deprives man of his original, autonomous qualities. In other words, Western society corrupts and transforms 'natural man' into the 'last man'. Rousseau's influence is plain to see. Elsewhere, he lamented:

> In place of the 'natural man' of Rousseau, the nineteenth century has discovered a *truer image* of 'man' [...] What one has not had the courage for is to call *this* 'man in himself' good and to see in him the guarantee of the future. [...] [I]n this, one is still subject to the Christian ideal and takes *its* side against paganism, also against the Renaissance concept of *virtù*.[187]

Nietzsche presented heroism as superior to romanticism, yet his 'hero' is another version of Rousseau's 'natural man': a rhetorical, mythological character that never existed. This was, however, an impossible admission for the late Nietzsche, who indignantly dismissed romanticism. When one finds him in *Twilight* almost compulsively deriding Rousseau's literary creation,[188] one cannot help wondering if this rhetoric was not offered as a smokescreen between Rousseau's alleged archetypal man and Nietzsche's no less unbelievable 'blond beast'.[189]

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evolved from Schopenhauer (as a precursor to his ideas) to 'the Greeks and their origins'.

[186] BT 3. Kaufmann's translations have 'Apollinian', which, as Young points out, has become pervasive in the secondary literature even if incorrect (Young 1996, 27).

[187] WP 1017; emphases in original.

[188] Described directly and indirectly as 'dirty' (TI-IX 1), 'false', 'fustian', 'vulgar', 'artificial' (TI-IX 6) and as an 'idiocy' and 'superstition' (HH-1 463).

[189] GM-I 11.

Nietzsche was not blind to these contradictory strands within his thought and was conscious of his romantic penchant, of which his disdain of arguments and reliance on intuition rather than logic are other reliable signs. In November 1887, in a letter to his friend Peter Gast,[190] he admitted he would be in good company among contemporaries, some of them criticised elsewhere for their decadence and romanticism.[191] This was a logical admission for someone who had earlier published from the perspective of a lonely 'wanderer' – a romantic literary figure if there ever was one.[192] A few months later, in his autobiography, Nietzsche wrote, no doubt measuring the depth of the contradictions he tried to overcome: 'Apart from the fact that I am a decadent, I am also the opposite'.[193] Elsewhere, still in 1888: 'I am as just a child of my age as Wagner – i.e., I am a decadent!'[194] Nietzsche's portrait of the Romantic author, 'a man of strong words and attitudes, a rhetorician from *necessity*, continually agitated by the desire for a strong faith *and* the feeling of incapacity for it',[195] thus looks like a self-portrait. So does the character or the 'young romantic' with whom Nietzsche fictitiously dialogued in his futile efforts to strip *The Birth of Tragedy* of its unmistakably romantic tenets,[196] efforts that an otherwise admiring commentator could not but call 'hypocritical'.[197]

Beyond Nietzsche's attempts at covering up the rather obvious, however, there remain serious difficulties. For if it is now the intensity of will to power which is the basis for differentiating people and establishing moral values, if 'there is nothing to life that has value, except the degree of power',[198] then Nietzsche's preferred moral scale is de facto aligned with his epistemological one. This line of thought, embryonic in *Beyond Good and Evil*, makes a brief but notable appearance in the second section of *The Anti-Christ* and is most visible in the notes collated in the first book of *The Will to Power*. It also signals Nietzsche's deepest problems with his concept of will to power as a new foundation for anti-ascetic ethics and epistemology. For on the one hand, Nietzsche

[190] Partially reproduced in Kaufmann (1968, 51) (footnote to WP 82).
[191] See, e.g., BGE 48; TI-IX 2, 3, 6.
[192] The second part of vol. II of *Human, All Too Human* was first published in 1880.
[193] Opening sentence of EH-I 2.
[194] CW-Preface.
[195] TI-IX 12; emphases in original.
[196] BT-Attempt 7.
[197] Sloterdijk (1989, 9).
[198] WP 55.

argued that what increases power is what is true; on the other hand, he held that what increases power is what is good. In other words, what is true is what is good: truthfulness is goodness or, again, truth is a value. Precisely the charge that the late Nietzsche so vociferously hurled at the worshippers of the ascetic ideal.

7. This equation of the true with the good, paradoxical as it is within the context of Nietzsche's critique of the ascetic ideal, is intrinsic to the Homeric world view that Nietzsche was so keen to embrace. As MacIntyre argues, in heroic societies 'evaluative questions *are* questions of social fact. [...] Homer speaks of *knowledge* of what to do and how to judge'.[199] Moral enquiries can be addressed through empirical methods since the good is ascertainable with certainty; failure, whatever the reasons, is a moral error. Nietzsche acknowledged as much when he wrote, in *Twilight*: 'every error, of whatever kind, is a consequence of degeneration of instinct, disgregation of will: one has thereby virtually defined the *bad*'.[200] His redefinition of personal responsibility,[201] extended to whatever one does, knowingly or not, voluntarily or not, is in strict keeping with this perspective, since for Homer's characters there is no difference between 'is' and 'ought', the latter being altogether absent in the poems.[202] In this outlook, moral statements are amenable to truth status; 'true' and 'good' are two sides of the same coin and both are equivalent to 'powerful'. Nietzsche was aware of this conflation in the epic poems, for in the first essay of the *Genealogy*, he had his master individuals describing themselves not only as the good, the noble or the 'powerful' ones but also as 'the truthful' ones.[203] These contentions are not by themselves ascetic, unless one is ready to consider that ancient heroism itself is, but they become so in Nietzsche's writings. This is so because, in his late thought, power is combined with the conception of will. A return to the main arguments proposed in *On the Genealogy of Morals* will show this.

In the first essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche made plain that for him the alternative to the Christian slave morality was ancient heroism's power-based ethics according to which the good is a combination of physical prowess and strict adherence to role-based social standards. In such a society, human life is inescapably tragic. Death is the only possible

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[199] MacIntyre (2008, 123); emphases in original.
[200] TI-VI 2; emphasis in original.
[201] Made in GM-II 2.
[202] MacIntyre (2000, 7); see also MacIntyre (2008, 122).
[203] GM-I 5.

outcome:[204] one overpowers until one is eventually overpowered.[205] The only choice left to the individual is either to embrace his tragic fate and seek fame through this acceptance or to refuse it and live a life dominated by those who accept the power-based world view. It is precisely upon this choice that Nietzsche based his dichotomy between the master and herd moralities and explained the latter as an offspring of the former (the herd ethics is said to have come into being through a 'revolt in morals'; that is, *after* the master morality). At this point though, Nietzsche has not yet provided arguments to the effect that the Homeric world view is the superior one. In the second essay, Nietzsche averred that life, including human life, is in essence will to power.[206] On the surface, this conception makes the case for the superiority of the masters' moral values, since these appear to reflect more accurately the principle driving human life. Upon reflection, though, the claim that life is will to power undermines Nietzsche's position: if life really is about constantly pursuing power, how is it possible that men came to reject the Homeric world view since doing so goes so visibly against the basic principle that underlines their existence? More puzzling still, how is it possible that the masters themselves finally rejected their initial values and fell for their slaves' morality, which, as Nietzsche tirelessly lamented, has now become so pervasive and dominant? In other words, for his history of morals to pass minimum completion and consistency tests, Nietzsche must explain 'the monstrosity of [the ascetic ideal's] power' in terms compatible with will to power.[207] Answering this puzzle means in effect unifying the three essays, a task with which Nietzsche did not concern himself. Pulling the jigsaw puzzle together is not only relatively straightforward but also very instructive. It goes a long way towards understanding why Nietzsche could not openly do it.

Nietzsche continued his account (second and third essay) by contending that will to power is experienced as instinct for freedom.[208] According to him, this instinct develops into psychological travails when one cannot express one's power or is unable to enjoy the feelings of freedom deriving from its natural expression, as is the case when one is physically oppressed.[209] One then acquires 'bad conscience': one suffers from a perceived purposelessness of existence compounded by a perceived meaninglessness of this suffering. The ascetic ideal, initially

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[204] As Achilles states plainly to Lycaon in the *Iliad*, book XXI.
[205] A perspective extolled in BGE 259.
[206] GM-II 12; see Z-II 12.
[207] GM-III 23.
[208] GM-II 18; see also WP 784: 'one desires freedom so long as one does not possess power'.
[209] GM-II 17.

developed by the Jews (slaves of the Egyptians) and further refined by early Christians (slaves of the Romans), plugged that void: it proposed purpose and thus meaning in the form of values and via the notion of absolute truth, all concepts posited as other-worldly entities dressed up as ultimate value objectives. Although enslaved, man could be saved: he had something to will which was distinct from (and deemed superior to) the physical power that eluded him. This novel existential goal generated a new kind of psychological suffering, however, for the ascetic objects of willing are by construction beyond earthly life and impossibly demanding. This feature, in turn, ensured that man thought of himself as guilty by nature, as not born worthy of these objectives. This guilt was explained as punishment for some unspeakable offense inseparable from man's coming into being, reinforcing by the same token the attractiveness of the untarnished objectives of the ascetic ideal. The Romans themselves suffered from the meaninglessness of their existence. This existential angst grew into a pervasive 'suicidal nihilism' and made them fall, in the end, for the ascetic ideal.[210] They, too, were looking for a purpose and a way of discharging their willing: just like their slaves, they had 'rather will[ed] nothingness than not will[ed]' at all.[211]

Absent from the concluding pages and making only brief appearances in the work as a whole, the concept of will to power, introduced in the central section of the central essay, is offered as the natural underpinning of the entire account. It is the link between Nietzsche's explanations for the advent of the slavish Christian morals, the phenomenon of bad conscience and the strength of the ascetic ideal. If men had not been constantly aspiring to a psychological substitute when freedom or physical power was out of reach, then, so Nietzsche argued, the slaves would not have inverted the master moral values. They would not have turned inwards their natural but frustrated cruelty and would not have contracted the 'disease' of bad conscience. Nor would they have created the ascetic ideal and finally would not have, with the active contribution of the ascetic priests, seduced their masters into believing in it, for these masters were equally led astray by a will to power which must discharge itself constantly. This constant willing to power is offered both as the origin of the ascetic ideal and as the source of its irresistible attractiveness to all men, slaves as well as masters.[212]

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[210] GM-III 28.

[211] GM-III 28, emphasised again in EH-GM. See also GM-III 14, where nothingness and nihilism are presented as what happens when the strong man falls victim to the weak one (cf. the 'ultimate man' of *Zarathustra*'s Prologue).

[212] See WP 774 (also WP 585 A). Leiter (2003, 255–263), proposes an extended version of this argument.

Such is the main natural-historical thesis that Nietzsche would like the *Genealogy*'s readers to accept. It is, however, highly implausible. The strongest reasons for rejecting it come from Nietzsche's own arguments and validity criteria. To start with, the overall circularity of the account is difficult to overlook. The Christian herd morality is supposed to be the product of a 'slaves' revolt in (their masters') morals', yet to accept being a slave, one must first refuse the masters' world view. One must already have subscribed to some sort of herd ethics, however undeveloped, before accepting a slave's life. It is difficult to conceive, for instance, of the warriors of the *Iliad* agreeing to be captured alive and reduced to slavery; death in combat is for them the only acceptable outcome of defeat. This existential stance is the foremost difference, so important for Nietzsche, between the warriors and their slaves. In other words, Nietzsche's proposed explanation for the birth of the herd ethics relies on its prior existence. The only way this circularity can be broken is to accept that the two types of moralities pre-existed Nietzsche's account.[213] This also means that the 'active' versus 'reactive' dichotomy between the two ethics on which Nietzsche insisted has to be abandoned altogether, for it is now unclear which morality reacted more to the existence of the other. They must have developed independently of or in opposition to one another and each as actively as the other: the inversion of moral values upon which Nietzsche was so insistent cannot mark the birth of the Christian ethics.

The *Genealogy*'s Homeric master is a man to whom are attributed traits like aggressiveness, selfishness, natural pride and dignity, lust for power and freedom, simple pleasures, all allegedly characteristic of a golden age free of the stifling moral constraints of Christianity and its values. As MacIntyre points out,[214] however, the traits Nietzsche praised and set as examples make sense only in the context of a given social order, that of those employing them, which is exterior and usually posterior to the social context that is referred to and in which they necessarily had a different meaning. It is unlikely that Nietzsche's noble individual could have portrayed himself positively through the words Nietzsche employed. This 'master' individual was indeed himself caught in a web of relationships which by necessity put the emphasis on social cohesion

[213] Staten (2006, 575–576).
[214] MacIntyre (2000, 17–18).

that attributes such as 'selfishness', 'unconstrained freedom' and the like preclude or are bound to weaken. Assuming improbably that Nietzsche's character could truly depict himself through these qualifiers, the resulting society would have been unstable and fragile.

In other words, if one morality really evolved out of the other, the sequence of this evolution is likely to have been the converse of what Nietzsche proposed. 'Historical spirit',[215] one of the litmus tests that Nietzsche argued must be used in explorations into the development of morals, does not support his account. The *Genealogy* fails when measured by the standards that its author set himself.[216]

The second prominent issue with Nietzsche's thesis is that it is unclear why and how 'will to nothingness' could be a viable alternative to 'will to power'. Even if cleverly disguised in the attractive outfits of the ascetic ideal by the works and tricks (discussed in great detail in the third essay) of the ascetic priests, one struggles to see how nothingness could be a credible substitute for power or even for the mere psychological feeling of power. For even if the ascetic priests themselves benefit from the ideals they promote and derive from them social advantages as well as psychological domination over the rest of the herd, the ethics of submissiveness and altruism composed by the Christian values is transparent enough. However one assesses Christ's Sermon on the Mount, one has to grant that its content is quite plain. Beyond the sermon itself, Christianity's low regard for the body and earthly life can at most be considered an open secret.[217] Nietzsche admitted as much in a later work, almost apologising for pointing out the tension between everyday practice and Christian prescription:

> *All* the concepts of the Church are recognised for what they are: the most malicious false-coinage there is for the purpose of *disvaluing* nature and natural values [...]. Everyone knows this: *and everyone none the less remains unchanged*. [...] The practice of every hour, every instinct, every valuation which leads to *action* is today anti-Christian: what a *monster of falsity* modern man must be that he is none the less not ashamed to be called a Christian![218]

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[215] GM-I 2.

[216] Brandhorst (2010, 22). Brandhorst continues his study by arguing that other aspects of Nietzsche's account have some credibility and that features of the 'English' psychology that Nietzsche derided are indeed implausible.

[217] 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Matthew 26:41).

[218] AC 38; emphases in original.

Moreover, if it is really the case that man's life, like that of any living creature, is will to power, then the distance, that Nietzsche was elsewhere so keen to demonstrate, between slaves' and masters' ethics collapses. In the end, all define their respective ideals in the same self-centred terms. This point has long been made by Georg Simmel, who noted that Nietzsche's masters' moral values and 'those of Christianity could be subsumed under the same standards [...] both Nietzsche's thought [his master morality] and Christian belief are exclusively concerned with the quality and structure of individual being'.[219] Beyond their first-level differences, Nietzsche's slaves' and masters' ethics share fundamental characteristics: they strive to confirm and elevate the status of the individual abiding to them and both moralities posit that the value of the moral agent rests in his inner qualities. Nietzsche pressed against the herd ethics that it conceived of itself as the only reference against which other ethics should be evaluated,[220] yet the masters' mode of evaluation can be described as equally self-serving: whatever the masters do is good, by definition. For the masters as much as for the slaves, the good ones are the masters or the slaves themselves. Both forms of will to power are as active as they are reactive.[221]

Nietzsche indicted the Christian ethics for relying on the notion of transcendental goodness towards which one must strive unconditionally, yet his own definition of the good as 'expressions of will to power which further life' (even if purely according to one's personal evaluation) is no less put forward as a general rule. Inexorably, an ethics which bases itself upon the idea that life is will to power is bound to consider power not a mere social objective (as was the case for ancient heroism) but, crucially, a self-standing, other-worldly value.[222] Power is essentialised if it is sought after for its own sake, as a principle not to be questioned because it is said to pertain to the essence of life. Behind Nietzsche's yes-saying approach to life and conception of 'higher men' as embodiment of that approach lurks a universal definition of goodness (as strong, active or positive, life-affirming will to power) against which Nietzsche argued often and unambiguously.[223]

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[219] Simmel (1991, 140).

[220] BGE 202: 'Stubbornly and relentlessly it says, "I am Morality itself, and nothing else is!"'

[221] See Porter (2009, 145), for a recent discussion on this point.

[222] Reginster notes this issue, yet the extent to which his own definition of power as 'overcoming resistance' satisfactorily addresses it is unclear (cf. Reginster 2006, 129, 143).

[223] Young (2007, 190ff) relies precisely on this point to argue that Nietzsche cannot be read as an extreme individualist, since the 'good' he promoted is accessible to everyone and (for Young) not intrinsically socially destructive.

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche did not elaborate on the reasons why the master-type individuals became victims of the ascetic ideal nor explained why a hierarchy based on will to power, outlined in *Beyond Good and Evil*, could be a way to fight this ideal. One can presume with a reasonable degree of confidence that this is the case because he came to realise that doing so would have revealed deep-seated contradictions damaging to his critiques of Christianity. The reasons for such an opinion are manyfold.

One can first note that Nietzsche switched to and from 'will' and 'will to power' throughout the second and third essay, with a marked preference for the former, as if to weaken the forceful tone with which the concept is introduced.[224] Forgetting his contention that genuine psychology was examination of the evolution of will to power,[225] Nietzsche granted his concept a very limited role in the *Genealogy*, a work that he still considered to contain 'decisive preliminary studies by a psychologist' less than two years later.[226] The notable absence of the concept is also discernible in the overall logic of the *Genealogy*'s argument. As Nietzsche lamented, the herd has triumphed. If in this struggle the herd had really been animated by a stronger will to power, then Nietzsche would have had no objective reason to regret its outcome. That he did is evidence that he evaluated the slaves' revolt from another perspective, a perspective not based on the concept of will to power and about which he preferred to remain silent.

What makes this observation all the more probable is that, if Nietzsche backed away from a unifying theory of will to power in his published texts, he was less prudent in his posthumous notes, in which a link between the history of morals, ethical decadence and will to power is often attempted. The following is typical:

> The instinct of decadence which appears as will to power. [...] *General insight*: supreme values hitherto are a special case of the will to power; morality itself is a special case of immorality. [...] We have seen two

[224] The expression 'will to power' is mentioned (not including Nietzsche's reference to his upcoming book) in II 12 (twice), II 18, III 14, III 15, III 18 (thrice); note also 'power-will' used in GM-III 11. Uses of the expressions 'will' or 'will to' are too numerous to mention.

[225] BGE 23.

[226] Second-to-last sentence of EH-GM.

> 'wills to power' in conflict (in this special case: we had a principle, that of considering right those who hitherto succumbed, and wrong those who hitherto prevailed).[227]

More generally, Nietzsche never made explicit how the ascetic ideal could be fought against beyond his general resolve that life is to be affirmed and not denied. Instead of formulating an answer in the terms of his own novel conception, he fell back on considerations relying on 'will', a concept that he previously criticised unambiguously.[228] This backtracking is especially visible in the concluding section of the *Genealogy*, where one expects an argument piecing firmly together the themes advanced in the three essays yet in which will to power is conspicuously absent. Nietzsche's conclusion, beyond its rhetorical force, falls short of what the various claims, put forward in thick succession since the very first pages of the third essay, led the reader to anticipate. In his last section, Nietzsche repudiated his concept.

What makes this observation a virtual certainty is that, even if the concept of will to power is not to be given such a unifying role in the *Genealogy*, even if it is to be received as a mere psychological inclination and not as what human life is, Nietzsche would not be for all that out of trouble. If the concept of 'will to nothingness', as it is employed in the last sentence of the *Genealogy*, is not a version or derivative of will to power, then it must be referring to a more general form of will. 'Man would rather will nothingness than not will' must then be interpreted as leaving a margin for choice: man prefers to will nothingness but could do otherwise. This reading generates daunting tensions within Nietzsche's thought, as choice means free will and free will demands in turn an entity of which it is said to be an attribute. Similarly, qualifying the will as either strong or weak, as Nietzsche did in *Beyond*, can only drive him further away from Homer, for such a qualification generates a distance between man and behaviour, since the qualifier is not meant to apply to actions but to an alleged inner source. In both cases, man is fragmented in willer (said to be free) and willed (body), for Nietzsche *the* cardinal misconception at the root of religious asceticism.[229]

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[227] WP 401; emphases in original; see also WP 215, 216 or 585, all written or revised in 1887–1888, when the *Genealogy* was composed.

[228] See, e.g., GS 127 or BGE 19.

[229] WP 136: 'religion is the product of a doubt concerning the unity of the person'.

Beyond their differences, rationalism and empiricism are committed to the view that actuality can be known and studied and that the results of this study will never contradict themselves. Rational truth, just like its empirical counterpart, is unique, but errors are multiple. As Nietzsche critically commented, for some Enlightenment thinkers this inprinciple knowable actuality included ethical dimensions. Romanticism was an attempt to overcome the limitations of rationalism and empiricism that Hume's conclusions made all too apparent. The traditional questions which Kant placed at the heart of his 'critical' project, 'what is certain?', 'what can be known?' and 'how is one to live one's life', are dismissed for being irrelevant and leading to intractable problems. The new fundamental query is now 'what can be willed?' for willing is taken to be the content of the world, of life and of human existence. Actuality, including its ethical dimension, is created out of will, out of the act of willing. In the romantic vision, moral evaluations and queries pertaining to the make-up of actuality belong to the same plane. Answers to these queries, however, are not to be arrived at through traditional empirical or rational means, nor can they be entirely formulated in natural terms. Romanticism is thus ascetic in the sense Nietzsche attributed to the term; since it calls on super natural concepts. The late Nietzsche, through his attempt to redefine ethics and epistemology on will to power, belonged to the tradition he otherwise attacked.

Despite his conscious anti-ascetic naturalistic efforts, Nietzsche's embrace of the core tenets of the ascetic ideal was in the end unavoidable. Nietzsche's love affair with the Homeric poems, presumably rooted in his early philology, made him fall for the concept of power and its heroic equation with truth and goodness; his romanticism essentialised those notions, transforming them into other-worldly entities. The association, in Nietzsche's late texts, of romanticism with asceticism makes the case of his own asceticism only stronger. Nietzsche once defined the difference between romantic and Dionysian pessimism (he loathed the former but approved of the latter) as one of motives ('hunger' vs 'superabundance' or 'being' vs 'becoming').[230] This distinction, however, is a characteristically ascetic-Christian one. Homer's 'masters', as Nietzsche reminded his readers in the first essay of the *Genealogy*, had nothing to do with motives; only tangible results mattered to them. Despite his

[230] In GS 370.

imprecations to the contrary, Nietzsche's thought is romantic in form and in content.

8. The case for Nietzsche's asceticism has already been made and resisted. Clark, among those most vigorously opposing it, sees an ascetic Nietzsche as one who would conceive of truth as correspondence with the 'thing in itself', exactly what her reading of the late Nietzsche rejects.[231] Leiter agrees, arguing that the epistemology and the ethics that Nietzsche defended in his works are exclusively of the naturalistic, life-affirming type and cannot be of the life-denying sort typical of the ascetics.[232] Both authors deny that the late Nietzsche could endorse asceticism and romanticism because they see him as finally overcoming successfully, if at times confusedly, the tenets and objectives of the ascetic ideal.

Other commentators disagree: in a passing comment, Kaufmann appears to take Nietzsche's asceticism (as well as Nietzsche's realisation of it) for granted since he does not provide arguments to sustain his view.[233] Thiele notes that Nietzsche's scepticism and atheism, seemingly Christianity's antitheses, can equally be interpreted, as Nietzsche himself knew too well,[234] as 'the culmination of religious ideals, particularly the ideal of truth'.[235] Gillespie observes that the free spirit and gay scientist, the philosopher of the future that Nietzsche applauded in his middle period, shares with the ascetic saint the objective to elevate and liberate itself from contingencies, material for the saint, intellectual for the free spirit.[236] It also appears that Nietzsche, despite his vehement life-affirming stance, partook in the ascetic ideal through his lifelong insistence that only art can justify life and the world.[237] Since justification implies redemption, the premise must be that the world of everyday life

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[231] Clark (1990, 181).

[232] Leiter (2003, 279–280).

[233] See the long footnote in Kaufmann (1974a, 359); it is unfortunate that Kaufmann does not elaborate on the references he provides (to EH-I 8, II 9 and V 3) to back up his claims, for these texts are anything but self-explanatory with regard to the allegations made. Kaufmann's inclination for unsubstantiated footnotes is noted in Young (1996, 27).

[234] GM-III 27: 'Unconditional honest atheism (and it is the only air we breathe, we more spiritual men of this age!) is therefore not the antithesis of that [ascetic] ideal, as it appears to be; it is rather only one of the latest phases of its evolution'.

[235] Thiele (1990, 145).

[236] Gillespie (1995, 215).

[237] This claim, initially proposed in the *Birth of Tragedy* (§5), was never reneged by Nietzsche. It is indirectly endorsed in the 1886 preface to the 2nd edition of that work (see BT-Attempt 5) and in §73 of *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche used the statement in the first letter he wrote from Turin to his friend Köselitz in April 1888 as explanation for his lonely lifestyle (quoted in Chamberlain 1998, 30).

has no value.[238] In the end, as Fraser observes, it is thus not only the case that 'Nietzsche's [...] position is related to, and comes out of, the Christian tradition', but also that, through his early adoption of Silenus's saying,[239] 'he look[ed] to be more world-denying and life-hating than the most extreme Christian ascetic'.[240] If such is the case, Nietzsche's yes-saying stance was desperation disguised as forced gaiety.[241] Finally, it is not merely that Nietzsche's position with regard to the objectives of the ascetic ideal can be challenged; the way with which Nietzsche opposed them is also open to question. Thus, Roberts points out that Nietzsche's calls for self-overcoming, his celebration and sanctification of the 'pains of childbirth',[242] which are said to lead to Dionysian creation, can be analysed as ascetic in their inspiration.[243]

The debate, then, revolves around the possibility of conflating 'asceticism' in general with 'ascetic ideal' in Nietzsche's late texts. It is only if the two notions can be differentiated in his books, in opposition to what has been proposed here, that Nietzsche's thought can be rescued from glaring inconsistency. In that case, Nietzsche's works can be considered to express a form of asceticism, but of the kind he approved of in *Human, All Too Human* (that is, knowledge conducive), while still rejecting the Christian, life-denying ascetic ideal.[244] While there is evidence that, in the late works, 'asceticism' does not exactly overlap with 'ascetic ideal',[245] there are strong reasons to believe that Nietzsche remained a self-conscious representative of the asceticism he attacked. This is so because Nietzsche's philosophy is not immune to the indictment he pressed against the Enlightenment's thinkers and against Christianity in general. Just like his predecessors and contemporaries, Nietzsche was an intellectual who could not help seeing knowledge as a self-standing objective, as something valuable for its own sake. As such, Nietzsche's quest can only share in the pursuit of nihilism as he himself defined it,

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[238] Stack (1983, 302–333).

[239] The saying is found in BT 3: 'What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is – to die soon'.

[240] Fraser (2002, 67–68).

[241] Young (1996, 92).

[242] In TI-X 4.

[243] Roberts (1996, 416ff).

[244] On related considerations, Young (2007) argues that Nietzsche remained to the end faithful, beyond all his rhetoric, to the religious communitarianism perceptible in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

[245] Cf. Nietzsche's praise in GM-III 9 for 'a certain asceticism'; i.e., philosophical asceticism.

since it blurs, not only textually (as pointed out earlier) but also conceptually, the borders between truth and knowledge that he was elsewhere adamant to clarify.

Nietzsche was no doubt aware of these contradictions. He often noted in the *Nachlass* that he was a 'thoroughgoing nihilist'[246] and lucidly wrote in *The Gay Science* that he, too, was 'still pious':

> even we the seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is truth, that truth is divine.[247]

In *Beyond*, Nietzsche attracted his contemporaries' attention to the 'swamp of nothingness' that, in his eyes, lay underneath their understanding of truth; he urged them to find a more credible substitute to Kant-Baron Münchhausen's solution of pulling oneself up by the hair. Yet, in the *Genealogy*, he noted: 'it is precisely in their faith in truth that [the free spirits] are more rigid and unconditional than anyone. I know all this from too close perhaps'.[248] As he almost confessed it and despite his vociferous anti-Platonic rhetoric, Nietzsche still belonged to the ascetic tradition he attacked, if only because of his commitment to knowledge beyond the appearances.[249] His conception of truth as a tool to be put to the service of life, paradoxical in light of his anti-utilitarian stance, can then be analysed as an effort to rescue it from internal collapse, as yet again another attempt to conceive of it as a man-independent concept.[250]

It is one thing to highlight the shallowness and inconsistency of a theory and quite another to put forward one's own, one which does not suffer from the very same contradictions. Proposing will to power as universal life principle in *Zarathustra* and as general mechanism for the rise of the ascetic ideal in the *Genealogy* can be interpreted as a self-conscious ascetic project of a type that Plato himself would have

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[246] WP 25; see also WP-Preface 3 and 4, as well as WP 3, from which it follows that Nietzsche is a radical nihilist himself.

[247] GS 344; see also the end of GM-III 24.

[248] GM-III 24.

[249] The *Genealogy* opens with 'We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge' (GM-Preface 1).

[250] For Schacht, Nietzsche's epistemological critique still 'preserv[es] something of the basic idea underlying the correspondence account of truth' (Schacht 1985, 108).

endorsed. If anything, the character of Zarathustra is the most apparent embodiment of Nietzsche's ambivalence towards asceticism. After a long exile, Zarathustra is said to break his isolation to teach the village people and warn them of the arrival of the 'last man' that can only follow from Christianity.[251] True free spirit, Zarathustra is Nietzsche's conception of the 'man of the future', 'Antichrist and anti-nihilist', who brings 'home the *redemption* of this reality'.[252] As the emphasis (in the original) shows, Zarathustra is Nietzsche's messiah against the Messiah: alone, against all he stands.[253] One is much tempted to add: 'and he can do no other'.

If asceticism is taken to mean abstraction from the contingencies of daily life and evasion into purely intellectual activities for the sake of inquiry and knowledge, then it is difficult to see how one could engage at all with philosophy without becoming ascetic. Nietzsche's lonely and wandering life, his lifelong commitment to writing and reading despite his failing health and against advice to the contrary from his doctors, can only be considered typically ascetic.[254] On the one hand, Nietzsche's proclaimed 'untimeliness', his disillusion with the academic world which culminated in his resignation from his Basel professorship, his disdain for logic and his contempt of truth for its own sake do set him apart from his 'old, cold and tedious' contemporaries, for whom his contempt was bottomless. On the other hand, Nietzsche still chose the traditional philosophical medium to express his thought and not sculpture, painting, music or poetry, at which he made regular attempts. As the preface to the *Genealogy* admits, Nietzsche took issue with the industrious scholars of his time through an exegetical, thus industrious and scholarly, work.[255] His resort to short and assertoric aphorisms attests to his awareness of this other self-referential problem.

9. An answer to the question framed in the introduction to this chapter can now be proposed. Under the expression 'ascetic ideals', Nietzsche referred to ethical and epistemological conceptions grounded

[251] Z-Prologue 5.
[252] GM-II 24.
[253] Stack (1983, 321).
[254] Despite his claims to the contrary, Nietzsche was an avid reader; see Brobjer (2008a) for more details on this point.
[255] GM-Preface 7 and 8.

in perfect, timeless and other-worldly value objectives such as absolute truth and goodness. He saw these ideals as distant legacies of Platonism elevated to civilisational foundations and philosophical cornerstones after their endorsement by Christianity and philosophers like Kant. Such notions, he contended, are noxious: the concept of metaphysical goodness eventually leads to a devaluation of earthly life and the concept of truth, valuable in and for itself, leads to questioning the basis of all conceptions, including moral ones. The death of God, decadence and finally nihilism are unavoidable results. Even science does not escape Nietzsche's criticism, for in his eyes it, too, takes truth as a value inasmuch as it considers knowledge as an unquestionable objective. Nietzsche also rejected the ascetic ideal because it denies one of his core convictions: the existence of hierarchy in nature and of differences between man and man. The ascetic conceptions of truth and goodness make de facto every man equal before them, a result that Nietzsche could not accept. Throughout his works, Nietzsche was obsessed with hierarchy – notably of individuals, cultures, values, moralities, truths, philological methods and artistic expressions. The basis for establishing these orders of rank is not always clearly defined, however, with such loose notions of physical or psychological health receiving successive focus in some of Nietzsche's writings. In his late works, a more affirmed evaluating criterion emerges: will to power. Armed with this conception, Nietzsche advocated simultaneously a naturalised, protopragmatic epistemology and a revival of ancient heroism's aristocraticism and values. Good and truthful were to be replaced by powerful.

It is precisely at this point that Nietzsche's answer to the ascetic ideal met its most serious difficulties. For it is the case not only that Nietzsche's depiction of the Homeric values was not one that Homer would have recognised and understood, but also that it portrayed the heroic-aristocratic individual as standing sovereignly against the crowd and capable of projecting his will to power onto his peers and his environment. This vision is at core romantic insofar as it is an individualistic one; 'heroic individualism', which is understandably attributed to the Nietzschean solution, is either a tautology or a contradiction in terms. Moreover, equating, as Nietzsche did, on the one hand 'true' with 'powerful' and on the other hand 'good' with 'powerful' amounts to equating 'true' with 'good'. Considering power a worthy objective, because its pursuit is deemed to be life's essence, unavoidably leads one to see power as valuable for its own sake. In other words, if will to power is to be the basis of a radical

revaluation of ethical values and of epistemological references, then truth and goodness must be conflated into an absolute, other-worldly value objective. This is, according to Nietzsche, precisely the most basic contention of the ascetic ideal. Despite his naturalistic intentions, will to power as an epistemological and ethical concept is not an alternative to the ascetic ideal but the ascetic ideal interpreted romantically. Nietzsche remained throughout his philosophical 'career' a romantic ascetic and he knew it, virtually admitting his romanticism and noting in published and unpublished texts that he was himself a decadent and a nihilist at bottom. *On the Genealogy of Morals* was left without a proper conclusion. Understandably so: unifying more firmly the three essays (as was done above on the evidence available in the unpublished notes) makes these irreconcilable contradictions all too apparent, well beyond what a vehement antisystem stance could ever obfuscate.

Criticism is easy, creation difficult: Nietzsche's work does not escape this trite observation. Yet even if Nietzsche is read not as attempting to find answers to the questions he raised, but simply as indicting Western thought for its asceticism, other problems remain. Even deflated to a purely negative stance, Nietzsche's critique of modernity and its ideals still demands a justification broader than a mere pointing to logical contradictions, especially when it comes from an author who dismissed the relevance of logic to life. The questions pertaining to the value of Platonic truth and moral values that Nietzsche was so adamant to raise in his late works must be legitimised. Considering the ascetic ideal detrimental to life, because resting on other-worldly concepts, assumes as a major premise that all other-worldly concepts are detrimental to life. This contention seems to rest on the idea that life is unitary in its essence, that the world is simple in its ultimate nature. These contentions are anything but forgone, however. How Nietzsche attempted to justify them is the next part of this enquiry.

3
Will to Power and Materialism

1. In the literature, Nietzsche's final stance on metaphysics and its relationship to will to power is a matter of debate and controversy. For many, indeed most, commentators, Nietzsche was the antimetaphysician philosopher par excellence, the one who could not contemplate pursuing a metaphysical line of thought without jeopardising his whole life's work. To support this judgement, such authors point to the vast number of aphorisms and notebook entries in which the middle and late Nietzsche lashed out at Plato, Christianity, Kant and Schopenhauer. They highlight Nietzsche's pervasive contempt for ontological, ethical or epistemological foundational concepts that could be in any way related to a 'true' world beyond that of everyday experience.

For other commentators, however, the converse is true: they believe that Nietzsche, despite his recurrent vitriolic antimetaphysical rhetoric, was in his last productive years engaged in an ambitious philosophical project typical of the Western metaphysical tradition. Martin Heidegger, possibly the best-known proponent of this interpretive line, saw in him the 'last metaphysician', a distant but recognisable heir of Plato, in the writings of whom the quest for a 'hidden unity' could be identified.[1] More recently, John Richardson analysed Nietzsche as engaged in the development of an ambitious metaphysical 'system' revolving around the concept of will to power.[2]

[1] Heidegger (1991, III, 3–9, 187–192); the quotations are from 8 and 190, respectively. The expression 'last metaphysician' as applied to Nietzsche is not Heidegger's original coinage. It was used by French commentator Théodore de Wyzewa in an eponymous article published in 1896 (quoted in Schrift 2008, n., 465).

[2] Richardson (1996); for Richardson, the 'system' is also ontological, epistemological and ethical.

Prominent in this dispute is the importance to be granted, in Nietzsche's thought, to the value of the *Nachlass* generally and of the eponymous posthumous 'non-book', *The Will to Power*, more particularly. It is indeed in this volume that Nietzsche's most quoted texts discussing the ultimate nature of actuality are found. Beyond their differences, most protagonists in the debate have thus accepted, implicitly or explicitly, Heidegger's premise that what is known today as *The Will to Power* is the expression of Nietzsche's final and proper philosophy. That is, 'lumpers' and 'splitters' alike believe that it is impossible to construe will to power as a theory of actuality without having recourse to *The Will to Power*.[3] In his attempt to reveal 'Nietzsche's system', Richardson relies at times almost exclusively on the posthumous notes.[4] Wolfgang Müller-Lauter does not proceed much differently[5]; yet his study constitutes an exception to the observation offered above. Indeed, after reviewing the posthumous fragments, he concludes that Nietzsche never really conceived of will to power as the ultimate grounding of actuality. As for the commentators not inclined to consider that Nietzsche finally succumbed to the charms of his publicly declared nemesis, they tend to disqualify, if not the 'work' (said to be Nietzsche's weakest)[6] in its entirety, at least its contents which have metaphysical flavours. These texts are considered speculative, 'empty',[7] 'silly', 'ludicrous extremes [and] crackpot metaphysical speculations'[8] that Nietzsche recognised as such and decided not to publish. This scenario is possible but would become a lot more plausible if the reasons why Nietzsche wrote and then rejected them could be provided.

Between these two positions, a third reading is visible in the literature. It is proposed by authors for whom the case is not so clear-cut. They do not want to depict Nietzsche as heir of the tradition he attacked in

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[3] Reusing here the terminology introduced in Magnus 1988b, according to which 'lumpers' consider the *Nachlass* to be of comparable scholarly value with the published works, while 'splitters' draw a sharp distinction in favour of the finished texts. Williams believes that the 'correlation between commentators' position on the *Nachlass* notes and their position on whether will to power is metaphysical' is 'one-to-one' (Williams 2001, 72).

[4] Of 1,164 references to Nietzsche's works made in Richardson 1996, 371 (almost 32%) are to *The Will to Power*.

[5] 'Nietzsche's authorised works do not offer a sufficient basis for understanding the will to power. The profundity of what he seeks to name by this phrase can be seen only by drawing upon the *Nachlass*' (Müller-Lauter 1999, 126ff; cf. also 160).

[6] Leiter (2003, xvii).

[7] Guess (1999, 186).

[8] Leiter (2009, 33; 2003, 252), respectively.

the published works, but they are also reluctant to dismiss the posthumous fragments, even taking into account their rather peculiar scholarly status. It is difficult to conceive that a thinker of Nietzsche's stature could have linked an original concept and coinage of his with sharp and well-rehearsed critiques of materialism and Kantianism (and possibly with his cherished doctrine of eternal recurrence) had he not, if perhaps only temporarily, thought his idea worthy of interest. These commentators, while ready to consider Nietzsche's 'metaphysical' notebook entries on their own merits, analyse them, with great interpretive care and many caveats, either in empirical[9] or metaphorical[10] terms. As shown below, these interpretations are not without solid textual support; yet they point the way to the concept's deepest internal weaknesses.

Whatever the case, before the debate can be entered in earnest, one must note that the above considerations contain two different questions. Why Nietzsche finally discarded the texts in which the ultimate nature of actuality is sounded and linked to will to power (assuming for now that this is what these texts do) is a related but separate point of inquiry from that of their philosophical origins, justifications and interests. Related, because quite clearly if an answer to the former question is ever to be provided, it will have to be in light of the latter. Separate, because Nietzsche's assessment of his own ideas does not bear on that of present-day readers who, with the benefit of hindsight, will be interested in assessing Nietzsche's statements on their own standing and in locating them in the broader context and development of his thought and of Western philosophy more generally.

To address all these matters, this chapter proceeds in the following main steps. The roots of Nietzsche's opposition to world dualisms of the Platonic-Kantian type are first explored. Doing this shows that what appears in his writings that relates one way or another to 'the world as will to power' can be meaningfully deciphered only in terms of and through arguments that Nietzsche found in Lange and in Schopenhauer. It is then argued that Nietzsche's 'private' writings (his notebooks) which sound the ultimate nature of actuality form a consistent whole with the 'public' ones on related themes. This chapter contends that this body of ideas, which coalesced around the concept of will to power, conceals

[9] Kaufmann is a well-known proponent of this interpretive line (see 1974a, 206–207), but so is Schacht, for whom will to power 'is only a property' of the world (1985, 207).

[10] Such is the case, e.g., of Kofman (1972), for whom Nietzsche's entire life work is to be received as metaphorical; Hinmann (1982), Stack (1983) and Williams (2001) share this interpretive tradition.

insurmountable contradictions with other writings of Nietzsche's but not with his opposition to metaphysics in the sense in which he understood the term. Finally, the discussion offers evidence to conclude that Nietzsche recognised these difficulties and saw that he could not overcome them. In other words, this chapter argues that the concept of will to power, when it is applied to 'the world', is in keeping with Nietzsche's vehement rejection of metaphysics but that it nonetheless set him on a philosophical journey which he recognised as being incompatible with other convictions dearer to him.

In light of the importance of Lange's and Schopenhauer's works in Nietzsche's thought on these matters, significant attention will be paid to their arguments, tenets and limitations and to how these influenced Nietzsche; other well-known and peripheral themes will be touched upon only as required. This approach is maintained even though some of the interpretations of Nietzsche's texts proposed below remain controversial in the literature – for example, about his view of causation and about section 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Exhaustiveness on these rich themes is beyond the reach of any single project on Nietzsche's thought, let alone of a single chapter. Whatever the merits and demerits of this approach, the existence of long-held controversies in the secondary literature indirectly makes the point this chapter argues. That learned commentators cannot agree on the scope of Nietzsche's relatively rare texts in which the expressions 'the world' and 'will to power' are found together is a confirmation of the presence in his writings of intractable contradictions finding their origins in the different traditions that Nietzsche unsuccessfully tried to combine. These conflicting threads appear sometimes neatly and distinctively in Nietzsche's books or notes, especially in the earlier ones. More frequently, however, they are weaved so tightly together to seem, at least on the surface, inseparable. This, of course, was exactly what Nietzsche deliberately set out to achieve. In some instances, he did succeed in making seemingly irreconcilable ideas look consubstantial with one another. It is the hallmark of the genius, in all disciplines, to connect what was previously unconnected in such a way that the fruit of the unlikely graft not only appears self-evident but also outshines its lineage. When it came to providing a theory of actuality, though – so this chapter argues – Nietzsche ultimately failed in his ambitious enterprise.

One of the objectives of what follows is thus to isolate in Nietzsche's writings independent trains of thought, to clarify their content and to show how Nietzsche attempted to bridge them. The late Nietzsche's opposition to world dualism is a good starting point in this endeavour.

2. At first sight, Nietzsche's blunt rejection of two-world visions of the Platonic type, as it is expressed in the late works, is a straightforward continuation of the 'positivist', science-confident inclination of *Human, All Too Human*. Analysed more closely, Nietzsche's stance goes much further and builds on ideas developed in very early works, including the unpublished essay *On Truth and Lies in the Extra-moral Sense*. If it is anti-Platonic, it is also anti-Christian and anti-Kantian (as well as anti-Schopenhauerian), the three worldviews being as always, albeit perhaps unfairly, lumped together in Nietzsche's late thought.

The world men can know is the world they perceive through their sense apparatus. Nietzsche considered that this trite observation is by itself no argument for believing that there is another reality beyond or 'behind' the phenomenal one, which should moreover be conceived of as its cause or ultimate substratum.[11] He held that the world human beings can engage with is the only one that matters and that any other conception of a 'real' but supersensuous world is utterly irrelevant, an unintelligible and laughable fabrication since by its very definition nothing can be known about it.[12] He dismissed whatever was proposed about this 'real world' as absurd from the outset, since descriptions of it are necessarily made in terms applicable to the world of phenomena or, more precisely, in terms opposing whatever is deemed relevant to the phenomenal world. For instance, whereas the world of everyday experience is thought to be becoming, imperfect and evil, the 'real world' is construed as being, perfect and good.[13] Nietzsche further insisted that merely speaking of a world as 'knowable', 'phenomenal' or 'apparent' or as 'revealed by the senses' is noxious, since through these qualifiers the idea of another, 'real' world irretrievably creeps back. The two worlds are conceptually linked to one another like the two sides of a coin: holding to the idea of a visible world is holding to that of a 'hidden' one as well.[14] Opposing such dichotomy, Nietzsche averred that, owing to their biological make-up and practical requirements, men have only limited access to, as well as selective and vested interests in, the complexity of actuality.[15]

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[11] Australian philosopher David Stove follows Nietzsche's cue, calling it 'the worst argument in the world' and ridiculing idealism for relying on it (see Stove 1995, 2001).

[12] A regular theme, found, e.g., in BGE 2 and 204 and GM-III 12.

[13] TI-III 6.

[14] Cf. the conclusion of TI-IV.

[15] To summarise to the extreme ideas put forward in GS 54, 57–59, 109–111, 335, as well as in D 117 and GM-III 12, 24; similar arguments are regularly proposed in the posthumous fragments.

If the world of phenomena was 'created' out of an underlying reality by the sense organs (as opposed to being a mere extraction from it), then the question as to what exactly created these same sense organs would be left begging, since it could not be the organs themselves.[16] For Nietzsche, what is important to life is isolated, amplified, simplified, following a process not unlike artistic creation, out of a context that has no significance in itself.[17] The world knows not of clouds nor of mountains; these categories exist only in man's understanding of and in addition to whatever there is but which has no name without him.[18]

Nietzsche's opposition to world dualism has ethical consequences, all of which are consistent with his opposition to the 'ascetic ideal'. He considered that if the world is to be conceived as 'one' or 'whole', then it has no value or meaning by itself since outside of it there is nothing which could be taken as a moral reference.[19] Ascribing moral valuation to the world presupposes precisely what Nietzsche rejected, the other, 'real' world: aiming at Kant, he argued that any conception of a world beyond that of sense-experience is a philosopher's clever but deceptive way to reach back to the divine. Adding to the sensuous world a transcendental realm as a source of value is either revenge against *this* earthly world (since such a move devalues and belittles it), a psychological consolation for its disappointing state of affairs, or both. In any case, such beliefs stem from and betray a decadent (code-name for 'Christian' in Nietzsche's late language) inability to face the challenges of worldly existence.[20] More importantly for the present discussion, Nietzsche held that it is not only the case that objects of the world like mountains or clouds are named by man; it is also that the very concept of 'thingness' or substance is itself a human fabrication. Faithful to the Heracliteanism and romanticism of his youth,[21] Nietzsche maintained to the end that the world is transient, chaotic and without order.[22] Attempts to deny this reality and

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[16] BGE 15; in this section Nietzsche answered directly to Lange, who summarised some of his conclusions thus: '1. The sense-world is a product of our organisation; 2. Our visible (bodily) organs are, like all other parts of the phenomenal world, only pictures of an unknown object; 3. The transcendental basis of our organisation remains just as unknown to us as the things which act upon it. We have always before us merely the product of both' (Lange 1925, iii, 219).

[17] TI-III 6.

[18] GS 57.

[19] TI-VI 8.

[20] GS 335; see also A 15 and TI-III 6.

[21] TI-III 2; Nietzsche's early endorsement of Heraclitus's doctrine is claimed in PTAG 5.

[22] See, e.g., GS 109.

to assert that there are stable entities or laws of physics are vain; they amount to imposing being onto a world of becoming. Such enterprises make actuality perhaps simpler to comprehend and describe but freeze it, turn it into a 'mummy',[23] for they assume that objects of the world have intrinsic qualities that are stable and man-independent.[24] Seduced by Plato's 'pure spirit', man thinks of himself as a self-contained being, as a subject.[25] This conception, which for Nietzsche lies at the root of Aristotelian logic,[26] is then used as a pattern, as the most elementary chart to make sense of an actuality that is conceived of in terms of 'external subjects': objects.[27] Plato devised the notion of being, Christianity enshrined it, Kant systematised it. Nietzsche insisted: it is a fabrication, a lie.[28] Knowledge is perspectival because it is driven by particular interests and framed by the imperfect human sense apparatus. Furthermore, the most basic conception through which man interprets the world, that of substance or thing, is an imposition of erroneous convictions of unity, entity and substance to actuality. Although not stated in these terms, Nietzsche's central claim on these matters is that metaphysical conceptions cannot be isolated from ontological ones, since man continuously projects his understanding of himself when he tries to make sense of the world. For him, the whole enterprise through which man meets and organises actuality is an immense exercise in anthropomorphism.[29]

The concept of causation is, unsurprisingly, one of the first victims of this insight. For Nietzsche, just as the idea of substance is derived from that of the ego taken as entity, the concept of causation is an external projection of the impression that the same ego causes the actions of the body.[30] In other words, one starts by believing that one's ego is a

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[23] TI-III 1.

[24] For a recent example that such is still the dominant scientific view, see Muller 2007.

[25] BGE-Preface; in HH-I 18, Nietzsche contended that man's belief in the being and identity of things is an inheritance from 'lower organisms', but he did not elaborate on how this conception could have been developed by non-conscious life forms and then passed on to man.

[26] TI-III 5; this line is analysed further in the context of Nietzsche's critique of truth in Müller-Lauter (1999, 7ff).

[27] TI-VI 3.

[28] TI-III 5.

[29] Stack (1983, 114ff); Miller (2006, 70). Nietzsche's anthropomorphism is also a central theme of Stack (1994). Berlin traces this line back to Goethe (cf. Berlin 2001, 104).

[30] TI-VI 1–4; similar or connected arguments are noticeable in GS 112 and 127, among others, showing the continuity of Nietzsche's thought on these themes.

separate entity and that it causes one's actions; once these conceptions are firmly entrenched, one expands them beyond one's body and interprets the regular succession of two events A-B as A causing B, both being seen as self-standing 'entities'. For Nietzsche the ego does not cause anything, however, not even thinking; will itself does not cause any action because there is no such entity as the ego or will.[31] Hume held causation to be incapable of proof; Nietzsche denied causation altogether, considering it an anthropomorphic distortion of actuality. There is for Nietzsche no doer causing the deed, for the simple reason that doer and deed cannot be separated: they are two aspects of the same event, like 'lightning' and 'flash'.[32] So are the concepts of cause and effect: Nietzsche held them to be arbitrary, if useful, segmentations of an actuality better understood as a continuum.[33] They are mere conventions, communication tools.[34] The notions of substance and of doer and deed are so strongly embedded in language that the latter is inconceivable without the former. Language is thus in Nietzsche's view the most pervasive and persuasive form of metaphysics, shaping man's conceptualisation of his environment to the deepest degree, simplifying and falsifying it through and through, transforming quantity into quality.[35] Following a transparent Humean line on this theme, Nietzsche considered that the strong belief in the reality of causation as a law of nature arises from a progressive 'habituation' to regular experiences and to the idea of causation itself.[36]

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[31] On these points, in addition to TI-VI 1–4, see also BGE 16 and 17.

[32] GS 370, GM-I 13, TI-III 5, VI 3. This theme is already present in HH-I 13.

[33] GS 112.

[34] BGE 21.

[35] Cf. the concluding sentence of TI-III 5, in which Nietzsche reached back to ideas he had expressed in his early *On Truth and Lies in the Extra-moral Sense*; see also BGE-Preface, 20, 24, 34, 54, as well as GM-I 13, in which similar ideas are expressed.

[36] TI-VI 4; see also TI-VI 5. The influence of Hume on Nietzsche regarding causation has been long noted in the literature (see, e.g., Danto 1980, 93ff; Schacht 1985, 181; Davey 1987, 16). Nietzsche paid his debt to Hume in posthumous fragments (implicitly in WP 664, explicitly in WP 550 or WLN 2[83]). In WP 550, however, Nietzsche tried to differentiate himself from his predecessor by insisting that men are led to interpret regularity as causality owing to their belief in the subject, not because of conditioning. According to Kaufmann, Nietzsche's use of the English word 'contiguity' in GM-III 4 is an allusion to Hume's view on causation; Brobjer agrees but believes that Nietzsche's knowledge of Hume on this subject matter is only indirect (Brobjer 2008b, 353–354).

The next victim of Nietzsche's attacks against metaphysics, paradoxically yet nonetheless logically, was nineteenth-century materialism. By Nietzsche's lifetime, this worldview, with its mechanistic and atomistic view of actuality and its commitment to the existence of immutable laws of physics, formed the dominating scientific model to the exclusion of any other. This position had been achieved despite serious philosophical rebuttals proposed in the works of Kant and Schopenhauer and in defiance of rising scientific criticisms. Prominent among these, materialism's billiard-ball framework did not reconcile with electromagnetic or thermodynamic phenomena that had been receiving increasing attention since the late eighteenth century. An exhaustive compilation of these philosophical and scientific critiques was available to Nietzsche through Friedrich Albert Lange's *History of Materialism and Criticism of Its Present Importance*, published in Germany to wide acclaim in late 1865, revised and substantially expanded in a two-volume edition published in two instalments (1873 and 1875).[37]

In his monumental work, Lange acknowledged materialism's superiority to other philosophical systems, especially those of Aristotle, Descartes and Leibniz, as well as to idealism in general. While remaining grateful to materialism for its scientific achievements, Lange sought to deflate and contain its claims to fame as useful but superficial descriptions of the phenomenal, since it limits itself to the study of the observable. In so doing, materialism leaves important aspects unexplained, because unexplainable, on materialism's tenets. Lange thus regularly pointed to materialism's inability, it being solely concerned with observable events and physical movements, to explain the unobservable phenomena of sensations and consciousness.[38] Similarly, he never tired of highlighting the great difficulties that materialists face in their construal of force and matter as inseparable yet radically different concepts. He also highlighted the 'absolutely incomprehensible action at a distance' principle with which atomism is saddled. Worse, for Lange, nineteenth-century materialism could not escape the determinism embedded in its mechanical billiard-ball model of the world, to which man, his thoughts and his brain processes included, must belong. For these reasons, Lange

[37] The fourth edition, published in 1882 (reprinted in 1887), was a condensed version of the 1873–75 edition. It has been established that Nietzsche read Lange's work in its 1865, 1882 and 1887 printings, but it remains unclear if he ever worked from the greatly expanded two-volume edition in which his name as well as *The Birth of Tragedy* are mentioned in a footnote (i, 62). See Stack (1983, n., 13) and Brobjer (2008a, 33–34) for differing arguments on this point.

[38] A recurrent theme in Lange's work; see, e.g., i, 30; ii, 157; iii, 158.

contended that materialism, in the last analysis, confirms Kant's critical theory of knowledge and faces an impossible choice. It either must admit that it will never reach a full understanding of the constitution of actuality independent of the perspective introduced by the human sense apparatus, or that it must commit itself to paradoxical and dogmatic a priori metaphysical assumptions about what is beyond the phenomena it studies. Either way, materialism cannot diffuse the fog of the mystery of actuality but is condemned to thicken it.[39]

Lange did not embrace idealism for all that. He rejected all claims to supernatural knowledge, since this knowledge would have to be expressed in the terms of a phenomenal understanding of actuality, an understanding itself constrained by man's fallible sensory apparatus. Lange's conclusion is clear: 'neither the phenomenal world nor the ideal world can be regarded as the absolute nature of things'.[40] Although materialism is 'the first, the lowest [and] the firmest stage in philosophy',[41] it nevertheless lacks the 'standpoint of the ideal' to account for human existence in its entirety. Philosophy, as well as science, stands in need of a synthesis between materialism and idealism, a sort of '*material* idealism', however speculative or chimeric this vision may seem.[42]

Even though he never mentioned Lange in his books and notebooks, Nietzsche studied his *History of Materialism* intensely and many of Lange's contentions made a lasting impression on his thought.[43] Nietzsche regarded his contemporary 'young natural scientists and old doctors' (code names for materialists) who wanted to belittle the role of philosophy as hopelessly ignorant, 'arrogant' and animated by 'a rabble instinct'.[44] With Lange (and with Locke), Nietzsche argued that allegations to the existence of matter are made only from the observable features that are attributed to it: materialists conceive of matter as the

[39] Lange expressed the views summarised above in his introductory chapter of book II of his critical study (see 1925, ii, 153–177, 273–273).
[40] Lange (1925, ii, 306; see also iii, 324).
[41] Lange (1925, iii, 335).
[42] Lange (1925, ii, 199); emphasis in original; see Stack (1983, 96ff), for further comments on this vision of Lange.
[43] The role that Lange played in the development of Nietzsche's thought is the object of an entire study by Stack (1983). The influence of Lange on Nietzsche is not disputed in the literature; the disagreement that exists is limited to Lange's importance as compared to the influence exerted by Kant and Schopenhauer. Lange is explicitly acknowledged only (and in fact quite rarely) in Nietzsche's private letters from the late 1860s. On this point and its possible explanations, see Brobjer (2008a, 32–36).
[44] BGE 204.

cause of whatever is perceived, but matter is never observed qua matter.[45] The existence of clump atoms (ultimate grains of solid matter) as basic components of actuality is thus untenable. Matter and atoms were for Nietzsche prime examples of man's projection of the concepts of being and causation onto the world.[46] Nietzsche's conclusions are as unambiguous as Lange's: matter is an inference, a simplification, a secondary notion. Matter must not be thought of as primary, as the source or origin of the phenomenal, as many physicists and philosophers do think of it, 'mistaking the last for the first'.[47] Matter is a convenient cover-up for what remains unknown: 'matter is [...] an error'.[48]

If Lange is not acknowledged in Nietzsche's books, another author, Boscovich, whom Nietzsche possibly discovered through Lange and then read directly while at Basel, is explicitly mentioned.[49] In his major work, *Theoria Philosophiae Naturalis* (first edition published in 1758), Boscovich contended that the notion of atoms leads to contradictions when applied to their alleged interactions. Instead, he proposed a conception of a dynamic world analysed as force points in which the notion of matter has been eliminated and replaced by pure, immaterial, unextended centres of force. Conceived of as a strictly mathematical model within which formal equations can be developed and integrated, Boscovich's work was receiving renewed interest in Nietzsche's lifetime. It provided a very convenient theoretical framework for the then emerging and promising electric field-force theory that came to be known as electromagnetism. This discipline, as Lange (after Faraday, Cauchy and Ampère), pointed out, could not be accommodated within an atomic materialist worldview.[50]

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[45] GS 373.

[46] TI-III 4.

[47] TI-III 5.

[48] GS 109; see also BGE 12, in which Nietzsche insisted that the 'belief in 'substance', in 'matter', in the bit of the earth, the particle, the atom', is to be abandoned.

[49] In Nietzsche's published texts, Boscovich is mentioned only in BGE 12; according to Pearson (2000, 19), it is referred to four times in all in the *Nachlass*, including once in an 1882 letter to Peter Gast. For discussions on Boscovich's influence on Nietzsche, see Pearson (2000) or Stack (1983, 226 ff). Boscovich's name is absent from the first edition of Lange's work but appears in its second, revised and expanded edition. Stack and Pearson believe that Nietzsche read Boscovich, yet his major work does not appear in Brobjer's (2008a) reconstruction of Nietzsche's readings.

[50] Lange (1925, 364ff). Lange makes similar observations with regard to chemistry and optics in the immediately preceding pages.

Although the foregoing is a robust and favourable platform onto which further criticisms of nineteenth-century materialism and science could be developed, Nietzsche's published works do not elaborate on these themes beyond the rare sections referenced here. Nietzsche preferred to attack science for its ethical tenets and consequences rather than for its mechanistic assumptions. This restraint is quite surprising in light of the numerous arguments collected by Lange. It suggests that, as far as a critique of materialism is concerned, Nietzsche realised that his thought was still a work in progress, had reached an impasse, or both. Whatever the case, in the posthumous fragments these charges are reiterated, connected firmly with one another but not altered significantly. Two notable additions to the ideas presented in the foregoing can be found in the notebook entries, however: a more thorough and sustained critique of materialism is formulated, based in part on a more substantiated stance against causation; evidence that Nietzsche was seriously engaged in working up an alternative approach to actuality is also apparent. That Nietzsche did engage in such developments is further supported by the finding that crucial aspects of this alternative theory reach back to and are detectable in texts that Nietzsche did publish.

In his notebooks, in line with what is found in the published works, Nietzsche contended that the idea of 'thing' (and of its archetype, the atom) relies on two conceptions he rejected.[51] The first is the principle according to which attributes or properties that are assigned to things can be conceptually dissociated from these things. Opposing this view, Nietzsche argued that if one removes all the properties attached to a thing, that thing disappears altogether.[52] The conclusion from this observation is not only that the obscure, if at first attractive, concept of 'thing in itself' (that is, a thing in isolation from its properties) is nonsensical[53] but also that there is no conceptual difference between the ordinary notion of 'thing' and the elusive 'thing in itself'.[54] Things are fictions.[55] Instead, Nietzsche held that 'a thing is the sum of its effects, synthetically united

[51] The relevant entries, beyond those referred to below, are mainly WP 481, 483, 485, 516, 552, 574, 631, 635, 785.
[52] WP 558; see also WP 557 and 561.
[53] WP 558.
[54] This point is not made as such by Nietzsche but can be safely extrapolated from his arguments proposed in WP 557–561 (which of course were not meant to be read in the sequence in which they are now usually read); it is proposed in Nehamas (1985, 81).
[55] WP 634.

by a concept, an image'.[56] A 'thing' cannot be dissociated by means of its properties from other 'things': it is merely a linguistic shortcut by which these are designated. Similarly, the concept of 'matter' is a reification of observable attributes which are subsequently attached to what has been reified; 'matter' just means 'matter in itself'. Similar comments go for 'force' as a stand-alone concept. An alleged 'force' does not exist without its 'effects':[57] while the notions of 'purely mechanistic forces of attraction and repulsion [...] are intended to make it possible for us to form an image of the world', they are 'empty word[s]', with which science should do away.[58] Causation by means of forces is an interpretation but remains at best a convention, at worst a lie: 'interpretation by causality [is] a deception'.[59] Unsurprisingly, the cause-effect and doer-deed couples and their embedded discontinuity collapse when submitted to the same corrosive analysis. For the same reasons that lightning does not flash nor causes the flash but rather is simply the flash,[60] the doer (cause) is the sum of its deeds (effects) and cannot be isolated from them. The cause is the effect, the doer the deed, the subject its actions: the observation that it is 'I' who does something, suffers something, 'has' something, 'has' a quality', is 'fundamentally false'.[61]

The second conception at the core of materialism that Nietzsche condemned without reservation is the discontinuity in the make-up of actuality that the idea of clump atom (or whatever particle deemed ultimately elementary) implies. Atomic materialism demands the coexistence of solid substance with something that is not substance; that is, vacuum. If actuality is reducible to particles akin to billiard-balls evolving in an empty space, they must interact by way of an 'action at a distance'. This is an unexplainable and self-contradictory perspective, since the existence of an interaction between particles means that there is 'something' between them (the interaction itself as well as whatever supports or conveys it).[62]

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[56] WP 551.
[57] WP 620.
[58] WP 621.
[59] WP 551.
[60] WP 548; cf. GM-I 13, in which exactly the same analogies and conclusions are proposed.
[61] WP 549.
[62] WP 618, 619. This difficulty was recognised by Descartes and acknowledged by nineteenth-century physicists, who proposed the concept of 'aether' as transmission medium to address it (no mention of 'aether' is made in Nietzsche's works, even though the concept is critically discussed in Lange; e.g., iii, 9–10). The notion was dismissed after the 1887 Michelson-Morley experiment.

For Nietzsche, this untenable substance-vacuum dualism was of the same nature as the dualisms or oppositions between appearance and thing in itself, cause and effect, subject and object.[63] He held these dichotomies as having been superimposed upon actuality following the doer-deed pattern for the sake of simplification, logic and calculability.[64] All are to be overcome and abandoned because they are fictions:[65] there is no difference in quality, only in degree. Actuality is not dualistic, as formal logic or Kantianism would have it, but is a continuum made up of differing quantities or concentrations. The sense organs, however, interpret and simplify these quantitative gradations as differences in quality.[66] When these false qualitative dichotomies are discarded, materialism as a worldview collapses, since it has lost all its foundations, at the first rank of which stood matter and non-matter.[67]

3. So far, very little has been found in the posthumous fragments not directly or indirectly expressed in the published texts; the consistency, indeed at times the similarity, of the arguments expressed in the former with what is found in the latter is patent. Most of them have transparent Langean sources. The divergence between the notebooks and the books lies in the former's formulation of the rudiments of an alternative to materialism that is not readily expressed in the late published texts, even if some echoes of it are distinctively heard in them. The origin of this alternative worldview is twofold. In important parts it can again be traced to theories Nietzsche was exposed to through Lange; in other important ways Schopenhauer's influence is equally obvious. These two influences are now considered more closely.

What emerges in the posthumous fragments can be analysed as an original elaboration on Boscovich's mathematical-physical framework of a dynamic but dematerialised world. This vision was embraced by electromagnetism and thermodynamics, the first discoveries of which

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[63] WP 552 (d): 'If we give up the concept "subject" and "object", then also the concept "substance" – and as a matter of consequence also the various modifications of it, e.g. "matter", "spirit" and other hypothetical entities, "the eternity and immutability of matter", etc. we have got rid of materiality'.

[64] WP 635; see also WP 516 and WP 551.

[65] WP 552 (b) and (c).

[66] WP 563; see also WP 565 and 710, in which similar ideas are developed. It must be noted here that WP 564 (written two to three years before WP 563 and 710) states exactly the converse: that differences in quantities are in fact differences in qualities. For attempts at reconciling both perspectives, see Deleuze (1983, 42–44) and Müller-Lauter (1999, 11–15).

[67] WP 552 (d).

Nietzsche knew through Lange's work.[68] For this latter science, then very new, the world consists of systems constantly exchanging or converting energy according to their entropy.[69] This new conception, the name of which was coined by Clausius in 1865, was conceived of as an all-pervasive property or state function of physical and chemical structures. Worthy of note is that though thermodynamics' worldview and its key notion of entropy are compatible with the concept of matter, they do not presuppose it. If one removes 'matter' from thermodynamical laws – in other words if one transposes thermodynamics' worldview into Boscovich's or electromagnetism's field-force model – there remains only energy. In Nietzsche's terms, there remains power. For if there are no things, there are quanta of power. This line of thinking, which can be identified in notes written in the years 1883–1885,[70] culminates in a striking entry, penned in 1888:

> Two successive states, the one 'cause', the other 'effect': this is false. The first has nothing to effect, the second has been effected by nothing.
>
> It is a question of a struggle between two elements of unequal power: a new arrangement of forces is achieved according to the measure of power of each of them. The second condition is something fundamentally different from the first (not its effect): the essential thing is that the factions in struggle emerge with different quanta of power.[71]

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[68] Although the origins of thermodynamics can be dated to the 1803–1824 works of the Carnots, father and son, its development as a distinct science is attributed to Joule (1843), Clausius (early 1850s) and Boltzmann (1870s). Nietzsche's knowledge of salient aspects of thermodynamics is evidenced by his reference to Lord Kelvin (William Thomson) in WP 1066 and his use of Clausius term 'disgregation' in WP 46. That Nietzsche used the expressions 'state of equilibrium' (WP 1064) and 'law of the conservation of energy' (WP 1063) is a further clue to his exposure to key terms and principles of thermodynamics (the law of conservation of energy is the first law of thermodynamics, that of the irreversibility of its transformations the second law). Thomson's and Clausius theories are discussed in the second (expanded) edition of Lange's *History of Materialism*.

[69] The term 'entropy' (based on the Greek for 'turning toward' or 'conversion') is absent from Nietzsche's writings. Lange briefly mentioned the notion in a footnote in 1925, iii, 11. Clausius second law of thermodynamics was formulated in 1862 and Lange commented upon it.

[70] As WP 617 attests; see also WP 631.

[71] WP 633; these ideas are proposed in slightly different terms in WP 634 and 635 (they form a single entry in Nietzsche's notebooks according to Kaufmann 1968, n. 338), written at the same time.

If one substitutes 'power' with 'energy' and 'measure of power' with 'entropy' in the above quotation, one obtains a statement that, in broad terms, thermodynamics would accept: causation is not a discontinuity but the exchange energy according to entropy. Science, Nietzsche held, implicitly recognises this through its law of conservation of energy and matter, especially when it symbolises physiochemical transformations through an equation centred on an equal sign. In such formulations, the two sides are said to be equivalent, and their location (on either side of the equal sign) is said to be irrelevant.[72]

As in the books, Nietzsche denied in the notebooks the existence of so-called 'laws of nature' that would manifest themselves through the regularity of events and causal relationships between them. The regularity of events ordinarily called causation is not proof of a law of physics. It is merely a human interpretation of the more fundamental (to Nietzsche at least) principle that power quanta expand themselves to their maximum, overcoming or absorbing whatever of lesser power lies within their reach: 'every power draws its ultimate consequence at every moment.[...] A quantum of power is designated by the effect it produces and that which it resists'.[73] For him, those who promote the existence of such laws mistake similarity of patterns for strict sameness. Without such strict sameness, however, the presence of an almighty lawgiver or of an underlying and perfectly ordered world cannot be inferred; nor can the existence of laws, their mysterious perfection and their alleged causal powers be argued.[74] In other words, for Nietzsche, the belief in

[72] WP 551. This claim would have been rejected by thermodynamics' exponents. Knowingly or not, Nietzsche ignored here Clausius's second law of thermodynamics (1862), which specifically states that without external intervention, physical or chemical transformations can only be one way. Once two bodies have come to a state of entropic equilibrium, they cannot return by themselves to their initial entropy states even if the overall quantity of energy is conserved. E.g., heat flows from a hot source to a cold one but never in the reverse direction; similarly, the dilution of a drop of ink in a glass of water is in practice irreversible even if statistically possible. Applied to the entire universe, this principle implies that, taken as a whole, the universe is on a 'no return' journey. Yet Nietzsche's observation remains partially relevant: used in an equation like $E = mc^2$, the equals sign means that the transformation of mass into energy is reversible, albeit imperfectly (this reversibility has been empirically verified).

[73] WP 634. Nietzsche's interpretation of the second law of thermodynamics (if such is his inspiration) is here correct, if somewhat metaphorical: within a given 'universe', energy is exchanged until entropy reaches an overall maximum level, at which point the universe has reached a terminal and constant state.

[74] WP 521, 629, 632, 634 express these themes in differing variations and with differing emphases.

unchangeable, universal laws of nature is a scientific variation of a more fundamental belief in a Christian or Kantian world dualism.[75] Hume argued the impossibility of observing, thus of proving, the relation between cause and effect but still assumed the existence of these events and that of a link between them. Nietzsche rejected the concept of causation for its reliance on hidden ontological references. What he objected to is the arbitrary segmentation of actuality into a subject-like cause and an object-like effect, miraculously patched up through laws of physics grounded on a 'true' or 'perfect' world. For him, power and quanta of power are the fundamental forms of what interacts; power is 'cause', 'effect' and 'causation' in a single unified notion. What science refers to as causation by means of laws is thus merely, in Nietzsche's eyes, power at work (exchanges and transformations of power) in various forms.

This last train of thought is not extracted from passing remarks or mere thought experiments jotted down casually in a few isolated entries. Not only do these ideas recur regularly in the notebooks from 1883 onwards; crucial components, indeed some of their conclusions (as usual without much if any substantiation), find their way into the finished works. Even though Nietzsche published relatively little on these topics, he regularly came back to them, from the early 1880s to his last months of intellectual activity. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche wrote, in opposition to physicists and their laws of nature, that a philosopher (transparently himself) could validly claim that the world's

> course is 'necessary' and 'predictable', *not* because laws are at work in it, but rather because the laws are absolutely *lacking*, and in every moment every power draws its final consequence.[76]

In *Twilight*, Nietzsche's early Heraclitean vision of actuality as a dynamic flux is reaffirmed. What is found in the posthumous fragments compose a body of ideas of which a few published texts are the visible tip.

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[75] Nietzsche would have been little surprised by very recent discoveries in astrophysics pointing to variations in value of previously deemed fundamental 'constants' of modern physics; see Berengut et al. (2010) for an example of such a discovery.

[76] BGE 22; emphases in original. A few years later, in his autobiography, Nietzsche approvingly if indirectly commented on his criticisms of materialism: 'This book [BGE] is in all essentials a critique of modernity, not excluding the modern sciences' (EH-BGE 2).

As shown, the themes under consideration in the foregoing anchored themselves in Nietzsche's thought under the influence of his close if unacknowledged readings of Lange's study. Despite his contempt for the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche was faithful to logical and epistemological considerations informed by contemporary scientific discoveries. Many of his conclusions can be formulated in scientific or, at least, science-compatible terms, a feature of his works that he was proud to recognise.[77] This inclination, combined with his attempts (exposed in the previous chapter) to naturalise epistemology and his not infrequent positive comments about the methods of science, warrants the qualifier of 'naturalist' that is now widely attributed to Nietzsche's overall philosophy – at the very least to substantial components of it.[78]

For all that, as he was developing this Langean, naturalistic and science-compatible line of thinking, Nietzsche remained attracted by arguments coming from a very different source. For just a year before plunging into Lange's book (and others signposted in it), Nietzsche sank himself in Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. In that work, the philosophically compelling criticisms of science and materialism offered were not lost on Nietzsche. The way Nietzsche integrated what Lange collected in light of what Schopenhauer developed is a telling tribute to his 'educator'. One basis of Nietzsche's admiration for Schopenhauer (even when he had turned against him) was indeed the latter's stated ambition to ground and prolong science's discoveries in a more encompassing framework, that of philosophy.[79] The foundations of this second aspect of Nietzsche's critique of materialism can be identified in his published works, especially in the very first one.

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[77] TI-VIII 3: 'It would be a profound misunderstanding to adduce German science as an objection [to my thought], as well as being proof one has not read a word I have written'.

[78] See Leiter 2003 (and 2009) for a vigorous defence of this reading, endorsed by Gemes and Janaway (2005), Bittner (2005) and Clark and Dudrick (2006), among others. Acampora (2006) and Janaway (2006), although following the naturalistic reading, offer critiques of Leiter's views. As far as I could determine, the terms 'naturalistic' and 'naturalism' applied to Nietzsche's thought were first employed by Schacht (see, e.g., Schacht 1985, 53, 239). Examples of Nietzsche's positive comments about the methods of science can be found in GS 293, BGE 207 and GM-III 23. Nietzsche's naturalism is returned to in the conclusion of this book.

[79] Thus Nietzsche observed in HH-I 26: 'Much science resounds in [Schopenhauer's] teaching' (in fact not enough in Nietzsche's view, as the rest of the section makes clear); elsewhere Nietzsche praised Goethe in part for the same reason (TI-IX 49).

4. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche posited that the ultimate substratum of actuality is a diffuse intention, a striving, a general and shapeless will that objectifies itself in the tangible world of everyday experience. The 'Dionysian content' versus 'Apollonian form' dualism forms the basis of *Birth*'s central contention. Building upon it, the work argues that Dionysian art (and only Dionysian art) can lead to artistic intoxication by providing pure, possibly dark and obscene but in any case formless content, while only Apollonian art can provide meaning-bearing structure to the exclusion of anything else. The combination of the two aesthetic forms results in an art, such as Wagner's, that is not so much intelligible as communicable.[80]

Nietzsche later reneged on some these views and turned against both Schopenhauer and Wagner. Yet he never abandoned the conviction that the tension between form and content is to be overcome.[81] He also remained faithful to the idea that appearances are manifestations of an inner dynamic that escapes immediate perception but which must be acknowledged as such if what is observed is to be properly understood. The published texts regularly attest to this aspect of his thought concerning the organic realm, before *Zarathustra*, *Beyond*, the *Genealogy* and their passages in which will to power is proposed as life's driving force.[82] In his later years, he attacked Darwin for failing to integrate this aspect of life into his theory of evolution, the principle of which

[80] For a more detailed argument that this is Nietzsche's position in *Birth*, see Young (1996, 38, 156–157).

[81] U-II 4 insists on this point (especially the end of the section) and no later text suggests a change of opinion. To the end, Nietzsche clings to the expressions 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian' to express this opposition, as WP 1049 (1885–1886) and WP 1050 (1888) attest.

[82] See, e.g., HH-I 18: 'the sentient individuum observes itself, it regards every sensation, every change, as something *isolated*, that is to say unconditioned, disconnected [...]. We are hungry, but originally we do not think that the organism wants to sustain itself; this feeling seems to be asserting itself *without cause or purpose*'. As the emphases (in the original text) show, Nietzsche's overall point, which was Schopenhauer's (see esp. WWR-II 19), is to highlight the mistake of considering feelings disconnected from one another and not manifestations of an underlying unified and uncontrolled intention driving all behaviour. A similar line is offered in D 130, in which Nietzsche rejected the concept of 'acts of will' for relying on the assumption that they are consciously controlled (see also D 124, in which the same point is made more succinctly). In HH-I 233 and 234, Nietzsche attributed historical appearances of geniuses and saints to flares of 'will' and of its 'energy'.

he otherwise accepted in its broadest outline.[83] Nietzsche's acceptance of some of Schopenhauer's key concepts was not limited to this first-level interpretation of life as manifestation of an internal 'will', though. He followed Schopenhauer further and expanded the underlying role of will to non-organic events. Schopenhauer's arguments to this conclusion deserve to be briefly restated, for they help make sense of many of Nietzsche's otherwise puzzling texts.

Schopenhauer arrived at his landmark vision of the 'world as will and representation' by combining two independent lines of argument starting from very different premises. The first of these lines, expounded in book I of *The World as Will and Representation*, is idealistic in its inception and leads, so Schopenhauer held, to a confirmation of Kant's epistemology. The second line of thought, developed in book II of the same work, is original to Schopenhauer and can be analysed as being naturalistic. In book I of *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer's starting point is the Berkeleian stance that the world of everyday experience is 'ideal', that it is phenomenon, appearance: the everyday world is representation.[84] Against Berkeley and taking Kant's dualism as established beyond doubt, however, Schopenhauer considered that this representation is a creation on the part of the mind, distinct from the man-independent 'world as it is in itself' which underpins it. More precisely, Schopenhauer held that the brain is responsible for representing the 'world in itself' in a useful, but not necessarily truthful, way.[85] A direct consequence of this 'biological idealism' is that materialism, which posits reality to consist of purely 'objective' (subject-independent) objects, is to be rejected as false.[86]

Schopenhauer did not satisfy himself with this Kantian outline. The originality of his philosophy lies in his attempts at penetrating into the nature of the world in itself. He argued in book II of his main work that science will never be able to account entirely for the world and must rely on philosophy to complete its world picture. This is the case because if science wants to escape infinite regress, it must limit itself to the discovery and study of laws of physics (the existence of which is taken for

[83] BGE 14, TI-IX 14, WP 70. Nietzsche's position with regard to Darwinism is discussed in Chapter 4.

[84] This argument is proposed in WWR-I, §§1–4, with complements in the 'Supplement to Book I'.

[85] Nietzsche never acknowledged his debt to Schopenhauer for this argument, central to his critique of truth.

[86] Young (1987, 8). See Janaway (1989, 175–177), for more details on Schopenhauer's purely idealistic arguments against materialism.

granted) and not of the forces that ultimately underpin those laws and account for their existence and constancy. If science tries to explicate the 'forces' underlying the 'laws' in the terms of more elementary concepts (following a theory-reduction approach), then it has only pushed its object of enquiry down one level, for these latter concepts will have to be explicated in terms of even more elementary ones. In Schopenhauer's thought, 'forces' are therefore the ultimate components, the existence of which science must posit as an axiom if it wants to avoid the infinite regress trap. In any event, science's account of actuality is by construction incomplete: it stands in need of an ultimate 'force', the justification of which cannot come from within science and even less so from materialism, which falls prey to very similar rejoinders. To summarise it to the extreme, Schopenhauer's argument against materialism is indeed that its commitment to causal explanatory powers of elementary particles necessarily leads it to infinite regress. If matter means structure, then whatever is thought to be matter's ultimate component can be broken down further. Materialism is bound to account for matter through indefinitely smaller entities and is by construction an incomplete scientific position. The only way to end that regress, Schopenhauer concluded, indirectly taking his cue from Boscovich,[87] is to accept that the ultimate substratum of actuality cannot be material. The world must be structureless, an immaterial flux or force. Schopenhauer believed this conclusion to be compatible with the 'biological Kantian' framework broached above.

Schopenhauer continued his argument by contending that science approaches the world as made of objects reduced to the observation of repeatable phenomena, of which these objects are deemed the cause. Science therefore limits itself to a study of actuality 'from without'. That is, science can at best provide an external picture of actuality, perhaps complete in its description of the relationships between objects, but in which the observing subject is not, indeed cannot be, included.[88] Consequently for Schopenhauer, 'if philosophy is to succeed where science fails, it must take the subjective, inward, turn'.[89] To complement science's approach, philosophy must look at

[87] Schopenhauer did not mention Boscovich but relied on a work published in 1777 by Joseph Priestley, who explicitly referred to Boscovich's original model. See Young (1987, 40–45), for more on these points and Schopenhauer's arguments.
[88] See Janaway (1989, 178–180) for more details on Schopenhauer's contention on this theme and in particular with regard to his opposition to reductive materialism, not discussed here.
[89] Young (1987, 50).

the world 'from within'. It must rehabilitate and insert the subject into science's vision to arrive at a complete picture of actuality. This, Schopenhauer proposed to do by considering the inner, psychological phenomenon of human will. He believed that man has an immediate and unmediated knowledge of his own body as will: one does not have to look at one's arm to know 'from within' that it is moving. One simply has to will one's arm to move for it to move: one's will is the 'inner' side of one's 'outer' body movements. One's body is one's objectified will.

Schopenhauer considered not only that volition, conscious or unconscious, is the basic aspect of human experience but that it is also to be found everywhere, in the organic as well as in the non-organic world. The will to fly is said to objectify itself in wings, sexual impulse in genitals, hunger in teeth and bowels and so on.[90] Similarly, Sun and Earth 'will' their mutual attraction and the magnet 'wills' its turning towards the pole.[91] This extension of the role of the inner, subjective will was for Schopenhauer demanded if one is to account for the concept of force in intelligible terms, an account that (objective) science is incapable of providing. His insights into the limitations of science, as well as his 'method of consideration', which consists in considering the subjective and objective perspectives together as an inseparable whole, left him no other choice.[92] He thus wrote that 'the double knowledge which we have of the nature and action of our own body, and which is given in two completely different ways, [is to be used] further as a key to the inner being of every phenomenon in nature [and to that of] all objects which are not our own body. [Every object] must be, according to its inner nature, the same as that in ourselves we call *will*'.[93] For Schopenhauer, will was the ultimate force of which science is desperately in need.

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[90] WWR-II 20.

[91] WWR-II 21.

[92] WWR-I 6; the quoted expression is found in Schopenhauer (1969, i, 19).

[93] WWR-II 19 (1969, i, 104–105); emphasis in original. There are, of course, numerous objections that can be raised against this extension of the human will to the organic world and then onto the non-organic one (see Young 1987, 66–70, for a critical account of Schopenhauer's arguments). These objections need not be considered immediately as Nietzsche nowhere formulated them. Some of them are briefly discussed below, for they bear on Nietzsche's arguments.

This analogy with the human will also enabled Schopenhauer to meet the Kantian 'sensuous perception' demand, which he fully accepted.[94] The acceptance of this 'meaning-' or 'concept-empiricism' criterion,[95] according to which all meaningful discourses must ultimately refer to concepts that are accessible empirically, strictly limits one to a posteriori knowledge. This, of course, is a logical constraint for someone claiming to be committed to Kantianism and its impassable epistemological barrier. In any case, this constraint was for Schopenhauer fulfilled by his concept of will, which he saw as 'knowledge [...] more real than any other knowledge'.[96] Paradoxically, this did not deter Schopenhauer from repeatedly noting that the will is more than the construct required to complete science's account of the world: in many passages, the will is also presented as Kant's noumenon, the ultimate substratum of actuality.[97] This tension in Schopenhauer's thought will be returned to as it flows into Nietzsche's.

In his notebooks, Nietzsche remained sensitive to the thrust of these arguments. He indicted mechanistic atomism and its embedded reductionism precisely for failing to consider Schopenhauer's conclusions. Thus, in 1885, Nietzsche sarcastically observed, reusing some of Schopenhauer's arguments almost word for word:

> Of all the interpretations of the world attempted hitherto, the mechanistic one seems today to stand victorious in the foreground. It evidently has a good conscience on its side; and no science believes it can achieve progress and success except with the aid of mechanistic procedures. Everyone knows these procedures: one leaves 'reason' and 'purpose' out of account as far as possible, one shows that, given sufficient time, anything can evolve out of anything else, and one does not conceal a malicious chuckle when 'apparent intention' in the fate of a plant or an egg yolk is once again traced back to pressure

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[94] 'Kant's principal result may be summarised in its essence as follows: "all concepts which do not have as their basis a perception in space and time [or which] have not been drawn from such a perception [...] are absolutely empty, that is to say, give us no knowledge." [...] I admit this of everything'; Supplement to Book II, ch. XVIII, 'On the Possibility of Knowing the Thing-in-Itself' (Schopenhauer 1966, ii, 196).

[95] To reuse Young's expressions; see Young (1987, 22–25), for further development of this initially Kantian epistemological constraint.

[96] Supplement to book II, ch. XVIII (Schopenhauer 1966, ii, 196).

[97] See, e.g., WWR-IV 54: 'the will is the thing in itself' (Schopenhauer 1966, i, 275).

> and stress: in short, one pays heartfelt homage to the principle of the greatest possible stupidity.[98]

Materialism has set itself a duty to ignore the intent underlying life by trying to reduce everything to purely objective and causally effective appearances: the growth of a plant and the development of an embryo are thus 'explained' as effects of physicochemical processes. By focusing on the 'skin' of the world, on its observable and calculable phenomena, materialism reduces everything to lifeless mechanistic calculations and appearances. Its world picture is a perspective that assumes, but leaves out of account, its most important component: 'the perspective-setting force [...] in school language: the subject'.[99] Exponents of materialism and of its mechanistic view of the world are thus condemned to answer qualitative, explanatory questions through quantitative, descriptive propositions.[100] Although materialists satisfy themselves with this view, one of its consequences is that the world is deprived of precisely what they attempt to explain.[101] Materialism remains oblivious to the existence of an 'inner' aspect of actuality, its internal dynamic, which it has knowingly decided to ignore. Yet such a dynamic interpretation is the only one that can account for the existence of such basic phenomena as the growth of a plant or the development of an egg into a chick – or, again, in one word: life.

More generally, by seeking 'explanations' in terms of interactions of ever-smaller components of matter, materialism progressively leads to an 'evaporation' of what is supposed to be captured by the concept of 'matter', its very foundational concept.[102] Nietzsche hoped that, faced with materialism's momentous shortcomings, even staunch materialists will eventually admit:

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[98] WP 618; cf. GS 373, in which mechanistic science is called an 'idiocy'. A very similar claim is formulated in BGE 14, where Nietzsche attacked the 'Darwinists and anti-teleologists among the physiological workers' because they accept the 'principle of the 'least possible energy' and the greatest possible stupidity'. The last sentence of GM-III 16 also hints at a rejection of materialism based on a dismissal of reductionism, in this case reductive physiology.

[99] WP 636.

[100] '"Mechanistic view": wants nothing but quantities, yet force is to be found in quality; mechanistic theory can thus only describe processes, not explain them' (WP 660; see also WP 479, 564, 608). For a broader discussion of these aspects of Nietzsche's thought, see Poellner (2006, 305–306).

[101] GS 373.

[102] TI-III 4 (the end of BGE 17 can also be read as a distant allusion to this paradox of atomism).

> with a wry expression that description and not explanation is all that is possible, that the dynamic interpretation of the world, with its denial of 'empty space' and its little clumps of atoms, will shortly come to dominate physicists.[103]

He then wondered, again following in Schopenhauer's wake:

> The will to accumulate force is special to the phenomena of life [...]. Should we not be permitted to assume this will as a motive cause in chemistry, too? And in the cosmic order? [...].
>
> Life as a special case (hypothesis based upon it applied to the total character of being –) strives after a maximal feeling of power; [...] the basic and innermost thing is still this will.[104]

The transition from the organic to the inorganic is continuous.[105] A dynamic interpretation of the world is the only one tenable; it accepts will as the underlying force of all events.

Nietzsche's critique of materialism, as it emerges from the notebooks, is then easily summarised. In his view, materialism irretrievably fragments the make-up of actuality through the discontinuous concepts of causation and of clump atoms. Adding insult to injury, by refusing to acknowledge the existence of an 'inner' side of objects, by assuming the eternal existence of atoms and laws of physics, materialistic science transforms the world into a mummy, a body of which only the lifeless skin remains. Such an outlook is unacceptable because it sterilises, trivialises and ridicules what it purports to explain. Grounded on a Platonic quest for eternal truth, committed to a vision of the world independent of the subject, materialism mistakes actuality for its appearances and neglects actuality's meaning and content. As such, it remains unable to account for most important and basic phenomena, including force, intention and life. Undeveloped echoes of this conclusion can be heard in book V of *The Gay Science* and in *Twilight of the Idols*.[106] Materialism was for Nietzsche, as for Schopenhauer,

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[103] WP 618.

[104] WP 689.

[105] WP 691: 'What has been the relation of the total organic process to the rest of nature? – That is where its fundamental will stands revealed'.

[106] One must also note the proximity of WP 618 (quoted above), which underlines 'the principle of the greatest stupidity' of materialists for ignoring underlying 'dynamic intentions' in their account of the world, and BGE 14, which indicts 'physicists, including those Darwinists and anti-teleologists' in exactly the same terms. This again shows the continuity in these matters between Nietzsche's posthumous notes and the published works.

world dualism of the most absurd sort: while pretending to a complete view of actuality, materialism is in fact a halved, truncated version of world dualism. To express these ideas in Nietzsche's early terms, materialism forfeits right from the start any hope of genuinely understanding the world by deliberately focusing on its shallow and hollow Apollonian form, leaving aside its internal dynamic and formless component, the Dionysian content of actuality. Materialism is laughable, 'one-sided' metaphysics;[107] materialism is sheer Apollonianism.

5. This error stands in need of correction; an alternative to world dualism that does not present the flaws of materialism must be identified. Nietzsche attempted this task by combining in his notebooks the three major strands of ideas revealed in the foregoing.

First, one must reject the idea of a 'true world' and its untenable world-dividing, knowledge-limiting barrier. Second, one must abandon the actuality-defacing cause-effect, doer-deed, matter-vacuum discontinuities implied by materialism and accept instead the idea of actuality as a continuous, structureless and immaterial flux of power. Third and finally, one must recognise, if one is to make sense of it, that actuality is the manifestation of a world conceived as ultimate force. These conceptual moves are to be accomplished simultaneously, as Nietzsche explained in an oft-quoted note written in 1885:

> The victorious concept of 'force' [...] still needs to be completed: an inner world[108] must be ascribed to it, which I designate as 'will to power', [...] 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.[109]

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[107] That Schopenhauer held materialism to be one-sided metaphysics is proposed in Janaway (1989, 182). Schopenhauer himself employed the phrase 'one-sidedness' with regard to idealism in the opening section of the first book of his main work. The expression 'one-sided' is found in Lange's *History of Materialism* to criticise materialism (and more generally empiricism) from its earliest origins, on related arguments (see, e.g., Lange 1925, i, 107ff).

[108] '*es muß ihm eine innere Welt zugesprochen werden*' (KSA 11 36[31]). Kaufmann apparently misread *Wille* instead of *Welt* and thus has 'will' in his (mis)translation (Kaufmann 1968, 333).

[109] WP 619; see WP 552: 'That the apparent "purposiveness" [...] is merely the consequence of the will to power manifest in all events' and WP 675: 'all "purposes", "aims", "meaning" are only modes of expression and metamorphoses of one will that is inherent in all events: the will to power'. See also WP 490, 658, 688, 689.

A notebook entry from 1888 confirms these views:

> A quantum of power is designated by the effect it produces and that which it resists. [...] That is why I call it a quantum of 'will to power': it expresses the characteristic that cannot be thought out of the mechanistic order without thinking away this order itself.[110]

Nietzsche's use of an 'analogy' with the 'inner' human will to coin his own expression makes clear that 'will to power' is proposed as an expansion of and an alternative to Schopenhauer's concept of will.[111] Actuality is made of interacting concentrations of forces or power quanta striving for more power. Power quanta are not things, not atoms.[112] It is their dynamic nature that holds will to power quanta together: 'reality consists [in the] action and reaction of every individual part toward the whole'.[113] These individual parts, the centres of force or power quanta, are 'points of will [*Willens-Punktationen*] that are constantly increasing or losing their power'.[114] The phenomena of reproduction, nourishment, hunger, resistance against decomposition, life itself, as well as all organic or inorganic events, are all reducible to manifestations of will to power.[115] In the words of the posthumous fragment that closes *The Will to Power*, the world is thus a 'monster of energy', an ever-changing and unstructured 'sea of forces', continuously and eternally discharging itself as and transforming itself in will to power 'and nothing besides!'[116] Will to power is what discharges itself into itself and is the result of this discharge: the world 'lives on itself: its excrements are its food',[117] it is 'a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness'.[118]

Consistent with his late rejection of world dualism, Nietzsche conceived of actuality as unified, as 'one'. The world is will to power

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[110] WP 634; cf. also WLN 34[247]: 'that it is the will to power which guides the inorganic world as well, or rather, that there is no inorganic world'.

[111] Z-II 12 ('Of Self-Overcoming') leaves no doubt that 'will to power' is an alternative to Schopenhauer's 'will to live'.

[112] WP 635.

[113] WP 567.

[114] WP 715. Walter Kaufmann (reluctantly) translates *Willens-Punktationen* as 'treaty drafts of will', as per the standard dictionary meaning; the translation proposed here is that of David J. Parent in Müller-Lauter (1999, 21) (see also n. 68, 188). Davey equally translates *Willens-Punktationen* as 'points of will' (1987, 23).

[115] WP 382, 651, 652, 654, 692, 702, 704.

[116] WP 1067.

[117] WP 1066.

[118] WP 1067.

and nothing besides: it is reality and appearance, Dionysus and Apollo, content and form, matter and non-matter, all in one entity. From very early on, Nietzsche saw in Schopenhauer's philosophy and its conception of an inner dynamic a basis upon which he could develop an alternative both to materialism and to the world dualisms inherited from Plato via Kant.[119] The concept of will to power was the late Nietzsche's answer to Lange's 'material idealism' challenge: an attempt to fuse two worldviews which, beyond their respective merits, fail to account cohesively for actuality on their own standing.

The foregoing is not limited to isolated notebook entries. In the published texts, Nietzsche's exasperation at his contemporaries' erroneous worldviews erupts at regular intervals; the list of positions for which his contempt knew no limit is long. For all that, Nietzsche believed that philosophy has a special responsibility in that it must provide the foundations for man's understanding of the world. Like Schopenhauer, he was convinced that philosophy must guide science, for the former is, indeed must remain, the 'master' of the latter and was in search of an alternative view of actuality, more encompassing than that of science.[120]

This quest transpires in a much-contested aphorism, section 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. A text that is for many commentators a mere thought experiment, eventually rejected by Nietzsche, is read by others as a plain affirmation of the doctrine.[121] Others, still, interpret this text as Nietzsche's condensed rehearsal of the Schopenhauerian argument that the ultimate nature of actuality is will, seasoned with some contentions of his own:[122] It reads thus:

> Assuming that nothing real is 'given' to us apart from our world of desires and passions, [...] may we not be allowed to perform an experiment and ask whether this 'given' also provides *a sufficient* explanation for the so-called mechanistic (or 'material') world?[123]

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[119] Nietzsche's preoccupation with these matters can be traced back to his 1867/1869 notebooks; see Toscano (2001, esp. 43–44) for a discussion on the young Nietzsche's philosophical projects.

[120] BGE 204. See also BGE 211: 'true philosophers are commanders and lawgivers'.

[121] See Clark (1990, 212–218) or Leiter (2003, 139–140), versus Hill (2007, 77–88), for respective examples of these contentions.

[122] See, e.g., Williams (2001, 44–48), and Janaway (1989, 347).

[123] BGE 36.

If one wants to go beyond the senses, beyond mere surface-phenomenal experience, so as to gain a genuine understanding of what there is, then one has to accept inner feelings, the 'world of desires', of emotions and passions, as the 'given', as being of a superior epistemological status than whatever comes from the 'external' sensory apparatus. This 'preliminary form of life', unifying all organic functions, is the will on which Schopenhauer settled when he looked for an alternative to the world seen 'from without' so as to provide science with what it cannot, on its own, obtain. Leaving aside (for now) the markedly hypothetical tone of the section, the overall structure of Nietzsche's speculation is the same as that proposed by Schopenhauer: if one wants to risk ('perform an experiment') a complete account of actuality, one must start from what is certain and expand from it. One has no choice but to start from the world seen from within; that is, from the experience of volition that is proposed here as the undisputable, most basic content of human experience:

> we are not only allowed to perform such an experiment, we are commanded to do so by the conscience of our *method*.[124]

No other option is indeed possible since Nietzsche's method for the riddle he is trying to solve must remain 'frugal [in its] principles';[125] in any case it cannot be Plato's, which denied the importance of 'sensuality',[126] nor can it be the ordinary scientific one, which can result only in a surface account of phenomena.

Nietzsche, not wanting to follow Schopenhauer in his will versus representation dualism, had to propose a description of actuality through a non-dualistic concept. That is, Nietzsche's alternative view must be compatible with the way human beings perceive the world (not only feel it from within) and make sense of it, causation included. Since, in his vision, causation is exchange of power, his concept of will must include a capacity to act upon power through and as power. Nietzsche's commitment to will as the most certain conception must be merged with his view of the world as power quanta acting upon power quanta (and not upon matter since, as he reminded his readers, he dismissed the concept as erroneous). On his own admission, Nietzsche was thus

[124] BGE 36, emphasis in original.
[125] BGE 13.
[126] BGE 14.

forced to wonder, reusing, for lack of a better one, a term he otherwise condemned for its implied ontological assumptions,[127]

> whether the causality of the will is the only causality. [...] [O]ne must dare to hypothesize, in short, that whatever 'effects' are identified, a will is having an effect upon another will – and that all mechanical events, in so far as energy is active in them, are really the energy of the will, the effects of the will.
>
> [In this case,] then we would have won the right to designate *all* effective energy unequivocally as: the *will to power*. The world as it is seen from the inside,[128] the world defined and described by its 'intelligible character' – would be simply 'will to power' and that alone.[129]

Even though he added his own variation to the proposed solution, Nietzsche walked here in Schopenhauer's footsteps when constructing the problem he was trying to answer, as well as, but to a lesser extent, when answering it. From Schopenhauer's naturalistic premises, using Schopenhauer's naturalistic method, little wonder Nietzsche arrived at a Schopenhauerian, naturalistic conclusion.

Beyond the questions this conclusion cannot but trigger, these statements are also noticeable for what they most visibly leave out. For if Platonic and Kantian dualisms, as well as materialism, are to be relegated to the backwaters of philosophy (as Nietzsche would have it) and if causation is to be redefined meaningfully, then a theory of actuality as will to power (even conceived of as 'dynamic') which does not include or account for the concept of time will not do. Nietzsche held to the end that the world is becoming, not being, and rejected worldviews for failing to consider this contention. For all that, in the arguments presented so far, there is nothing that could immunise Nietzsche's thought from the same indictment. Nietzsche must do what neither

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[127] Nietzsche's later rejection of the causality of will (in TI-VI 3) should not be read as him coming back on BGE 36. In *Twilight*, it is the causality of will as conscious phenomenon (as ego or subject) which is denied, not of the will as fundamental component of actuality (WP 478–479 insist on this point: that the 'inner world', the conscious, causally efficacious will is an illusion).

[128] '*von innen gesehen*': also translatable as 'seen from within' (as in Magnus 1978, 23). Here Nietzsche employs Schopenhauer's exact expression when he (Schopenhauer) seeks an alternative to the world '*von außen gesehen*'; i.e., 'seen from without' (WWR-II 20).

[129] BGE 36; emphases in original.

Lange nor Schopenhauer attempted.[130] He must provide an account of temporality consistent with his insistence on 'becoming' and he must link this account with will to power for his alternative theory of actuality to pass a minimal surface-consistency test and to have a claim to completeness.

Nietzsche remained silent on this problem, offering what can be at best qualified as embryonic thoughts – and those are found only in the posthumous fragments. For if he had a theory of temporality at all, it must be his undeveloped doctrine of eternal recurrence,[131] not in its normative or 'existential imperative'[132] version, as it is expressed in *The Gay Science* and in *Zarathustra*, but in its cosmological, avowedly 'metaphysical' form, as it is found in the posthumous fragments.[133] One of these notes makes the connection between the doctrine of eternal recurrence and the concept of will to power (if not the two expressions) explicit if lapidary.[134] In this text and a small handful of others,[135] Nietzsche argued that to think of the world as not having an overall objective yet as constantly transforming itself without any repetition is self-contradictory, since the combination of these two features constitutes an objective of sorts. An openly godless vision of the world as going always forward yet never

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[130] Schopenhauer did discuss time and its passing in relation to will but only in his analysis of existential boredom. Young sees in Schopenhauer's 'predilection for representing life in terms of circular metaphors' (such as his analogy of life as an endless walk on burning charcoals) a seed of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence doctrine (Young 1987, 159–160). The concept of time receives scant attention in Lange's work; it is only explicitly but briefly considered when Kant's position with regard to materialism is discussed.

[131] Magee (1987, 274).

[132] As per the title Magnus' noted study (Magnus 1978; see 47–68) for a detailed account of the history and Sophist origins of the doctrine.

[133] To reuse the term and its qualification (the square commas) that Nietzsche employs in WP 462.

[134] WP 617, written between 1883 and 1885. The two expressions 'will to power' and 'eternal recurrence' are found, although not directly connected, in WP 55, written in 1887. WP 1067 states that the world as will to power is 'without beginning, without end' and that it 'must return eternally', but the expression 'eternal recurrence' is not found in the note; same comment as for WP 639, in which will to power is said to go through an 'eternal cycle'. Heidegger argues that the two notions cannot be conceived independently of one another; his arguments, mostly indirect, rely on Nietzsche's plans for the major work that was not to be rather than on the contents of actual notebook entries, however (Heidegger 1991, ii, 150–165).

[135] WP 55 and WP 1062–1067; see also WP 639, which contains a snippet of this stream of ideas.

crossing back on its path still reintroduces a god in the form of the overarching principle according to which the world must only go forward without ever retracing its footsteps.[136] Nietzsche did not believe that the world is going toward a final state for all that, however, for he held that if the world had such an objective, it would have already been reached. That this is plainly not the case, that the world is still in perpetual transformation and flux, although being, in his eyes, made up of a finite number of centres of forces and of a constant total quantity of energy, led Nietzsche to a twofold conclusion. Firstly and once again, that the contemporary scientific worldview (implied by thermodynamics' laws) is mistaken, since it describes the world as going towards a final state of energy equilibrium. Secondly and since time is for him infinite, that the world is eternally returning, eternally going through a cycle of identical states reoccurring an infinite number of times.

The logic and internal consistency of these assertions is sounded later on. Worthy of note is that Nietzsche saw the world as constant becoming, yet this becoming is a being, since it is conceived of as limited to a finite number of possible states. As he did with so many other dichotomies (among which are quality vs quantity, doer vs deed, cause vs effect, substance vs vacuum, truth vs error, good vs evil and so on), Nietzsche conflated being and becoming into one single notion. Platonic timelessness and mechanical, forced transformations are united in a single vision through the working of will to power: 'to impose upon becoming the character of being – that is the supreme will to power. [...] That everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being'.[137] For undeveloped as it is, this vision fits within the overall frame discussed earlier. Being and becoming are indistinguishable, which is consistent with Nietzsche's rejection of causality and of its implied irreversibility.

6. Nietzsche's attempts at developing an alternative and encompassing theory of actuality cannot be ignored or dismissed as inconsequential thought experiments. Will to power was conceived of as a monistic, material-idealistic, surface-depth, Dionysian-Apollonian rejoinder to a Kantian vision of a world not only fragmented along a phenomenal-appearance versus noumenal-real divide but also, in its ultimate component, forever and by definition out of the reach of human knowledge. The vision of the world as will to power is formulated as an alternative

[136] Cf. Spinoza's *Ethics* Part I, Propositions 15, 29 and 33.
[137] WP 617; see also WP 1061.

to materialism for exactly the same reasons, for Nietzsche took materialism to be a truncated if unacknowledged version of world dualism. He attempted to provide a Heraclitean alternative, taking into account his understanding of the then recent development of science. The concept crystallised and developed from 1885 onwards as the culmination and bridging of distinct yet related lines of thinking, one informed by Lange and the other by Schopenhauer. This combination is perhaps Nietzsche's most original project. It remains to Nietzsche's credit not only to have had a serious and at first sight consistent attempt at reconciling what looks otherwise irreconcilable but also to have endeavoured to build and expand on foundations rooted in science and philosophy. Accepting arguments and conclusions proposed by Lange and by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche tried in his notebooks to go beyond them by integrating what the two authors had left aside – temporality. Unfortunately, however, as a theory of actuality, will to power is neither Nietzsche's most convincing or even convinced concept, for reasons that are now to be discussed.

One first notices that Nietzsche remained very quiet about his new concept. As often observed in the literature, the expression 'will to power' comes up very rarely in the published works; as a theory of actuality, it is never seriously articulated and even less expanded, at the expense of its philosophical importance. Even in the posthumous fragments the concept's presence, if undeniable, can be described only as paltry.[138] One must also observe that will to power is not emphasised (merely very briefly alluded to three times in all) in Nietzsche's autobiography and is not mentioned at all in the 1886 prefaces of his pre-*Zarathustra* books. Yet as the notes show, Nietzsche was still actively engaged with the themes to which these ideas relate in his last year of intellectual activity. That he finally decided not to proceed with his project – that is, that he eventually chose not to publish these notebook entries – strongly suggests that he understood the serious difficulties they contain. It is to the difficulties of which Nietzsche most presumably became aware that the discussion now turns.

The first objection to will to power as alternative view of actuality coming from Nietzsche's own texts must be that this conception seems, at least prima facie, plainly 'metaphysical'; that is, above physics. Heidegger certainly read it that way and after him, if against his main interpretive line, this qualification has been regularly applied

[138] The expression appears only 32 times in the published works and 147 times in the *Nachlass*, a fifth of these being in tentative titles for the book that was not to be (Williams 1996, 451).

to the concept in the literature.[139] In some instances, this conviction is used to dismiss the idea that Nietzsche could entertain the notion in earnest since a supernatural will to power seems incompatible with his vitriolic rejections of all things relating to or coming from a supersensuous world.[140] Other authors have come to a similar conclusion from a different, albeit closely connected, route. They consider that Nietzsche cannot have been serious with will to power as an alternative view of actuality since, read metaphysically, cosmologically, empirically or otherwise, a proposition like 'the world is will to power' is incompatible with Nietzsche's epistemological critique and perspectivism, which prevented him from uttering any definitive statement about actuality (or about anything else for that matter).[141] These conclusions are by no means forced, however. To pre-empt arguments made below, it is in its monistic, non-supernatural features that the concept of will to power runs up against its deepest difficulties when it comes to reconciling it with the rest of Nietzsche's writings.

Before this debate can be embarked on, two distinct if related questions must be answered. The first one pertains to whether it is possible to dissociate *The Will to Power* and beyond it, the *Nachlass* as a whole, from Nietzsche's published writings as far as a theory of actuality is concerned. In the positive case, the issue at stake loses much of its relevance: should the two sets of texts be irreconcilable by virtue of their contents, one can safely assume that Nietzsche discarded his notebook entries because he judged them weak or misguided, regardless of the reasons he could have for holding such views. His readers would therefore be better advised to respect Nietzsche's explicit instructions: disregard the posthumous works that, in hindsight, should have remained unpublished.[142] The second question, related to the first one but perhaps more philosophically compelling, consists in clarifying what is meant by 'metaphysical'

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[139] A notable exception is of course Kaufmann, for whom will to power is Nietzsche's cosmological, empirically inducted account of the world, extrapolated to the extreme from a doctrine first applicable to human behaviour (see 1974a, 178ff).

[140] As done in Clark (1990) and Leiter (2003); Stack (1983 and 1994) follows a similar line.

[141] Nehamas (1985), 74ff. Clark (1990) argues that Nietzsche's antiworld dualistic stance and his perspectivism are two faces of the same coin. A notable exception to this line is Doyle (2009), who argues that Nietzsche's concept of will to power as theory of actuality derives from his antiperspectivism (cf. ch. 4 of Doyle's study).

[142] Such is the line recommended, e.g., by Hollingdale (1985, 167ff).

in Nietzsche's texts, for any assessment of his thought's consistency with regard to his notion of will to power will hinge on the sense he attributed to the term. A conclusion to the effect that Nietzsche judged his concept to be metaphysical would go a long way towards explaining his decision not to publish the notes which make use of it. There are reasons to believe, however, that both questions can be answered negatively, justifying further exploration.

As the foregoing shows, Nietzsche's notebook entries and finished texts form a coherent whole. Even if the posthumous fragments push a line of thinking further than what is proposed in the published works, the seeds of this line, the overall direction along which it is pursued, key arguments employed in this pursuit, as well as conclusions it arrives at, can be identified in the late published corpus.[143] In particular, section 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, the brief dismissals of materialism and atomism, the regular sneers at the concepts of causation and 'laws of nature', not to mention the explicit mentions of will to power as universal principle of the organic world,[144] attest to the proximity, indeed the continuity, between the *Nachlass* and the late books. Excising completely or partially *The Will to Power* from Nietzsche's corpus, even assuming that it was what Nietzsche himself wanted, truncates it of an important component. When it comes to will to power as a theory of actuality, the two sets of texts must be considered in conjunction and stand or fall together.[145] This assessment helps in answering the second question, pertaining to the meaning to be given to the term 'metaphysical' in Nietzsche's late thoughts. If it is now accepted that it is one and the same Nietzsche who penned the finished as well as the unfinished works (as opposed to a Nietzsche committed to his books vs a non-committed or purely playful one with regard to the notebooks), then it follows that these texts must be approached and read consistently. This constraint also entails that the meaning to be attributed to the term 'metaphysical' as possible qualifier of Nietzschean concepts does not need to be one that would satisfy a contemporary, modern, let alone postmodern reader, of Nietzsche. It can only be the meaning that Nietzsche attached

[143] Miller argues that *The Birth of Tragedy* contains the earliest forms that the entries collated under the heading 'The Will to Power in Nature' in *The Will to Power* develop (Miller 2006, 71–73).

[144] Among which are BGE 22, 186, and GM-II 12.

[145] A conclusion implicitly adopted in Schacht (1985, 187–233) (see Magnus 1988b, 220, for comments on Schacht's use of the material contained in *The Will to Power*). Richardson's study hinges mostly on this finding (1996, 8–9).

146. Müller-Lauter (1999, n. 21, 218–219).

to it in his writings. In other words, in this debate, 'metaphysical' must attract the same understanding that the late Nietzsche granted it and must reconcile with related aspects of his late thought.[146]

One of these aspects is Nietzsche's acceptance of Schopenhauer's concept-empiricism demand. When Nietzsche wrote that 'a force we cannot imagine is an empty word and should be allowed no rights of citizenship in science',[147] when he dismissed the concept of 'thing in itself' or again when he ridiculed his contemporaries for pulling themselves up by the hair in the manner of Baron Münchhausen for relying on *causa sui* arguments,[148] he was attacking the idea that concepts can be meaningful by and in themselves, that they do not need empirical or experiential referent.[149] As he put it: 'What is clear, what "clarifies"? First, whatever can be seen and touched – you have to take every problem at least that far'.[150] This is the case since he took the senses and the evidence they provide as the only secure basis of knowledge.[151] This concept-empiricism demand underpins Nietzsche's critique of epistemology: eternal, unchanging, Platonic Truth 'is an error' precisely because it allegedly exists in and by itself, independently of and in fact contrary to experience. As revealed by the senses, the world is indeed becoming, not being;[152] any conception is to be rejected if it runs against this Heraclitean insight. Philosophy must rely on experience as a method as well as a proof of audacity; the 'free spirits', new philosophers the advent of which Nietzsche called for, will have to be experimenters.[153]

When Nietzsche is reluctantly 'commanded' to 'perform [...] an experiment'[154] into the constitution of actuality, the concept-empiricism constraint that he accepted left him little choice: exactly as was the case for Schopenhauer, he was forced to refer to the phenomenon of human will to coin his vision of the world as will to power. From these considerations, as well as those discussed earlier, it is clear that by 'metaphysical' Nietzsche meant, literally if narrowly, 'meta-physical' – that is, supernatural, referring to a feature or quality of the world deemed to be in

147 WP 621.
148 BGE 21; Schopenhauer used the same sneer against the exponents of materialism in WWR-I 7.
149 Clark (1990, 110).
150 BGE 14. See also TI-III 3: 'We possess scientific knowledge today to precisely the extent that we have decided to accept the evidence of the senses [...]. The rest is abortion and not-yet-science: which is to say metaphysics'.
151 TI-III 3.
152 TI III 2.
153 BGE 42.
154 BGE 36.

some ways beyond that of experience and resting on a dualistic worldview.[155] In Nietzsche's sense, any concept not meeting the concept-empiricism demand is 'metaphysical' because it cannot be related to what an experimenter would be able to recognise in principle. The 'laws of physics' based upon intrinsic properties of physical objects, the existence of which science takes for granted, are thus for Nietzsche metaphysical insofar as they refer to an allegedly enduring, man-independent state of affairs (such as Kant's noumenon), the immutable character of which being, by definition, beyond empirical verification. Underpinning this conception is Nietzsche's conviction that any alleged reality beyond that of experience is a senseless fabrication; if anything, chapters III and IV of *Twilight of the Idols* make this clear beyond doubt.[156]

On these grounds, considering will to power intentionally metaphysical amounts to considering that Nietzsche was inconsistent at the coarsest, most direct, first-degree level. Although the present study made the case for reading Nietzsche's texts with a degree of suspicion with regard to their author's intentions, holding that Nietzsche was incoherent to that degree renders a critical evaluation of his writings impossible. It is difficult to believe that Nietzsche would have even casually jotted down ideas that so openly contradict principles to which he was so openly committed if he did not see value in them. The fact remains that Nietzsche more than jotted these ideas down, since the entries in which partial arguments for the world as will to power are developed or quickly rehearsed are polished in their stylistic expression.[157] They propose a text in which Nietzsche's 'voice', with all the hallmarks of the late prose for which he is remembered, is unmistakable. Nietzsche must have been committed, at least temporarily, to a vision of the world as will to power. This conclusion is all the more likely in that it did not appear all formed, as in a moment of epiphany, as was the case with the doctrine of eternal recurrence, but gradually developed along the several, distinct and rich lines summarised earlier. A flash of inspiration irreconcilable with long-held principles would have been quickly recognised as misguided. It would have left no durable imprint in Nietzsche's thought, his notebooks, let alone his published works, at the first rank

[155] A reading shared by Müller-Lauter (1999, 122) and Poellner (2007); Poellner refers to this stance of Nietzsche as his 'anti-essentialism' (cf. 2007, 13).

[156] See also WP 586, in which this theme is expounded in various forms.

[157] Of which WP 618, 619, 1066 and 1067 are prime examples; but other notes – WP 551, 552, 634–636, as well as WP 1062 – also contain texts of typical published Nietzschean prose.

of which stand *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. One must therefore admit that Nietzsche did not consider his theory of will to power as metaphysical in the sense that he attacked in his late writings.[158] The concept was *intended* as a naturalistic, monistic one – and this leads to two new interrogations. Is it possible that Nietzsche was mistaken in his assessment of his concept (implying here that will to power is truly metaphysical in Nietzsche's sense – supernatural – irrelevant of what Nietzsche thought of it)? If the concept is not metaphysical in Nietzsche's understanding of the term, how can it be qualified? The remainder of this chapter argues that Nietzsche was correct in his belief that will to power is not metaphysical in his sense but that this diagnosis, logically if somewhat paradoxically, finally led him to reject his concept nonetheless. For in the last analysis, an analysis about which there is enough evidence to believe that Nietzsche made his, the world as will to power amounts to a convoluted but recognisable version of materialism insofar as it presents all the problems for which Nietzsche dismissed materialism. To show this, it is necessary to return to the seed of the idea of will to power in Nietzsche's thought – that is, to Schopenhauer's conception of will – and to inquire into its exact epistemological nature.

As noted, Schopenhauer was bound by a self-imposed Kantian concept-empiricism constraint, according to which knowledge is limited to what is accessible, at least in principle, experientially. In practice, this principle demands that any statement aiming at expressing a quality or property of the world is made in terms that eventually point to phenomena. Schopenhauer's choosing of the word 'will' to refer to the inner nature of inanimate objects by reference to what he took to be the fundamental aspect of human existence is partly to be explained by this demand. Schopenhauer made it clear that one has experiential knowledge of one's will, in time if not in space;[159] the will may be the body experienced from within, but it is the body experienced nevertheless. These conflicting premises (concept-empiricism on one hand, willingness to inquire into what lies beyond the world of phenomena on the other) led Schopenhauer to a very difficult conundrum. Either he had to abandon altogether his project to 'modify' 'Kant's doctrine of the inability to know the thing in itself',[160] or he must claim that objects can be conceived in terms of the subject. The latter option is tantamount to holding that self-introspection alone can lead to a complete understanding of the world.

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[158] An interpretive line followed by Schacht (1985, 205ff).
[159] WWR-II 18 and 19.
[160] 'Supplement to Book II: On the Possibility of Knowing the Thing-in-Itself' (Schopenhauer 1966, ii, 197).

Schopenhauer would here be committing the same 'piece of humbug' for which he castigated Fichte.[161] Either way, Schopenhauer cannot claim to be faithful to concept-empiricism and state simultaneously that the thing in itself is the will, for will must refer in his thought to a phenomenon and not to the noumenon. That he repeated this statement (and as the title of his main work plainly insinuates) while at times painstakingly trying to distance himself from such an affirmation by insisting that, properly understood, the world in itself remains beyond human understanding, is evidence that Schopenhauer was at least confusedly aware of his predicament.[162] A possible solution – perhaps a charitable one given the number of times Schopenhauer used the expression 'the will as thing in itself'[163] – is to consider that when Schopenhauer wrote that the thing in itself is will, he merely meant that the best knowledge one can have of the world 'as it is in itself' is as will.[164] Some of Schopenhauer's writings do lend themselves to this reading.[165] Whether it is faithful to their author's intentions or not, unless one believes that phenomenal perception is exclusively of external reality, knowledge of the world as will belongs to the phenomenal realm.[166] Whatever it is exactly, the 'world as will' refers in Schopenhauer's thought to the world of phenomena, of

[161] WWR-I 7. In this section Schopenhauer came back to the reasons leading to his dismissal of Fichte's philosophy as a 'fictitious' and of this author as gifted only in rhetoric. For Schopenhauer, Fichte spun the non-ego 'from the ego as the web from the spider' (Schopenhauer 1966, i, 32–33). Nietzsche reused these Baconian terms almost literally with regard to Kant, in AC 11 most notably.

[162] The first paragraphs of WWR-II 23 are quite telling in that regard, Schopenhauer alternatively affirming the unknowability of the world in itself and its 'will' nature. The supplements to book II titled 'On the Primacy of the Will in Self-Consciousness' and 'On the Possibility of Knowing the Thing-in-Itself' are also rich in heavy convolutions on that theme, which Young qualifies as 'tortuous tergiversations' (Young 1987, 30).

[163] See, e.g., WWR-II 23 or IV 54, in which this expression (or close variants of it) returns insistently.

[164] As proposed in Young (1987, 27–33).

[165] Especially the long supplement to book II titled 'On the Possibility of Knowing the Thing-in-Itself'.

[166] In a later study, Young argues that the contradictions in Schopenhauer's claims about the nature and possibility of knowing something about the thing in itself are the result of his inconsistent or incomplete reworking of his main work for its second edition (published in 1844, 26 years after the first). For Young, in the first version of the work, Schopenhauer asserted many times that the will is the noumenon. In the second version, however, the emphasis has shifted towards affirming that even if the term "will" provides a deep*er* account of the world than its description in terms of material bodies, the world it describes remains in the realm of appearance […] a description of penultimate rather than of ultimate reality' (Young 2010, 92; emphasis in original).

perceived forms and structures.[167] If such a world lies beyond immediate perception, it was still for him accessible to and as experience.

This analysis holds even if it seems challenged by Schopenhauer's conception of teleology. Schopenhauer believed that nature is wholly teleological (i.e., he believed that the organic and the inorganic worlds are evidence and can be explained only in terms of an overall purposiveness) and his use of the term 'will' includes this dimension. He observed that 'the bird of a year old has no idea of the eggs for which it builds a nest'[168] but considered that if animals do not behave with a 'regard for the future', their 'inner being' does.[169] The seeming purposiveness of behaviour displayed by animals that cannot have understanding of long-term motives was for Schopenhauer the proof of an underlying agency, which, although blind,[170] has for overall objective 'the conservation of the individual and the propagation of the species'.[171] The seed 'wills' its growth as plant: and the egg 'wills' itself as chicken. The will thus includes a non-phenomenal dimension since this agency, although in Schopenhauer's thought 'objectified' in the concerned organisms, cannot be observed or experienced directly, at least not independently of the behaviour it is deemed to explain. In Schopenhauer's perspective, 'will' is not, or is not only, an anthropomorphic metaphor but expresses a fundamental unity which he believed is the duty of philosophy to bring to light so as to provide science with the encompassing framework that alone it cannot produce.

It remains, nevertheless, the case that, in book II of *The World as Will and Representation*, this fundamental unity is exposed and explicated in terms of its final consequences (more particularly in terms of its tangible effects) as these are observable to the acute natural scientist. Schopenhauer's arguments for the existence of the unity he was trying to unmask are all explicitly a posteriori propositions. If generalisation and induction are undeniably present in Schopenhauer's thought, the conclusions offered do not start from a priori principles but from statements of facts obtainable from an insightful empirical analysis of nature. In book I, Schopenhauer's transcendentalism soon becomes

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[167] Schopenhauer argued that if knowledge of one's willing is not 'perception (for all perception is spatial)', it is still 'entirely *a posteriori*' knowledge 'more real than any other' ('On the Possibility of Knowing the Thing-in-Itself', Schopenhauer 1966, ii, 196).

[168] WWR-II 23.

[169] WWR-II 27.

[170] The blindness of the will is often mentioned in WWR; e.g., see II 21.

[171] WWR-II 27.

biological idealism. It is offered as a starting point to the naturalism of book II, but as Young argues, this idealism is not formally required for his account of the will in nature.[172] Schopenhauer's emblematic vision of the world as will is an empirical proposition, as long as it remains devoid of any arguments coming from Kantianism. This is the case even if Schopenhauer progressively turned it into a purely idealistic and axiomatic statement, especially in his discussion of ethics. On the one hand, his Kantian idealism committed Schopenhauer to considering actuality to be composed of two worlds, one noumenal, the other phenomenal; on the other, his insightful critique of science and his observations of nature led him to view objects as containing an 'inner' but natural dynamical component that he called will. It was perhaps inevitable that he tried to combine and juxtapose his idealistic and naturalistic visions. As commentators have shown, it is precisely where the two interact (in 'I' as biological-ideal, brain-subject link between the noumenal and the phenomenal worlds), that his philosophy meets its most serious difficulties. Schopenhauer posited 'I' as identity between the willing and the knowing subjects, with the former being noumenal and the latter phenomenal, inasmuch as it is objectified in the brain. This vision is fraught with intractable inconsistencies, however, not only because it is impossible to conceive of an entity being simultaneously phenomenal and noumenal but also because this scheme amounts to construing the willing subject as being an object for the knowing subject, in plain contradiction with Schopenhauer's premises.[173] In any case, despite his intellectual acuity, Schopenhauer did not realise that if the world men know is the representation of a world-will owing to the workings of the brain-subject, then these two worlds can be folded into a single one owing to the very existence of a connection between them, irrespective of the exact nature of this connection. What Schopenhauer presented as dualism (will and representation) is thus in principle reducible to monism. His writings seem at times reluctantly

[172] Young (1987, 13).

[173] Janaway (1989, 264ff); Janaway writes of Schopenhauer being 'in deep water' here. Young's critical discussion of Schopenhauer's construal of concepts in terms of phenomenal perception (a logical move in view of Schopenhauer's biological idealistic premises) reveals other aspects of these problems, for such a construal led Schopenhauer to consider 'concepts [as] quasi-things, mysterious non-particulars' (Young 1987, 19–22). Whether Schopenhauer himself really understood the full consequences of his views is unclear, for if all concepts result from or can be explicated in terms of phenomenal perceptions, his self-imposed Kantian concept-empiricism demand becomes superfluous.

close to admitting this observation. Kant, through his insistence that nothing could be known of the noumenal world and that the divide between the phenomenon and the noumenon was strictly impassable, was more consistent in this regard. Similar considerations have led Young to conclude, taking into account Schopenhauer's commitment to Kantianism, that Schopenhauer's 'naturalistic metaphysics' is in fact a 'trichotomy' (noumenon-will-representation) in which, importantly, will and representation are on the phenomenal side of Kant's epistemological barrier.[174]

Much of the foregoing applies to Nietzsche's concept of will to power since Nietzsche accepted the Kantian-Schopenhauerian demand for concept-empiricism, making it a precondition for meaningful knowledge. Again, unless one is ready to believe that his thought is inconsistent at the most direct level, one must concede that Nietzsche believed that will to power passed the concept-empiricism test. In other words, Nietzsche must have considered that his arguments leading to his vision of the world as will to power complied with this epistemological demand. At first sight, there seems to be some basis to this belief since these arguments, even if Nietzsche never explicitly payed his debt to either author, mainly come from Schopenhauer's 'naturalism' as well as from Lange's science-informed, critical study. Interestingly, however, Nietzsche *failed* to infer that conclusion. That is, Nietzsche did not realise that Schopenhauer's concept of will, as it is expounded in book II of his main work, passes the concept-empiricism test. From *The Birth of Tragedy* onwards, Nietzsche saw Schopenhauer's vision as being truly metaphysical in his sense, as referring to a substratum lying beyond the realm of physics.[175] In the Nietzschean reading, the idealistic framework set in book I of Schopenhauer's main work is carried unchanged into book II: Schopenhauer's will, in Nietzsche's early and late view, is the Kantian thing in itself.[176] Such conception was consequently unacceptable for

[174] Young (1987, 33).

[175] In *Birth*, Nietzsche considered that Schopenhauer's will is, or is akin to, the Kantian noumenon; no evidence suggests that he changed this assessment later on. (In *Human*, book I, §236, Schopenhauer is called a 'metaphysical philosopher'.) Although there is in the literature very wide agreement about this interpretation (detailed, e.g., in Young 1996, 32ff), there are also, as is the norm with Nietzsche's texts, starkly dissenting views (see, e.g., Han-Pile 2006).

[176] WP 692 (1888) makes this plain: 'Is "will to power" a kind of or identical with the concept "will"? [...] Is it that "will" of which Schopenhauer said it was the "in-itself of things"? [No, because] what [Schopenhauer] calls "will" is a mere empty word'.

the 'mature' Nietzsche. Thus there can be no 'simple' will, because if there was, there would also be 'something' else, be it Schopenhauerian representation or Kantian phenomenon. Although Nietzsche endorsed Lange's and Schopenhauer's rebuttals of materialism, he complemented the Schopenhauerian concept of will with the predicate-qualifier 'to power' to arrive at a unified but non-idealistic and naturalistic vision of actuality. To formulate an answer to Lange's 'material-idealist' challenge, as well as to address the difficulties embedded in what he took to be an irredeemable dualistic vision, Nietzsche insisted on the observable features of his concept. Will to power is conceived as will and representation combined;[177] if will and representation are merged into a unitary concept, at least the daunting issue of their interaction disappears. Yet this move was not formally required, for it would have been enough for Nietzsche to accept Schopenhauer's naturalism without his idealism to render Schopenhauer's concept of will more consistently non-supernatural. The predicate 'to power', legacy of Nietzsche's love affair with ancient heroism's worldview, colours his coinage with purely Apollonian hues. Moreover, by referring to the notion of 'power quanta' that he develops from his assimilation of science's latest developments, Nietzsche landed in a framework that cannot be dissociated from that of materialism. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to arguing these conclusions.

7. In Nietzsche's vision of the world as will to power, materialism's atoms interacting at a distance are replaced by different concentrations or quanta of power constantly exchanging power; this transfer of power is proposed as an alternative to causation. What, in this picture, is the most fundamental notion is unclear however; is it will to power, power or power quanta? Do power quanta consist of power or of will to power? Do they exchange power, or will to power? There are no answers to these questions in Nietzsche's writings and this incompletion points to serious difficulties with his vision.

One can start uncovering these difficulties by noting that Nietzsche's arguments to the effect that causation is an unwarranted human interpretation and that the notions of 'cause' and 'effects' are only conventions do not lose their force when applied to a vision of a world consisting of power interactions. As Schopenhauer insisted, within a naturalistic framework, empirical observations can lead only to finer and finer descriptions of the ways objects of the world (or whatever is perceived as such) interact with

[177] Rehberg (2002, 39).

one another. Yet the assessment as to which objects, in these interactions, are more powerful or exhibit more power or, in Nietzsche's language, represent or embody a higher quantity of will to power is dependent on the perspective one takes of the observed events. Under normal conditions, water dissolves sugar but, equally validly, sugar can be said to absorb itself into water; neither sugar nor water can resist the interaction with the other. Similarly, the lion kills the zebra, but the zebra is an attractive prey for the lion; when hungry, one eats food, but the hungrier one is, the more irresistible the food. Neither can be said to be, in absolute terms, more powerful or commanding than the other. Nietzsche was at least confusedly aware of this problem since he had Zarathustra declaring that 'even in the will of the servant I found the will to be master', adding shortly after: 'as the lesser surrenders to the greater, [...] so the greater, too, surrenders'.[178] On Nietzsche's own arguments, then, power, just like causation, is a human interpretation; both are 'conventional fictions for the purpose of description or communication'.[179] Power is not an empirical notion but a perspective-laden qualifier added to an observed relationship or natural event. Depending on one's viewpoint, this interpretation can be reversed. In that regard, power conveys less descriptive meaning than the notions of 'cause' or 'effect' which, perhaps erroneously, imply the idea of irreversibility. In any case, power cannot be the most elementary notion in Nietzsche's will to power worldview since it is an addition to an observation.

Nietzsche is in deeper trouble still. Since the notion of power assumes the existence of entities the interaction with which it is supposed to qualify, stating that these same entities are constituted of will to power becomes, in assuming what it seeks to explain, a self-referential proposition. If only because of this, will to power cannot pretend to be the ultimate notion in a coherent picture of actuality. It is, in fact, a surface-interpretation concept devoid of descriptive power.

Before arguments to that effect are offered, it is worth noting that appearances have always been one of Nietzsche's main concerns; they shape his entire corpus from the very first work onwards. Already in *The Birth of Tragedy*, as Peter Sloterdijk argues, it is the Apollonian art form, that which concerns itself with structure, representation and formal perfection, which is triumphant.[180] The Greeks, even in Nietzsche's reconstruction of their cultural and artistic zenith, proved themselves superior to surrounding barbarians, otherwise as Dionysian as the Greeks

[178] Z-II 12.
[179] BGE 21.
[180] Sloterdijk (1989, 24–28; see also 54 and 78–80).

themselves, only through their Apollonian restraint: 'Dionysian orgies' are identified as 'Greek festivals' and distinguished from 'Babylonian Sacaea' only because they are interrupted by periods of Apollonian control.[181] Nietzsche's answer to the problem he was inquiring into, the origin and decline of Greek artistic achievements, is unambiguous. In his account, the Dionysian-Apollonian duality at the core of Greek tragedy at its pinnacle is not evenly balanced, indeed cannot be: in practice Dionysus only exists through and must always be reined in by Apollo.[182] Dionysian art can only be expressed and recognised as Apollonian art. Once this theme is uncovered as the dominating pattern of Nietzsche's essay, the entire work gains in clarity, explaining for instance why Nietzsche's fiercest attacks against Socrates are peppered with admiring observations.[183] Entire sections, while reading at first as tributes to Dionysus, are revealed as pleas to Apollo when re-examined in this perspective.[184] Even the book's defining claim that 'the existence of world [can be] justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon' appears in this light as an apology of Apollonian art and illusion.[185] Nietzsche's later criticisms of Wagner revolved precisely around the latter's alleged rejection of classicism and contempt for Apollonian structure in favour of pure, unmitigated 'Dionysianism'.[186] It was because he came to believe that Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* was of almost pure Dionysian inspiration that Nietzsche turned against Wagner and his Bayreuth project.[187]

In his introspective moments, Nietzsche lucidly recognised his fascination with the Apollonian. In the 1886 preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, when he tried to reconcile the book's tenets with his late rejection of

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[181] BT 2.

[182] BT 1: 'This joyous necessity of the [Dionysian] dream experience has been embodied by the Greeks in their Apollo: Apollo, [...] the deity of light, is also ruler over the beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy. The higher truth, the perfection of these states [makes] life possible and worth living'.

[183] BT 15: 'the most sublime ethical deeds, [...] heroism, and that calm sea of the soul, so difficult to attain, which the Apollonian Greek called *sophrosune* [temperance], were derived from the dialectic of knowledge by Socrates and his like-minded successors'.

[184] BT 2 being a prime example here.

[185] BT-Attempt 5.

[186] Gillespie (1995, 213). Nietzsche's argument sounds here disingenuous, if not plainly dishonest. Wagner loved and modelled himself on Beethoven, whose work was a consciously crafted combination of classicism and romanticism. Nietzsche must have known this even if, as Young points out, his conceptions of classical and romantic art appear merely superficial (Young 1996, 140ff).

[187] This criticism is developed in U-IV 4.

romanticism, he could misrepresent his early work only so much. His observation that it is primarily an inquiry into 'the problem of science itself', written for artists who 'have an analytic [...] penchant',[188] is not without justification, for science is explicitly put on trial in the book on grounds that the prophet of the death of God will have no reason to disown.[189] For all that, in the last analysis, Nietzsche's special-pleading observation is first a direct admission that *Birth*, beyond making the case for a revaluation of Dionysus's role in Greek cultural accomplishments, contains a sustained appeal to nineteenth-century Germany to find an Apollonian *solution*, not a Dionysian alternative, to the threat of scientism. Nietzsche's stylistic virtuosity, his lifetime obsessions with morality, truth and hierarchy, as well as his insistence that one is to give style to one's existence,[190] further support this reading of his works. Morality, inasmuch as it is concerned which socially acceptable behaviour, exemplifies the Apollonian side of human existence. That the 'problem of morality' came to dominate Nietzsche's last years of intellectual activity to the extent it did is evidence of Nietzsche's almost exclusive concerns with external aspects of human life, as opposed to its inner meaning. The death of God, proclaimed in *The Gay Science*, is announced by the madman as devastating news, not so much because it deprives mankind of the meaning of life, as one would expect a faithful to highlight. The death of God is lamented because the horizon has been 'wiped away by a sponge' and because men are left without games to play and without ways to absolve their deeds.[191] Their intentions may have been pure; they have killed God nonetheless and this is what really matters. The death of God is a catastrophe, not because human existence's substratum has disappeared, but because it has ceased to be visible. Men are now without rules and regulations to follow. In other words, the madman mourns God because his death signifies the disappearance of external references, of social conventions and of regulating mechanisms, independently of their inner meaning or justification. In *The Gay Science*, the death of God is a cataclysmic event because it is the death of Apollo.[192]

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[188] BT-Attempt 2.

[189] See esp. BT 18 and its charge against the illusions and dangers of 'Socratic culture' and its engrained optimism; see also §§14, 15, 19 and 20.

[190] GS 290.

[191] GS 125: 'What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent?'

[192] This point is made by Gillespie, if argued from a very different perspective: 'Nietzsche recognized that the bastion of reason had fallen: God and all the eternal truths that rested upon this God were dead beyond all hope of resurrection. While

As for truth, Nietzsche defined it in a Baconian, protopragmatic fashion as a process and means to power over nature, as opposed to an idealised objective. This, again, highlights Nietzsche's commitment to 'successful' but fleeting forms and appearances. In Nietzsche's vision, when science pursues truth for the sake of truth, as a value, it only replicates and walks into the noxious wake of Platonism and Christianity.[193] When science, as was the case with the 'Greeks' (read pre-Socratics), knows how to stop at appearances and remains 'superficial – out of profundity' because it has come to understand that appearances are what truly matter, then it becomes a gay science.[194] Now if a gay scientist is one who remains superficial, then so must be the Nietzsche who, out of bad faith or sincere delusion, claims in the 1886 preface to *The Gay Science* to have regained his cheerfulness.[195] Despite his arguments, inherited from Schopenhauer, to the effect that science must complement its worldview by taking an 'inner', subjective perspective, Nietzsche still believed that science has to remain superficial and limited to what external experience can offer. The subjective, 'inner' perspective that Nietzsche wanted to reintroduce in natural science must be only skin deep at most. If will to power is to be the concept over which science's worldview is to be rebuilt, then it must also comply with that demand.

To his credit, Nietzsche did not shy away from this conclusion and in the published works stated it plainly. In *Beyond*, he openly conceded proposing will to power as an interpretation. Where a 'sad' scientist allegedly explains two events as causally connected by unexplainable laws of nature, the 'gay' Nietzsche, refusing such supernatural explanations, saw will to power in action. He analysed causality as an illustration of a 'maximum expansion of power' principle but admitted that the ultimate objective of this alternative perspective was no different from that put forward by the natural scientist: it remained a description in view of a prediction, an attempt at making the world calculable.[196] Later, in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche insisted that cause and purpose are to be sharply differentiated when looking into the history of a practice or organ.[197] In

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the immediate consequences of this event in his view were cataclysmic, [...] the God who had died was only the tame, rational God of Christianity' (Gillespie 1995, 197).

193 GM-III 23–27; GS 123, beyond its title, does not say otherwise.

194 GS-Preface 4.

195 Young argues that Nietzsche's proclaimed cheerfulness in *The Gay Science* is in fact 'a kind of manic frivolity which is really no more than a symptom of desperation and despair' (Young 1996, 92).

196 BGE 22.

197 GM-II 12.

direct opposition to Schopenhauer, who considered that purpose meant origin (bowels as objectified hunger) and thus granted explanatory because teleological powers to his notion of will, Nietzsche flatly denied this possibility. Opening a line now embraced by postmodernism, he saw origin and purpose as mere external and disconnected 'signs that a will to power has become master'[198] and is operating in the background.

For the same reasons, however, Nietzsche forfeited any hope of ever being able to provide any explanatory account of phenomena. He, too, was limited to mere descriptions. The Nietzschean observer is condemned to propose shallow and constantly changing interpretations, knowing from the start that these will always remain eminently challengeable, in fact unprovable, descriptive claims. As Nietzsche insisted, descriptions cannot be accounts of what there is; the concept of will to power can only be a lens through which the world of objects is interpreted; it cannot form the basis of a claim to a correspondence with an ultimate reality. In this outline, naturalisation, even if it adds a veneer of empiricism, is of no consequence. Will to power is a perspective on the world, one of Nietzsche's many well-loved masks and metaphors.[199] In the published works, will to power is an Apollonian, surface-interpretation, concept. If Socrates was an Apollonian man, then so was Nietzsche.

This analysis holds for the posthumous fragments as well. Actuality, as Nietzsche painted it, consists in the play and counterplay of interpretations and perspectives. He redefined reality as a sum of interactions between power quanta and averred that will to power discharged itself as evaluation, action, resistance and interpretation.[200] Interpretation was itself seen as a 'means of becoming master of something'.[201] In doing this, Nietzsche implicitly acknowledged that his own analysis of the world as will to power (as action and reaction of power centres) was a perspective, an appearance, an interpretation among competing others. Despite Nietzsche's imprecations against the erroneousness and non-existence of a 'real' world beyond those of appearances, however, this worldview also assumes an underlying but never openly stated substratum. A world of competing power quanta and of will to power 'manifest[ing] itself only against resistance' implies that there must be more than one power

[198] GM-II 12; see also WP 552 and WP 675, in which this idea is expressed in similar terms.
[199] Cf. BGE 40: 'everything deep loves a mask'. Such a reading of the notion has long been extremely common in the literature; e.g., see Kofman (1972), Blondel (1977), Stack (1983), Müller-Lauter (1999, 147ff), Williams (2001, 107ff).
[200] WP 567.
[201] WP 643.

quantum or centre of will to power.[202] If not, this quantum or centre would expand indefinitely and talk of resistance, interaction or exchange of power would be meaningless. For the same reason, power and will to power must not be evenly distributed: the world as will to power is a world which is individuated, populated with differing concentrations of power interacting with one another, thus justifying the expression 'wills to power' employed by some commentators.[203]

More importantly, however, individuation is left unexplained; in fact, it cannot be explained in Nietzsche's monistic worldview. Individuation demands the existence of a substratum different from that which it individuates. If power quanta represent varying concentrations of will to power or, more generally, if the world is made of will to power manifested in different 'entities' (irrelevant of what these are exactly), then there must be a substratum allowing for this dilution or fragmentation. In the absence of such an underlying substratum, the concentration is the same everywhere and the notion of will to power is devoid of meaning. More generally, the very possibility of entertaining a concept demands the existence of another, defined in terms that are not applicable to that to which it is opposed. The eye perceives the colour 'red' because different primary colours also exist and these cannot be defined as the mere absence of red; an island is identified as an island because it is surrounded by something that is not the island. Similarly, matter is deemed a meaningful concept only because it is opposed, in nineteenth-century materialism's worldview, to non-matter: vacuum (at the price of generating the 'action at a distance' problem that Nietzsche was quick to highlight). As Nietzsche noted, if one disappears, so does the other.[204] Quality or information demands asymmetry; the two notions are equivalent.[205] If whatever exists is will to power and only will to power, then strictly speaking there is no will to power to speak of, since there is no way of differentiating it from something else. In other words, even if in some crucial ways 'the world is will to power', then it *cannot* be 'and

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[202] WP 656; see also WP 382, 634 and 963.

[203] Cf. Müller-Lauter (1999, 138ff) or Stegmaier (2009, 8). Nietzsche himself used this expression but only in his notebooks and with regard to will to power as psychological principle (cf., e.g., WP 401, WLN 1[58], 5[14]). In WP 1067, Nietzsche wrote that the world is 'at the same time one and many' and that it is 'will to power', implying that will to power is itself 'one and many'. See also WP 536: 'whatever is real, [...] is neither one nor even reducible to one'.

[204] 'If there is nothing material, there is also nothing immaterial. The concept no longer means anything' (WP 488).

[205] Muller (2007).

nothing besides'.[206] The world cannot be said to be made of a simple, unitary substratum or concept, whatever it is. If will to power is all there is, really, then the expression ceases to be a concept at all. The only possible way to rescue it from self-annihilation is therefore to adjoin to it a hidden, 'parallel' or underlying notion, opposing will to power for being different from it in some crucial aspects.[207]

This reading is to be contrasted with passages in which Nietzsche seems to affirm unambiguously that will to power refers to the 'inner' or essential content of whatever there is. These passages are extremely rare; a notable one is found in *Beyond Good and Evil*, another in the *Nachlass*.[208] To my best knowledge of Nietzsche's writings, nowhere else does Nietzsche state plainly that the *essence* of actuality is will to power; that this is really what he meant is in fact very doubtful.[209] The posthumous text is proposed in a tentative mode, starting with and repeating the conjunction 'if' in its development and concluding that such hypothesis is an 'absurd question, if the essence itself is power-will and consequently feelings of pleasure and displeasure! Nonetheless: opposites, obstacles are needed'. In other words, 'will to power' has become 'power-will' in the course of a fragment whose ending is in the negative mode. Besides, the text appears to be acknowledging the logical constraint pointed out above: that the essence of the world, if there is one, cannot be simple but must be dual in some ways for, if not, the alleged essential substance is unidentifiable. From 1868 to 1872, the young Nietzsche contemplated undertaking various essays to explore the problem of individuation in Kant's and Schopenhauer's works as well as in materialism and there are reasons to believe that he was aware

[206] A version of this argument is used by Muller-Laüter to reject the idea that will to power, in Nietzsche's thought, could refer to an 'in itself' or a priori quality of the world and to dismiss Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche (Muller-Laüter 1999, 19–21). Another illustration of this problem is the infinite regress trap that awaits anyone construing the world as purely consisting of force (will to power) interacting on other force (will to power), for in such construal the meaning of the concept of force cannot be elucidated; see Poellner (2007, 283–285) for a detailed exposition of this 'quasi-Berkeleian' issue.

[207] These observations, which can be, in very similar terms, directed to Schopenhauer's world-will, constitute another argument for Young's interpretation of Schopenhauer's metaphysics as trichotomic.

[208] BGE 186: 'a world whose essence is the will to power', and WP 693: 'if the innermost essence of being is will to power'.

[209] WLN 14[82] comes close to a similar affirmation but stops short and in any case would only indirectly make the statement.

of the issues broached in the foregoing.[210] Their lessons were presumably not lost on the older Nietzsche.

As for section 186 of *Beyond*, in which will to power is said to be the essence of the world, the context makes it clear that Nietzsche used this undeveloped and in-passing statement as argument against the efforts of moral philosophers in general and of Schopenhauer in particular. Nietzsche took Schopenhauer, like all his predecessors, to base his ethical philosophy on the 'harm no one, rather help everyone as much as you can'[211] principle which Nietzsche believed is characteristic of 'children and old women'. Yet if morality is to be a science, as the moralists Nietzsche attacked considered, then the 'facts' of morality have to be looked at as they really are, not as they are imagined. In this background, 'will to power as essence of the world' is not to be read literally but as Nietzsche's way of reminding his readers, in Machiavellian fashion, that life and by extension the world is about power relations, not about the 'tastelessly false and sentimental', covertly Christian belief that all is or should be about love. This reading is supported by Nietzsche's clarification, later in the same work: '"Exploitation" is not part of a decadent or imperfect, primitive society: it is part of the fundamental nature of living things, as its fundamental organic function; it is a consequence of the true will to power, which is simply the will to life'.[212]

8. The conclusion is that, as an alternative theory of actuality, will to power amounts to a superficial interpretation of natural phenomena. The concept allowed Nietzsche to propose novel interpretations but demands, although Nietzsche nowhere acknowledged it, an underlying substratum to be at all meaningful. Even though will to power claims to present a holistic picture of the world, it is a one-sided, halved dualism, just as much as materialism. This analysis, which is consistent with Nietzsche's lifetime obsession with appearances, transpires directly from the published writings and holds in light of the posthumous texts. It must now be completed by way of a further inquiry into the workings of a world as will to power as Nietzsche envisioned it. There are not many details as to how exactly such a world would operate, but the ones provided are quite revealing. The discussion proposed here is less an exploration than a reconstruction based on the few clues available in Nietzsche's notebook entries.

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[210] Toscano (2001).

[211] Expressed in Latin in Nietzsche's quotation of Schopenhauer's *Fundamental Problems of Morality* (the translation quoted here is that proposed by Marion Faber 1998, 186).

[212] BGE 259.

The first step in this reconstruction is Nietzsche's use of the term 'quanta' to designate the centres of forces, which must now be seen as the most basic component of actuality. In Bacon's *Novum Organum*, the term 'quantum' refers to a finite and stable quantity of matter or substance.[213] After Bacon, this meaning appears to have remained the norm in science and philosophy. Kant used it in that sense[214] and Lange referred to it in like manner.[215] Nietzsche remained faithful to this tradition. When he stated that the world 'may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centres of force', he de facto implied that each of these centres represents a finite quantity (quantum) of force or power.[216] The main difference is that Nietzsche's quanta, like Boscovich's pure force-centres, are not substantial but immaterial, unextended and indivisible. Now if power quanta are the most basic components of actuality, to the extent that they are finite and indivisible, all quanta are identical (if the qualifier is applicable to immaterial concepts) and represent the same quantity of power. Being identical, they are also immutable. How these quanta can exchange power becomes puzzling, for if one quantum exchanges power with another, then surely they are neither constant nor identical.[217] On these matters, Nietzsche's lack of scientific culture beyond what he could collect through Lange's erudite account is plain.[218] As concepts, 'gradient' and 'vector', introduced in his lifetime and developed to great effect in the fields of electromagnetism and thermodynamics,

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[213] 'For there is nothing more true in nature than the twin propositions that "nothing is produced from nothing," and "nothing is reduced to nothing," but that the absolute quantum or sum total of matter remains unchanged, without increase or diminution', *Novum Organum* XL. Nietzsche read and annotated this work (Brobjer 2008a, 237).

[214] 'Principle of the Permanence of Substance: In all changes of phenomena, substance is permanent, and the quantum thereof in nature is neither increased nor diminished' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 'Systems of the Principles of the Pure Understanding', III-3 A, First Analogy).

[215] Stack (1983, 36); Schopenhauer does not use the term (except when quoting in Latin) in his main work.

[216] WP 1066; see also WP 633 ('the factions in struggle emerge with different quanta of power'), WP 639, as well as WP 638, where 'quantum' refers to the world's total quantity of energy. The expression 'quantum of force' is also employed in GM-I 13.

[217] As WP 633 clearly implies.

[218] Nietzsche would himself come to resent his lack of scientific culture (see EH-II 2). Müller-Lauter argues that Nietzsche's friend Peter Gast played a role in Nietzsche's scientific awareness that should not be underestimated (see Muller-Laüter 1999, 112 and n. 88, 214).

appear indeed as superior alternatives to 'quantum' to convey what Nietzsche can be taken to mean. In these disciplines and more generally in what will come to be known as continuum mechanics, these notions offer coherent ways of representing and conceptually manipulating variations of forces, pressures and potentials in time and space. A study, even if cursory, of these disciplines would have also benefited Nietzsche with regard to another conception of his. The second part of the self-contradictory 'there is no law: every power draws its ultimate consequence at every moment'[219] seems inspired from a basic principle of thermodynamics. If understood as meaning that 'bodies' (whatever these are) expand to the maximum and apply equal pressure or power in all directions,[220] then it is a simple reformulation of a contention which underpins the conception of 'ideal gases', proposed by Clapeyron in 1834 and still widely used today in fluid and continuum mechanics.

Nevertheless, continuum, despite earlier allegiances to the notion,[221] is *not* what Nietzsche implied in the texts in which he introduced his concept of power quanta. This is especially the case when the vision is developed within the framework implied by Nietzsche's 'proof' of the eternal recurrence theory. According to it, the world indefinitely repeats a cycle composed of a given succession of states. These states are in a 'calculable' number and each state represents a given combination of force-centres reoccurring an infinite number of times.[222] Beyond the contradiction that there seems to be between infinite time and the repetition of an overall identical cycle,[223] acceptance of Nietzsche's argument demands two important premises. The first one, about which Nietzsche remained silent, is that the world can go from one state to the next only through a discrete (as opposed to smooth

[219] WP 634; see also TI-IX 11: 'Power [is] a law among laws'.
[220] As WP 636 also plainly suggests.
[221] See, e.g., GS 112.
[222] WP 1066.
[223] Unless there exists a point of reference 'external' to the world (an impossibility if 'world' is taken to encompass everything that there possibly is), the passage of time can be appreciated only with reference to a given state of the world thought to be initial and non-repeatable. Once the overall cycle of the world recommences, time is by definition reset to zero since the record of the very existence of the point of reference of the previous cycle is erased from all tablets; if it were not, then that would mean that the main cycle has not repeated itself yet. Nietzsche was well aware of this difficulty since he admitted to conflating being and becoming through his theory of eternal recurrence (see WP 617 and 1061). For an in-depth exploration of this point, see Magnus (1978, 98–110). For an argument to the opposite conclusion in the context of Nietzsche's opposition to Dühring with regard to the infinity of past time, see Small (1990).

or continuous) transition. If, strictly speaking, transitions were allowed to be continuous, then there would be an infinite and incalculable number of 'substates' between two-world states.[224] These 'substates' being themselves world states, the number of possible states would also become incalculable, a possibility specifically ruled out by Nietzsche.[225] If transitions are discrete though, when the world goes through them, it switches or 'jumps' from one state to the next.[226] In this outline, which a commentator calls 'time atomism',[227] actuality is fragmented in disconnected states and the actual 'leap' between them must be thought of as instantaneous, meaning that the world is in a temporary 'static state' between each transition.[228] This underlying discontinuity in the make-up and evolution of actuality is noticeable in Nietzsche's thought when he wrote of the 'great dice game of existence',[229] for the result of a dice's throw is limited (assuming the dice to be cubic) to six and only six possibilities. It is also perceptible when Nietzsche wrote, in spite of all his previous arguments, of 'bodies' striving to become master 'over all space'[230] around them or when he used an expression like 'atoms

[224] For the same reason that there is an incalculable and infinite quantity of real numbers between 1 and 2. Calculability does not necessarily mean finitude, however; the number of rational numbers between 1 and 2 is infinite but calculable.

[225] Nietzsche did not explain why he believed the number of states (combinations) to be calculable; it seems he took this for granted given his hypotheses (finite total quantity of force, finite quantity of centres of force), but there is no compelling reason to hold that view.

[226] Magnus' rejection of Simmel's classic rejoinder (based on a set of three wheels spinning at rates of 1, ½ and $1/\pi$, respectively, which, in Simmel's argument, never repeats exactly its starting position) to Nietzsche's eternal recurrence theory is partly based on this observation. To be valid, Simmel's objection to the theory demands the possibility of perfectly continuous (i.e., going through an infinite number of positions) rotations of the wheels, for only such possibility can prevent the wheels from reproducing exactly a given position when their differential spinning rates are irrational (irrational meaning here impossible to reduce to a fraction of integers; the number π is irrational, justifying Simmel's choice). Such a possibility is excluded in Nietzsche's vision of a world limited to a finite number of combinations (Magnus 1978, 90–98; Simmel 1991, 172–173).

[227] Pearson 2000, 6ff. Pearson's coinage comes from the title of a *Nachlass* fragment, dated from 1873 and titled *Time Atom Theory*.

[228] The difference between a world transforming itself discretely and one doing so continuously is similar to the difference between a digital clock which temporarily 'freezes' time each minute or second of the day and a so-called analogue, or traditional, clock, the hands of which show the passing of time by moving continuously, never stopping in a given position.

[229] WP 1066.

[230] WP 636.

of force'.[231] Discontinuity is of course implied by Nietzsche's settling on the term 'quantum', which forcibly suggests the idea of finitude, self-containment and structure, in complete disregard of Schopenhauer's arguments to the necessary structureless nature of actuality. It was precisely for the discontinuity implied by 'quantum' that Max Planck reluctantly retained the term in 1900, when he proposed his revised solution for the then mysterious black-body radiation problem, a solution which has since given its name to today's 'quantum physics'. Planck hypothesised that physical systems were capable of exchanging only discrete amounts of energy, or quanta.[232] In such a discontinuous outlook, Nietzsche's world as will to power quanta is a recognisable, albeit convoluted, version of atomism.[233]

The second premise that Nietzsche's 'proof'[234] of the theory of eternal recurrence demands to be logically valid is that the world progresses from one state to the next according to a forced order. If transitions from one world state to the next were not forced – that is, if the world could progress randomly from one state to another – it would be possible to have a finite number of possible states (as Nietzsche assumed) while not having the world recurring eternally through a given cycle.[235] That, however, Nietzsche believed there to be such an endlessly repeating and thus ordered cycle means that he saw each transition as forced, possibly according to the principle that power must express itself to its maximum effect or consequence. No exception (in the form of a deviation, even of the smallest sort, from the overall cyclic succession of states) is possible since such exception would introduce variation and automatically break the repetition, thus falsifying the eternal recurrence theory. In this determined outlook, every event is necessary; as Nietzsche observed, 'event and necessary event is a tautology'.[236] Now forced connections from one state to another are usually described as

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[231] WP 637.

[232] For some time, Planck thought that his theory was only provisional and would eventually be proven wrong. He was convinced that actuality was not discrete but continuous; he only later accepted Einstein's arguments to the contrary.

[233] Using a different but related route, Porter argues that will to power is a mere logical extension of atomism for relying on the notions of 'force-centre', 'force-point' and 'power quantum' (Porter 2006, 556–559).

[234] Term explicitly used in WP 1057; WP 1063 and 1066 also convey the idea of a formal demonstration of the theory.

[235] As is the case, e.g., for the decimal expression of π: even if limited to using only 10 possible digits, it is endless yet never repeats itself. This rejoinder was first proposed in 1936 by Oskar Becker in *Dasein und Dawesen*, 42 (Pfullingen, 1963; quoted in Müller-Lauter 1999, 106).

[236] WP 639.

cause-effect relationships; that Nietzsche rejected the terms had little consequence on his de facto reliance on the concept of causation in the intermediary steps of his demonstration of the eternal recurrence theory. One must also mention the danger that there is in supporting a view in which the world is recurring eternally with arguments coming from the first law of thermodynamics.[237] This body of knowledge makes such a cycle impossible: the second law of thermodynamics precludes the reversibility of energy exchanges, even if the overall quantity of energy is said to remain constant in a closed system. Thermodynamics predicts a terminal state of the world where all energy will have been exchanged and the energy level is the same everywhere, signalling the end of all life and of all events (thermodynamics is vulnerable to Nietzsche's question as to why this terminal state has not been reached yet). In such a view, if the entire universe is considered a finite system, as Nietzsche would have it, then a recurrence of events, let alone an eternal one, is impossible. If Nietzsche wanted to refer to the first law of thermodynamics, he also had to accept the second law: one comes with the other.[238]

In the end, then, as far as an alternative theory of actuality is concerned, will to power is not metaphysical, as Nietzsche understood the term, but it is precisely in its non-metaphysical aspects that the concept meets its greatest difficulties. Nietzsche's world as will to power remains a surface description of actuality since it demands an unstated substratum to be logically complete. On Nietzsche's own admission and consistent with his protopragmatic epistemology and his admiration for the methods of science, the theory is formulated with the view of producing useful predictions, as a road to power over nature, by focusing on appearances. When merged with Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence, a world as will to power is a world fragmented in discontinuous states, moving discretely and necessarily (i.e., causally) from one given state to the next according to a very general but inviolable principle. In other words, Nietzsche's world as will to power presents rigorously the same features for which Nietzsche indicted and vehemently rejected nineteenth-century materialism.[239] Nietzsche's world as will to power quanta and

[237] WP 1063: 'The law of the conservation of energy demands eternal recurrence'.

[238] The various tensions that exist between will to power and thermodynamics' worldview are detailed and described as overcome in Müller-Lauter (1999, 115–121).

[239] The proximity of materialism's and of Nietzsche's world as will to power is acknowledged in Müller-Lauter (1999, 150–152). Muller-Laüter concludes that

atomic materialism's world of elementary, grain-like particles of matter are, in their defining aspects, indistinguishable: one-sided, logically incomplete and untenable but pragmatic surface interpretations based upon causal determinism and focusing on appearances. In Nietzsche's language, materialism's 'matter' has simply become 'will to power'.

Will to power is Nietzsche's version of what Peter Sloterdijk calls 'Dionysian materialism', which he sees as the fundamental marker of modernity. Modern materialism, Sloterdijk observes, inasmuch as it is a violent rejection of idealism, is a desperate and 'final seizure of power'.[240] Nietzsche's view of the world as will to power belongs most firmly to that tradition; it is the final form and completion of his early (1870–1871) ambition: 'My philosophy [is] an inverted Platonism: [...] living in semblance as goal',[241] inasmuch as it focuses exclusively and deliberately on appearances for the sake of effectivenes, that is, on power. In the words of Heidegger, with will to power, Nietzsche 'anticipates the consummation of the modern age',[242] an age obsessed with technology and the fleeting feeling of the power over nature it provides. In the last analysis, then, will to power as a theory of actuality is sheer Apollonianism under a Dionysian mask. Will to power is materialism interpreted romantically. The late Nietzsche's antiworld dualism, combined with an obsession with power presumably coming from his early readings of Homer, carried him too far to the naturalist-materialistic side. That Nietzsche refrained from publishing in full the body of ideas discussed so far indicates, however, that his critical stance concerning his own ideas was not as blunt as the above suggests. It is to these aspects that this chapter now turns.

9. What is known today as section 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil* contains crucial, if loosely connected, components of the chain of arguments that led Nietzsche to the view that the world is will to power. That this text found its place in one of his major published works indicates how close Nietzsche must have been to publishing the ideas analysed here. That he finally refrained from doing so, while still stating regularly that 'life is will to power', is in itself reasonable evidence that Nietzsche, when working

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will to power is a superior worldview according to Nietzsche's criterion for truth (enhancement of power) but that this assessment rests upon 'the circularity of Nietzsche's thinking'. Nehamas's interpretation of Nietzsche's reconstruction of things as the sum of their effects is also broadly consistent with the reading proposed here, for materialism also constructs the world of material objects through their effects over other objects (Nehamas 1985, 74–84).

[240] Sloterdijk (1989, 83–84).

[241] Quoted in Heidegger (1991, I, 154).

[242] Heidegger (1991, III, 6).

on *Beyond*, realised the difficulties and contradictions this vision contains. The marked hypothetical tone of the section is extremely unusual in his work.[243] It appears as a sort of compromise, as if Nietzsche wanted to distance himself from his own thought while still proposing it. The section is a compelling sign that Nietzsche is wary of his own ideas while remaining attracted to what they represent. Nowhere in the corpus did Nietzsche make the reasons for his wariness explicit, but the published texts and the posthumous notes contain solid indications that he became aware of the problems detailed above. Nabais observes that the concept of will to power took shape in Nietzsche's notebooks at about the same time (from 1885 onwards) as the expression 'eternal recurrence' disappeared from them.[244] Even though the idea of a world as will to power eternally recurring is found in a few posthumous fragments, the two trademark expressions are found together only in a single note, as if Nietzsche was aware of the risks of explicitly uniting the two concepts.[245] Moreover, the note in which the 'demonstration' of the eternal cycle is proposed, even though making use of the expression 'centres of force', is written in a hypothetical voice[246] and contains neither the term 'quantum' nor 'power' nor, a fortiori, 'will to power'.[247] This is another good reason to

[243] This tone is, as Müller-Lauter (1999, 127) notes, deflated by Nietzsche's parenthetical remark and italics in the following passage of the section, which is assertive and not tentative: 'Assuming finally that we could explain our entire instinctual life as the development and differentiation of *one* basic form of will (namely the will to power, as *my* tenet would have it)'.

[244] Nabais (2006a, 125). *Ecce Homo* is a possible exception to this observation; when Nietzsche mentioned his eternal recurrence doctrine as 'the unconditional repeated circular course of all things' (EH-BT 3), however, he immediately added a reference to Zarathustra. This suggests that it is to the normative version of the theory, rather than to its cosmological form, that he referred in this passage (see, e.g., EH-Z 1 and Z 6, where this is unambiguously the case).

[245] WP 55. In that long entry, however, not only is the concept of will to power not used with regard to an alternative view of actuality (but as basis for moral values), but also it is not connected in any way with that of eternal recurrence. WP 617, on which Heidegger relies regularly to argue for the unity of the two notions, comes very close to doing this, yet in this text Nietzsche only alluded to the eternal recurrence theory (when he wrote 'that everything recurs') without mentioning it by its name. See Heidegger (1991, I, 18–24), and Krell (1991, 271–272), for more details and analysis on the importance of WP 617 in Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche.

[246] WP 1066: '*If* the world *may* be thought of [...] it *would* be realised an infinite number of times' (emphases added).

[247] It must be said, however, that WP 639 (written a year earlier, 1887) sounds the idea of an 'eternal cycle' of successive highs and lows of will to power and of various stages of an overall constant quantum of energy. Müller-Lauter also reports

suspect that Nietzsche had come to realise that the assumptions of his 'proof' of the theory, combined with an actuality seen as a collection of power quanta, landed him in a discrete framework indistinguishable from that of atomism.

Contextual exegesis of Nietzsche's notebook entries is bound to remain a fragile enterprise given the relative uncertainty that shrouds their precise contents and chronology. The published works offer more solid grounds in that regard; their literal construction provides clues that Nietzsche realised the problems he was facing. It is, for instance, difficult to believe that the Nietzsche who, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, ridiculed his predecessors and contemporaries for attempting *causa sui*, or Münchhausen-style,[248] levitation did not see that he was endeavouring to execute exactly the same improbable performance. If the world is 'simply "will to power" and that alone',[249] then beyond the logical difficulties pertaining to individuation, will to power itself must be conceived of as self-sufficient or, again, as *causa sui*. Nietzsche surely was aware of this tension, his ironical but uncompromising charge against Kant's supposedly self-sustaining 'categories' being spelled out just a few pages before he proposes the experimental section 36.[250] This problem is so flagrant that Nietzsche's later insistence, in *Twilight*, that abolishing the 'real world' means abolishing the 'apparent one' can (also) be easily if perhaps cynically analysed as a disingenuous attempt to weaken its significance. If notions of 'apparent' and 'real' worlds are to be dispensed with completely or merged into one, then the world as a whole is to be conceived of as its own *causa prima* – that is, as *causa sui*.[251] In such a context, the rejoinder to the effect that the concept of will to power itself suffers from the same weakness loses much, perhaps all, of its significance.

Such tension between sections a few pages apart is a regular pattern of *Beyond* as far as will to power is concerned. Nietzsche's open admission

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that a previous version of WP 1067 insisted on the 'will to willing-again-and yet-one-more', which would indicate that in 1885 Nietzsche was seriously trying to connect firmly will to power and eternal recurrence (Müller-Lauter 1999, n. 17, 217–218).

[248] In BGE 21; see also BGE 11 and 15.

[249] BGE 36.

[250] In BGE 11; in this section Nietzsche, in typical fashion, amalgamates indiscriminately Kant's categories, faculties and synthetic a priori judgements into one lump concept to dismiss them in one fell swoop. In doing so, however, Nietzsche's argument loses its bite, because it is now unclear (but in the end unimportant for the present discussion) which notion exactly he attacks for being *causa sui*, for surely if one is, then the others are not.

[251] The last sentence BGE 9 can be read as alluding to this conclusion.

that will to power is an interpretation of nature on a par with that of scientists has already been noted.[252] He thus acknowledged that, through his concept, the riddle of actuality is merely pushed further back one level and that no explanatory gain has been achieved. Despite his warning that it is folly to believe that human interpretations can be universal,[253] will is a simplification, just like matter.[254] In the 1885 note which concludes *The Will to Power*, although calling it 'my Dionysian world', Nietzsche could not help observing that will to power is 'his mirror', a surface-interpretation metaphor that is openly Apollonian. Another of his criticisms that Nietzsche must have realised was relevant to a view of the world as will to power is that pointing to the fact that a concept can be meaningful only if it is opposed to another. That which is thought to be everywhere present or universally relevant, that which purports to account for an entire spectrum is a meaningless concept. Beyond his sneers at all sorts of dualisms, Nietzsche recognised that if one end of a spectrum disappears, the other also does. This theme regularly surfaces in notebook entries.[255]

In a late note, Nietzsche observed that monism, as a systematic view of actuality, is 'passive' nihilism'[256] and contemptible 'peaceableness'.[257] This is so because, beyond all his critiques of the Kantian ethics, Nietzsche recognised that accounting for the world and human existence through a single, all-encompassing concept robs man of his power to create value and to entertain purposes on his own standing. In a monistic world, values and purposes are already inscribed in the great natural course of events, of which man is but a negligible part and over which he has no control. In such an outlook, if man is to be a bearer of value at all, it can only be that of the whole, or Unity, a whole to which all values must be assigned. The subsequent realisation that such a unified whole is in itself valueless, meaningless for being determined, its course forever beyond the reach of man, shatters this hope.[258] A monistic, natural world is a determined world and a

[252] In BGE 22.
[253] WP 565.
[254] WP671.
[255] WP 552 notably; see also the end of WP 693.
[256] WP 22 and 23; see also WP 55. Note also WP 16: 'we despise ourselves only because there are moments when we cannot subdue that absurd impulse that is called "idealism"'. Elsewhere, Nietzsche noted that monism is linked with inertia and weakness (WP 600).
[257] WP 601.
[258] See WP 12 (A) and WP 55.

determined world is without moral significance; even if a liberating perspective because it restores a sense of innocence,[259] this insight leads to complete nihilism; that is, to the understanding that human existence is itself worthless, meaningless and without moral purpose.[260]

Following Schopenhauer and Lange, Nietzsche attacked nineteenth-century materialism and natural science on exactly these grounds. He analysed them as deliberately excluding the subject from the scope of their investigation, proudly relying on their 'objective' picture of the world from which the value inherent to the subject has been removed.[261] In this, Nietzsche joined Christian authors who long argued that materialism devalues the world. More originally, Nietzsche indicted Christianity for leading to the same result. For the faithful, only God knows what is good, for He is the source of all values. For Nietzsche, however, it is not only the Christian vision that contains the seed of the nihilistic collapse, described above, for stripping man of moral worth; combined with the Platonic-Christian will to truth, nihilism becomes an even more certain outcome. Once the news of the death of God is fully absorbed – that is, when Christian man, driven by his frenzied will to truth, comes to realise that God is a logically untenable belief – the onset of nihilism is precipitated.[262] Science and Christianity are depicted not as opposing each other but, owing to shared underlying features, as leading to the same, if unintended, catastrophic consequence. Part of Kant's 'critical' work was precisely directed at finding an alternative to such a nihilistic result; Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, was then sufficiently lucid to acknowledge this.[263] Even if the late aphorisms and posthumous fragments under analysis do not acknowledge it openly, through these considerations Nietzsche returned to arguments expressed in his first book, to the effect that life and the world can be justified only through the

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[259] TI-VI 8.

[260] Based on these contentions, Young goes so far as to argue that Nietzsche could not be fundamentally antireligious even if he remained anti-Christian (see Young (2007, 201ff), for a summary of Young's arguments). Young's thesis has been resisted by most commentators.

[261] GS 373; see also WP 1(5).

[262] A regular theme; see GS 125, GS 343 and TI-IX 5 for a direct expression. Hence GS 132: 'What is now decisive against Christianity is our taste, no longer our reasons', for to call reason to the rescue against Christianity is to run the risk of re-creating a new god, namely Truth.

[263] In BT 19 most visibly. See also BT 18, in which Kant is praised for having defeated the optimism concealed in 'the essence of logic'; i.e., for having won over pure reason and the nihilism to which it leads by way of unchecked scepticism. More on Nietzsche's tribute to Kant in *Birth* can be found in Gillespie 1995, 212ff.

union of Apollo and Dionysus; that is, through a dualistic perspective. A Unity – whatever its name: Nature, Matter, God – insofar as it lies beyond man's control, bears no more moral worth than a wholly determined one. When this realisation finally emerges, nihilism ensues.

Nietzsche did not diagnose at length the origins and causes of nihilism for the sake of proposing a diagnosis. Zarathustra is not simply a diagnostician and a prophet of doom. He is also a physician and a conveyor of 'glad tidings', urging his disciples and the village people to derail the advent of the nihilistic 'last man' by fighting against 'the senseless, the meaningless'; virtue can still be bestowed upon earth by reverting to the body and its 'holy' instincts.[264] Nietzsche's later 'yes-saying' motto, his defence of a 'gay science', his grand project to 'revalue all values' pursued the same objective: to avert nihilism. Yet Nietzsche's own arguments must have made him realise that this struggle, regardless of how he conducts it, must rely on a worldview that cannot be reduced to monism.[265] A monistic world seen as 'will to power and nothing besides', in which subject and object are made of the same substratum, cannot be the recourse against the nihilism Nietzsche prophesised. Such a world is just as much an impasse as a world exclusively made of matter if one is looking for grounds from which to fight nihilism. That both worldviews are only seemingly monistic but in reality dualistic (for reasons offered earlier) is of no consequence to that finding, for will to power and materialism were taken to be monistic, each by its respective exponents.

That Nietzsche reached this uncomfortable conclusion, beside his not infrequent late admissions of being himself at bottom a decadent and nihilist, is quite plain in a notebook entry that reads like an honest admission. The account provided sounds like a miniature of the evolution of Nietzsche's own position, ending on a despairing note:

> as soon as man finds out how [the] world is fabricated solely from psychological needs, and how he has absolutely no right to it, the last form of nihilism comes into being: it includes disbelief in any metaphysical world and forbids itself any belief in a *true* world. Having reached this standpoint, one grants the reality of becoming as the *only* reality, forbids oneself every kind of clandestine access to

[264] Z-I 22 (2).

[265] Although undeveloped, WP 600 can be read in this light: the recognition that monism is a sign of decline for 'depriv[ing] the world of its disturbing and enigmatic character'. See also Z-I 10 and WP 601: value, hope and love require war and overcoming of an opposition, a feature specifically ruled out by monism.

> afterworlds and false divinities – but *cannot endure this world though one does not want to deny it*.[266]

World dualism is untenable and is mere moral trickery in the eyes of a 'free spirit'. In the end however, metaphysical monism fares no better. Not only is it psychologically unbearable, since it removes all bases for moral valuation, but it also and consequently leads to the final, civilisation-destroying form of nihilism.

Materialism and will to power as theory of actuality suffer from the same intractable core weakness. Both worldviews are one-sided world-dualisms insofar as they demand an underlying opposing substratum for their respective ultimate concept to make sense at all, the existence of which is not only unacknowledged but also refused. Their claimed monism, even if illusory, prevents in practice the edification and preservation of moral value and meaning within their respective worldviews. Nietzsche's desperation left him little option but to refrain from publishing in earnest his alternative theory of actuality while keeping for himself the reasons for doing so. Quite unusually for him, it also meant that he could not lash out jubilantly with his sharpest arguments against materialism. For even if will to power was conceived as a reaction against and an alternative to materialism, to the extent that both worldviews suffer from the same insuperable weaknesses, they cannot be differentiated. Philosophically, they stand or fall together. Philologically also, for both lines of thought belong to the same period in Nietzsche's intellectual development. Both stemmed from the same once-cherished sources: Schopenhauer and Lange.

Will to power fails as a theory of actuality opposing materialism and two-world dualisms and many signs show that Nietzsche recognised this failure. Yet perhaps the concept of will to power can still be put to use in a narrower, if not less ambitious and daunting, scope. Perhaps will to power can still provide insights into life, especially human life. Perhaps the concept can reveal the key to human existence. It is to these questions that this study now turns.

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[266] WP 12 (A); all emphases in original.

4
Will to Power and 'I'

1. Among the various roles that Nietzsche assigned to his concept of will to power, one stood out early on. From *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* onwards, will to power was at times proposed as the drive or set of drives explaining the totality of man's behaviour, at other times as the process underpinning all organic events to the extent that the phenomena 'life' and 'will to power' are said to be indistinguishable. In this context it is unsurprising to read Nietzsche treating will to power as the true basis of psychology, a discipline he redefined, in terms equally obscure and intriguing, as the exploration of 'depths' and as the 'morphology and evolutionary theory of the will to power'. On these premises and on these alone, affirmed Nietzsche, psychology is to be recognised as 'the queen of sciences, which the other sciences exist to serve and anticipate', for it is to 'once again become the way to basic issues'.[1]

Even if one grants Nietzsche poetic licence and forgives a degree of self-aggrandisement when speaking of his own ideas, for any self-respecting philosopher these are no small assertions. The least one would expect after such bold claims is extensive substantiation or, at minimum, qualification; one cannot expect one's readers to accept a demotion of physiology and zoology, not to mention physics and chemistry, as ancillaries of a concept of one's own coinage without solid argumentation. Frustratingly for his readers, of such developments no trace is to be found in Nietzsche's texts, published or posthumous. As if this were not enough, there is an obvious element of irony in Nietzsche's extraordinary declarations. In the same works in which they are made, Nietzsche vehemently dismissed the existence of a behaviourally effective entity

[1] BGE 23.

distinct from the body. Earlier, he had his Zarathustra proclaiming in clear terms that man is 'body entirely, and nothing beside' and that 'soul is only a word for something in the body'.[2] He no less vigorously rejected the Cartesian cogito while writing off the notion of free will as simple 'emotion' and 'error'.[3] In *The Gay Science*, he reduced self-consciousness to an internal and causally insignificant use of language. The existence of the very entity over which psychology traditionally rests being so unambiguously denied, one is left to wonder what remains of the discipline and how, rather than becoming the central axis around which the other sciences revolve, it could be salvaged from an absorption-dissolution into physiology in the best of cases. Nietzsche's brief allusion, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, to a mysterious if attractive 'physio-psychology' does nothing to alleviate this paradox.[4]

Although Nietzsche's arguments against Descartes and the causal but uncaused 'I' must be taken on their own merits, on these matters, perhaps more than on any other, Nietzsche's blunt handling of philosophically weighty terms and concepts is all too apparent. So much so that, so this chapter argues, it disserves his goals and in the end invalidates the case he was trying to make. Had Nietzsche used the same word consistently for what he wanted to debunk, his case would have been clearer and possibly stronger; the fact is that he did not. In his obsessive bludgeoning of what he took to be the monolithic ontology of his time, Nietzsche made no distinction between Plato's psyche, Christ's soul, Descartes' 'I' and Kant's subject.[5] He took these concepts, together with what he considered to be their various denominations or derivatives (self, ego, *Geist* – spirit or mind – and will, the latter inclusive of its Schopenhauerian sense), as pointing to the same idea. All these terms and the notions they are meant to represent are dismissed indiscriminately in Nietzsche's writings. That such a brusque move was deliberate or the result of his lack of philosophical schooling is an intriguing point

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[2] Z-I 4.

[3] BGE 19 and TI-VI 7.

[4] In BGE 23, and as the note at the end of the first essay of the *Genealogy* plainly suggests. See also WP 492: 'The body and physiology the starting point: why?'

[5] 'Psyche' is a word seldom used by Nietzsche; when referring to Plato's *ψοχή*, Nietzsche wrote 'pure spirit' (as in BGE-Preface). MacDonald argues that in Descartes's *Meditations* and *Replies*, contrary to customary practice even among Cartesian scholars, 'mind' should be sharply distinguished from 'soul', for the latter is there conceived as the immortal, corporeal but thoughtless life principle while the former is merely the ability to think (MacDonald 2003, 281–282). Nietzsche certainly did not make such distinction in his critique of Descartes.

in its own right. It is a moot one, though: what matters to the commentator is what Nietzsche's arguments achieve or fail to achieve on their own standing. Adding philosophical sophistication to Nietzsche's texts is bound to cast an additional agenda on a corpus not known for impartiality or balance. It is likely to depart from what Nietzsche wrote or, more precisely in this instance, did not write.

To make these problems as manifest as possible, choice has thus been made to retain the term 'I' to point to what Nietzsche attacked: the 'doer behind the deed', the uncaused cause, Descartes' 'thing that thinks'.[6] It is indeed that word that Nietzsche used in *Zarathustra* and in *Beyond* in his most direct and unambiguous dismissals of the notion.[7] Moreover, when he used 'soul' (*Seele* in German) in these same works (and a fortiori in his use of 'ego' or *Geist* in others), Nietzsche was not concerned with the spiritual dimension traditionally associated with the term. What he opposed was the construct of a supernatural entity or substratum, distinct from the body, that directs behaviour and to which moral values can be ascribed. Nietzsche – presumably finding such matters secondary or altogether irrelevant in the context of his wholesale rejection of the Christian ontology – was uninterested in the possibility that this entity or substratum could elevate itself above nature and connect with God.

Nietzsche's lack of refinement on these matters takes centre stage when it comes to the freedom versus determinism debate that receives sustained attention in this chapter. Traditional compatibilist arguments of the Stoical (one is to choose what one has to do) or Humean (freedom to act demands determinism of the will) type may represent a solution to the free will problem – or again they may not. Kant rejected compatibilism in very harsh terms; he analysed it as affirming the possibility of free will through arguments that have nothing to do with metaphysics, whereas he insisted that (transcendental) metaphysics was the only possible grounding of freedom.[8] Irrespective of the merits or demerits of compatibilist solutions and of their assessment by Kant, however, what is notable

[6] Other choices were possible; in his study, Parkes retains the term 'soul' (Parkes 1994, 19–20).

[7] In Z-I 4 and BGE 16 and 17, notably.

[8] Cf. the *Critique of Practical Reason*, ch. III. Kant wrote that compatibilist arguments amount to 'wretched subterfuge' and 'petty word-jugglery' (Kant 1952, 332); he insisted that freedom came from man's own 'causality as a noumenon' (333).

is that Nietzsche not only denied the possibility of free will (a possibility that compatibilism attempts to qualify and safeguard), but also rejected precisely that upon which Kant relied to ground it. That is, Nietzsche rejected the existence of a non-bodily component of man, the 'doer behind the deed' that Kant affirmed. This rejection is detectable even in Nietzsche's dismissal of 'unfree will':[9] for him, speaking of an unfree will still assumes the existence of 'will' as ontological substratum not reducible to the body. In other words, Nietzsche located the free will problem exactly where Kant had before him; in that sense, Nietzsche is committed to naturalism for the same reason that Kant had to break from it. For all that, even if compatibilism can be analysed as offering solutions to some of the more serious problems Nietzsche's thought contains and although some rare passages lend themselves to a compatibilist reading,[10] in light of his blunt handling of ontological concepts, it is extremely improbable that Nietzsche thought along compatibilist lines.

Underneath Nietzsche's lack of philosophical finesse run contradictions from which he never succeeded in untangling himself. In addition to the free will problem, one of their most readily discernible aspects is Nietzsche's inability to deliver on the expectations that the extraordinary statements highlighted earlier cannot but raise. This is not to say, of course, that Nietzsche had nothing of interest to say about psychology or about such connected matters as consciousness, language, drives, responsibility and morality. Measured by the interest they have stirred in the literature, Nietzsche's contributions in these areas are nothing short of exceptional. One cannot but observe, however, that the books he polished off for publication do not readily support or even reconcile with the view that psychology should be replaced by the study of the 'evolution of will to power'. Asserting, as Nietzsche did, that every creature strives to release its strength,[11] that happiness is 'the feeling that power increases'[12] or that 'even in the will of the servant' there is 'a will to be master'[13] falls short, on any reasonable account, of making a solid case that human existence is driven exclusively by a psychological will to (more) power. Nietzsche did not, either, make it clear how or why psychology, as he redefined it, should be *the* way to basic issues beyond the trite comment (one he did not even offer) that empirical

[9] In BGE 21.
[10] Most notably TI-IX 38.
[11] BGE 13.
[12] AC 2.
[13] Z-II 12

observations are, first, psychological phenomena, making in this broad sense psychology the basis of all knowledge. Similarly, endorsing Socrates' classic view of consciousness as dialogue within, adopting Hume's dismissal of the self as immaterial substance (a claim that very few philosophers ever really made anyway[14]) or seemingly endorsing the romantic contention of will as central to human existence does not amount to providing a robust alternative to the Cartesian starting point. Besides, as Nietzsche must have known, philosophical cornerstones such as the cogito, the I-subject, free will and the self as entity distinct from the body had already been submitted to vigorous criticisms well before his time. Nietzsche's only innovation on these matters, provided it can be sufficiently clarified and distinguished from the more general concept of will, is the concept of will to power.

The salient themes under consideration in this chapter (power as a general drive, rejection of the cogito, dismissal of the self, denial of free will, the role of language in consciousness) come back insistently in Nietzsche's late writings, albeit sometimes only in lapidary forms. Yet except for the link (seasoned with peripheral considerations on will and will to power) between morality and conscience, which receives an essay-long development in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche's attempts at connecting and unifying them all firmly are not prominent in his corpus. Such links are found only in the *Nachlass*. Nowhere did Nietzsche formulate plainly and unambiguously, let alone substantiate, assertions to the effect that man *is* will to power. At best, he can be said to allude to this statement. This restraint is surprising, because not only does such a claim flow almost directly from others he published or kept for himself, but the contention also goes a considerable way towards elucidating many statements offered in *Zarathustra*, *Beyond* and *The Gay Science*, the most striking of which were quoted above. These omissions are indications of Nietzsche's awareness of the difficulties he was facing; together with other texts, they can be analysed as explanations of his decision not to go ahead with the publication of his ideas. It is indeed reasonable to believe that, on matters pertaining to what can only be called ontology (a term notably absent from his vocabulary), Nietzsche recognised that his philosophy had reached a paralysing dilemma.

What follows explores, qualifies and substantiates the foregoing. A brief exposition of Nietzsche's main ideas on the above topics, including

[14] On this point, see Martin and Barresi (2000, 1–11) and Nicholls and Liebscher (2010, esp. 4–13).

his dismissal of Descartes' cogito, his account of consciousness and his position on free will, is first proposed. A critical discussion ensues, followed by arguments to the effect that Nietzsche became progressively aware of the issues he was facing. Apart from some rare attempts to unify the salient themes under analysis in this chapter, the posthumous fragments do not propose material which departs substantially from what can be found in the texts Nietzsche finalised. The two sets of texts are thus considered simultaneously, with a preference for the published works wherever possible.

2. The first appearances of the concept of will to power in Nietzsche's finished works are directly relevant to this chapter. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche, through his mouthpiece, asserted the concept as the drive behind all moral values, struggles, successes and meanings and thus (if indirectly) as underlying human behaviour. Later in the work, this line is pushed further forward: will to power becomes the dominant life process, to the extent that the phenomena 'will to power' and 'life' are said to be indistinguishable. The pages in which these claims are made are typical of the entire book: declaratory, forceful and somewhat ponderous. The absence of substantiating argument is as noteworthy as the lack of hesitation in Zarathustra's harangues:

> No people could live without evaluating; but if it wishes to maintain itself it must not evaluate like its neighbour evaluates. [...]
>
> A table of values hangs over every people. Behold, it is the table of their overcomings; behold, it is the voice of its will to power. [...]
>
> Whatever causes it to rule and conquer and glitter, to the dread and envy of its neighbour, that it accounts the sublimest, the paramount, the evaluation and the meaning of things.[15]
>
> Where I found a living creature, there I found will to power; and even in the will of the servant I found the will to be master. [...]
>
> Only where life is, there is also will: not will to life, but – so I teach you – will to power![16]

Nowhere in *Zarathustra* did Nietzsche provide reasons that could justify these views. Their origins in his thought are far from obscure, however, for they follow a line that can be easily traced back to earlier works and emerges progressively, from his 'middle' period onwards, as an

[15] Z-I 15.
[16] Z-II 12.

important one: the role of power as implicit or explicit motive in human behaviour.[17] This development is worthy of a brief exposition because it points to a key weakness of the concept.

In the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, a Nietzsche confident in science launched an all-out attack on world dualisms in general and on their Christian-Kantian versions in particular. As far as psychology is concerned, his critiques take aim at two related arguments that, after Kant, are generally used to justify morality and freedom. According to Kant, the moral worth of an action is grounded in the freedom of the individual performing it, that is, in the ability of the individual to resist the treadmill of the natural world's causal determinism. Such ability demands the existence of a world beyond that of everyday experience, a world in which causation is inapplicable and to which the 'intelligible' part of the individual must belong. Even Schopenhauer, who held the Kantian 'categorical imperative' in contempt, accepted this other-worldly grounding of the moral agent. He considered that, although egoism is the defining tendency of human beings, genuine cases of altruism do exist. These can be explained only by the realisation, by altruistic individuals, that beyond appearances there is a unity (the world will) and that individuation is, therefore, an illusion. In this perspective, egoism, which starts from and seeks to strengthen individuation, is a misguided moral and psychological stance.

Since he wanted to deflate these arguments and expose them as superfluous, Nietzsche was bound to account for human behaviour in very different, this-worldly terms:

> Observe children who weep and wail *in order that* they shall be pitied [...]; the pity which [they] express is a consolation for the weak and suffering, inasmuch as it shows them that [...] they possess at any rate *one power*: the *power to hurt*.[18]

Pity, as well as conformism, asceticism, justice, altruism, pleasure, benevolence, compassion and love but also cruelty, self-deception, hypocrisy,

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[17] Poellner goes further back than is proposed here and traces the early signs of the train of ideas considered here to entries in Nietzsche's notebooks of 1874, as well as to some passages of the *Untimely Meditations*, attributing its inception in Nietzsche's thought to Schopenhauer (Poellner 2007, 200–205). Stack argues that the emphasis on power in the Nietzschean corpus comes from his even earlier readings of Emerson (Stack 1992, 148ff).

[18] HH-I 50; emphases in original.

even the mere giving of advice, are equally reinterpreted and explained through 'human, all-too-human', that is, natural, reasons. At the first rank of these reasons stands a vested, often unrecognised or even denied quest for power and its exercise over other human beings. The expression 'will to power' does not appear in *Human*, but in this work the constant pursuit of power distinctly emerges as a dominating – perhaps unconscious, in any case natural – psychological drive.[19] In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche expanded on these views, describing power as the basis for rights and duties.[20] He also wrote of the 'feeling of power' and of the 'desire for power' as man's 'strongest propensity', driving the 'history of culture' and as sources of moral valuations and nobility.[21] Beyond this unfolding theme, Nietzsche's core argument against the Kantian moral route to two-world metaphysics remains simple: genuine altruism does not exist and hence there is no need to account for it. The possibility of a supersensuous world is not ruled out,[22] but 'free spirits' should nonetheless reject it on the grounds of its unacceptable justification. In *Human*, naturalism suffices to account for the genesis of morality.[23]

In the first instalment of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche confirmed and complemented these statements.[24] Power and the desire for power are not merely the true nature of pity and some other feelings, as argued in *Human*, or sources of rights, as posited in *Daybreak*; more generally, the drive for (more) power is said to form a basic psychological urge at work everywhere and always.[25] In books I to IV of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche's thesis is that everything that one does is merely the expression of one's overarching, if unrecognised, desire for power in all its dimensions.[26] Following an apparently Stirnerian line, Nietzsche analysed selfless

[19] Nietzsche's exposure to and attraction towards various conceptions of the unconscious can be traced back to Schopenhauer, Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894) and Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906), among others. Their influences are noticeable in *The Birth of Tragedy* and in the unpublished essay *On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense*. The concept runs through all subsequent works. Liebscher (2010) is a detailed account of Nietzsche's changing perspectives on the unconscious and their respective origins.

[20] D 112. This theme (power as source of rights) was sounded earlier in HH-I 93.

[21] D 23, 189, 348 and 356, respectively.

[22] As HH-I 9 indicates.

[23] Moore (2006a, 58–62) proposes an expanded discussion on this theme.

[24] See, e.g., GS 118.

[25] See Williams (2001, 8–17), for a more detailed account of Nietzsche's stance in *Daybreak* and the first four books of *The Gay Science*.

[26] GS 13.

behaviour as belonging to a general pursuit of influence, if not for oneself, at least in the name of a belief or on behalf of an organisation from which one expects some sort of compensation.[27] Even sacrificing one's own life is interpreted as a selfish act since it is supposed to yield rewards thereafter.

In subsequent works and in the notebooks, Nietzsche never reneged on the salient aspects of these views. If the theme had by then matured, the way to convey it concisely and forcefully was still missing. Between the end of 1876 (first appearance of the expression 'will to power' in the notebooks) and early 1883 (publication of parts I and II of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*), Nietzsche associated the phrase 'will to' with over one hundred fifty different nouns before finally settling for the expression for which he is well known.[28] That it fell to Zarathustra to proclaim the theory attests to the importance that Nietzsche granted his concept – an importance that is anything but fleeting: the phrase and its associated psychological themes are restated, if in some instances very briefly or indirectly, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, book V of *The Gay Science*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*.[29] In all these works, will to power is proposed as the overall principle that shapes behaviour and guides life in all its aspects. As Nietzsche stated it most clearly, life '*in its essence* means appropriating, injuring, overpowering those who are foreign or weaker [...] because life simply *is* the will to power'.[30]

On the Genealogy of Morals sheds some retrospective light on how Nietzsche arrived at this statement. After repeating the claim above in almost the same terms in the second essay,[31] Nietzsche opened and concluded the third essay by positing further that man is constantly trying to discharge a willing urge in various forms, including the nihilistic, civilisation-destroying 'ascetic ideal'. This is so because man cannot stop willing, to the extent that he prefers to 'will [ascetic] nothingness than not will' at all.[32] This statement shows that, as he closed the *Genealogy* and despite dismissals expressed earlier,[33] Nietzsche was

[27] For discussions of the possible influence of Stirner over Nietzsche, see Brobjer (2003) or Patterson (1993, ch. 7).
[28] Williams (1996, 450).
[29] See BGE 259; GS 349; GM-II 12; TI-IX 11 and X 3; AC 17, respectively.
[30] BGE 259; emphases in original.
[31] In GM-II 12.
[32] GM-III 1; these claims are repeated word for word in the last section of the same essay.
[33] In BGE 19 notably.

still indebted to the Schopenhauerian notion of 'will' as general and existence-defining phenomenon. In Schopenhauer's very broad sense of the term, will is conceived of as the most permanent life activity or process: will as striving, craving, desiring, hoping, fearing and so on (even the body resisting decomposition can be analysed as a basic version of 'willing') and their respective opposites. To this general Schopenhauerian 'will to life', abruptly dismissed in *Zarathustra* for being meaningless,[34] Nietzsche, in line with arguments proposed from *Human* onwards, added an overall direction: if one cannot will more life once one is alive, one can always will more power. This addition also allowed Nietzsche to expand the scope of his concept and to apply it to entire nations; will to power is in *Zarathustra* asserted as the grounding of a people's moral values and religion.[35]

It has often been observed in the literature that Nietzsche rarely provided sustained arguments for his audacious assertions; even mere explanations on why he came to hold them are rarely offered. Will to power as psychological drive is no exception to these observations. It is indeed one thing to reinterpret pity, sacrifice and the 'golden rule' in its Christian or Kantian expressions as demonstrations of vested selfishness or desire for influence (reinterpretations for which Nietzsche's arguments remain rather cursory in any case); it is quite another to consider that *all* aspects of life can be reduced to an unceasing and uncontrollable urge for power. In support of the sweeping contention that 'the essence of life is will to power', Nietzsche offered no argument beyond the force of his conviction. Paradoxically, this glaring non sequitur is one sign amongst others that, from 1885 onwards, will to power was, for Nietzsche, a lot more than a purely psychological drive, however life-shaping and nation-defining. The contention that, psychologically, life is will to power is in fact a consequence of a view that Nietzsche held but never stated plainly in his finished or unfinished works. From the first delivery of *Zarathustra* onwards, Nietzsche entertained the highest ambitions for his concept even if these remained mostly hidden in his published writings and undeveloped in his notebooks.

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[34] Zarathustra's dismissal of Schopenhauer's 'will to life' in Z-II 12 is based on the following argument: to be willing, one must first be alive; once one is alive, there is therefore no reason to will (to) life any longer.

[35] Z-I 15, quoted above. See also WP 142: 'Toward a critique of the law-book of Manu – The whole book is founded on the holy lie. [...] the origin of the holy lie is the will to power'.

Arguments to that effect follow before reasons for Nietzsche's restraint can be proposed.

3. If sustained argumentation was not Nietzsche's forte, the unfolding of his thinking remains in some instances accessible. At about the same time that he was working on *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche observed in one of his notebooks that a 'belief [...] is the consequence of an insight into the falsity of previous interpretations, [...] not a *necessary* belief'.[36] There is much to comment on this proto-Popperian statement with regard to its relation to Nietzsche's critique of epistemology most notably. What it makes clear, however, is that, for Nietzsche, a belief can be accepted, not because logic or experience demands it, but merely because a previously held one, pertaining to the same subject, is now considered false. Deductive logic is not to be ignored since falsity is to be taken into account, but it must remain the servant of enlightened intuition, of informed insight. Descartes (to say nothing of Fichte) would have presumably approved; despite his recurrent criticisms of rationalism and romanticism, these doctrines lingered in Nietzsche's thought.

This way of 'arguing' was at work in Nietzsche's attack against Kant's metaphysics. Even though no direct case against the existence of a supersensible world is made in *Human, All Too Human*, such existence is still to be dismissed because arguments (the grounding of moral values) supporting it have been shown, in Nietzsche's eyes at least, to be unfounded. Needless to say, this outcome is in no way forced, since the falsity of a premise of a deduction does not entail the falsity of its conclusion.[37] The account of Western metaphysics in *Twilight of the Idols* (the 'History of an Error' of chapter IV) is another illustration of this thought pattern of Nietzsche's: 'The 'real world' – an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer – an idea grown useless, superfluous, *consequently* a refuted idea'. Rhetorical emphasis (Nietzsche's own) aside, that a concept is useless or superfluous does not logically mean, even if one is committed to Ockham's razor as Nietzsche can be taken to be,[38] that it is refuted. It means, as far as the matter at hand is concerned, only that the said concept is not pertinent to the explanation sought. Nietzsche's conclusion to falsity, in this instance as earlier in *Human*, is neither an induction nor a deduction but

[36] WP 599; emphasis in original. See also WP 496: 'The most valuable insights are arrived at last'.

[37] From the deductive proposition 'if A is true then B also is', nothing can be said of B if A is not true.

[38] The parsimony principle is insisted on in the last sentences of BGE 13 ('Here as everywhere, [...] we must beware of superfluous principles!').

an intuition. Disdainful of logic and reason as he regularly appeared to be,[39] it is possible to imagine that Nietzsche would have remained unconcerned with such formal rejoinders, shrugging them off as petty, herd-like and irrelevant.[40] The cost of such an extreme 'antirationalist' standpoint is heavy, though, for as Poellner argues, it prevents anyone who adopts it from formulating any statement about reality.[41] Nietzsche was aware of this consequence, since he derided the intelligibility of Kant's noumenon precisely on these grounds.

Whatever the case, the main argument that Nietzsche pressed against the psychology of his time is that it was grounded in and framed by Platonic-Christian concepts. He held that such psychology ignores unconscious phenomena, concerning itself only with conscious motives for action. It is tainted with 'moral prejudices' since it is incapable of extracting itself from the subjective moral judgements through which the psychologist necessarily interprets the behaviour which is meant to be analysed objectively.[42] In particular, from *Zarathustra* onwards, Nietzsche dismissed in terms ever more derogatory what he indiscriminately took to be the Platonic-Christian-Cartesian-Kantian ontology, according to which man is to be conceived of in terms of a free, self-conscious, or noumenal psyche, soul, 'I' or subject directing a body. Since he wanted to redefine the discipline and to overcome psychology's traditional Christian moral boundaries, he had to challenge these foundational conceptions and propose new ones. In this enterprise, he insisted that, when looking at man, one is to start from what is known as opposed to what is imagined.[43]

With these comments as background, one must note that, be it in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil* or *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the concept of will to power is affirmed in the same book chapters in which the Christian-Cartesian soul-body ontology is rejected.[44] In Nietzsche's

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[39] Cf. TI-III or WP 522.

[40] 'what have I to do with refutations!' (GM-Preface 4).

[41] Poellner (2007, 289–291).

[42] This is a long-running theme of Nietzsche's, visible from *Daybreak* onwards (see D 104 and 111 notably) and clearly expressed in the preface to the *Genealogy*. See also GS 3, GS 4, BGE 23 and BGE 47, last lines: 'this is where earlier psychology ran aground: was it not chiefly because it had submitted to the rule of morality, itself *believing* in moral values oppositions and seeing, reading, *interpreting* these oppositions into the text *and* facts of the case?' (emphases in original).

[43] GS-Preface 2.

[44] The same pattern is detectable in §§2 and 3 of the 1886 preface to *The Gay Science*, in which philosophers are encouraged to study the role of power while rejecting the soul-body distinction.

late writings, the affirmation of the former cannot be separated from the rejection of the latter. Similarly, Nietzsche's views on conscience, consciousness and personal responsibility (discussed below), again in stark opposition to the corresponding Christian-Cartesian viewpoints, are found in their most developed form in book chapters which make use of, or at a minimum allude to, will to power.[45] These recurring contextual proximities can be received as clues to the development and meaning of Nietzsche's positive statements, whether direct or indirect. If the thought pattern discussed above is any guide, Nietzsche's conviction that will to power is the basis for a new psychology is an intuition rooted in the dismissal of one concept complemented by an insight into another. It is arrived at not because Nietzsche had a valid logical argument supporting it but because he simultaneously rejected the traditional ontological basis of psychology while being convinced that 'will' and an unceasing quest for power are dominating aspects of human existence.

Nietzsche's dismissal of the cogito, explicit if undeveloped in *Zarathustra*,[46] is detailed only in the opening chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*. In these dense sections, Nietzsche fired in many directions, as many as he thought there are 'prejudices of philosophers'. The causally effective, existence-defining 'I', as posited in the Cartesian *Meditations* and central to the Christian creed, is the common thread and receives sustained attention.[47] Like Hume before him, Nietzsche rejected 'I' as immediate certainty altogether. 'I', he noted, cannot be arrived at from 'I think' for the premise already assumes its conclusion, 'I' as active and causal source of thinking. 'Thinking' is itself an assumption, for whatever process there is could be easily requalified as a more general 'willing' for lack of a clear reference.[48] Thoughts are spontaneous, raising further doubts about their controllable nature and their alleged origin.[49] 'I' is an

[45] Book V of *The Gay Science*, second essay of *Genealogy*.

[46] Z-I 4.

[47] These themes are also the subject matters (among a few others) of WP 470–492. Barring exceptions mentioned in the discussion below, the published works and the posthumous fragments do not express different ideas on these areas; they differ mainly in their style, the latter proposing a simpler, less dense prose on the whole.

[48] These points are all made in BGE 16 (see also BGE 34). This section should be compared with vol. I, part IV, §VI, of Hume's *Treatise*, which starts with 'There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our self' (Hume 1985, 299).

[49] BGE 17. The parallel with Hume's *Treatise* is again notable: 'Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or

erroneous notion, Nietzsche held, arrived at from a causal inversion: 'I' does not 'do' and is not the source of the thinking; rather, the thinking creates 'I'. Like the layman who attributes the lightning to the flash, one attributes one's actions to one's self as independent substratum or entity. In reality, there is no flash behind the lightning and no 'being behind doing'.[50] The idea of a causal source of behaviour is nonsensical for it inevitably leads to insuperable *causa sui* contradictions in various disguises (one's ancestors, society, the environment, God, etc.); in each case, the source of this other source is left unexplained.[51] Ending a section that started on an exasperated sigh with an ironical chuckle, Nietzsche noted that 'I' in the 'I think' is nothing but a requirement of language, an intermediate yet in the end improbable 'hypothesis' worthy of only 'a smile and two question marks'.[52]

Nietzsche insisted: there is no such substance or entity as 'I', there is no 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject': this is an 'utterly incomprehensible' and 'unthinkable' 'in-itself' of man.[53] The body is the only thing that there is:

> 'I am body and soul' – so speaks the child. [...] But the awakened, enlightened man says: I am body entirely, and nothing besides; and soul [*Seele*] is only a word for something in the body. [...] [G]reater than this [...] is your body [...] which does not say 'I' but performs 'I'.[54]

This conviction and its psychological and moral consequences form the basis of what Zarathustra set himself to teach the village people. The Christian ontology, final link of a chain of ideas that grew from one another under the influence of linguistic constraints,[55] is to be rejected and overcome as a first step towards the arrival of the Übermensch. In addition to its possible moral significance, Nietzsche's trademark rhetorical figure is also an allegory of an ontological stance opposing the 'herd' one. 'I' as subject or as man's inner 'atom' is for Nietzsche nothing else

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from any other, that the idea of self is derived; and consequently there is no such idea' (Hume 1985, 299–300). The spontaneous nature of thought is also affirmed by Hume in the *Appendix* (see 1985, 671–672).

[50] GM-I 13.

[51] BGE 21.

[52] BGE 17 and 16, respectively. See also TI-III 5.

[53] GM-III 12.

[54] Z-I 4.

[55] BGE 20.

but a secular mask for the Christian soul:[56] 'I', 'self', 'subject', 'mind', 'soul': each is only a different name for the 'ego', Western man's 'oldest article of faith'.[57]

With this rejection of the 'inner atom', the philologist-turned-philosopher Nietzsche remained faithful to one of the defining features of ancient heroism, a worldview towards which he had been attracted from very early on, even during his most avowedly romantic years.[58] As Snell shows, Homer had no word for the concept of self; the various terms found in the epic poems and now interpreted as proxies for it (most notably *psyche*, *thymos*, *noos*) point in the text to organs or physiological processes or refer to analogies with them. This notable absence is not mere rhetoric on Homer's part but highlights a firmly entrenched, if never explicitly stated, ontological perspective: ancient heroism's man is body and behaviour, that is, body and body only.[59] For Nietzsche, the 'Greeks' (i.e., the pre-Socratics) were actors in the first, literal, non-theatrical sense of the term because they did not ask themselves why they acted the way they did.[60] Their philosophers had reached the profound wisdom to remain 'superficial' when looking at man or, again, decided to stop at the 'skin'; they had realised that there was nothing but indecency to be gained trying to go deeper.[61] Since Plato and his 'invention of pure spirit'[62], however, 'philosophy has been [...] an interpretation of the body and a misunderstanding of the body'.[63] Philosophy must therefore return to a proper understanding of the body. If psychology is to be reinstated as the 'queen of sciences', it must not only follow suit but also pre-empt that move. Yet between this conviction and the contention that will to power is *the* new basis of psychology, many difficulties are still to be cleared.

4. Dismissing the existence of the causal self on logical or grammatical grounds can only be a preliminary step in Nietzsche's enterprise. He

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[56] Connecting here points made in BGE 12 and 16.
[57] WP 635.
[58] In *Birth*, the main charge brought against Socrates is that his influence precipitated the demise of heroism and of its culture (BT 16; see also BT 3). Nietzsche's lifelong attraction to ancient heroism is expounded in Thiele (1990, 11–27).
[59] Snell (1982, 5–17).
[60] In *The Case of Wagner*, Wagner is castigated for being an 'actor' in the theatrical sense, for having 'a talent for telling lies' (CW 7).
[61] GS-Preface 4; see also GS 373. Nietzsche repeats these ideas in the epilogue to *The Case of Wagner*.
[62] BGE-Preface ('*Plato's Erfindung vom reinen Geiste*' in original).
[63] GS-Preface 2.

must also propose an alternative explanation for the belief, which has gained widespread currency in the West since it was proposed by Plato, that such substratum exists in one form or another. Nietzsche rejected not only the existence of an immaterial entity but also the very idea of a behaviourally directive process.

Socrates' classic view is that to philosophise is to dissociate the psyche from the body and to learn to die. Accordingly, Descartes rooted his 'I' in his experience of pure mental contemplation and in his alleged ability to distance himself from his physical perceptions to the point where he could discount them altogether. This latter possibility established the existence of a self-contained entity, the 'thing that thinks', distinct from the bundle of his bodily sensations yet retaining the capacity of directing his body. For Descartes, one's body is contingent and irrelevant to who, or what, one truly is. The existence of 'I' as pure and detached self-consciousness is not deduced from a syllogistic major premise since Descartes had resolved to doubt everything, including logic.[64] Rather, this existence springs from an intuition rooted in the very act of uttering it, out of the reach of, thus untarnished by, the senses' corrupting influence. Even God or a 'malicious demon' is unable to lead Descartes astray in arriving at his landmark conclusion.[65] To Descartes' credit and even without going as far as he did, many activities can seemingly be planned and their consequences duly considered before being carried out. To paraphrase a passage (quoted above) of *Zarathustra*, it does seem that one is 'I' not only because one performs 'I' but also because one can envision performance as a mere potentiality. Self-consciousness generates a distance between planning and performing and this distance, in turn, seems to leave room for a reflective process driving behaviour, if perhaps not for a causally effective entity, substantive, immaterial or otherwise. Nietzsche was thus bound to say more on self-consciousness if he wanted to pass a minimum completion test in his attempt to redefine psychology and human existence in non-Platonic terms.

Other hurdles stand in the way of Nietzsche's ambitious enterprise. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche requalified Descartes' 'I think' as 'there is thinking' and stripped it down to a bare and uncontrollable willing process contained in its consumption in the here and now.[66] If perhaps

[64] If Descartes had wanted to ground his *cogito* upon syllogistic logic, he would have had first to establish the major premise according to which 'everything that thinks, exists'.

[65] That such is Descartes' position is most clearly apparent in the *Meditations on First Philosophy*, §II; see Gillespie (1995), chs. 1 and 2, for an extended discussion of the reasons for and consequences of this view.

[66] BGE 19.

less laden with ontological preconceptions than Descartes', Nietzsche's statement still begs the question, for Nietzsche did not elaborate on how it is possible for this willing to account for the consciousness of its own existence. His subsequent decomposition of willing into simultaneous commanding and obeying wills does not address this omission since self-consciousness itself is not classified in the typology introduced. That is, there is no consideration on whether the will's self-perception belongs to the commanding or to the obeying component.

Nietzsche's charge of circularity levelled against the Cartesian statement is unanswerable: the cogito is a declaration of self-consciousness proposed as a proof of conscious existence; that is, as a proof of self-consciousness. Yet Nietzsche's requalification of thinking and feeling into willing, as it is proposed in *Beyond*, falls prey to exactly the same rejoinder. It is a no less circular declaration of conscious bodily and intellectual sensations put forward as a proof of willing – that is, as a proof of conscious bodily and intellectual sensations since willing is explicitly proposed in the same section as the name for the consciousness of these phenomena. One way to break this circle would be to account for self-consciousness as a product (not as a proof) of willing. Doing this would also address the issue created by the apparent distance between self-consciousness and behaviour mentioned above: if it can be shown that self-consciousness is a product (as opposed to a cause) of behaviour, then the seemingly causal power of self-consciousness would be revealed as resulting merely from an incorrect perception of the timing of events.

This reconception is precisely what Nietzsche attempted, mainly in section 354 of *The Gay Science* (book V, written after *Beyond*), which builds on themes broached in earlier texts.[67] Expanding an unacknowledged Schopenhauerian line,[68] Nietzsche notably argued that self-consciousness is the result of man's ability to acquire and use language. This human ability is itself said to have developed out of the

[67] D 115, D 116, GS 11 and BGE 268; echoes of the key concepts sounded in GS 354 can be heard in GS 355 and 357.

[68] As exposed mainly in the supplement to Book II of WWR, titled 'On the primacy of the Will in Self-Consciousness'. Most relevant passages read thus: 'consciousness is conditioned by the intellect, and the intellect is a mere accident of our being, for it is a function of the brain. The brain [...] serves the purpose of self-preservation by regulating [the organism's] relations with the external world' (Schopenhauer 1966, ii, 201) and 'The relation of the will to the intellect [...] can further be recognised in the fact that the intellect is originally quite foreign to the decisions of the will. It furnishes the will with motives; but only subsequently, and thus *a posteriori*, does it learn how these have acted' (Schopenhauer 1966, ii, 209).

necessity to communicate with peers in order to survive in a difficult environment:

> Man, like every living being, thinks continuously 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 this 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 (*not* of reason but merely of the way reason enters consciousness) go hand in hand. Add to this that not only language serves as a bridge between human beings but also a mien, a pressure, a gesture. The emergence of our sense impressions into our own 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.[69]

In this section, Nietzsche strictly equated self-consciousness with conscious thinking and with an internal use of language.[70] In line with his overall contempt for anything common and public, self-consciousness is hence described as only a 'surface', 'shallow' and 'herd signal' of human life, 'corrupting' and 'falsifying' existence. Self-consciousness, Nietzsche contended, is not required to explain actions. Conscious rationalisation of one's behaviour is a non-causal afterthought, a post hoc interpretation. Actions cannot be explained by moral obligations or conscious thinking because actions are unknowable: they are unintentional.[71]

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[69] GS 354; emphases in original. WP 523 and 524 propose substantially the same ideas in different terms.

[70] 'Conscious thinking' is not a pleonastic expression for Nietzsche since, earlier in the same section, he noted that human beings could 'think, feel, will and remember [...] and yet none of all this would have to "enter our consciousness"'. 'Language', in GS 354, must refer to the publicly used one, for if not, Nietzsche's explanation, which relies on man's need to communicate with his peers, becomes unintelligible. Notes WP 522, 523 and 524 ('consciousness [...] is only a means of communication. It is evolved through social intercourse and with a view to the interest of social intercourse') make this point clear beyond doubt.

[71] Cf. GS 335 and BGE 32; see also D 116, D 119 and again GS 354. This is not one of Nietzsche's best arguments. Two meanings are traditionally attributed to

Human beings are in this perspective revealed as unique individuals only by what they do, their actions. As soon as they start thinking – that is, using public language even if privately – they adopt gregarious behaviour and lose their unique personal identity. In Nietzsche's terms, they become average, utilitarian, 'weak', 'tame' and 'sick'.[72] Attesting to the persistence of these ideas in Nietzsche's late thought, most of these arguments are restated forcefully again in the 'The Four Great Errors' chapter of *Twilight of the Idols*, in a section in which Nietzsche's exasperation about his predecessors' and contemporaries' misconceptions on these matters is palpable.[73] As commentators noted, this explanation of self-consciousness is self-contained and naturalistic:[74] the only acknowledged prerequisite is man's existence within a group and his inability to survive on his own without meaningful collaboration of the other members of his group. The explanation reconciles with the experience of conscious thinking as a language-mediated conversation with oneself, a perspective that can be traced back to Socrates.[75] Nietzsche's thesis is also consistent with consciousness and self-consciousness being limited aspects of human existence, for clearly most of life is conducted without one being constantly aware of all details of what one, let alone one's body, does.[76]

More importantly, however, Nietzsche's theory, at least at first sight, breaks the circularity highlighted earlier while fitting nicely with his dismissal of the Cartesian axiom and his rejection of the doer behind the deed. Man is no longer the combination of a body with an immaterial 'I' that thinks and commands it but is revealed as a body that happens to be able to think. Conscious processing is not what is genuinely unique to an individual nor is it offered as an undisputable proof of human existence. It is merely one of its inconsequential by-products. Everything can be explained in terms of will to power: it was to

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'intentional': 1) conscious willing and 2) directed at an object, i.e., phenomenologically. Actions are surely intentional in the second sense.

[72] GS 352.

[73] 'The 'inner world' is full of phantoms and false lights': the will is one of them. [...] And as for the ego! It has become a fable, a fiction, a play on words! It has totally ceased to think, to feel and to will! ... What follows from this? There are no spiritual causes at all!' (TI-VI 3). See also WP 475–484.

[74] See, e.g., Magnus (1988a, 159), and Schacht (1988, 71–75). Danto qualifies this theory of Nietzsche as 'groundbreaking' (Danto 1980, 116ff).

[75] As he exposes it to the young Theaetetus in Plato's eponymous dialogue.

[76] To the extent that good health has been defined as 'the silence of the organs' by French physiologist and surgeon René Leriche (1879–1955).

overcome a difficult environment and to enable man to assert his power over it that language was developed, which then gave birth to self-consciousness.[77] The observation proposed in *Beyond*, '(there is) willing', is in *The Gay Science* reanalysed as a surface interpretation of a phenomenon without being consubstantial to it, as it was for Descartes. What is primary is willing but not the consciousness of willing.

For Nietzsche, then, consciousness is dispensable for being accidental and inconsequential; it cannot therefore be the basis for reinterpreting or accounting for human experience. In this perspective, not only does the border between consciousness and unconsciousness disappear but also that between consciousness and self-consciousness. All three concepts are merged into one. In the parallel he made between the development of language and that of conscious thinking, Nietzsche switched seamlessly from consciousness to self-consciousness, as if the two notions were strictly equivalent.[78] This move amounts to doing away with the concept of personal responsibility, however, since personal responsibility is anchored in the difference between the two concepts.[79] In the traditional view, it is from one's self-consciousness that springs one's ability to contemplate the consequences of one's actions (insofar as one can foresee them) before these are enacted. Since responsibility is generally not attributed to non-humans, negating the difference between consciousness and self-consciousness amounts thus to erasing what can be taken to be *the* difference between humanity and animality. Nietzsche admitted as much since he titled the section of *The Gay Science* under analysis here 'On the genius of the species'.[80]

For all that, Nietzsche would have dismissed these rejoinders as inconsequential and a mere legacy of a prejudice inherited from Plato. For him 'I', soul or self is an illusion; conscious thinking, seen by Descartes as the indubitable proof of the existence of such entity, is in Nietzsche's perspective a superfluous and accidental property of existence without any bearing on one's actions. In his view, there is simply

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[77] Liebscher (2010, 256).

[78] This conflation of the two notions is plain everywhere in the section (GS 354). Nietzsche could not be interested here in how simple consciousness (perception) could be dispensed with and therefore must be referring to the human ability of being conscious of being conscious or, again, of being self-conscious.

[79] Spillane and Martin (2005, 213).

[80] GS 354; the text starts with 'the problem of consciousness', however, a further sign that in this text Nietzsche made no distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness.

no ground for discriminating consciousness from self-consciousness because there is no such thing as the self as independent subject of self-consciousness: man is body and body only. The body behaves and generates consciousness as a by-product; behaviour only partially rises to consciousness but the extent to which it does so remains irrelevant, for consciousness exerts no control on behaviour in the first place. Putting temporarily aside the reification of consciousness implicit in this account, a striking consequence of this view is that explanations in terms of moral values, motives, goals or purposes are revealed as mere 'after the fact' rationalisations.[81] For Nietzsche, the notion of personal responsibility, as conceived of in the Christian tradition, is unfounded. It must be redefined. This is what he outlined in *Human* and in *Daybreak*[82] but exposed in detail only in *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

In very broad outline, in the second section of the second essay, Nietzsche praised the 'sovereign individual', the 'supramoral' person who, at the end of a long process, finds himself above morality. Such man is free of the notion of guilt and accepts full responsibility for whatever he does, consciously or not:

> The man who has [...] in him a proud consciousness, quivering in every muscle [...] The 'free' man [who] honour his peers, the strong and reliable, [those] who know themselves strong enough to maintain [their promise] even 'in the face of fate'. [...] The proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of this rare freedom [...] has in this case penetrated to the profoundest depths and become instinct, the dominating instinct. What will he call this dominating instinct, supposing he feels the need to give it a name? The answer is beyond doubt: this sovereign man calls it his *conscience*.[83]

This fictional character personifies Nietzsche's conflation into a single notion of the concepts of responsibility, conscience, consciousness and self-consciousness.[84] This superior individual is not without reminding

[81] GS 359 and 360.
[82] See HH-I 39 and D 132, respectively.
[83] GM-II 2; emphases in original.
[84] Kaufmann (1989, n., 57) castigates Danto for 'mistranslating' (in Danto 1965, 164 and 180) the German *schlechtes Gewissen* (literally 'bad conscience') into 'bad consciousness'. Elsewhere, Danto (1988, 21–22) justifies his translation by insisting that, in English at least, 'bad conscience' always means 'guilty

one of *Zarathustra*'s Übermensch even if no direct reference to this rhetorical figure is made in the *Genealogy*.[85] Nietzsche's occasional but plain (if cryptic) allusions to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* throughout *On the Genealogy of Morals* and his insistence in the preface of that work that *Zarathustra* must be fully understood before reading the *Genealogy* are clear hints to the continuity of his thought and the impossibility of dissociating the themes sounded in both books.[86]

Beyond this alleged cohesiveness, however, what is most notable in the foregoing is what is left out. Nietzsche stopped short of the conclusion to which the various contentions discussed so far readily lead. In sum: power as motive explaining whatever people do; willing as the most general form of feeling; man always willing something; thinking not proof but accident of existence; no internal causally effective entity or agent; man nothing more than his actions. From these premises, a conclusion readily presents itself: Descartes's cogito is to be replaced by Zarathustra's unstated but transparent '(there is) willing to power' as a basis for a redefinition of human life, justifying the view that life is will to power. In other words, man is for Nietzsche not the combination of a body and a 'thing that thinks' (however called) but man *is* will to power. Yet Nietzsche did not go so far; even the posthumous fragments make this claim only indirectly.[87] This is an extraordinary omission, as if Nietzsche was unsure of his own thinking. Indeed he was, since he entirely crossed out the oft-quoted section in which the claim is incidentally proposed.[88]

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conscience' and thus 'bad consciousness'. The arguments proposed here to the effect that, in Nietzsche's thought, the concepts of 'conscience' and 'consciousness' can be conflated, while supportive of Danto's position, are independent of the language in which Nietzsche is translated. Building on George Herbert Mead's work, American psychiatrist Thomas Szasz argues a line similar to (but not as extreme as) Nietzsche's and conflates self-consciousness, morality, language and responsibility into a single notion (Szasz 2002). The possible influence of Nietzsche on Mead remains an unanswered puzzle to this day: Nietzsche's name does not appear in Mead's two major works, *Mind, Self and Society* and *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*.

[85] See Loeb (2005) for a detailed exploration of the direct and indirect links (of which the figure of the Übermensch is one among many) that exist between *Zarathustra* and the *Genealogy*.

[86] In addition to the preface (last section), direct references are made in the last section of the second essay and in the aphorism prefixed to the third essay.

[87] 'And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides!' (WP 1067).

[88] Williams (2001, 63). On Nietzsche's intentions with regard to WP 1067, see also Magnus (1988b, 226), and Leiter (2003, 139); these authors base their claims on Montinari's scholarship of the *Nachlass*.

Signs abound of Nietzsche's uneasiness and ambivalence on these matters. For instance, Nietzsche's dissolutions of the will and of the 'atomic soul' into a duality of wills or multiplicity of souls, as proposed in *Beyond Good and Evil*,[89] are difficult to reconcile with his attacks on the same notions conceived of as behaviourally causative entities,[90] not to mention his rejection of causation simpliciter contained in the same work.[91] Not only that, but even if Nietzsche, in *Beyond* at least, made use of gerunds ('there is thinking' or 'act of willing') and dismissed substantives,[92] he nonetheless appeared committed to the view that these processes are unchanging, that they somehow form the stable and basic elements of human existence.[93] Reification is not very far away; beyond terminological changes, Nietzsche seemingly re-created in different forms precisely what he wanted to eliminate. As Müller-Lauter notes, one can thus wonder if Nietzsche's 'deconstructions [are not] futile. Is what is destroyed not always restored?'[94] There are many reasons to suspect that it is the case, for Nietzsche's ideas conceal serious weaknesses, circularities and contradictions.

5. Problems with the concept of will to power as a purely psychological drive arise when one tries to apply it in practice. Antisocial behaviour appears difficult to reconcile with Nietzsche's theory, for one struggles to see how such behaviour could be interpreted as a quest for power since it usually leads to the exclusion, incarceration or even physical elimination of the individual exhibiting it. This is so unless, as Nietzsche suggested in *The Gay Science*, that exclusion, incarceration or elimination is interpreted as a means to influence one's environment beyond mere physical existence (e.g., through martyrdom). On another plane, dreaming also seems to resist a simple reduction in terms of a quest for power, unless this activity can be shown to translate into the dreamer's better physiological health and hence physical power. The irony is that even if these phenomena (along with the rest of human existence) could be explained as expressions of a will to (more) power, Nietzsche's theory would then fall prey to even more damaging criticisms. For beyond the

[89] BGE 12 and 19.
[90] In BGE 19, believing that 'willing is enough for action' is said to be one of many 'erroneous conclusions' and 'false assessments'; see also TI-III 5 and VI 3.
[91] BGE 19 and 21.
[92] BGE 17 and 19, respectively. The expression 'will to power', even if based on a noun, also suggests a discharge, a process, as opposed to a fixed entity.
[93] Davey (1987, 26).
[94] Müller-Lauter (1999, 13–14).

possible import of the above counterexamples, a more general question with Nietzsche's theory pertains to its falsifiability.

This question is easily formulated: on Nietzsche's grounds, are there cases in which one is not, psychologically if not physically, 'willing power'? In light of his own arguments about the universal role of power in human existence presented earlier, the only answer to this question seems to be 'when one is dead'. As the literature has noted,[95] the hypothesis of a will to (more) power as unique drive behind all human behaviour is merely superficially attractive. If will to power is put forward as explanation of all the actions of a person (everything that the person does is interpreted as a manifestation of a unique will to power or to more power), then none in particular is explained except that the person 'behaves'. Nietzsche's theory cannot explain or predict unambiguously one given behaviour as opposed to another. Beyond lexical appearances, willing to power is general and directionless. It can lead only to the conclusion that man as living creature simply 'wills power'. In this perspective, the theory is unfalsifiable and its interest, philosophical or merely psychological, is questionable.[96] These observations are consistent with Nietzsche's statements to the effect that 'life is will to power', which now partake of a strong tautologous flavour.

Nietzsche was well aware of this problem. Not only in *Zarathustra* did he explicitly reject the idea of a 'will to life' as circular, but in *Beyond* he further indicted Schopenhauer's concept of a unique, all-encompassing will precisely for being too general to be psychologically meaningful, calling it an 'exaggerated prejudice'.[97] It is thus implausible to believe that Nietzsche had not realised that his own concept was vulnerable to this same criticism. What makes this conclusion a virtual certainty is that Nietzsche visibly tried to counter it. One possible way of addressing such a predicament is indeed to refine the theory so as to come up with a minimum of two drives, each being unambiguously associated with a type of behaviour it is supposed to explain and predict. This is exactly what Nietzsche proposed in an oft-quoted passage:

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[95] See, e.g., Clark (1990, 211–212), or Foot (1994, 13).

[96] This rejoinder is not limited to Nietzsche's theory but holds against any attempt at reducing human behaviour to expressions of one single drive, force or 'need', be it directed towards self-preservation (alluded to in BGE 13), sex, survival of the species, self-actualisation or the like.

[97] BGE 19; a seed of this idea is discernible in HH-I 276: 'the finest discoveries concerning culture are made by the individual man within himself when he finds two heterogeneous powers ruling here'.

> the act of willing is [...] something that has a unity only as a word [...] in every act of willing there is first a multiplicity of feelings, namely the feeling of the condition we are moving *away* from and the feeling of the condition we are moving *towards*.[98]

Even though willing is always assertion (or attempted assertion) of one's power, Nietzsche posited that it can be expressed in two opposite ways, moving towards and moving away. These contradictory urges are said to be present in all acts of will to power, with only their respective influence supposed to vary. If the 'will to move towards' dominates, will is supposedly expressed in an active, advancing, overpowering, commanding or conquering direction, whilst if the 'will to move away' takes over, reaction, retreat, submission or obedience is the ensuing result. Even in this case, though, Nietzsche believed that one still wills power. Obedience is interpreted as covert domination inasmuch as the executing will still resists complete annihilation, seeing itself as the continuation of the commanding will over lesser wills.[99] Victory and defeat are thus said to express the same drive or process and to differ only in their outcome; actions strictly identical in their physical features can be distinguished through the direction of their underlying will. Winking to one's neighbour can be analysed as a successful attempt to attract this person's attention (bringing him or her into one's sphere of influence) and suggesting one's will to dominate, whereas blinking when facing the sun can be seen as betraying an inability to resist the sunrays' glare. In Nietzsche's language, the latter behaviour exemplifies one's will to retreat but can still be said to be a will to dominate since by closing one's eyelids, one protects one's eyes for later, potentially overpowering, uses. Nevertheless, in theory at least, one should be able to endure the sun's rays if one could will power with greater intensity. Much of Nietzsche's later distinction between 'slave' and 'master' moralities is based on this dualism, which Kaufmann calls the 'dialectical monism' of the will.[100]

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[98] BGE 19; emphases in original. See also Z-II 12.

[99] See WP 642: 'To what extent resistance is present even in obedience; individual power is by no means surrendered. In the same way, there is in commanding an admission that the absolute power of the opponent has not been vanquished, incorporated, disintegrated. "Obedience" and "commanding" are forms of struggle'.

[100] Kaufmann (1974a, 235ff). Kaufmann builds on this feature to draw parallels between Nietzsche's and Hegel's philosophies. The point is also behind Deleuze's famed distinction between active and reactive forces in Nietzsche's thought.

As the example above shows, however, the unfalsifiability or tautology problem flowing from the universalisation of the concept is perhaps obfuscated but remains untouched. This is the case because for the psychological theory of will to power to have any claim to practical validity, the purported reason for acting must be established independently of the behaviour it is supposed to justify. If this condition is not verified – that is, if the existence of the motive or process supposedly explaining a given behaviour is only arrived at from the observation of the behaviour – then the theory is simply circular or tautologous and cannot be put to predictive use. It only restates the same observation in two different forms (behaviour, theorised motive for it); whatever reason offered as an explanation for the behaviour is simply interpreted back from the behaviour. The list of alleged motives is bound to grow indefinitely (as many inferred motives as different observed actions) if clear criteria with regard to the scope of each motive are not provided.[101] Should this condition be met and the list of possible but competing motives or psychological drives be curtailed, a clear predominance order would still have to be provided. Without such order, sustained, goal-directed behaviour becomes unexplainable. Simple actions like sleeping and eating cannot be accounted for even a posteriori since there is no reason to assume that the competition between drives or motives should ever have a winner.[102]

Nowhere in his texts did Nietzsche attempt to address these questions; nowhere did he comment on his own concept in the terms employed above. Yet evidence suggests that Nietzsche was aware of these difficulties. For instance, in *Beyond*, he indicted Spinoza for proposing a 'superfluous' principle with his 'instinct for self-preservation',[103] showing that he was keen to limit the number of explanatory psychological principles to the strict minimum. More importantly, he also posited that willing, properly understood, is 'based on a social structure of many "souls"'.[104] With this expression, Nietzsche was referring to his 'hypothesis about the soul', according to which the soul is to be thought of as a 'multiplicity of the subject',[105] as a 'social construct of drives of emotions', a

[101] As Nietzsche's toying with over a hundred and fifty different 'wills to' illustrates.

[102] These comments regarding the predictive limitations of psychological theories can be expanded to any theory relying on unobservable inner causes; they are indebted to the opening chapter of B. F. Skinner's *Science and Human Behavior* (Skinner 1953) and to Spillane and Martin (2005, 30–31).

[103] BGE 13.

[104] BGE 19.

[105] BGE 12. See also WP 490 (in which the expression 'aristocracy of "cells"' is employed), WP 518 (in which Nietzsche spoke of a 'tremendous multiplicity'

hypothesis that, he believed, 'will claim [its] rightful place in science'.[106] This 'soul as social structure' that Nietzsche opposed to his contemporaries' 'atomism of the soul'[107] is thus an indirect acknowledgement of the incompleteness of his theory of will to power. It is a recognition that the theory must be completed with scope and predominance criteria as applicable to the will's subcomponents, so that which one of them dominates at any given time can be ascertained independently and before the resulting behaviour is observed. Nietzsche's insistence that willing is to be comprehended 'from within the sphere of ethics; ethics, that is, understood as the theory of hierarchical relationships among which the phenomenon of "life" has its origins'[108] does not say anything else. The subprocesses thought to be part of an overall will must be rank-ordered if the expression 'life is will to power' is to be meaningful at all.

Nietzsche's efforts at explaining the phenomena of pleasure and displeasure illustrate these problems well. As he observed in a series of entries found in the same late notebook:[109]

> the will to grow is of the essence of pleasure: that power increases, that the difference enters consciousness.[110]

Now if pleasure is to be accounted for as an increase of power, one would expect that pleasure comes from the will overcoming whatever resists to it. Yet

> it is not the satisfaction of the will that causes pleasure [...], but rather the will's forward thrust and again and again becoming master over that which stands in its way. The feeling of pleasure lies precisely in the dissatisfaction of the will.[111]

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evidenced by the body), WP 574 (the ego said to have a 'multiplicity of [...] processes'), WP 966 ('the highest man', said to be the one who has 'the greatest multiplicity of drives'). In WP 339, mankind is described as 'an inextricable multiplicity of ascending and descending life-processes'. WLN 36[8] (apparently a draft for BGE 19) mentions a 'multiplicity of feelings'.

[106] BGE 12.

[107] BGE 12.

[108] BGE 19.

[109] Notebook 14, dated Spring 1888. The passages considered here are WLN 14[80], 14[82], 14[101], 14[173] and 14[174], the contents of which are found in large parts in WP 693–699, completed by WP 702–703. These entries contain passages not found in the translation of Notebook 14 as provided in *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, however.

[110] WP 695.

[111] WP 696.

Furthermore,

> Man does *not* seek pleasure and does not avoid displeasure [...] what man wants, what every smallest part of a living organism wants, is an increase of power. Pleasure and displeasure follow from the striving after that; driven by that will it seeks resistance, it needs something that opposes it – Displeasure, as an obstacle to its will to power, is therefore a normal fact, the normal ingredient of every organic event; man does not avoid it, he is rather in continual need of it; [...]. Displeasure thus does not merely not [*sic*] have to result in a diminution of our feeling of power, but in the average case it actually stimulates this feeling of power.[112]

This is the case because

> as a force can expend itself only on what resists it, there is necessarily an ingredient of displeasure in every action. But this displeasure acts as a lure of life and strengthens the will to power![113]

The inevitable conclusion from these convoluted considerations is that pleasure and displeasure are indistinguishable. They are both triggered by the same event (a dissatisfaction of will to power) and they both lead to a striving for more power. As Nietzsche elsewhere observed, 'one and the same stimulus can be interpreted as pleasure or displeasure'.[114] In other words, the concept of will to power is unable to account for such basic and universal feelings as pleasure and displeasure.[115] This disappointing result is a logical finding if the only drive there is, is will to power. Once again, a concept offered as explanation of everything predicts nothing at all.[116]

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[112] WP 702; emphasis in original.
[113] WP 694.
[114] GS 127.
[115] The same goes for pleasure and pain; as Nietzsche elsewhere noted, they are 'not opposites'; they are merely forms of 'the feeling of power' (WLN 2[76]) and thus basically indistinguishable. Liebscher arrives at a similar conclusion on slightly different premises: 'if the will to power dissolves all dualisms [...], then there is no scale upon which to measure the increase of power anymore' (Liebscher 2010, 257).
[116] Upon similar observations, Staten (1993, 69–76), rejects Deleuze's famed reading of will to power as affirmative in its essence. For Staten, 'the will does not care' (1993, 70).

The *Genealogy*'s ending is a foretaste of this issue. In the last sections of the third essay, Nietzsche attributed the attractiveness of the ascetic ideal to its being one of the most potent forms of man's will,[117] a will which has to be will to power in light of the claim, made earlier in the same work, to the effect that the essence of life is will to power.[118] This is a rather paradoxical thesis given that the same ascetic ideal brings about, so Nietzsche argued at length in the same essay, the nipping in the bud of the 'higher men' and the ensuing collapse of Western culture and civilisation. The only way to reconcile the accounts is to consider that will to greatness and will to self-annihilation are equivalent manifestations of will to power or, again, that will to power explains neither.

Nietzsche was caught in deeper problems than the above suggests, however, for his concept suffers from an internal circularity. In its most immediate sense, will to power conveys the idea of a drive or a resolve to achieve greater power; many of Nietzsche's own uses of the concept are made in that sense. In this context, power is employed to qualify relationships between at least two living beings or between one living being and an inanimate object. In other words, on its own standing, Nietzsche's concept cannot define life since it presupposes it: stating that 'life is will to power' is a self-referential proposition. Nietzsche's attempts at defining 'power' attest to this: when Zarathustra states that 'life is the objective of power', a few lines later he adds that 'power is the objective of life'.[119] When Nietzsche asserted directly that 'life is will to power' or indirectly that 'man is will to power', he did not even push the question of the definition of life or that of human agency one step further back; he did not push the question at all. The only way out of this impasse is to rely on a concept truly independent of what it tries to qualify; that is, one not referring to some characteristic intrinsic to that which is to be qualified or explained, be it life or human behaviour.

This overarching problem can be illustrated from a different perspective, a perspective that points to an ambivalence at the core of Nietzsche's thought on the matters under discussion in this chapter. In the context of Nietzsche's general hostility to world dualism and of his denials of the self as the causal source of behaviour, Zarathustra's 'self-overcoming' exhortations can be read literally, in their very first degree,

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[117] 'What is the meaning of the power of this ideal, the monstrous nature of its power? [...] The ascetic ideal expresses a will: [...] it submits to no power' (GM-III 23).

[118] GM-II 12.

[119] Paraphrasing parts of Z-II 12 here.

in 'a sense beyond morality'.[120] 'Self-overcoming' can be taken to mean overcoming one's self; that is, abandoning the concept of the self ('I', soul, ego) as an entity distinct from the body.[121] One is nothing but one's behaviour; one is not 'I', says Zarathustra to his disciples, but one (more precisely: one's body) merely performs 'I'.[122] Nietzsche's pleas to his readers to enter an 'extra-moral' age and to achieve the 'self-overcoming of morality' are thus preconditioned on them forgetting the 'know thyself' imperative[123] – quite logically so, since in this outlook there is nothing left to know beyond one's body. If this is the case if 'I' is seen as a mere performance of the body as opposed to a behaviourally directive entity or substratum irreducible to the body, then human existence is confined to the natural world. Combined with Nietzsche's rejection of free will from *Human, All Too Human* onwards,[124] the inescapable conclusion is that man's life is causally determined by whatever past and present contexts and stimuli. The notions of choice and responsibility disappear. Free will is a mere emotion, pleasurable because satisfying.[125] It is an invention of moral philosophers to make the animal man look more interesting because unpredictable, subsequently seized upon by Christianity to allow for the notion of guilt.[126] The will is neither free nor unfree (an unfree will would still reintroduce the idea of a doer behind the deed); the will is either weak or strong.[127] The numerous texts in which Nietzsche asserted the importance of one's physiology over one's existence and psychological life give further weight to this interpretation.[128] Nietzsche can thus be read as a psychologist of human nature in

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[120] WLN 2[13]. In this long entry, Nietzsche held that, to counter the rise of democracy (which he took to be secularised Christianity), a return to a form of aristocracy is required so as to generate, 'in short (to use a moral formula in a sense beyond morality), the "self-overcoming of man"'. Here, as in *Zarathustra*, self-overcoming is thus clearly associated with a dismissal of the Christian model of man as body and soul.

[121] WP 617. This literal reading is supported by a posthumous note which clearly links the two meanings of the expression: 'Becoming as invention, willing, self-denial, *overcoming of oneself: no subject* but an action, a positing, creative, no "causes and effects"' (emphases added).

[122] Z-I 4.

[123] BGE 32.

[124] Arguments proposed in HH-I 18 and 39, notably.

[125] BGE 19.

[126] GM-II 7; see also GM-I 13.

[127] BGE 21.

[128] See, e.g., TI-VI 1, in which Cornaro's frugality is explained as the effect of his long life and not as its cause. In GM-III 15 Nietzsche wrote of 'the physiological cause of *ressentiment*, vengefulness and the like', i.e., of the physiological origins

the tradition of David Hume, in the steps of whom he walked at crucial points of his argument. Amongst recent commentators, Brian Leiter has defended this interpretive line with great vigour and influence.[129]

Yet such a reading stands in sharp contrast with the proto-existentialistic tone of many of Nietzsche's texts. This tone is exemplified in the eternal recurrence theory,[130] in the regular praise for the 'noble person [who] reveres the power in himself and also his power *over himself*'[131] or in the description of an 'emancipated individual, with the actual *right* to make promises, this master of a *free will*'.[132] These claims and many similar others imply the possibility for the individual to control his life. Existential freedom is also conveyed in Nietzsche's calls to his readers to 'become who they are',[133] since such calls implicitly assume that there is a leeway for self-controlled change.[134] One still has, so Nietzsche appears here to be saying, the opportunity of making one's life flourish more or less and of bringing it (or not) to complete maturity. This possibility is also found in his considerations on the possibility of developing to the fullest the fruit that one has the potential to bear.[135] Yet if one has some sort of control over one's life, no matter how tenuous, then one escapes in some crucial aspect the causal determinism of the natural world. Man cannot be reduced to his body: 'I', self, ego, spirit, will or subject as causally directive yet causally free entity or process must exist in some form or another and because of this must belong to the supernatural. Nietzsche's early dedication to education (his Basel professorship), his later sustained

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of psychological phenomena. In the next section he contended: 'When someone cannot get over a "psychological pain", that is not the fault of his "psyche" but [...] more probably even that of his belly'. See also D 119, GS-Preface 2, BGE 20 and the note concluding the first essay of *Genealogy*, where the importance of physiology to make inroads into psychology is stressed in very transparent terms.

[129] For Leiter (1998, 240–255, restated and expanded in 2003, 97–101), Nietzsche depicted man's existence as determined by significant aspects of his physiological constitution over which he has no control. Leiter notes that 'a 'person' is [for Nietzsche] an arena in which the struggle of drives (type-facts) is played out; how they play out determines what he believes, what he values, what he becomes. But, qua conscious self or 'agent', the person takes no active part in the process' (Leiter 2003, 100).

[130] Magnus reads in the eternal recurrence theory Nietzsche's 'existential imperative' (Magnus 1978).

[131] BGE 260; emphases added.

[132] GM-II 2; emphases in original.

[133] HH-I 263, GS 270, EH-II 9; see also the subtitle to this last work.

[134] Hence Cooper (1998, 213) argues that Nietzsche's main message is that one has full power over oneself and over one's existence.

[135] GM-Preface 2; see also HH-I 210.

efforts to reach out to 'untimely' and then '*free*-spirited' (my emphasis) readers and more generally his lifelong passion for human culture can also be received in this overall perspective. All these commitments are indeed impossible to make sense of outside a worldview allowing for psychological yet behaviourally effective freedom and self-control.

It is undeniable that Nietzsche's texts easily lend themselves to both interpretations. Echoes of this tension reverberate endlessly in the secondary literature. Authors insist on the naturalistic, protobehaviouristic overtone of Nietzsche's works, while others remain adamant about their proto-existentialistic content. The possibility, through conscious efforts, of accepting and of becoming 'what one is', to consciously will (more) power over the world, including over one's life, automatically brings back to life Nietzsche's nemesis, the doer behind the deed, however called. Conversely, if the causally effective 'I' is an illusion, becoming 'what one is', whatever this expression may precisely mean, is irrelevant for being inconsequential. If one is will to power expressed as body and if will to power is uncontrollable, no matter what one thinks of oneself and of one's existence, one's life follows a course according to past and present parameters over which one has no control. Nietzsche's rare attempts to address this contradiction are neither complete nor convincing. One can even doubt whether they are in fact genuine. To pre-empt partially the conclusion offered below, these half-hearted attempts are solid signs of Nietzsche's realisation of the depth of the problems his concept of will to power faced. Before this argument can be made, further consideration of the origins of his conflicting ideas is in order.

6. According to Müller-Lauter, Nietzsche's 'subject as multiplicity' hypothesis is indebted to the German zoologist and anatomist Wilhelm Roux, whose ideas Nietzsche abundantly commented upon in his 1881 and 1883/84 notebooks.[136] In what has turned out to be an influential but was then a controversial work,[137] *Der Kampf der Teile im Organismus* (*The Struggle of the Parts in the Organism*), Roux argued that evolution, development and current morphology of organisms can be explained only through a constant inner competition between the organs that compose them. This competition is said to be direct or indirect, through

[136] Müller-Lauter (1999, 161–182). This paragraph is indebted to Müller-Lauter's study. See also Toscano (2001, 48–60), Staten (2006, 566–567), Moore (2006b, 526–528).

[137] Roux's ideas have paved the way for what is known today as 'evolutionary mechanics'; in subsequent works, he also pioneered experimental embryology (Hamburger 1997).

the various physiological processes that the organs support. Only thus, according to Roux, can extremely complex transitions from one life form to another (e.g., the transformation of some animals from water to land creatures, as per Darwin's theory of evolution), entailing vast amounts of simultaneous inner transformations, be elucidated. Against Darwin, Roux held in particular that the individuals' struggle for existence cannot account for the formation of their organs; these must, thanks to their internal workings and through their multiple interactions, form and regulate themselves. Roux did not embrace teleology or vitalism for all that. Opposing teleological accounts, Roux sought to explain organisms in reductionist terms; that is, through causal mechanisms enacted by their organs. He went so far as to claim that animals are 'machines for self-preservations, self-reproduction and self-regulations'.[138]

Nietzsche did not go to these extremes. In particular, he considered that non-teleological, reductive causal-mechanical physical and physiological models were based on the 'principle of the least possible energy and the greatest possible stupidity'.[139] Yet some of his claims can be easily paralleled with statements proposed by Roux. For instance, Nietzsche, without acknowledging the source of his inspiration, accepted the overall idea of the individual organism as a collection of independent parts or processes.[140] He followed Roux in rejecting Darwin, for whom the development of an organ is conditioned to that of the individual of which it is a part. For Nietzsche, each organ or processes evolves independent of its contribution to the whole organism; in an often quoted passage of the *Genealogy*, he stated that 'however well one has understood the utility of any physiological organ, [...] this means nothing regarding its origin: [...] purposes and utilities are only signs that a will to power' is operating.[141] Each organ is the embodiment, that is, the morphology, of an independent will to power; its utility to the organism is merely an accidental by-product of its existence. In this perspective,

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[138] Quoted in Müller-Lauter (1999, 174).

[139] BGE 14; see also WP 618, in which explanations of 'the whole from its parts' is a 'homage[s] to the principle of the greatest possible stupidity'. The last sentence of GM-III 16 also dismisses bluntly reductive physiology.

[140] 'The individual itself as a struggle between parts (for food, for space, etc.): its evolution tied to the victory or predominance of individual parts, to an atrophy, a 'becoming an organ' of other parts' (WP 647). In addition to Nietzsche's texts, referred to above, which mention an internal 'multiplicity', the theme is also perceptible in the putative WLN 2[76]: 'Aristocracy in the body, the majority of the rulers (struggle of the tissues?)'.

[141] GM-II 12.

will to power refers to a psychological drive as well as an organic process, the latter being the manifestation of the former. From the first sections of *Beyond Good and Evil* to the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the continuity of Nietzsche's thought on these matters is plain. The problems mentioned above are not addressed though; in fact, at least two new distinct but related ones have been created. Firstly, Nietzsche's separation of an organism's will to power into several independent psychological or organic subprocesses undermines itself directly, for it is very unclear how a psychological drive or life process can be simultaneously primary (i.e., at the origin of all other drives or processes) and made of more than one component. Secondly, in the absence of a unique fundamental drive or process, the question of the overall unity of the organism now looms large.

Nietzsche's acceptance of some of Roux's key ideas is yet another manifestation of his ardent readings of the Homeric poems. In the *Iliad*, not only is there no word for the modern notion of self, but also no word points to the body as a unitary concept. The emphasis is on a plurality of independent parts appearing at times in conflict with one another. This view is so consistently carried throughout the epic cycle that the unity of the living human body and the existence of the individual as individual become difficult to explain.[142] Waking consciousness emerges from Homer's texts as a 'polycentric field of awareness whose several centres possess varying degrees of autonomy in relation to an I that is not in itself another fixed centre but rather a variable "function" of the totality of centres'.[143] The body as well as its expression as consciousness are loci of constant battles between competing organs or wills; individuality exists only as the external outcome of a society of internal agents. This perspective is transparently found in Nietzsche, indirectly through his critiques of Western psychology and directly in his rarer positive statements.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, one of the key charges that Nietzsche, perhaps unfairly, indiscriminately levelled against his predecessors 'from time immemorial' (i.e., Plato) and especially against Kant, is to have theorised, reified and enshrined the 'folk superstition' of indivisible individuality through that of the psyche-soul-I-subject-ego.[144] Philosophy

[142] Snell (1983, 5–7).

[143] Parkes (1994, 253).

[144] The quotations are from BGE-Preface. Nietzsche did not seem to pay any attention to Plato's vision of a tripartite psyche (expressed in the *Republic*), which can be said to be a simplification of the Homeric model; he retained only the picture of the unitary psyche as it is found in later dialogues, like the *Phaedo*. Similarly, Nietzsche ignored Kant's insistence (in the first *Critique*) on the importance

since Plato is for him guilty of having overlooked that whatever name is given to the concept, it is only the combination of a moral and a grammatical notion, not an empirical one: an invention, an interpretation, not a discovery.[145] Opposing the Platonic view, Nietzsche regularly described the unity of the organism as well as the existence of the '"ego" as being'[146] as only apparent. Individuality gives way to plurality: for him, individuals exist only as federations, as results of a 'co-operation' of the parts that compose them – that is, 'as a pattern of domination that signifies a unity but is not a unity'.[147] There is no overall, unitary will to power to be found 'within' man or his body because 'there is no will: there are points of will [*Willens-Punktationen*] that are constantly increasing or losing their power'.[148] Man is thus 'a multiplicity of 'wills to power': each one with a multiplicity of means of expressions and forms'.[149] Even speaking of the will's 'subcomponents' or 'subprocesses' is misleading insofar as it implies a unity to which these subcomponents belong; speaking of individual wills combining themselves on pragmatic grounds seems to be more faithful to Nietzsche's ideas. Cooperation between wills to power, just as between individuals in a herd, is merely 'a means' towards an end:[150] the achievement of more power, for 'the degree of resistance that must be continually overcome in order to remain on top is the measure of freedom, [...] that is, as positive power,

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of intellectual synthesis in the formation of knowledge and his later distinction of three drives in the 'human predisposition for animality'. Schiller's and Fichte's writings on this broad theme, although perhaps unknowingly echoed in Nietzsche's texts, are also ignored altogether (see Parkes 1994, 252–267, for a 'brief history of psychical polycentricity', from which the preceding comments are extracted).

145 'The "soul" itself is an *expression* of all the phenomena of consciousness which, however, we *interpret as the cause of all these phenomena* ("self-consciousness" is a fiction!)'(WLN 1[58]; emphases in original).

146 WP 517.

147 WP 561; see also WP 518: 'If our "ego" is for us the sole being, after the model of which we fashion and understand all being: very well! Then there would be very much room to doubt whether what we have here is not a perspective illusion – an apparent unity that encloses everything like a horizon. The evidence of the body reveals a tremendous multiplicity; it is allowable, for purposes of method, to employ the more easily studied, richer phenomena [the body] as evidence for the understanding of the poorer [the "ego"]'. Nietzsche's criticisms of individuality as it is traditionally conceived and his substitution by plurality in his late texts are expanded in Nabais (2006b).

148 WP 715.

149 WLN 1[58].

150 WP 766.

as will to power'.[151] The individual exists as individual only as a vehicle for its internal components to achieve their goals.

Nietzsche's accounts of the development of self-consciousness and of moral values belong to that perspective. It was to achieve greater power over their environment via the coordination of their actions that men developed language, a communication device which was subsequently interiorised to give rise to the phenomenon of inner dialogue and then to the illusion of the body-controlling self. Self-consciousness is thus not primary or unitary but the incidental by-product of cooperation between wills to power manifested as independent bodies. Similarly, in *Zarathustra*, moral values are nothing but the expression of wills to power embodied in the peoples who assert them.[152] The masters of the *Genealogy*, although themselves manifestations of strong but independent wills to power, were eventually defeated by their slaves because these, even if weaker individually, through sheer cleverness and other manipulative techniques employed by their priests, became collectively stronger than their masters. In Nietzsche's vision, there is no discontinuity or fundamental difference between an organ, the body, an individual and society. Importantly, these terms do not refer to self-standing or well-defined entities but merely point to expressions of stronger and stronger wills to power. They represent arbitrary and intermediate if descriptively useful stops along a continuum of increasing power and control over other wills. As Thiele concludes, in Nietzsche's thought 'patterns of domination – in short, politics – allow pluralities to bear the appearance of unities'.[153] This continuity also allowed Nietzsche to make allusions to the social nature of drives, emotions or 'souls', to make what is ordinarily taken as an 'internal' concept (self) dependent on an 'external' one (society) without committing a logical fallacy.

A closer reading of the late texts reveals, however, that beyond these well-known themes, will to power is in fact *not* the criterion upon which

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[151] WP 770.

[152] Z-I 15.

[153] Thiele (1990, 52); similarly, Parkes writes of Nietzsche's 'political metaphor for the psyche' (Parkes 1995, 272). Even if the title of WP 660 is 'The Body as a Political Structure', the question whether Nietzsche was a political philosopher is yet to be settled. If Nietzsche's moral philosophy has political implications (some of which are explored in Bloom 1986, 217–226), identifying in his works a positive and coherent political philosophy is anything but straightforward, for such an agenda is difficult to reconcile not only with his perspectivism but also and more importantly with his emphasis on the individual and his power, a point towards which the discussion is about to turn.

Nietzsche grounded the hierarchy or 'political' predominance through which the appearance of unity is achieved. If it were, then Nietzsche's abundant disparaging comments about the slaves, their priests and what they achieved would be inexplicable. In the last analysis, according to Nietzsche's own account, these individuals did nothing else but organise themselves so as to achieve greater power over their seemingly indomitable (judging from the description offered in the *Genealogy*'s first essay) but in the end clay-footed masters. Nietzsche rebelled against the defeat of 'Rome' by 'Judea', whereas one would have expected him to rejoice at the spectacle of the victory of a new might over an older one, of the victory of one will to power over another. This shows that the result he recounted in the work did not respect the predominance criterion he truly favoured and wanted to restore. Nietzsche's preferred criterion, absent in the *Genealogy*, is the same one that is missing in *Beyond* in the discussion of the various components ('away from' and 'towards') of the will and without which the psychological theory of will to power is meaningless. While not proposed in these books, this missing decisive factor is not difficult to reconstitute.

Contradicting the arguments that individuality is at bottom an illusion and a noxious moral assumption, Nietzsche's contempt for the Christian herd ethics is rooted in its denial of the value of the individual. Within a slave morality framework, so Nietzsche claimed in the *Genealogy*, individuals have to submit to an ideal that denies and smothers *self*-affirmation. The eagle is vilified for being an eagle and must behave as a lamb if he wants to be socially accepted at all; the higher man is forced to surrender or hide his strength and to submit to the values of the herd.[154] This denial of the great individual as great individual is, for Nietzsche, the capital, ignoble, repugnant and unforgivable offence of the ascetic ethics: he saw such herd morals as leading to what can be called a 'tall poppy syndrome' preventing the flourishing of great men, those who create value and take human culture to higher levels. Rather than power in general, Nietzsche's true evaluative criterion is the power of the solitary individual as individual, a vision which culminates in the figure of the Übermensch.[155] Making no mystery of his nostalgia, Nietzsche wrote, 'in the past, every elevation of the type 'human being' was achieved by an aristocratic society [...]: by a society that believes in a great ladder of hierarchy and value differentiation between people'.[156]

[154] GM-I 10–12; see also GS 352.
[155] Moore (2006b, 524). The point is argued in finer detail in Moore (2006a, 31–34).
[156] BGE 257.

Crucial to this conception, the existence of the (great) individual as self-standing, value-endowing, culture-enhancing and civilisation-building entity is not only affirmed but extolled. In this outlook, will to power plays a secondary role; what comes first in Nietzsche's ranking scale is the individual that exhibits, as individual, will to power. If will to power takes precedence over the great individual, as in the slaves' revolt in morals, it is vilified as a 'will to nothingness'.

Nietzsche's redefinition of personal responsibility hides a similar reversal. In his view, the superior individual, he who has a fully developed conscience, must accept responsibility for whatever he does, consciously or not, willingly or not. Yet Nietzsche also insisted that the 'sovereign individual' had the right to stand for himself with pride and possessed the 'right to affirm [him]self'.[157] Nietzsche's love affair with the ethics that emerges from Homer's poems notwithstanding, Nietzsche could not abandon his ideal of giants like Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon, standing against the crowd and endowing meaning and order in an otherwise senseless and chaotic world. Beyond his late public rejection of romanticism, Nietzsche shared an important tenet of the movement as it developed in early nineteenth-century Germany under the influence of, among others, Fichte, the early Schelling, Schiller and Schopenhauer. In Nietzsche's thought as in that of those authors, self-affirmation is proclaimed as the inalienable right and privilege of the exceptional individual. If Nietzsche had wanted to remain faithful to the Homeric ideal, he would have had no other choice but to reject this romantic vision. Lacking a word for the self as it would later be conceived of in the Platonic-Christian tradition, Homer's characters cannot possibly aim at self-affirmation, only social affirmation. Excellence in performing the role imposed by his peers – that is, glorious and proud effacement behind assigned social responsibilities – is the sole objective of the Homeric hero. Death is the unavoidable but accepted fate. In this outline, the individual is not a source of value as individual. Values are imposed upon him: at best, he can be a moral model through the example he sets. As the contemporary critiques of *The Birth of Tragedy* pointed out mercilessly, Nietzsche's philological rigour is again found wanting in *Beyond* and the *Genealogy* under the influence of his enduring Schopenhauerian-Wagnerian romanticism. Inevitably, however, with such romanticism creeps back the notion of individuality as free, all-powerful, value-endowing, purpose-giving and world-directing notion. In his elevation of the (great) individual as ultimate source of values,

[157] GM-II 3.

Nietzsche reintroduced that which is absent in Homer's poems but is foundational to a large component of romanticism: the soul, self or free 'I' as man's defining substratum.[158] Romanticism, when it is committed to the existence of an entity that is conceived of as causally effective yet escaping the causal determinism of the natural world, is committed to the Platonic-Christian ontology.

Similarly, in his opposition to physiology's causal reductionism, Nietzsche assumed de facto the whole to be superior in a crucial aspect to the sum of its parts. The difference between, on the one hand, the organism and, on the other, the organs and their processes must be an agency or principle having teleological and causally effective powers, providing unity and direction to an otherwise disconnected collection of individual components, perhaps all 'willing power' but potentially pulling in different directions.[159] This superordinate principle cannot be directly observed as such; if it could, it would be a biological process or organ among the others and Nietzsche would then fall back into the reductive physiological reductionism (as Roux did) he so clearly dismissed. This principle must be inferred from the observation of phenomena attributed to the organs but cannot be explained in strictly organic terms. In other words, this agency presents the exact outline and features of the concept that Nietzsche vehemently rejected in his predecessors' and contemporaries' thought: an unobservable, teleological and causally effective entity or process, irreducible to any or to the totality of the body's organs. If man is will to power or a collection of independent wills to power, will to power (or one of the several wills to power) must have a supernatural and teleological dimension.[160]

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[158] See Gardner (2010, 8–9), for an expanded version of this argument.

[159] See Janaway (1989, 354–357), for a discussion of this issue in the context of Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche.

[160] The teleological dimension of will to power has been noted in the literature (see Poellner 2007, 162–173, e.g.) and receives central attention in Richardson's *Nietzsche's System* (1996; see 50–52 and 187–191, among many other passages). The tension this teleology generates with Nietzsche's anti-essentialist and naturalistic stance has not gone unnoticed either (cf. Poellner 2007, 191–198). Janaway brings it to bear to deflate Nietzsche's naturalism as attributed to his *Genealogy* (Janaway 2006, 340ff). As Staten summarises, 'Nietzsche [...] proposes to go straight from biology to purposiveness [but runs into difficulties] because the problematic of consciousness is entangled with that of teleology in a way that Nietzsche never gets quite clear. [...] what puts [an] unbearable strain on Nietzsche's naturalism is the fact that he wants immanent will to power to not be teleological yet to achieve what teleology achieves' (Staten 2006, 568–570). Similar comments are offered in Nabais (2006b, 76ff). In later works, Richardson

Nietzsche's dismissals of 'Darwinists and antiteleologists' revolved precisely on this theme.[161] If Darwinism were to be strictly correct, Nietzsche argued, its implied determinism would irresistibly drive species to perfect states of adaptation to their environment. A rigorous Darwinist evolution would thus make species extremely fragile to changes in their milieu: the more adapted, the more fragile.[162] He further argued that, on its own, adaptation to the environment cannot explain the development of the species, since biological diversity is unexplainable within a strict determinist framework.[163] Convergence is more likely if the unique and inescapable criterion is environmental fitness.[164] Nietzsche also objected to Darwin's idea of species necessarily growing perfect because evolution through selection opens the way to degeneration of the species when weak individuals collaborate to offset their weaknesses, as the slaves did to topple their masters.

Whether or not the consequences Nietzsche attributed to Darwin are faithful to the thesis of *On the Origin of Species* forms a fascinating theme in its own right. Nietzsche most likely never read Darwin; his understanding of Darwinism appears to be only secondary, acquired through his readings of Lange, Roux and others.[165] In the present study's context, however, this theme is of little relevance; what matters here is to ascertain why Nietzsche objected to his interpretation of Darwin's theses. In Nietzsche's eyes, that species have multiplied and survived to the extent that they have can be explained only by an internal resistance to adaptation helped by an abundance of resources.[166] The less adapted are the more powerful because, in effect,

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comes back (on his own admission) on his reading, arguing that Nietzsche successfully, if partially, naturalised teleology through Darwinian natural selection (Richardson 2002; 2004, ch. 1). There are reasons to resist this view, as the unfolding discussion indicates.

[161] BGE 14.

[162] Connecting here points made in WP 685 and TI-IX 14. TI-IX 14 appears to be a greatly condensed version of ideas developed in WP 70, 647, 649, 684 and 685 (dated from 1883 onwards, evidence of the enduring presence of this theme in Nietzsche's thought).

[163] In WLN 36[21] and WP 685.

[164] Convergence is indeed the dominating pattern of (deterministic) evolutionary dynamics simulations; see Skyrms (1996, 22–44), for a discussion of this point.

[165] This belief is widely shared in the literature (see, e.g., Poellner 2007, 140; Moore 2006a, 22; 2006b, 519; Johnson 2010, 3). In Brobjer's reconstruction of Nietzsche's library and readings, works by Darwin do not appear but works about him abound (Brobjer 2008a).

[166] WP 70: 'Against the doctrine of the influence of the milieu and external causes: the force within is infinitely superior; much that looks like external influence is

they are more versatile and more intelligent, if intelligence is equated with adaptability: 'The weaker dominate the strong again and again – the reason being they are [...] *cleverer*... Darwin forgot the mind [...]: *the weak possess more mind*'.[167] Less adapted species exhibit stronger will to power, which for Nietzsche is the force driving change, though the herd can smother them:

> That will to power in which I recognise the ultimate ground and character of all changes provide us with the reason why selection is not in favour of the exceptions and lucky strokes: the strongest [...] are weak when opposed by organised herd instincts.[168]

Evolutionism must thus not leave 'the mind' out of the equation, as Darwinism did: Nietzsche is an evolutionist but not a Darwinist.[169] His 'confidential' comment that 'we do not need to get rid of "the soul" [*Seele*] itself',[170] even taking into account the explicit qualification (the inverted commas), betrays, in light of the above, a vitalist inclination that has its roots in his romanticism.[171] 'We do not need' sounds like an understatement; 'we cannot' or even 'we must not' seems more appropriate. In this section, will to power, 'I' and 'mind' are indistinguishable concepts.

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merely its adaptation from within'. See also WLN 7[25] and GM-II 12, in which adaptation is qualified as 'an activity of the second rank'. Moore argues that on this theme Nietzsche drew heavily on, among others, Swiss botanist Karl Wilhelm von Nägeli and Anglo-German zoologist William Rolph (Moore 2006a, 29–55; 2006b, 524–529). Prodigality of nature is important to Nietzsche's rejoinder to Darwinism, since Darwin argued from premises that include a Malthusian scarcity of resources (see TI-IX 14 and GS 349).

[167] TI-IX 14; emphases in original ('mind' is Hollingdale's translation for the German *Geist*; Kaufmann uses 'spirit'). In this section, Nietzsche argued against Darwin's theory of evolution, and 'weak' is hence to be read as per Darwin's conception of the term, i.e. 'less adapted', 'less fit'.

[168] WP 685; see also GM-II 12.

[169] This very rich theme is the subject of Moore 2006a (see 21 for a direct expression; see also Moore 2006b, 518); the point is also made in Johnson (2010), 4. Moore argues that non-Darwinist evolutionism was the dominant scientific paradigm in the second half of the nineteenth century and was paradoxically the result of the publication of *The Origin of Species* (Moore 2006a, 23–29). For an attempted resolution of the conflicts between Nietzsche's and Darwin's thoughts, see Richardson (2002, 2004).

[170] BGE 12.

[171] Thus Moore observes that 'in seeking to refute Darwin's most radical proposals for explaining species change, [Nietzsche] unwittingly lapses into an obsolete Romanticism' (Moore 2006a, 194); see also Moore (2006b, 529–530).

These comments can be expanded to Nietzsche's account of self-consciousness. Fascinating as it may be, Nietzsche's theory remains incomplete: it does not explain how self-consciousness developed, merely why it did. It proposes to account for self-consciousness as an outcome of social existence given some premises, one of which is that individuals had to cooperate to survive in a difficult environment.[172] The theory is incapable of explaining why self-consciousness and descriptive language are exclusively human phenomena if they are to be explained through coordination of individual efforts. Other animals live in groups and in some cases their lives are organised along highly specialised roles, like those displayed by honeybees or ants. Herd animals adopt roles that seemingly imply cooperation and exchange of information going well beyond the mere sharing of feelings. This is for instance the case when one individual keeps a watch on behalf of the rest of the group or positions itself temporarily in front of a flight formation to spare (at least in the eyes of a human observer) physical expense to his peers. Why these animals have not developed descriptive (as opposed to merely expressive) language and thus self-consciousness out of communication requirements cannot be elucidated through Nietzsche's suggestions. The theory is naturalistic from a phylogenetical perspective but remains incomplete nonetheless. One of its unstated premises is that man has already gained the ability to communicate through descriptive language. This unacknowledged precondition is in fact an illustration of an internal circularity of the theory that is now to be highlighted.

By considering, in *The Gay Science*, that consciousness is equivalent to an internal use of language, Nietzsche in effect equates it with conceptualisation by means of words.[173] In this perspective, consciousness must be distinguished from awareness and mere perception, for clearly infants and non-human animals are aware of (perceive) their environment yet cannot be suspected of having any words to conceptualise it. With this move, Nietzsche once again conflated consciousness with self-consciousness since conceptualisation by means of words is impossible to conceive of independently of self-consciousness. This is the case because, as Nietzsche noted elsewhere, such conceptualisation is the act of assigning a word to a perceived phenomenon.[174] This ability assumes

[172] In contradiction with TI-IX 14, where nature is said to be prodigal.
[173] Katsafanas (2005, esp. 3–10).
[174] D 115 and BGE 268; see also WP 506.

the capacity to distinguish what is being perceived from what perceives and is taken as a point of reference, for if the two are not discriminated, everything – perceiver and perceived, subject and object – remains an undifferentiated whole and there is nothing left to distinguish and to conceptualise.[175] Conceptualisation by means of words is the acknowledgement through a symbol of the distance between object and subject. Implicit in Nietzsche's account is a reification of self-consciousness as a self-contained vessel and assessor of external perceptions.[176] It is impossible to conceive of the subject or 'I' as mere performance of the body and receptacle of bodily sensations conceptualised through symbols (giving birth to descriptive language and then consciousness in Nietzsche's theory) without an entity capable of conceptualisation.[177] Nietzsche admitted as much when he depicted consciousness as a 'mirror effect',[178] for a mirror can only reflect objects; it cannot create them, even less itself.

Expressed differently, if self-consciousness is conceptualisation by means of words, as Nietzsche argued, it still requires the existence of the conscious self as pre-existing entity or substratum and cannot account for it. Nietzsche's theory of self-consciousness is circular insofar as it implicitly relies on what it tries to explain: self-consciousness as conceptualisation requires consciousness of whatever is being conscious; that is, self-consciousness. Without a pre-existing conscious self, even if

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[175] Knowingly or not, Nietzsche walked here in Descartes's steps. For Descartes, 'all thinking, including even sensation, is [...] necessarily reflective. [In the Cartesian perspective,] thinking is thus poetic in the Greek sense as *poiesis*, a making that first makes himself and then the world for this self through representation' (Gillespie 1995, 50).

[176] This reification is transparently implied in Nietzsche's writing that 'our actions, thoughts, feelings, and movements enter our consciousness' (GS 354). Moreover, if such material 'enters consciousness', then it cannot generate it ex post.

[177] Thus Porter concludes that Nietzsche reduced 'the subject of sensation to sensation without a subject', a move that is 'hard to conceive' and which, in the end, fails: 'the radical destitution of the subject does not occur at all within Nietzsche's picture' (Porter 2006, 551–552). The same point is expressed indirectly by Liebscher, who observes that Nietzsche's 'anti-subjective turn does not allow any role for the concept of consciousness, since the conscious subject is no longer included in the process of interpretation' (Liebscher 2010, 256–257). In other words, Nietzsche's theory of consciousness and his rejection of the self are mutually exclusive; if he wanted to make room for consciousness, he must bring back the subject in his account.

[178] Opening lines of GS 354.

reduced to the ability to talk descriptively to oneself, Nietzsche's theory collapses. Here Nietzsche faced a variation of the dilemma that Hume left unresolved: the impossibility of explaining the self as an illusory outcome of experience in the absence of the substratum said to be the receptacle of that very experience.[179] Given the proximity of Nietzsche's and Hume's thoughts, possibly even the indebtedness of the former toward the latter on these matters, this observation is anything but surprising. In any case, Nietzsche's abrupt denial that his theory of the development of consciousness has any bearing on epistemology and on the traditional opposition between subject and object rings rather hollow, if not of bad faith.[180] This is the case because Nietzsche's theory of consciousness opens the back door to what was publicly shown the gate, the concept it is supposed to eliminate: the subject, self or 'I' as autonomous entity or substratum.[181]

The irony is that Nietzsche made himself the case for rejecting his own claim since he contended that consciousness is a falsification, in effect pulling the carpet from underneath his own feet.[182] If consciousness falsifies existence, as Nietzsche held, then investigations into the nature of consciousness, including Nietzsche's, lose their relevance. They cannot pretend to represent the reality they are supposed to capture since they have been (one can only presume) arrived at through careful introspection or, again, through the exercise of self-consciousness. As such, even if relying on meticulous self-observation, they are to be considered erroneous 'surface interpretations'. That is to say, Nietzsche's theory of consciousness as falsification falls into the notorious self-refutation trap. His assertion that his views on consciousness exemplify the 'essence of [...] perspectivism'[183] takes in this context a particularly ironical relief, for perspectivism cannot affirm itself without refuting itself at the same time or at least cannot do so without extremely elaborate qualifications that Nietzsche did not offer.[184]

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[179] Davey (1987, 24–25). Hume's dismissal of the self in book I of his *Treatise* is also in tension with his moral psychology as developed in books II and III; this aspect of Hume's thought (and the determinism it contains) is discussed in Gardner (2010, 15–17).

[180] Last 'paragraph' of GS 354 in Kaufmann's translation.

[181] This point has received recently much attention in the literature; see, e.g., Gardner (2010) or Janaway (2010).

[182] GS 354.

[183] GS 354.

[184] The multiple links that exist between Nietzsche's views on self-consciousness and his epistemological perspectivism are discussed in Janaway (2010).

Nietzsche rejected the notion of immediate certainty and the epistemological value of 'immediate certainties' and 'inner facts', attacking Schopenhauer, Descartes and Kant for relying on them.[185] In light of the above, very similar charges can be levelled against Nietzsche when he attempted to justify his own views. Schopenhauer developed his conception of man as objectified will by reinterpreting bodily sensations as proof of willing; Descartes grounded his cogito on a purely intellectual phenomenon conceived of as detached from the bundle of bodily sensations. Nietzsche tried to combine both approaches when he asserted that 'the will is [...] above all an *emotion*, and in fact the *emotion* of command', for emotions refer to both physiological and purely psychological phenomena.[186] Yet not only does the term 'emotion' implicitly refer to 'something' experiencing the emotion which must be distinct from it, but also it is unclear to what degree 'the will is an emotion' is not Nietzsche's own 'immediate certainty' or 'inner fact'. No argument substantiating this statement is provided beyond what must be, despite his later and highly implausible claim to the contrary,[187] Nietzsche's personal experience. In *Beyond*, Nietzsche insisted that the notion of an 'immediate certainty' is a senseless '*contradictio in adjecto*'.[188] For all that, the 'there is willing' that he proposed in the same section appears like a simple romantic reformulation of the Cartesian axiom, which he dismissed for being circular. For him, Descartes's axiomatic statement simply assumes what it sets out to prove and no explanatory gain is achieved. Nietzsche's requalification of human behaviour as 'willing', even if 'to power', can be subjected to the same critique, though: a mere lexical change devoid of explanatory powers. The term 'behaviour' has been replaced by the expression 'will to power'. This is all the more the case since Nietzsche was adamant that there is no 'I', no doer behind the deed, or in other words, that there is no distinction to be made between willing and behaviour that willing is supposed to exemplify. The two expressions are interchangeable. Indeed, separating behaviour from will would land Nietzsche in an even more difficult situation, for 'I' would be simply re-created under another name.

The conclusion is that the concept of will to power as insight into human existence falls short of the expectations that Nietzsche raised

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185 BGE 16 and TI-VI 3, respectively.
186 BGE 19; emphases in original.
187 EH-II 9: '"Willing" something, "striving" for something, envisaging a "purpose", a "wish" – I know none of this from experience'.
188 BGE 16.

in the opening chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*. As a purely psychological theory, will to power is unable to explain behaviour since it subsumes all actions to a single but in practice meaningless drive. As a reformulation of human life, the notion is circular, for it assumes what it tries to define. Moreover and crucially, Nietzsche's accounts of self-consciousness, the unity of the human body and the evolution of the species, while allegedly building on the physiological concept of will to power, rely implicitly on a pre-existing causal, teleological, non-organic, supernatural and self-reflective entity or process, the very notion that will to power is supposed to displace and make redundant. Besides, power per se is not the criterion that Nietzsche extolled in his pleas to improve human culture and avert nihilism. What Nietzsche relied on in his trademark arguments and contentions, what he praised through his romantic 'heroic individualism', is precisely what he so often rejected in Plato, Christianity, Descartes and Kant. The concept of will to power as psychological drive or ontological basis presents all the features for which Nietzsche dismissed what was for him the Platonic-Christian-Cartesian-Kantian notion of psyche-soul-I-subject. Although supposedly inducted from natural observations, will to power as ontological or merely psychological conception is 'I' interpreted romantically.

There are many indirect signs in Nietzsche's writings to believe that he came to this conclusion himself. These are noticeable in Nietzsche's texts that propose explanations of human and natural phenomena, for these texts make use, sometimes avowedly, of concepts that he elsewhere vehemently dismissed. This is particularly the case when it comes to suicide or to his opposition to free will. More generally, Nietzsche was caught in a web of contradictions from which he tried to extract himself but in which he remained mired, prudently preferring to remain silent on the most visible ones. This body of evidence is now to be considered.

7. Even a cursory reading of *Beyond Good and Evil* cannot fail to reveal a glaring lack of cohesiveness running through the work. In the thunderous introductory chapter, Nietzsche, lashing out at his contemporaries and predecessors, concluded with a grandiose enthronement of psychology as the 'queen of sciences' and a redefinition of the discipline as the 'evolution and morphology of will to power'. Suprinsingly, the following chapters are silent on these same themes.[189] There is no logical bridge from

[189] §36 being a possible caveat to this observation. Yet even if this aphorism can be read as a condensed argument for a theory of actuality, a single section cannot be received as a sustained response to the towering challenge that Nietzsche threw at himself in the opening sections of the book. In any case, §36 does not allude to psychology or to 'morphology'.

the first chapter to the following ones, except that the latter propose a history of moral values that can be read as a possible substitute to what was dismissed early on. Power is the new basis for ethics,[190] but of will to power, there is scant mention; of its evolution or morphology, there is none at all.

Not that this finding should come as entirely unexpect; on this particular aspect, *Beyond Good and Evil* is a mere repetition of the book that immediately preceded it. The forcefulness of Zarathustra's brief declarations about the inexistence of the soul and about the central importance in man's existence of will to power (claims made in the first half of the book) is matched by the complete absence of these matters in the second half of his adventures and sermons. This is an omission worthy of note when one remembers that the last chapter of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was written slowly during the 1884/85 winter, whereas the first one had been penned two years before in a short burst of productivity. These observations can be extended to the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, written immediately after *Beyond*. In the last instalment of *The Gay Science*, not only is the concept of will to power merely alluded to in a single passing comment,[191] but also, as in *Beyond* with regard to dismissal of the cogito, the concept is *not* explicitly connected with Nietzsche's theory of the origin of consciousness. This again is a remarkable restraint, the proximity, at the very least the compatibility, of these strands of ideas being not difficult to establish, as the foregoing has shown.

This lack of development in the published works takes a particular relief in view of Nietzsche's frequent and varied attempts at connecting all these ideas in his notebooks.[192] The following is typical:

> We have no right whatever to posit [...] consciousness as the aim and wherefore of [the] total phenomenon of life: becoming conscious is obviously only one more means toward the unfolding and extension of the power of life. Therefore it is a piece of naiveté to posit pleasure or spirituality or morality or any particular of the sphere of consciousness as the highest value – and perhaps to justify 'the world' by means of this.
>
> This is my basic objection to all philosophic-moralistic [...] theodicies [...]. One kind of means has been misunderstood as an end; conversely, life and the enhancement of its power has [*sic*] been debased to a means.

[190] In BGE 260 notably.
[191] At the end of GS 349.
[192] As is the case, e.g., in WP 434, 476, 502 and 524.

> If we wished to postulate a goal adequate to life, it could not coincide with any category of conscious life; it would rather have to explain all of them as a means to itself.[193]

Consciousness is not a moral or metaphysical objective of which power is a means but it is only a means towards achieving and increasing power, an aim that is the only possible, if unconscious, goal of life. In other words, consciousness is a by-product of a constant but unrecognised pursuit of power because man is will to power. Written in 1887 and revised in late 1888, this entry reveals a Nietzsche concerned with these matters and trying to bring his thoughts about them to fruition. That he decided not to publish the entry suggests that he was unable to commit himself to its contents. This prudence by a writer who in his youth did not hesitate to sacrifice his budding academic career to romanticism and who later attacked the most celebrated philosophers of his day can only be explained by his awakening to and growing uneasiness with the problems his thought contained.

This uneasiness is identifiable elsewhere in the notebooks. As he was working on *Beyond Good and Evil* and book V of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche wrote:

> a critique of the faculty of knowledge is senseless: how should a tool be able to criticise itself when it can use only itself for the critique? It cannot even define itself![194]

Later, he observed:

> The intellect cannot criticise itself [...] because in order to criticise the intellect we should have to be a higher being with 'absolute knowledge'. This presupposes that, distinct from every perspective kind of outlook or sensual-spiritual appropriation, something exists, an 'in-itself'.[195]

The intellect cannot analyse itself because doing so would require the existence of a 'higher being',[196] an 'in itself' of man's intellect:

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[193] WP 707; see also WP 676 and WP 711, which contain similar if less developed arguments.
[194] WP 486.
[195] WP 473.
[196] See also WP 524 and its reference to 'a higher court'.

precisely the entity that Nietzsche dismissed while still pondering on the nature of will and self-consciousness. Despite the underlying anti-essentialism of his late works, in this passage the trap of reification once again closed on Nietzsche. When penning these lines, Nietzsche must have felt the ground softening beneath his feet.

Nietzsche's weariness with his own concept had a wider base than the above comments suggest, however. His ambition to reinstate psychology at the top of the scientific pyramid was jeopardised by his willingness to transform the discipline into a 'physio-psychology': naturalising psychology is unlikely, by any account, to help elevate it above sciences like physiology and phylogeny. In fact, Nietzsche's moral philosophy as a whole is threatened by such an agenda. Based on evolutionist arguments, Nietzsche never tired of pointing out that Christian morality, insofar as it praises altruism, is 'antinature' and is prejudicial to life since it is detrimental to the affirmation and survival of the individual who is supposed to abide by it.[197] Similarly, he derided all explanations of the origin of the concept of 'good' as 'unselfish' as logically and psychologically untenable: in the mouth of the individual uttering it, 'good' must have meant, initially at least, powerful, useful – that is, 'good for me'.[198] One of the late Nietzsche's most persistent contentions is that the theory of evolution has opened a gap between Christian ethics and nature's ways that is too wide to be ignored: naturalism must be brought to bear on ethics.[199] The Darwinian-sounding title of Nietzsche's main moral treatise, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, attests to this concern. Pragmatic, tangible and life-affirming power is the neutral, amoral ('beyond good and evil') starting point that the free spirits, 'trained [...] to sacrifice all desirability to truth, every truth, even plain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unchristian, immoral truth', have little choice but to oppose to the Christian-Kantian ones, 'for such truths do exist'.[200] As the note at the end of the first essay of the *Genealogy* insists, psychological and physiological investigations must go hand in hand: psychological explanations must reconcile with and prolong physiological discoveries. This

[197] See TI-IX 35 for a concise exposition of this theme.
[198] GM-I 2 and 3.
[199] Johnson (2010, 3). This theme is transparently the thrust of BGE 9, even if Darwin's name is not mentioned. Nietzsche's preoccupation with this theme dates back to the *Untimely Meditations* I and II (Moore 2006b, 521). See Moore (2006a, 56ff), for a broader discussion on the influence of Darwinism on nineteenth-century moral philosophy in general and Nietzsche's in particular.
[200] GM-I 1. This theme is also expressed in BGE 2 and was earlier sounded in HH-I 1.

overall perspective is consistent with the late Nietzsche's denial of 'I', self or soul as supernatural self-standing and causally effective entity or substratum, with the naturalistic inclination of many of his writings and with his general violent hostility to world dualism.

An immediate problem with such a general framework is that suicide or sacrifice for a cause deemed greater than one's life becomes very difficult to explain. When proposing explanations for such phenomena, Nietzsche exonerated himself from the constraints of his own agenda and suspended the antisupernatural overtone of the works in which the explanations are proposed. In *Human, All Too Human*, suicide is presented as a 'victory for reason' over physical decline.[201] In *The Gay Science*, suicide and martyrdom are accounted for, as are all aspects of human behaviour, in terms of a constant and selfish quest for power.[202] Finally, in *Twilight of the Idols*, natural (i.e., involuntary) death is analysed as a cowardly and ignoble act, a mark of the lowly, the weak, the Christian.[203] The conviction that there is a rewarding, blissful life after involuntary death or, conversely, that one's ideal will be advanced through self-imposed martyrdom can only function as a purely psychological incentive, however. Strict physiology is unable to explain how such beliefs can take root in a given individual. Voluntary termination of one's existence cannot be explained as a quest for power if power refers exclusively to tangible physical or physiological advantages as opposed to purely psychological (if delusional) ones.[204] As for explaining individual suicidal tendencies as outgrowths of a drive present at the species level,[205] his commitment to evolutionism makes such a hypothesis altogether laughable for Nietzsche since the development of such an instinct would lead to the species' rapid extinction.[206] Similar difficulties can be identified in Nietzsche's explanation of sainthood proposed in *Beyond Good and Evil*, which relies exclusively on psychological factors;[207] a surprising explanation on the part of someone supposedly

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[201] HH-I 80.
[202] GS 13; see also HH-I 133.
[203] TI-IX 36.
[204] This is not to say that no forms of suicide can be framed within naturalistic arguments; other avenues are available, as Durkheim's *Suicide* (published in 1897) explored.
[205] As Freud later (if only for some time) attempted through his 'death instinct'.
[206] WP 707: 'The "denial of life" as an aim of life, an aim of evolution! Existence as a great stupidity! Such a lunatic expression is only the product of measuring life by aspects of consciousness (pleasure and displeasure, good and evil)'.
[207] BGE 51.

convinced that the psychological is merely an expression or mode of the physiological.

Nietzsche wrote sparingly on suicide.[208] This is a notable omission in light of the attention the theme receives in *The World as Will and Representation*, a work that Nietzsche read intensely. This restraint can be taken as a sign of his uneasiness about the matters discussed above. Suicide, martyrdom and sainthood are not the only difficulties that Nietzsche met in his attempts at erasing the difference between psychology and physiology. Even more damaging for Nietzsche's thought, the main thesis of *On the Genealogy of Morals* is exposed to similar rejoinders. In the work's opening sections, Nietzsche explained why a fundamental flaw made of 'English' psychology, as exemplified in the work of his former friend Paul Rée, a nonsensical affair:[209]

> These English psychologists – what do they really want? One always discovers them voluntarily or involuntarily at the same task, namely at dragging the *partie honteuse* of our inner world into the foreground and seeking the truly effective and directing agent, that which has been decisive in its evolution, in just that place where the intellectual pride of man would least *desire* to find it (in the *vis inertia* of habit, for example, or in forgetfulness, or in a blind and chance mechanistic hooking-together of ideas, or in something purely passive, automatic, reflexive, molecular and thoroughly stupid) – what is it really that always drives these psychologists in just *this* direction?[210]

As the terms 'blind', 'chance' 'mechanistic', 'automatic', 'reflexive' and 'molecular' show, Nietzsche dismissed 'English' psychology because it accounted for the 'evolution' of moral values on purely biological evolutionary bases; that is to say, on purely Darwinian, organic, deterministic grounds. This dismissal is consistent with Nietzsche's earlier insistence that a 'science of morality' is an 'antithesis' and that reason

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[208] Suicide receives no sustained attention in the works between *Human* and *Twilight* except for the rare and brief mentions already noted.

[209] Nietzsche had previously praised Rée's work (see, e.g., HH-I 37). Rée was himself strongly influenced by Darwin, Spencer and Mill (for more details about Rée's account of morality, see Janaway 2006, 341–344, and Brandhorst 2010, esp. 11–14). Darwin is mentioned by Nietzsche in GM-P 7.

[210] GM-I 1; emphases in original. *Partie honteuse* (shameful part) refers in colloquial French to the genitals, that is, to an *organ*; the Francophile Nietzsche must have been well aware of the full meaning of the expression and most likely used it with that slant.

alone cannot account for morality since it is only a tool having nothing to do with value.[211] On such premises, Nietzsche's objective to develop a 'natural history of morals' (title of chapter V of *Beyond Good and Evil*) seems suddenly more distant. The *Genealogy* proposes elaborate developments on and explanations of psychological processes and phenomena (such as guilt, *ressentiment*, 'bad conscience', asceticism, etc.) in physiological terms, depicted as eventually leading to the genesis of slavish moral values.[212] Judging from the work's introduction though, one does not readily see why a naturalised account of the history of morality is possible or should be at all attempted.

It is indeed one thing to propose a naturalistic explanation for the genesis of the herd ethics but another to account for its rise and final triumph. For this latter task, naturalism is set aside in the *Genealogy*. Keeping the promise he made in the book's opening, Nietzsche broke from naturalism in its closing. The last section asserts that the masters fell for the herd morality because they, like their slaves, suffered from 'suicidal nihilism' and because they, too, 'would rather will nothingness than not will' at all.[213] A transparent implication of the last statement of the third essay (which is also its first) is thus that men, even those of the master type, fall prey to the ascetic ideal because of their constant willing, yet could *choose* otherwise. In this passage, although it is said to be incessant and uncontrollable, willing is capable of choice: the will is free. This contention is detectable in Nietzsche's frequent praise of 'self-knowledge', 'self-control' and self-imposed restraint even when injured,[214] for these recommendations point to the possibility of self-mastery and self-induced transformations. Even if proposed as a story of eagles and lambs, the story of the rise of the herd ethics hinges on a purely psychological phenomenon for which Nietzsche did not provide any physiological explanation.[215]

In the end, then, natural genealogy is defeated; logically given Nietzsche's introduction but in contradiction with an overarching theory, outlined in the second essay, of will to power defined as an organic

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[211] The quotation is from BGE 186; the second claim is found in BGE 191.

[212] For a detailed exposition of Nietzsche's naturalism in the *Genealogy*, see Leiter (2003); for critical discussions, see Janaway (2006) and Brandhorst (2010).

[213] GM-III 28.

[214] BGE 281, BGE 283 and GM-II 11, respectively.

[215] Janaway (2006, 346–347), relies precisely on this contradiction in Nietzsche's account to propose 'correctives' to Leiter's (2003) naturalistic reading of the *Genealogy*. Gardner (2010, 8, 23–27) offers similar observations.

drive. After all, the so-called 'slave revolt' is primarily 'in morals' and not 'in physical power': the masters have become psychologically weak, but there is no hint of them being physically diminished. Nietzsche substituted a tentative naturalistic physio-psychological thesis for a non-natural, purely psychological explanation laden with romantic overtones. Despite naturalistic intentions developed throughout the work, the closing of the *Genealogy* is a clear illustration of Nietzsche's pervasive and underlying commitment to the existence of the self or 'I' as non-natural, causal but uncaused entity or substratum.

Even if the thesis proposed in the *Genealogy* could be somehow safeguarded from the above comments, even if Nietzsche's genealogy of morality could be naturalised, the work would face bigger problems still. This is so because merging psychology into physiology amounts to erasing the distinction between acting and reacting. As Nietzsche observed, if the free but causally effective 'I' (whatever its name) disappears, everything that a person does or values must be analysed as the result of complex automatisms of which the individual is at best a powerless spectator.[216] Man becomes, then, a purely reactive agent whose existence is causally determined by past and present stimuli. Psychology must give way to physics.[217] In this naturalistic and determinist outlook, the active versus reactive difference, upon which the *Genealogy* is insistent, between the masters and their slaves disappears for having no ground upon which it can be established. 'Higher' or 'herd' type, no one is responsible for what one does; determinism removes the possibility of (uncaused) action. Every event becomes an effect, a reaction; human actions become simultaneously necessary and spontaneous. There is no longer any justification to qualify one morality as noble and the other as base or to hold that one culture elevates the type man while the other degrades it. Simmel's observation to the effect that, in the last analysis, master and slave morals cannot be meaningfully distinguished is again vindicated.[218]

Although such a protobehaviourist stance flows easily from many of his writings and is easily compatible with his view on consciousness as an 'after the fact' and inconsequential internal dialogue,[219] Nietzsche

[216] 'Our most sacred convictions, the unchanging elements in our supreme values, are judgments of our muscles' (WP 314).
[217] GS 335 (titled 'Long live physics!') is a long development of this theme.
[218] Simmel 1991, 140.
[219] Stack (1983, 191–192), reads Nietzsche's works on behaviouristic lines precisely for these reasons.

himself rebelled against it. In section 21 of *Beyond*, he castigated those (criminals) that pushed back responsibility for their actions to society. For Nietzsche, when one rejects the causal, purposive 'self', one abandons claims to personal responsibility; one reveals the kind of person one is. One is then 'weak-willed', for one is happy to be a puppet of events allegedly beyond one's control. Strikingly, Nietzsche refused to do so with regard to himself; the reasons for such rejection are not difficult to see. His bouts against his recurring and crippling migraines and other health problems, his strenuous dedication to his work, his stubborn efforts to see his 'untimely' books published and republished (at his own expense) with new prefaces are difficult to reconcile with a determinist outlook. All these activities are more easily analysed as belonging to the sphere of freely and self-consciously willed objectives than as automatic, knee-jerk reactions of a puppet-string individual reduced to his physiology. On these matters, what Nietzsche wrote is thus not necessarily, at least not consistently, what he really believed.[220]

Nietzsche was aware of this underlying contradiction; in the 1886 preface to the second volume of *Human*, he noted:

> [In this book] a sufferer and self-denier speaks as though he were *not* a sufferer and self-denier. Here there is a *determination* to preserve an equilibrium and composure in the face of life and even a sense of gratitude towards it.[221]

Nietzsche's autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, displays a similar lifelong, exalted, at times delusional opposition to the main intellectual currents of his age. Even if Nietzsche was lucid when etching his self-portrait, it remains the case that if one believes that one's will is the source of one's resistance to the miseries of life, then one is convinced that this will has somehow escaped nature's causal treadmill and thus belongs to a supranatural realm of some sort. If one claims to be 'born posthumously',[222] then it can only be because one believes that one's birth has somehow escaped the flow of pure determinism.

The very idea of philosophising is at risk of meaninglessness if those who engage in it lack a causal, self-reflective entity that could translate intellectual investigations into tangible, practical outcomes. To

[220] On other matters, opinions differ; see, e.g., Bloom (1986, 203–205).
[221] HH-II Preface 5; emphases in original.
[222] AC-Preface.

what purpose is Nietzsche-Zarathustra teaching if not to change the village people's and his free-spirited disciples' way of thinking and of acting? Nietzsche would no doubt retort that this question assumes that thinking precedes acting and that there is a causally effective relationship between the two, both assumptions that he rejected. Nevertheless, if human behaviour is decided unconsciously and merely executed consciously, as Nietzsche argued in *The Gay Science*, it is hard to make sense of the same Nietzsche's pledges and efforts to convince his readers of the validity of his views since it will remain undecidable if these have any influence at all. The very notion of 'effort' loses its meaning if actions are started and persevered in unwillingly and automatically. In a deterministic outlook where behaviour is the effect of physiological causes beyond one's control, the concept of intentionality loses its meaning. Without the accompanying idea of freely determined intentions, the idea of consciously sustained attempts to overcome resistance is meaningless. So are Nietzsche's explanations of happiness as the feeling of overcoming resistance,[223] for the notion of resistance also rests on that of intention.

This tension, detectable in Nietzsche's late thought, is visible in his middle period. In the following section, the positions are mixed in the same breath:

> It is because man regards himself as free, not because he is free, that he feels remorse [...] . No one is accountable for his deeds, no one for his nature; [this is clear] yet here everyone prefers to retreat back into the shadows and untruths: from fear of the consequences.[224]

If one behaves according to one's 'nature', over which one has no control, then one's fear of the consequences of this view is irrelevant: one behaves thus because one must. If, conversely, fear is to be taken into account when explaining one's behaviour or conviction, then this means that one has, in theory at least, the possibility of overcoming it, subsequently acting upon one's behaviour in spite of one's 'nature' and becoming for the same reason accountable for such deed. One explanation excludes the other. One can also inquire further into why man regards himself as free, as Nietzsche posited in the passage just quoted: is it because man's 'nature' is such that he cannot help but doing so? In this case, man would be *forced* to consider himself free. Now that this

[223] AC 2.
[224] HH-I 39.

insight has been arrived at thanks to Nietzsche's works, however, his readers know that they have, in the end, the possibility of adopting the opposite conviction, thus proving that they are not, after all, forced to regard themselves as free. All this is hopelessly self-contradicting and begs a nagging question: where exactly did Herr Nietzsche stand in this debate? Was he able to shed the belief in free will thanks to his dedicated hard work or because of his constitution?

8. As should now be clear, Nietzsche constantly wavered in his late writings between two mutually exclusive positions. On the one hand, Friedrich Nietzsche advocated a protobehaviourism inspired by ancient heroism and supported by his naturalistic inclinations, these worldviews sharing a negation of the existence of the self as a free and behaviourally causative entity. On the other hand, Nietzsche Friedrich could not but develop a proto-existentialism rooted in his romanticism and extolling the very same notion. In the end, the dilemma is easily summarised: heroic, naturalistic Nietzsche or romantic, proto-existentialistic Nietzsche? Zarathustra is the perfect illustration of these intractable contradictions: chimera among chimeras, he preaches the latter while declaring ponderously that he embodies the former. At crucial moments in his arguments, as well as to justify the pertinence of its own philosophical project and more generally of philosophy as a worthy discipline, Nietzsche had to retain the major theoretical construct of his much-critiqued predecessors, the causally effective psyche, self or 'I'. At the same time he remained outraged by the logical inconsistencies of this concept and those of the Platonic world dualisms in which it is embedded, indicting Descartes or Kant for the flaws he believed their works contained.

Despite vehement rhetoric and fierce indignation, Nietzsche remained to the end unable to commit in writing to either position, claiming here to espouse one while adopting there the other, attempting to reconcile them through an impossible naturalistic ontological synthesis bearing the romantic-heroic name of 'will to power'.[225] The will is said to be neither 'free' nor 'unfree' because 'in real life it is only a matter of strong and weak wills'.[226] This argument, like the contention it tries

[225] Although not in these terms, the argument developed in the foregoing paragraphs is proposed in Staten (2006, 570–574). As Staten concludes, 'despite its naturalistic trappings, [the] absolute origin of new form [of which free will is an aspect] is ultimately as mysterious in Nietzsche's account as it was in that of the rhapsode Ion' (574).

[226] BGE 21.

to encapsulate, is oxymoronic, however. If the will is strong or weak, then it is a causally determined and thus unfree object since, strictly speaking, qualification, just like quantification, requires reification.[227] This did not distract Nietzsche from depicting Schopenhauer as an example of 'weakness of the will'[228] or from equating decadence with the same phenomenon.[229] Not only is this explanation of decadence difficult to accept in light of what is proposed in the third essay of the *Genealogy* (in which decadence is said to be the result of a strong will misdirected towards nothingness), but to confuse his stance further, Nietzsche also wrote:

> *Weakness of the will*: that is a metaphor that can prove misleading. For there is no will, and consequently neither a strong nor a weak will. The multitude and disgregation of impulses and the lack of any systematic order among them result in a 'weak will'; their coordination under a single predominant impulse results in a 'strong will': in the first case it is the oscillation and the lack of gravity; in the latter, the precision and clarity of the direction.[230]

This attempt at reconciling a perspective of the will as multiplicity with a gradation, which, as Nietzsche recognised, demands unicity, is self-contradictory. Merely speaking of an order unifying the various aspects of the will assumes that there is a dimension along which the will can be measured. Yet this measurability is precisely what a multiplicity of impulses precludes in principle and is supposed to make of the expression 'weakness of the will' a misleading metaphor. It is reasonable to believe that Nietzsche was aware of these problems since he refrained from publishing this unfortunate argument.

More generally, if one assumes that time is a man-independent notion flowing in one direction, causal-physiological explanations of behaviour cannot escape either infinite regress or regress to a prime mover. This latter solution ends up in the *causa sui* problem and this argument was indirectly used by Nietzsche to reject unfree will in *Beyond Good*

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[227] The same comment applies to 'where the will to power is lacking there is decline' (AC 6): if the will is 'lacking' then it is a quantifiable concept.

[228] WP 84.

[229] WP 43.

[230] WP 46; 'disgregation' is a term coined in 1862 by physicist Rudolf Clausius as a measure of the degree to which the molecules of a body are separated from each other.

and Evil.[231] Yet Nietzsche's rejection of causation, as it is proposed in the same work, casts a layer of obscurity on his position. *Causa sui* is indeed an illogical '*reductio ad absurdum*'[232] only if one accepts causation; if causation is a man-made fiction, then *causa sui* is not a contradiction in terms but merely another and irrelevant expression of the same fiction. It cannot be an acceptable way of terminating a proof by reduction to absurdity. Finally, any statement denying causation is at bottom self-contradicting since it makes such allegation inconsequential: if it is really the case that nothing causes anything, then claiming that 'causation is an illusion' is not to be followed by any event, psychological or otherwise. That one still believes that such a statement should be uttered and repeated can only mean that one still believes in causation. The only exit from such unattractive circles seems to be a two-world solution of the Cartesian-Kantian type, positing 'I' as a supranatural yet this-worldly causally effective entity. An exit of this sort was a difficult one to negotiate for the late Nietzsche unless he was ready to execute a dramatic about-face. At times, he seems to be on the verge of initiating that radical change of direction. Nietzsche indeed observed in his notebooks, in contradiction with his very public anti–*causa sui* stance: 'the 'higher nature' of the great man lies in being different, [...] not in [being] an effect of any kind'. [233] In other words, the specificity of the great man would seem to rest, after all, in his being his own (necessarily other-worldly) self-cause.

One can also note that Nietzsche's denial of the causal 'I' is pleonastic. Denying either causation or the existence of the self has the same import with regard to the Platonic-Christian-Cartesian ontology. If causality is an illusion, the existence of 'I' as supernatural entity becomes irrelevant, for even if it existed, it would be devoid of causal powers. Similarly, even if causation were a man-independent reality, if 'I' does not exist as an entity or substratum, man's existence is of a nature very different from that posited by Christianity and Descartes. It seems unlikely that this aspect of the problem escaped Nietzsche's scrutiny. This is attested by his inability to commit to unambiguous statements with regard to the nature of causation and the causal efficacy of volition,[234] two features of his works that have sparked a wide variety of interpretations in the

[231] In BGE 21.
[232] BGE 15.
[233] WP 876.
[234] Matters critically discussed in Poellner (2007, 36–46 and 269–273), respectively.

literature. This inability is yet another indirect sign of Nietzsche's general uneasiness with the matters discussed here.

To Nietzsche's credit, one must note that the theory of eternal recurrence deflates the debate summarised above. In its cosmological reading, the theory denies the unidirectionality of time in favour of a closed-loop model. If time comes and goes indefinitely, causality can be dispensed with, since no event can be said to be the predecessor or cause of another. Event B seems to follow event A, but after an extremely long (yet finite) period of time, event A will appear to follow event B. Nietzsche's fervour for this extreme reading of the theory, as expressed in the notebooks,[235] can thus be analysed as a desperate attempt to find a radical escape from the various predicaments outlined in the foregoing. Once again, a discussion started on ontological grounds has transformed itself into an epistemological debate with ramifications pertaining to the nature of actuality – a debate in which Nietzsche not only never seriously engaged but, in his published works at least, refused to engage.[236] In a similar vein, his not infrequent falsely candid attempts at self-deflation fall short of the expectations that many of his aphorisms cannot but raise.[237] They even have a distinct flavour of bad faith, especially in light of his unpublished notes in which the wider consequences of his views are often highlighted.[238]

One should not forget, however, that Nietzsche chose not to publish many of the texts that have been analysed in this chapter, even if they reconcile easily with the published material. In particular, the notebook entries, some of them long by his standards, in which he tried to explain pleasure and displeasure as expressions of will to power have been reduced to a couple of very short sentences in the finished works.[239] Not only are these unconvincing, but they also appear unconvinced, since they lack the rhetorical vigour customary of him. About the same time that Nietzsche penned the purely assertive lines found in the opening page of *The Anti-Christ*, he observed in his notebooks that 'if the innermost essence of being [was] will to power, if pleasure [was] every increase

[235] WP 1057–1065.
[236] As the last lines of GS 354 attest; BGE 54 repeats this scenario.
[237] See, e.g., BGE 34.
[238] WLN 11[145] being one example among many.
[239] AC 2: 'What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? – The feeling that power increases – that a resistance is overcome'.

of power',[240] there would still remain to explain 'who' or 'what' exactly would feel pleasure or displeasure and would want power. As the note concludes immediately, these are 'absurd question[s]'. Understandably so, since they automatically assume *another* entity not reducible to will to power but capable of feeling pleasure and of wanting power. What Nietzsche realised here is that even if will to power could be shown to be the universal drive behind human behaviour and feelings, the demonstration would inevitably fragment 'will to power' into two different concepts, a 'will' striving for or feeling the 'power'. In other words, even if the psychological theory of will to power were true, if human conscious and unconscious existence could be reduced to a constant and general striving for power, the theory would still require precisely what its ontologically expanded version tries to displace in its depiction of human existence: an underlying entity or substratum responsible for the willing. This objection to his theory comes from Nietzsche's own notebooks; it is a sure sign of Nietzsche's eventual rejection of his own ideas. That he never used the term 'ontology' in his published works, surely one of the greatest sacrifices a thinker of his stature could make, is another.[241]

There are more. In *Twilight*, when Nietzsche reintroduced the Apollonian and the Dionysian 'forms of intoxication', these are described as being personified in the sculptor and musician, respectively.[242] Importantly, Apollonian and Dionysian intoxications are said to represent *competing* principles to that of will to power, a principle that, according to Nietzsche, remains prevalent in some particular professions, like architecture.[243] Nietzsche wrote later, in *The Anti-Christ*, that will to power can

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[240] WP 693.

[241] 'Ontology' appears nowhere in Nietzsche's published works; in *The Will to Power*, its only presence is in WP 529, an entry that incidentally lists 'consciousness as cause' as a 'tremendous blunder'. It is worth noting that, by Nietzsche's lifetime, the term had already acquired its current meaning. It is used by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (book II, ch. III, titled 'Of the Ground of the Division of All Objects into Phenomena and Noumena': 'the proud name of an ontology, which professes to present synthetical cognitions *a priori* of things in general in a systematic doctrine, must give place to the modest title of analytic of the pure understanding'). The German *Ontologie* appears in the dictionary published in 1863 in Leipzig by Otto Wigand under the direction of Daniel Saunders (*Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, vol. 2, 476); the very brief definition provided (*Dinglehre*, or again theory or science of things) reconciles with Kant's usage.

[242] TI-IX 10.

[243] TI-IX 11.

be 'lacking' or that it 'declines [where there is] a *décadence*'.[244] This also suggests the existence of another will or drive (a drive to 'physiological regression' is a likely candidate), since in the absence of such opposing will or drive, it is difficult to make sense of these sentences.[245]

Nietzsche was on more solid ground when he asserted that grammatical rules alone cannot, in and by themselves, reflect the reality and complexity of human existence. Yet if language and grammar do not warrant the existence of 'I' in its various denominations, one should remain wary of arguments attempting to show its inexistence formulated through the same means. Nietzsche's various arguments on the inherent inability of language to capture the complexity of human experience undermined his own attempts to redefine it using descriptive tools constrained by the same rules. As the young Nietzsche argued, language is by necessity symbolic: when used to express a perception of the world, it cannot do otherwise than simplify and distort what it tries to represent.[246] The use of written words to describe and comment upon human existence implicitly but forcibly assumes that it can be meaningfully qualified through such means. Using unidirectional, written discourse to reflect upon and communicate about it (as opposed to silent meditation, music, painting or Socratic dialogue) rests on a decision in need of justification. After all, as Nietzsche himself recognised in the concluding sentence of the 1886 preface to the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, to practice philosophy, one always has the possibility of remaining silent. When contemplating the inconclusive state of his own works in the last months of 1888, Nietzsche must have been tempted by that option. Illness would soon make this decision for him.

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[244] AC 6 and 17, respectively; see also TI-IX 38, in which will to power is said to be 'undermined'.

[245] If life is will to power and only will to power, then as long as there is life, there is will to power, and thus the latter cannot be lacking or even, strictly speaking, declining (the expression 'physiological regression' is found in AC 17). As is mentioned earlier, this complement to Nietzsche's theory is highly unattractive: the evolution and development of a 'will to physiological regression' is inconceivable at the species level, since it would be synonymous with the species' rapid extinction. Nietzsche admits as much in WP 707.

[246] Points made in the unpublished essay *On Truth and Lies in the Extra-moral Sense*.

5
Conclusion: The Twilight of an Idol

1. On the morning of January 3, 1889, upon seeing a cart driver beating his horse in a street in Turin, Nietzsche ran to the scene and interposed himself between man and animal. Seconds later, he collapsed physically and psychologically. Nietzsche, the philosopher who a couple of years earlier wrote that the advancement of the species justified a mass sacrifice of a part of mankind,[1] wanting to spare a workhorse a few bruises: the anecdote well illustrates Nietzsche's state as his century entered its final decade. After a year of prodigious activity during which he wrote no less than three books, two pamphlets, one collection of poems and hundreds of notebook entries and private letters, Nietzsche was not only physically strained, as one would expect, but also intellectually and emotionally confused.

Even before this sad event, evidence of Nietzsche's disorientation was manifest in *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*, both of which he wrote in August 1888. Basking then in the reported success of Georg Brandes' lectures on his works, enjoying rare moments of cheerfulness supported by an apparent physiological recovery, Nietzsche tried in these two books to gather, refine and amplify his most striking thoughts to strengthen a budding public attention and attract new readers. In *Twilight*, Nietzsche's exasperation, mixed with desperation at the 'idols' he was sounding to make them appear hollow, is evident in the excesses of some passages. Hollow convictions are not only found in the works of Nietzsche's predecessors or contemporaries however; a few can also be identified in his own thought. It seems reasonable to believe that the once cherished concept of will to power figures prominently among

[1] GM-II 12; a theme also found in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

the concepts Nietzsche had abandoned by the time he wrote *Twilight*. Beyond that emblematic concept and despite the confident note at the end of the book's preface,[2] entire components of Nietzsche's thought had tumbled down. Nietzsche was despairing as he contemplated the spectacle of his own work; the impossibility of writing the planned great book was by then painfully manifest. The following summarises and complements what has been proposed in the foregoing chapters.

2. *Twilight* cruelly exposes the extent of Nietzsche's conundrum with regard to the fact-value distinction. In the first essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche contrasted Christian values with a reconstruction of pagan morality, itself transparently inspired by his readings of Homer's poems. He left no mystery of his preference for the latter, which is qualified as active, noble and suitable for powerful 'master' individuals, while the former is considered reactive, plebeian in its foundations and aspirations – good for the rabble and the herd that the masters used to dominate. Consistent with Homer's poems, Nietzsche's masters are said to make no formal distinction between what is true and what is good. They are depicted as referring to themselves as the good and the truthful ones, qualifying as good and true anything that they liked or that resembled them.

The first essay of the Genealogy approves of this conflation and an analysis of the last chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil* shows that Nietzsche sought to provide it with a naturalistic grounding. By the end of the *Genealogy*, however, Nietzsche's position has become less clear. Epistemological-moral alignment has become an important item on Nietzsche's charge sheet against the ascetic ideal, expression by which Nietzsche designated the dominant ethical and epistemological models inherited from the Enlightenment. What Nietzsche indignantly held against his predecessors and contemporaries is that they took truth and goodness as the two sides of the same other-worldly coin and elevated them to the status of a God-like value-objective. Nietzsche saw this epistemological-ethical conception leading to a devaluation of earthly life and to a democratic degrading of civilisation since all men are equal before the truth-goodness supernatural deity. He traced the initiation of this 'anti-Greek' debasement back to Socrates and his devoted executor, Plato.

Futher analysis reveals, however, that Nietzsche's proposed alternative presents the same features. Whilst it is the case that, in ancient

[2] The preface to *Twilight* ends with the following, immediately after Nietzsche's name: 'Turin, September 30, 1888, on the day the first book of the *Revaluation of All Values* was completed'.

heroism's worldview, truth and goodness cannot be separated from one another, these conceptions are not anchored in other-worldly ideals. They are conflated with power, as Nietzsche explained, but crucially, in the epic cycle power itself is defined as the extent to which the individual achieves his peers' expectations. These expectations, encapsulated in one's social role, form a rigid and tangible constraint over which one has no say. They are the source of one's prestige and influence should one excel at meeting them. This is particularly the case for the warriors of the *Iliad*: heroic power cannot be dissociated from measurable success on the battlefield. Not so in Nietzsche's vision, in which, under the influence of romanticism's ideal of an autonomous, free, value-endowing artist-hero, power has become a personal, idiosyncratic and purely psychological concept detached from any tangible objective or reference. Power was for Nietzsche an other-worldly, self-standing value-objective to be pursued for its own sake. More power is never going to be enough. Worldly power is not the objective; Power is. Nietzsche's unshakeable romanticism in effect essentialised power the same way Plato essentialised truth. Behind Nietzsche's concept of will to power lurks a universal definition of goodness, of which the 'higher men' are the transparent human objectification. Will to power is a romantic disguise for the ascetic ideal. Will to power is not an alternative to the Platonic-Christian will to truth-goodness that Nietzsche attacked, but merely a romantic interpretation of it. An attractive but dangerous one, as the twentieth century has shown.

This conclusion is too prominent to have escaped Nietzsche's scrutiny. It points to an extremely damaging problem at the core of his moral-epistemological philosophy, a contradiction considerably more crippling than the intractable self-referential problem exemplified by his 'truth is an error' expression, perhaps catchy but knowingly meaningless. Nietzsche faced a terrible dilemma: either he must abandon his romantic vision of the great individual carrying on his shoulders the culture of humanity, or he must forfeit the conviction that ancient Greece is an unrivalled cultural and artistic reference. Both contentions were among his firmest and most enduring beliefs. If 'heroic' points to Homer's characters, 'heroic individualism' is an oxymoron, an impossible synthesis of heroism and romanticism: a chimera. Naturalism, to which Nietzsche was regularly attracted, is of no recourse in this debate, for naturalism, as Nietzsche himself argued,[3] does not lead

[3] See BGE 9.

to realism about moral values. One cannot consistently press against science to take natural (empirical) truth as a value whilst hoping that man, as wholly natural being, even of the 'higher' type, can still be a source of value.

Nietzsche was in the end unable to decide between romanticism and ancient heroism and decided to repudiate both publicly, perhaps hoping to find an elusive compromise at a later stage. In the last book of *The Gay Science*, romanticism is vilified in very harsh terms. The charge is still present in *Twilight of the Idols*, but in this work ancient heroism is also, if indirectly, thrown overboard through Nietzsche's insistence on the fact-value distinction:

> One knows my demand of philosophers that they place themselves *beyond* good and evil [...]. This demand follows from an insight first formulated by me: *there are no moral facts whatever*.[4]

If values are not facts, if ethics has to be dissociated from epistemology, then Homer's ideal must be abandoned. A Nietzsche ready to embark in this direction is a Nietzsche who has decided to move resolutely away not only from romanticism, which conflates truth and goodness into will, but also from ancient heroism, for which the moral reality is simply the social reality and its tangible demands. A Nietzsche ready to embark in this direction is a Nietzsche who has abandoned all prospects of identifying an alternative to the ascetic, Platonic-Kantian vision within the framework of a this-worldly, heroic, power-based one. The Nietzsche who wrote these lines is a Nietzsche who turned his back on his once dearly held concept of will to power as anti-ascetic epistemological and ethical ideal while still, against all hopes, clinging to it (and to ancient heroism in general) in later sections of the work.[5] Behind the concept, an entire project has tumbled down. Nietzsche was just as much an ascetic as Plato, Descartes or Kant. And he knew it.

Beyond the case for Nietzsche's asceticism and for his realisation of it lies another and larger debate. Derrida argues that all philosophers, Nietzsche included, are condemned to evaluate concepts and traditions from within the limitations of these same concepts and traditions.[6] The above confirms this observation. Nietzsche was caught in the conundrum of wanting to break from the agenda set by his predecessors from

[4] TI-VII 1; emphases in original.
[5] The concept is mentioned in TI-IX 38 and X 3.
[6] Derrida (2001, 354) notably.

within the legacy of that very agenda and the question whether or to what extent he succeeded in his attempts has philosophical import that goes well beyond his own case. Is Nietzsche to be remembered as the archetypal reactive, no-saying thinker with a hammer, or was he also a successful positive, constructive, yes-saying author, as he claimed to be? Nehamas's famed answer is that Nietzsche, through his books and career, consciously tried 'to fashion a literary character out of himself and a literary work out of his life'.[7] This reading is compatible with that proposed by Thiele, who insists that Nietzsche's life and works cannot be meaningfully dissociated and that they exemplify his 'heroic individualism'.[8] Nietzsche practiced what he preached; *Ecce Homo* is a valid account of his life. If such is the case and admitting, for this discussion's sake and in spite of the foregoing, that such a 'heroic individualistic' or 'radical aristocratic' stance could be sufficiently clarified, Nietzsche's thought and life would be positive only inasmuch as they would be exemplary. The problem would only have been pushed back one level, for the question of the value of such examples would now be begged.

A wider interpretation of Nietzsche's works can be found in MacIntyre, who, with Foucault, sees in his 'genealogical' method of successive interpretations a radical departure from the Western philosophical tradition epitomised in Kantianism. For MacIntyre, 'Nietzsche did not advance a new theory against older theories; he proposed an abandonment of theory'.[9] The parallel with the debate concerning Nietzsche's perspectivism is here striking, for in the last analysis the same issue is at stake: the possibility of constructing a philosophy which considers reason as *the* way to knowledge yet which does not share Plato's elevation of truth (however defined) as an objective for its own sake. This momentous inquiry calls for the same comments as were offered with regard to Nietzsche's epistemological critique: to MacIntyre's Nietzsche, who proclaims that the concept of theory should be abandoned, one can easily retort that this antitheoretical stance is itself a theory. To those who resist reading as ascetic anyone who has written so vigorously against asceticism, one can easily point out, with the postmodernists'

[7] Nehamas (2000, 137). Nehamas's reading of Nietzsche has been staunchly opposed by other 'analytic' commentators, such as Leiter. For all that, commentators not suspect of postmodernist inclinations have recently reached back to Nehamas's emphasis on 'literature'; see, e.g., Acampora (2006) and Janaway (2006).
[8] Thiele (1990, 6–7).
[9] MacIntyre (1990, 49).

Nietzsche this time, that language is a deceptive layer like any other and that grammar is God in plain clothes. Literary and rhetorical prowess can achieve only so much. The very broad issues that flow from these considerations cannot be inquired into here, for they expand well beyond the objectives of the present study. What should remain clear, however, is that the dangers of self-contradiction do seem to await, sooner rather than later, anyone who ventures into construing Nietzsche as a postmodernist or as a non-ascetic writer.

3. *Twilight* also offers the spectacle of the pathetic and undecided struggle between Nietzsche the virulent antimetaphysician and Nietzsche the reluctant metaphysician. This unresolved tension developed gradually in Nietzsche's thought and stemmed from, on one hand, his attacks, initiated in *Human, All Too Human*, against apparent versus real-world dualisms of the Kantian type (about which Nietzsche had only the harshest comments) and, on the other hand, his attempts to provide an alternative to materialism.

Against materialism and especially against its nineteenth-century version, atomism, Nietzsche proposed in the published writings pungent if undeveloped criticisms that are expressed in more sustained forms in the posthumous fragments. These criticisms are informed by partly compatible, unacknowledged but easily detectable arguments emanating from Lange and Schopenhauer. They amount to analysing materialism as a metaphysical model of the most objectionable, despicable sort; as a one-sided, halved-world dualism claiming to present a coherent and complete picture of the world while failing to account for its most important aspect. This is so because materialism, by leaving deliberately the subject out of its 'objective' world picture, is unable to explain such basic phenomena as the growth of a plant, the turning of an egg's yolk into a chick or intentionality: life. Additionally, Nietzsche considered that explanations that rely on the existence of laws of physics are dualistic inasmuch as they rely on a supranatural world as repository and source of these laws' powers and constancy. He held that the concept of force demands that of an internal dynamic. As for the cause-effect decomposition, consubstantial to materialism's mechanistic worldview, Nietzsche held that it was a mere projection of an illusory ego-act dualism where the ego is thought of as cause of the act. Atomism inherits all these critiques plus ones that are more specific. Nietzsche notably averred that atomism's foundational discontinuity, matter-vaccum as illustrated by the concept of 'clump atoms', is logically untenable since it leads to the nonsensical (because self-contradictory) concept of 'action at a distance'.

On these premises, Nietzsche developed an embryonic alternative to materialism that he strove to differentiate from that of Schopenhauer so as not to fall into his dualism. Whereas for Schopenhauer the world is will and representation, for Nietzsche the world is will to power and this world view is intended as a monistic one. Will to power is the ultimate force that not only appears as matter but also describes the interactions between what is experienced as such. Causation is redefined as exertion of will to power over will to power; the intentionality which underlies events such as the growth of a plant or the development of an egg's yolk into a chick is also will to power; life is will to power. Will to power is proposed as a synthesis of the subjective, internal or intentional and of the objective, external or determined 'sides' of the world. Nietzsche's attraction towards, if perhaps not definitive commitment to, this vision is beyond doubt: many posthumous fragments refer to it and shredded expressions of the theory are detectable in the published corpus.

Worthy of note is that Nietzsche failed to appreciate that Schopenhauer's vision of the world as will is not entirely, at least not consistently, idealistic in its construction and underpinnings. Owing to his commitment to what has been called 'concept-empiricism', Schopenhauer's vision of 'the will in nature' can be argued, in its most important components, on purely naturalistic arguments. By wanting to avert the pitfalls of what he took to be unmitigated idealism, Nietzsche re-created within his own construction the same weaknesses for which he had vigorously indicted materialism; that is, unacknowledged logical incompletion and possible (depending on the texts considered) discontinuity in the texture and evolution of actuality.

Nietzsche appeared oblivious to basic logical constraints: monism is untenable if individuation is to be accounted for at all, since discrimination requires the existence of two distinct qualities or substrata. If the world is will to power (or anything else) 'and nothing else besides' or, again, if *everything* is will to power, then nothing is. Moreover, Nietzsche's emphasis on power means that his vision is a surface qualification of actuality since power can only be, on Nietzsche's own arguments, an added, man-dependent interpretation of the world just as much as causation. Power is not, indeed cannot be, an intrinsic quality of whatever there is. Consistent with Nietzsche's perspectivism, the attribution of power to this or that object of the world (or whatever is perceived as such) depends on a subjective point of view, a perspective that a world as will to power assumes but cannot provide or ground unambiguously. In other words, the subject is still missing from Nietzsche's vision, which in turn cannot account for it. As to Nietzsche's conception

that power is to exert itself to its maximum, one struggles to see why this principle should not be categorised as a law of nature of the sort that Nietzsche clearly rejected. Worse still, *if* it is to be combined with Nietzsche's 'proof' of the eternal recurrence theory (whether Nietzsche seriously entertained this intention is debatable), a world made of will to power quanta recurring eternally is a world the texture of which is discontinuous, its evolution limited to discontinuous quantum 'leaps'. These two features are, of course, at the core of atomism. Even without this development, however, Nietzsche's world as will to power remains a superficial interpretation of actuality, a one-sided, halved-world dualistic vision. Will to power as a theory of actuality is materialism interpreted romantically.

There is evidence that Nietzsche at least confusedly realised these problems. He refrained from publishing the texts where the argument that the world (including life) is will to power is explicitly offered while still affirming regularly that 'life is will to power'. He let a condensed version of an argument to the effect that the world is will to power surface in a very unclear and unusually hypothetical text (section 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil*), a further sign of his ambivalence on these matters. Similarly, Nietzsche's eternal recurrence theory, in its cosmological version as well as its 'proof', is found only in the texts Nietzsche withdrew from publication.

More importantly, signs abound that Nietzsche rejected his vision of a world as will to power for its ethical consequences. A monistic worldview, according to arguments Nietzsche rehearsed in his notebooks, can indeed only precipitate the onset of nihilism. If man is to inscribe himself into a world made of a single ultimate substratum, he must first relinquish value in and of himself, as well as any hope of creating value by himself. A monistic vision of the world is a vision in which moral worth is ascribed to a unity, whatever its name, to which man and nature belong. Man's subsequent realisation that this unitary whole is valueless, because determined (since nature itself appears to be) and thus with no possible moral significance, signals the definitive precipitation of nihilism. In indicting materialism and natural science for leading to this outcome, Nietzsche joined here, in his conclusion if not in his arguments, long-standing Christian critics of materialism. More originally, Nietzsche levelled the same charge against Christianity, God being in this instance the name of the unity from which all values, for Christians, are said to flow.

A world as will to power, if conceived of as a monistic worldview, faces these problems squarely and the posthumous fragments contain evidence

that Nietzsche reached this uncomfortable conclusion. Having already explored in *The Birth of Tragedy* the question pertaining to the location of artistic value, he concluded that dualism was the only answer. His later insistence, in *Twilight*, that facts and values have to be distinguished is another sign of his realisation that monism is unable to account for both. Moreover, whereas world dualism has the daunting task of accounting for how one 'side' of the world interacts with the other, monism faces a no less acute dilemma. It must explain either how a unified world can be its own cause if it is a world of becoming or, if it is not, how the sensuous evidence attesting to its continuously changing character, evidence that Nietzsche accepted, can be explained away. Nietzsche's isolated statement that will to power is to 'impose upon becoming the character of being' can be read as an attempt at diffusing this conundrum: if being and becoming are merged, the problem of having to reconcile apparent Heracliteanism with the absence of a first cause disappears. This strikingly undeveloped conception leaves untouched, however, the issue of having to locate moral worth and rescue it from internal collapse.

It is no doubt in the hope of diffusing such difficulties that Nietzsche wrote the last section of the 'Four Great Errors' chapter of *Twilight of the Idols*. The entire section would be worth quoting, but in its most relevant passages it reads thus:

> The fatality of [man's] nature cannot be disentangled from the fatality of all that which has been and will be. [...] *We* invented the concept 'purpose': in reality purpose is *lacking* ... One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one *is* in the whole [but] *nothing exists apart from the whole!* – That no one is any longer made accountable, that the kind of being manifested cannot be traced back to a *causa prima*, that the world is a unity neither as sensorium nor as 'spirit', *this alone is the great liberation* [...] We deny God; in denying God, we deny accountability: only by doing *that* do we redeem the world.[10]

The world is determined ('fated'): nothing, not even man, can be subtracted from what has been and will be. Such a world has no moral significance or purpose – indeed can have none. Events happen because they must. Moral valuations as well as personal responsibility are thus impossible and illusory. Nietzsche insisted that the world can be redeemed, freed from whatever moral faults it had. Now this is of course

[10] TI-VI 8; all emphases in original.

impossible, since doing so implies that the world has a moral content and that this content can be altered, in contradiction with what was contended a few lines before. Moreover, if man can redeem the world, then man has to be held responsible for this redeeming (or lack thereof). This is again a logical impossibility if no one is accountable for anything. Nietzsche's heavy-handed imprecations aside, there seems to be little to be extracted from the above-quoted passage, which is self-contradictory to the point of meaninglessness. The world as will to power, improbably conflating being and becoming yet averting nihilism for being a source of moral worth, is a metaphysical chimera. Nietzsche's confused realisation of this predicament surfaces throughout *Twilight*.

4. Finally, *Twilight* displays unmistakable evidence of the quandary in which Nietzsche is knowingly mired with regard to what can be called his ontology of will to power. Not that this situation should come as a surprise, for even the lesser role that Nietzsche attributed to his concept that of mere psychological yet life-defining drive, leads to a series of conceptual impasses and logical contradictions.

If will to power is conceived of as a general psychological drive operating everywhere and always, explaining human behaviour in all its manifestations, then it explains no behaviour in particular except that the individual 'behaves'. The notion is redundant with that of 'life'. For the concept to have a claim to usefulness, it must be decomposed into various, more elementary drives, each one of them being associated with a specifically identifiable kind of behaviour. Nietzsche was well aware of this problem, since he not only abruptly dismissed Schopenhauer's general 'will to life' as meaningless but also attempted to analyse will as a duality or as a multiplicity of drives, wills or souls. Yet he never elucidated how exactly these wills of a lesser order are to be differentiated and prioritised if not retroactively – that is, how his theory improves in any way over a post-characterisation of observed behaviour. Possible descriptive gains are offset by a complete loss of predictive power. Nietzsche's proposed redefinitions of pleasure and displeasure as distinctive manifestations of will to power fail notably on this dimension. More damaging to his theory still, if the individual is the locus of constantly competing psychological drives that cannot be prioritised, is that goal-directed behaviour becomes unexplainable even after it has been observed.

As if ignoring these glaring problems, Nietzsche entertained even higher ambitions for his concept. These are revealed in light of his regular and indiscriminate dismissals of ontological dualisms of the Platonic-Christian-Cartesian-Kantian type. Nietzsche wanted to replace

the 'psyche-soul-I-subject versus body' model of man with a view in which man is conceived of as embodied will to power. In Nietzsche's vision, 'I', put forward as pillar of the traditional view as in the Cartesian cogito, is requalified as an uncontrolled because uncontrollable expression of will to power. Self-consciousness is dissolved into an accidental, after-the-fact and inconsequential internal use of language. Differences between the unconscious, the conscious and the self-conscious lose their relevance; personal responsibility is dissolved through its extension to whatever one does, consciously or not, knowingly or not. There is no doer behind the deed; there is only will to power manifesting itself as organs, as body, as behaviour and, finally but remotely, as self-consciousness. Man is body and body only because man is will to power expressed as body.

In this perspective, however, the integrity of the individual as individual is unexplainable for it is undermined by the simultaneous and competing expressions of independent wills to power manifesting themselves in the body's various organs. For the same reason that purposive behaviour cannot be accounted for if the individual is the locus of unprioritised psychological drives, the unity of the body cannot be explained if man is a collection of competing organs devoid of a superordinate principle. The very expression 'purposive behaviour' becomes in Nietzsche's ontological framework an empty concept for lack of a designated psychological entity or physiological level to which it could be relevant.

The answer to these difficulties, in Nietzsche's finished and unfinished texts, is clear if in contradiction with some of his trademark statements: beyond his repeated and vociferous repudiations of the concept of free will, 'I' or 'soul', Nietzsche is still committed to the view that there is more to man than the simple collection of his organs or wills. Nietzsche's dismissal of reductive physiology, his evolutionism that opposes Darwin's determinism, as well as the distinct proto-existentialistic tone of many of his claims, cannot be explained without the existence of a component of man that cannot be dissolved in his body. If one acts and not only reacts, if one imposes value as the *Genealogy*'s masters are said to have been capable of in pagan times, then one is the uncaused source of one's own behaviour, values and beliefs. If one has fallen for the ascetic ideal of the herd when one could have done otherwise, then one is gifted with the capacity of choice. If one believes that one is born posthumously, as Nietzsche did, then one believes that one has escaped the causal determinism of the natural world. Despite Nietzsche's naturalism and his commitment to the ontology that arises from Homer's poems, despite his rejection of the notion of 'free will', romanticism's tenet of

man gifted with a supranatural, life-directing, world-shaping and value-endowing will is still discernible in his late writings. If man is will to power, then will to power encompasses an aspect of man that is not part of the natural world. In other words, if man is will to power, then will to power includes that entity or substratum that, according to Nietzsche, Plato called 'pure spirit', Christ the soul, Descartes his 'I' and Kant the subject. Will to power is 'I' interpreted romantically.

That Nietzsche at least partially realised the contradictions he was facing on these matters can be reasonably inferred from his withdrawing from publication the texts in which the will to power ontology is most visibly expressed and without which many arguments offered in the books are incomplete. His backing away from this vision is in any case made plain in the 'Four Great Errors' chapter of *Twilight of the Idols*. After having pilloried yet again the notions of causality in general and of causality of the will in particular and after having consistently repudiated in robust terms the possibility of psychological explanations in terms of motives (since such explanations rely on causality of will), Nietzsche continued:

> The error of free will. [...] the doctrine of will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is of *finding guilty*. The whole of the old-style psychology, the psychology of will, has as its precondition the desire of its authors, the priests at the head of ancient communities, to create for themselves a *right* to ordain punishments.[11]

But if free will is truly an error, the concepts of 'guilt', 'invention', 'purpose' and 'desire' are meaningless: people behave not as they intend to but as they are determined. No idea or doctrine is 'invented'; whatever people say or do is mere uncontrollable recombination of, or reaction to, past and present environmental stimuli. Priests and immoralists alike cannot 'create' anything: things happen and will continue to happen because they must.

In spite of his implausible claim, made in *Ecce Homo*, that he never willed anything nor ever entertained any purpose,[12] Nietzsche rejected such a determinist outlook. The passage quoted above implies this refusal and countless others, of proto-existentialistic flavour, attest to it. Thus, despite his claims to the contrary, Nietzsche accepted 'the psychology

[11] TI-VI 7; emphases in original.
[12] EH-II 9.

of will'. Not only did he accept it, but he also, if indirectly, promoted it since his arguments, allegedly to disprove it, implicitly rely upon it. By the time he wrote *Twilight*, the psychology that he eradicated from his philosophy is that of will to power, as he announced it in the first part of *Beyond*. That which he wanted to promote, he obliterated from his thinking; that which he set out to eliminate, he thoroughly reinstated at the core of this thought. A psychology of choice, efforts, guilt and punishments – all terms central to his explanation of the genesis of Christian morality in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, a work in which Nietzsche set to develop an alternative to 'English' (i.e., Darwinist, biological, deterministic) psychology. The psychology of will which transpires from the ending of the *Genealogy* and to which he clings in some parts of *Twilight of the Idols* is, as he knew, at bottom a Platonic-Christian psychology. The grand ambitions of section 23 of *Beyond Good and Evil* are but a distant dream. Nietzsche's belief in his own concept of will to power is thus more than doubtful. If anything, the following makes it clear:

> *Psychological explanation*. – To trace something unknown back to something known is alleviating, soothing, gratifying and gives moreover a feeling of power. [...] First principle: any explanation is better than none. [...] Thus there is sought not only some kind of explanation as cause, but a *selected* and *preferred* kind of explanation, [...] the *most common* explanation. Consequence: a particular kind of cause-ascription comes to preponderate more and more, becomes concentrated into a system and finally comes to *dominate* over the rest, that is to say simply to exclude *other* causes and explanations.[13]

The points summarised above make it impossible not to think that this trademark Nietzschean swipe, allegedly aimed at contemporary psychologists, is not also directed at Nietzsche himself and his theory of will to power as basis for a new physio-psychology. It was first a psychological intuition, inspired by ardent readings of the Homeric poems, before it became an ontological theory resulting from a rejection of Cartesianism and Kantianism. To this new model of man Nietzsche was initially committed. He progressively came to reject it because he realised that it was merely his preferred mode of psychological explanation, a common one, perhaps, but not a universal one, let alone a viable ontological model.

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[13] TI-VI 5; emphases in original.

5. Beyond all the evidence adduced in the present study, Nietzsche's very probable realisation of his failure is also detectable in his exalted but vain attempts at presenting his philosophical work as a resounding success. Nietzsche's self-aggrandisement is notable in the well-known fourth chapter of *Twilight of the Idols*, titled 'How the "Real World" at last Became a Myth: The History of an Error'. This historical account is offered as a logical progression in six stages, from the inception of the idea of a 'true world' by Plato (stage 1) to its elimination in the hands of Nietzsche's executioner, Zarathustra (stage 6). Importantly, positivism's rejection of the 'real world' (stage 4) is depicted as a philosophical position reached after and in reaction to Kant's world dualism (stage 3). As the tone of the section makes it clear, stage 4 is portrayed as intellectually superior to stage 3 for being the first step towards the final awakening heralded by Zarathustra.

Nietzsche's witty summary of the history of Western metaphysics elicits a few smiles. In the context of the current discussion, its main significance is that it ignores the fact that the core of positivism's critiques of idealism had been formulated, well before Comte (if it is Comte to whom Nietzsche was referring),[14] by David Hume. The tune of 'positivism's cockcrow' had been previously sung by empiricism: in Hume's words, metaphysics, inasmuch as it is a claim to knowledge beyond experience, is merely 'sophistry and illusion'.[15] Hume's *Treatise* initially 'fell dead-born from the press', but as Kant finally saw some forty years after its publication, on its sceptical grounds, science too is to be dismissed altogether since it goes, like religion, beyond experience. Kant then developed, as Nietzsche knew too well,[16] his 'categories of the understanding' and 'synthetic a priori judgements' precisely in order to safeguard the possibility of studying the phenomenal world from Hume's destructive conclusions. One can only wonder what

[14] Magnus believes it is the case (1978, 132) since Comte is explicitly mentioned later in *Twilight* (in TI-IX 4); Clark disagrees (1990, 112), believing that TI-IV is a summary of Nietzsche's own philosophical development and that stage four describes Nietzsche's own early work. This precise point is unimportant for the present discussion; what is significant here is the sequence of events as told by Nietzsche, for even if stage four points to Nietzsche's early philosophy, it remains nevertheless the case that Hume expressed these views well before Nietzsche did and that Nietzsche knew of Hume's arguments.

[15] *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, last words of the book (§132).

[16] As BGE 2, BGE 11 and WP 101 attest. See also BGE 252: 'Kant rose and raised himself up to rebel against Hume'. Kant's reaction to Hume is articulated in detail in Lange (1925, ii, 149–170).

Western philosophy would have gained if the full weight of Hume's arguments had been recognised earlier and if Hume had had the opportunity to respond to a system of thought similar to that of Kant. In any case, as Nietzsche noted, it was Kant, not Comte (and even less Nietzsche), who woke up first from 'dogmatic Newtonian slumbers' at the sound of Hume's alarm bells.

When Nietzsche wrote *Twilight*, however, the thought that Kantianism, inasmuch as it took into account Hume's arguments and irrespective of its merits or demerits, could be a philosophically more sophisticated position than empiricism had become unacceptable. To think this would come close to admitting that, beyond their rhetorical vigour, his criticisms of the ascetic ideals, of romanticism and of Platonic ontology amounted to little more than variations on the themes of empiricism and naturalism, incorporating elements extracted from ancient heroism. Acknowledging this openly, in Nietzsche's eyes, would be tantamount to accepting that most of his work since and including *Human, All Too Human* had been a waste of time and effort, that he failed not only as an academic and as a philologist (not to mention as a composer) but also as a philosopher. By 1888, Nietzsche was no longer the young promising academic seeking the intellectual protection of great predecessors or contemporaries like Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner but an author craving recognition and consolidation of his budding fame. Merely rehearsing someone else's (Hume's) arguments, even if directed against new targets, could not be for him an attractive option; Schopenhauer had already done so at the expense of Kant in any case. Appearing as the philosophical heir of a recent tradition (that is, as revitalising positivism, as *Human, All Too Human* attempts to do) was not prestigious enough for a thinker who prided himself on philosophising with a hammer and breaking new philosophical grounds with dynamite. Thus, in 1888, the chronology of Western metaphysics had to be hijacked in broad daylight. Kantianism (and beyond it, romanticism) had to be presented, not as a sophisticated albeit possibly failed attempt to respond to long-existing arguments, but as an intermediary step in the history of philosophy, leading to Nietzsche's own. Joyful, perhaps futile, in any case easy (because well rehearsed by Hume) idol-smashing is then put forward as progress, as meant to clear the way for the rise of a self-declared, allegedly post-Christian, post-Kantian, yet pre-Socratic 'Zoroastrian' prophet. Nietzsche knew too well that Zarathustra himself had in reality little 'glad tidings' to bring, however. In his mouth, the cosmological theory of eternal

recurrence, long proposed by Heraclitus and the Stoics and revisited as such in the notebooks, was in the end reduced to 'the greatest weight';[17] that is, to an imperative laden with existential connotations but epistemologically, metaphysically and ontologically insignificant. Not only is this diminutive version of the doctrine difficult to reconcile with the grandiose role that Nietzsche assigned to the end to his mouthpiece,[18] but as Simmel saw, it amounts to little more than a variation on Kant's secularised Christian 'categorical imperative' which so infuriated Nietzsche.[19] Perhaps this explains Nietzsche's pompous elevations of his *Zarathustra* to gospel status.

6. The story of Nietzsche's failed grand project can be told in yet different terms. As the name plainly suggests, will to power was envisioned as a synthesis of romanticism and ancient heroism. Despite Nietzsche's antisystem stance, the objective was to propose a novel and all-encompassing ethical, epistemological, metaphysical and ontological framework. Ancient heroism, as it emerges from Homer's poems, can be characterised by an ethics rooted in an awareness of the tragedy of human existence, physical power and stringent role-based compliance grounded in a 'realist' epistemology, all features flowing from metaphysical and ontological 'naive' monisms. Conversely, romanticism insists on a proto-existentialistic emphasis on freedom and power of the will, this conception being seen, in Schopenhauer's version, as ontological and ideal substratum. The only point of contact between these two philosophies is a common emphasis on power, tangible in ancient heroism's case, essentialised in romanticism's. Beside these two worldviews, a third line was available by Nietzsche's lifetime: naturalism. Naturalism is an epistemological doctrine encompassing two distinct and independent versions: methodological naturalism and substantive naturalism.[20] Methodological naturalism accepts only a posteriori claims about nature, while substantive naturalism insists that philosophical conclusions must be amenable to empirical inquiry. While a methodological naturalist is ready to accept the existence of entities that cannot be perceived directly if this existence can be argued from empirical results, a substantive naturalist rejects such a possibility as a matter of principle.

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[17] GS 341.

[18] See EH-Z.

[19] The ethical worth of an action is to be found in its endless repetition – in time for Nietzsche, across actors for Kant (Simmel 1991, 170–172).

[20] This taxonomy is borrowed from Railton (1989, 155–156). In the literature, substantive naturalism is also called ontological naturalism.

Beyond its a priori commitment to the existence of matter, materialism is a textbook example of substantive naturalism, with 'substance' being simply called 'matter'. Nietzsche can be said to lean strongly towards methodological naturalism because of its commitment to the methods of science.[21]

Naturalism, in its two forms, is broadly compatible with ancient heroism. Even if the gods play an important role in the *Iliad* and influence events as well as men, they fit within a general naturalistic picture. Although immortal, Homer's gods are merely stronger and more powerful human beings; they remain subordinate to an overall order in nature that Homer never described but plainly assumed.[22] As Lange acknowledged in his *History of Materialism*, materialism (and, by extension, naturalism) remains the most successful of all philosophical approaches if success is measured by the ability to describe, predict and alter observable natural events. For this reason, naturalism's scientific successes would have been accepted by Homer's main characters, for such successes would have supported their power-driven agenda. For the philological Nietzsche, naturalism was thus an easy position to take, an effortless extension of his love affair with Homer's poems, his anti-world dualism and commitment to concept empiricism further giving his position strong substantive naturalism flavours.[23] From substantive and methodological naturalism to materialism, there is then a very small step to take, as Chapter 3 revealed from a different perspective.

Nietzsche was further attracted by naturalism because of a lifelong penchant for romanticism, contracted through his ardent readings and rereadings of Schopenhauer. For Romantics, as for Homer's heroes, the greater reach over nature that science enables in practice is welcome insofar as it multiplies the power of the human will. Schopenhauer was well versed in natural science and relied at times extensively on

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[21] Leiter (2003, 6–11). Leiter has coined the expression 'Speculative M[ethodological]-Naturalist' to put the emphasis on Nietzsche's attempts at pushing sciences' methods further than the sciences of his time so as to come up with more encompassing theories.

[22] Stumpf (1994, 4). The point is noted by Lange: '[the *Iliad*'s] gods are not wholly omnipotent' (Lange 1925, i, 116). This is not to say (as Lange pointed out immediately on the same page) that Homer's worldview was favourable to natural science. Indeed it was not, since in the *Iliad* nothing can happen without divine intervention.

[23] Thus Leiter observes that Nietzsche endorsed key results of science, a feature of Nietzsche's thought qualified as 'result continuity' (Leiter 2003, 7).

its methods to argue his vision of the will in nature. What Nietzsche astonishingly failed to note, however, is that substantive naturalism specifically denies what romanticism takes as a foundational insight: the existence of a free, dynamic, 'inner' component of nature that accounts for intention, change and life. One cannot be an exponent of romanticism who takes essentialisation as an axiom and simultaneously entertain an inclination for a version of naturalism that precisely prohibits this essentialisation and strictly reduces the world to observable substances.

When he tried to propose a model for man and human existence, Nietzsche erred again and for similar reasons. If, ontologically, substantive naturalism is compatible with ancient heroism, the compatibility of its methodological version with romanticism is only skin-deep. Methodological naturalism, which was Hume's, is indeed at bottom deterministic.[24] If the existence of the will as ontological substratum is argued from the expression of the body and only of the body, one does not see how it can shape human existence and the world through its free inspiration, as opposed to being encapsulated in man's natural make-up. If the will is argued from and is to be found 'in' nature, then it cannot turn against it; a river does not flow against its own current.

There is even an ironical dimension in Nietzsche's attempt to fit a romantic, proto-existentialistic ideal into the ethical constraints of ancient heroism. The powers and freedom of the individual to escape his condition and shape his environment that are at the core of romanticism form precisely what Homer's characters would have found most objectionable and despicable. Nietzsche's proto-existentialistic stance, which he was proud to claim if not in these terms, makes sense only in an ethical outlook that opposes the heroic values, the collapse of which Nietzsche otherwise lamented. If it is highly dubious that the herd ethics was a reaction to the Homeric one, there can be no doubt that existentialism and its predecessor, romanticism, find their roots in the herd ethics. Even Fichte's extreme version of that doctrine, for all its excesses, emerged out of Kantianism. The values romanticism and existentialism promote can be attractive only to individuals who have had the extraordinary luxury of growing bored with the existence that their environment, social class and education carved out for them. The angst and boredom these spoilt children lament are products of the freedom that only modern technology and mass industrialisation make

[24] Stroud (2003, 3ff, esp. 4).

possible. Existential guilt and bad conscience would have been at best incomprehensible, at worst ridiculous and laughable, to the heroes of the *Iliad*, absorbed as they were in the unceasing and exacting duties that nature and their peers demanded of them.

For some time, Nietzsche called for the rise of 'higher men' and free spirits. These new masters would have represented a tangible, flesh-and-bone showcase of his late philosophy as well as a remedy to nihilism. Ruling the herd, they would have carried the future of Western culture on their shoulders and repelled the arrival of the 'last men'. Without will to power, however, there is no yardstick left with which to identify these superior individuals. Nietzsche's list of examples is consequently disparate and easily revealed as arbitrary. If it includes, understandably, artists such as da Vinci, Michelangelo, Goethe and Beethoven, the inclusion of Julius Caesar, Cesare Borgia and Napoleon, whose cultural legacies are questionable, is impossible to explain. If there is one aspect of Nietzsche's thought that such a heteroclite list represents, it is the contradiction in terms contained in the labels 'heroic individualism' and 'radical [individualistic] aristocraticism'.

Even though the objective of 'revaluing all values' is once again yelled at the face of his readers at the end of *The Anti-Christ*,[25] of will to power there is scant mention in the book and the concept is reduced to a psycho-physiological criterion. The diagnostic of impending nihilistic catastrophe is maintained, but the construction with which it was to be averted is now in ruins, knowingly demoted to something inconsistent with Nietzsche's initial and grandiose ambitions. Instead, as a last-minute prescription to cure Western civilisation, Nietzsche threw in a thinly plagiarised version of his arch-enemy's ideal state. In a three-tier model of a 'healthy society' that Plato would have approved of wholeheartedly, Nietzsche saw his beloved Homeric master-type individuals, the 'noble warriors', occupy only the second rank, *behind* the 'spiritual type' for whom 'knowledge [is] asceticism'.[26] Such brutal defacing of his own work gives an idea of the depth of Nietzsche's disarray.

The failure of Nietzsche's project is now more than complete; it is, on his own admission, beyond remedy. Years of strenuous effort and unceasing bouts of terrible ailments since *Human, All Too Human* have come to nothing. To Nietzsche, life must have looked like an unmitigated failure from beginning to end. In such a desperate situation, the

[25] Last sentence of AC 62 (i.e., of the whole book).
[26] AC 57.

only task left is to masquerade one's works as great sucesses and to write an aggrandised but desperate story of one's life. Ecce homo: behold the failed philosopher. The grandiloquent and megalomaniacal (if in parts still trenchant) autobiographical account is additional evidence that Nietzsche knew, even though he never admitted it plainly, that his thought had reached a dead end. Shortly after completing *Ecce Homo*, tertiary syphilis (or whatever infection Nietzsche had contracted) took over.[27] The physical collapse in Turin was triggered by an existential one:[28] 'all suppressed truths become poisonous'.[29] On January 3, 1889, Nietzsche had not said everything he wanted to say, but he had said everything that he could say. His late philosophy ended in self-conscious failure in its major themes since the concept that was supposed to capture and symbolise his grand ambitions collapsed before his own eyes. An excruciating recognition: in the last act of the fight to the death between 'Dionysus and the Crucified', Nietzsche is not always playing the role of the Greek god.[30]

7. If the arguments offered in the present book have any value, it is thus not only Nietzsche's philosophy of art that ends in failure;[31] his attempts to build alternatives to the moral-epistemological, metaphysical and ontological conceptions of his time also end unsuccessfully. Through the concept of will to power, Nietzsche tried to cast too wide a net over ancient heroism, naturalism and romanticism. If the notion is attractive, it remains superficially so. If many of Nietzsche's late texts are philosophically rich beyond measure, they are also self-contradicting to the extent that a definitive, one-dimensional, consistent interpretation of his work is out of reach. The concept of will to power is perhaps the most telling example of such defeats. In this instance, internal tensions have led to destruction of meaning.[32] Nietzsche's vituperative demolitions of his predecessors' philosophies may have hit their targets, but his own construction collapses under the weight of its internal contradictions. Romanticism cannot be reconciled with ancient heroism; the differences between the two worldviews are too profound to be meaningfully bridged. Naturalism is of no help in this enterprise even if it

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[27] For a discussion of possible causes of Nietzsche's illness, see Sax (2003).
[28] Chamberlain (1998) is a booklong exploration of this theme.
[29] Z-II 12.
[30] Nietzsche's last letters were signed either 'Dionysus' or 'The Crucified One' (see Chamberlain 1998, 211–212).
[31] Young (1996, 148).
[32] Porter (2006, 548).

connects partially to both of them. Will to power is a stillborn philosophical chimera recognised by its Prometheus as such.

In the end, Nietzsche had little choice but to fall back on the grounds he had previously joyfully razed and to recross the bridges he had compulsively set ablaze. The ascetic ideal was worshipped once again, the world of materialism was seized in the name of pragmatic power and 'I' as romantic will was restored as pillar of man's freedom and power over a determined, natural world. Few are capable or have the courage of Max Stirner's uncompromising, pure and extreme coherence flowing from an utter and visceral rejection of all the conceptions the Western philosophical tradition has derived from its fountainhead, Plato. On strict philosophical grounds, the comparison between the now iconic, brilliant but inconsistent, perhaps casual, literary genius and the almost entirely forgotten sombre but resolute schoolmaster does not necessarily go in the former's favour.[33]

Moreover, there are reasons to conclude that Nietzsche eventually recognised his failure. Contrary to what Nietzsche implied through the title of his work, *Twilight of the Idols* does not signal the last glitters of Western philosophy's most enduring 'idols', at the first rank of which stood for him other-worldly truth and goodness, metaphysical and ontological dualisms, causation and freedom of the will. Rather, in its most relevant passages, behind its rhetoric that makes at times entertaining reading, *Twilight* shows that, by the time of its writing, Nietzsche had reluctantly but thoroughly abandoned the concept through which he had hoped to displace the cornerstones of the Western philosophical landscape. This renouncement signals that the same idols are reinstated in Nietzsche's crepuscular thought. If through the work shines the twilight of an idol, it is of his own concept of will to power and beyond it that of his entire late philosophy.

Nietzsche turned towards more than one idol during his life. After Christianity's God, philology was an early one, soon followed by romanticism, to which he offered both *The Birth of Tragedy* and the sacrifice of his academic career. An illusion soon dispelled; romanticism cannot represent a viable alternative to the herd ethics since it is one of its outgrowths. Nietzsche turned violently, if belatedly, against romanticism when he realised the full significance of romanticism's descent. After romanticism came something akin to positivism, to which the first instalment of *Human, All Too Human* is a long litany. Nietzsche then tried to salvage romanticism by combining it with ancient heroism through

[33] Paterson (1993, 145–161).

naturalism. Works from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to book V of *The Gay Science* prepare the ground for such a project and its figurehead concept of will to power, with which Nietzsche hoped to replace everything he had previously successively adored and burnt, be it revealed Christian truth, value, will or science. In 1888, this idol fell, as it had to, together with all the hopes that were attached to it. Nietzsche's confident note at the end of the preface is a delusory daydream, a last glimmer of hope against all evidence: *Twilight of the Idols* marks the death of the project Nietzsche had pursued since 1885.

One of the limitations of the present study is that it is based on only a part of Nietzsche's entire work. Much remains to be unearthed from the vast amount of material not explored here and it is possible that it contains evidence capable of undermining the views presented here. One must always remain ready to acknowledge that reaching finality in Nietzsche studies can be merely a sign of incomplete understanding. Yet even if this is the case, the discussions offered above should be enough to conclude that Nietzsche's canonical corpus is not amenable to consistent interpretation when it comes to its major themes. Nietzsche's books compose a failed grand project that cannot be repaired. If anything, over a hundred years' worth of chaotic and contradictory scholarship attests to this.

8. The century in which Nietzsche wrote was a century that, mainly under the ever-growing influence of science, saw Western thought going through epochal transformations. New, disturbing theories emerged within the span of a single generation. In their wake, the seeds of technologies that would revolutionise the twentieth century started to form and develop. The charting of Earth's most remote corners was almost complete, that of the solar system was well under way and to many it looked like the mystery of man's lineage was uncovered. Medicine was striking its first major successes against long-standing blights of humanity. All these achievements, widely celebrated as 'progress' and 'civilisation', were proudly exhibited in recurrent Universal Expositions. At the time of Nietzsche's collapse, unbounded optimism prevailed.

Machiavelli argued that the rise of Christianity precipitated the fall of the Roman Empire and advocated a return to pagan virtues to restore Italy to her former imperial glory. Nietzsche took this argument further; for him, there was no alternative to Western decadence and nihilism from within the herd ethics, especially when its accompanying epistemological and metaphysical foundations had been revealed as sham by a frenzied Platonic will to truth. Like a few before

him but perhaps more cogently than anyone else, Nietzsche understood that his contemporaries' definitions of moral, political, scientific and cultural progress, inherited from the Enlightenment, had set the West on an implosion course. Having made such an analysis, he assigned to himself the task to 'revalue all values' – that is, to propose single-handedly an alternative upon which a different future would be possible. That he failed in this Herculean enterprise is hardly surprising. Even through its renewed emphasis on nature that Rousseau, Schelling and Hölderlin celebrated, romanticism remains ontologically, ethically and metaphysically incompatible with ancient heroism. Nietzsche's chimeric concept of will to power is the philosophical equivalent of the artistic synthesis, from which Richard Wagner drew much inspiration, of romanticism on one side and the heroism of the Icelandic sagas on the other: grandiose and attractive, perhaps, but only from afar. Whereas Wagner enjoyed his final rise to international glory, it was only after Nietzsche insightfully recognised his own failure and subsequently collapsed that he himself came to fame. As he saw, it is a birthmark of modernism that popular success unfailingly signals decadence whilst previously it crowned exceptional achievement.

Nietzsche's failure epitomises that of his century and prefigures the disasters of the next ones. It is a truism to say that Western philosophy has neither finished with the debates Nietzsche started nor found a workable alternative to the civilisational decline that he so vividly articulated. Nietzsche's failed prescription represents a challenge unmet to this day, possibly the most towering and pressing Western humanity has ever faced. The stakes today could hardly be higher. If the epistemological and ethical perspectivisms that Nietzsche ushered into the philosophical agenda finally prevail, however, one does not see how this challenge could be answered. If this is the case, if nihilistic collapse is the West's final chapter, Nietzsche's failure would not be only his own. On this account, he was as lucid and prescient as ever:

> *Toward a critique of the philosopher*. – It is a self-deception of philosophers and moralists to imagine that they escape decadence by opposing it. That is beyond their will; and, however little they acknowledge it, one later discovers that they were among the most powerful promoters of decadence.[34]

[34] WP 435.

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