NIETZSCHE’S STANDARD OF VALUE: DEGREES OF STRENGTH

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By ETHAN MEANOR, B.A. (HONS.), M.A.

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AUTHOR: Ethan Meanor, B.A. (Hons.), University of Prince Edward Island; M.A., York University

SUPERVISOR: Professor Barry Allen

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify and explicate Nietzsche's standard of value, that is, the basis upon which he approves of some human phenomena (e.g., moralities, philosophies, artistic and political movements, etc.) and disapproves of others. I argue that this standard is best captured by the concept of "degrees of strength."

Part I undertakes a detailed examination of Nietzsche's philosophical methodology, which must be understood in order to understand his conception of degrees of strength. I argue that the central tenet of his methodology is his commitment to "historical philosophy," that is, to the view that absolutely opposite phenomena like soul and body, good and evil, and so on, do not exist as opposites, and that their opposition is only relative. I here engage with what is perhaps the most prominent reading of Nietzsche's methodology in the Anglophone world today, namely that it is a form of "naturalism," understood as a commitment to some kind of continuity with the empirical sciences. I show that this reading relies on a definition of "nature" that Nietzsche never gives, and commits him to an ontology that he explicitly rejects, without doing anything to clarify his methodology that is not done by the concept of historical philosophy.

Part II examines Nietzsche's attempt to formulate a "proper physio-psychology" based on historical philosophy, which requires him to conceive of human beings as communities of willing subjects that he calls "drives." I argue that Nietzsche adopts the notion of the human being as a multiplicity from physiology, and attempts to combine it with the notion of the willing subject that arises from introspective psychology. He believes that the human belief in causality is a result of the psychological experience of willing, and that physiology cannot explain the causal relations among events in the body without appealing to a concept of will. I then show how he extends this insight beyond the body to the world as a whole, arguing that we cannot comprehend causality at all except by means of the concept of "will to power." This, I claim, is Nietzsche's main reason for asserting that the world is "will to power and nothing else."

Part III introduces Nietzsche's concept of the "problem of value," the solution of which amounts to what he calls "the determination of the order of rank among values," that is, of which human values contribute most to the enhancement of the power of humanity, and which frustrate such enhancement. I argue that the standard by which Nietzsche determines this is a symptomatology based on the concept of degrees of strength: those "ways of thinking and valuing" that are symptomatic of higher degrees of physio-psychological strength are more valuable for the enhancement of the overall power of humanity, while those that are symptomatic of weakness are less valuable, or even disvaluable, for that end. While the main focus of Part III is to explicate the concepts of physio-psychological strength and weakness, I conclude with an examination of what Nietzsche calls the "great economy of the whole," according to which even weakness often has value for enhancing the power of humanity, so long as it is kept in its proper place and not valued more highly than strength.

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For

ED KEUNECKE

Ihr Einsamen von heute, ihr Ausscheidenden, ihr sollt einst ein Volk sein: aus euch, die ihr euch selber auswähltet, soll ein auserwähltes Volk erwachsen: — und aus ihm der Übermensch.

Also sprach Zarathustra
("Von der schenkenden Tugend")

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GUIDE TO ABBREVIATIONS

I cite Nietzsche's works in English translation according to the standard abbreviations of their titles set out below, followed by volume/division (where applicable), followed by the section number. With the exception of "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," which is not divided into numbered sections, I do not refer to page numbers, since these differ from one edition to the next, while the section numbers are the same in all editions. Where the letter *P* is used, this refers to the preface to the work, which is usually also divided into numbered sections. Finally, the third division of *Ecce Homo* consists of six numbered sections, followed by Nietzsche's commentaries on his earlier works, each of which consists of a series of numbered sections organized under the title of the work in question. Where I cite these commentaries, I omit the division number (III), and use the abbreviation for the title, followed by the section number.

For example, BGE 36 refers to *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 36; HA II:196 refers to *Human, All Too Human*, volume 2, section 196; GM P:3 refers to *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, section 3; TI II:2 refers to *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Problem of Socrates" (second division), section 2; and EH Z:3 refers to *Ecce Homo*, division 3, commentary on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

A = *The Antichrist*
BGE = *Beyond Good and Evil*
BT = *The Birth of Tragedy*
CW = *The Case of Wagner*
D = *Daybreak*
EH = *Ecce Homo*
GS = *The Gay Science*
GM = *On the Genealogy of Morals*
HA = *Human, All Too Human*
NCW = *Nietzsche contra Wagner*
TI = *Twilight of the Idols*
TL = "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense"
UM = *Untimely Meditations*
WP = *The Will to Power*
Z = *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

I cite Nietzsche's unpublished notes in German according to *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studien-ausgabe* (KSA). Citations consist of the volume number, followed by the notebook number and individual text number assigned by the editors of that edition. For example, KSA 11:27[59] refers to volume 11, notebook 27, text 59. Translations from this edition are mine.

Introduction

My aim in this study is to identify and explicate what I will call Nietzsche's "standard of value" —that is, the principled basis on which he approves of some human beings, moralities, philosophical, artistic, and political movements, and so on, and disapproves of others. Nietzsche has a reputation as a polemicist whose writings consist mainly in harsh critiques of traditional European morality, religion, and philosophy, and anyone who has read him knows that this reputation is well deserved. Those who have read him carefully also know that it is an exaggeration, and sometimes even a caricature: for all the things to which Nietzsche says "no," there are also a great many to which he says "yes"; and in both cases, his reasons for doing so are almost always far subtler than they may appear on a first reading. Nietzsche was no mere commentator, writing down his positive and negative opinions and putting them into print, but a serious theorist who was concerned with solving particular problems related to, among other things, the value and disvalue of different human phenomena of the kinds listed above. Even many of his more philosophically-inclined readers make this mistake in practice, if not usually in principle. For it is common to see discussion of which things Nietzsche approved and disapproved, and it seems that citing his approbative or disapprobative statements in order to establish his attitude toward these things is often taken to amount to an interesting contribution to the understanding of his thought.[1] For my part, I think that the more important and difficult question is *why* Nietzsche approved of certain things and disapproved of others—a question that sounds straightforward, but turns out to be incredibly complex when pursued far enough. To the

1 This practice is very widespread in the Nietzsche literature, and it would be unfair of me to single out one or two people for censure. Anyone who cares to can consult the latest issue of *Nietzsche-Studien* or the *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* and be sure of finding examples of what I am describing.

question "Why does Nietzsche disapprove of Christianity?" it is not enough to answer, for example, "Because he considers it life-negating." This answer is broadly correct, but it really tells us very little unless we have a sound understanding of what "life" means for Nietzsche, what it means to "negate" life, and why and in what sense he takes issue with things that do this. Obviously attempts have been made to answer these questions before, and I will engage with some of them in this study. My point is simply that with Nietzsche, one may begin by asking why he disapproves of something like Christianity, and soon find oneself waist-deep in a theory of biology or psychology or knowledge that cannot be neglected if one really wants an answer to the question with which one began. To understand why Nietzsche approves and disapproves of the things he does—to grasp his "standard of value"—is therefore a long and complicated enterprise.

One reason for this, which will become clear during the course of this study, is that Nietzsche's thinking is circular. I do not mean that it is fundamentally tautologous, or that its basic premises enjoy no support except from each other. Rather, it is circular in the sense that it developed organically, with its various elements informing and supporting one another, rather than geometrically, beginning with first principles and elaborating their consequences. Schopenhauer makes this point quite clearly with respect to his own philosophy:

> A *system of thought* must always have an architectonic connection of coherence, that is to say, a connection in which one part always supports the other, though not the latter the former; in which the foundation-stone carries all the parts without being carried by them; and in which the pinnacle is upheld without upholding. On the other hand, *a single thought*, however comprehensive, must preserve the most perfect unity. If, all the same, it can be split up into parts for the purpose of being communicated, then the connection of these parts must once more be organic, i.e., of such a kind that every part supports the whole just as much as it is supported by the whole; a connection in which no part is first and no part last, in which the

> whole gains in clearness from every part, and even the smallest part cannot be fully understood until the whole has been first understood.[2]

While I do not think that the appellation of "a single thought" is particularly helpful in characterizing either Schopenhauer's philosophy or Nietzsche's, the description given in this passage captures quite well the kind of circularity I am talking about, and indicates the difficulties with which it confronts the interpreter—for if it is not possible to understand a particular part of Nietzsche's philosophy without understanding all the others, the interpreter who wanted to understand some one part of that philosophy must see his task grow immeasurably. One consolation, however, is that the process of comprehending the whole can proceed quite freely, according to the interests of the reader: for if "no part is first and no part last," all that matters is that one gets around to all of them at some point and relates each one to all the rest. While it may be impossible ever to definitively *finish* such a task, given enough time one will find that it becomes possible to survey the whole as from a high point, and to see how the various paths one has followed through Nietzsche's philosophy are connected.

It is for this reason that, although I have set out to identify Nietzsche's standard of value, I will nevertheless spend the majority of this study investigating aspects of his thinking that are not obviously related to that project, but which must be understood if his standard is to be understood. In particular, it is necessary to explicate (1) Nietzsche's *methodology*, that is, his understanding of what philosophy is and how it has to proceed; and (2) the general *worldview* he elaborates on the basis of that methodology, including his theories of psychology, biology, and physics. Although these latter theories can be said, on balance, to have their basis in his

2 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover 1969), p. xii.

methodology, they sometimes serve to reinforce that methodology as well, in keeping with the circularity of his thinking. This kind of relation also holds between these first two subjects of inquiry, and the third concerning Nietzsche's standard of value: for questions of method and substantive views about the way reality is cannot be disentangled from evaluation on his view —"evaluation" being understood quite broadly as encompassing things like cognitive interests, and not merely "morality." This is actually a fine example of the kind of circularity I have been describing: for our methodology should be based, among other things, in our cognitive interests; and our cognitive interests are conditioned by substantive considerations like the type of creatures we are (biology), as well as the type of individuals we are (psychology); but to investigate those substantive issues, we require a methodology based in our cognitive interests. It should be clear that each of these things conditions the others and is conditioned by them in turn, so that none can properly be called fundamental. I will suggest that this kind of circularity is not simply an artifact of Nietzsche's thinking, but a genuine problem deserving of philosophical attention. However that may be, "a book must have a first and a last line, and to this extent will always remain very unlike an organism, however like one its contents may be. Consequently, form and matter will here be in contradiction."[3] In this case, unlike Schopenhauer, I cannot even beg the indulgence of my readers "to read the book twice," so that the somewhat artificial priority I have given to some parts of Nietzsche's thought over others must be calculated to facilitate comprehension as effectively as possible. While I will not be able to entirely avoid the expedient of briefly taking up ideas that have yet to receive a full and detailed treatment, I will do my best to keep this to a minimum.

3 Schopenhauer, xii–xiii.

I will argue that Nietzsche's standard of value is based on a conception that I will call "degrees of strength" (*Kraftgrade* or *Grade der Kraft*). According to this conception, different human beings manifest different degrees of "physio-psychological" strength, power, or force, and the most valuable human beings are the ones that manifest this in the highest degree. This conception is wedded to a physio-psychological *symptomatology*, according to which Nietzsche thinks it is possible to determine one's degree of strength based on as complete a picture as possible of one's activity, broadly construed to include writings and utterances that evince a particular "way of thinking and valuing" (GS 370), as well as more ordinary actions and dispositions to act in particular ways. The sorts of things I listed at the beginning—moralities, philosophies, artistic movements, and so on—are thus to be understood as *symptoms* of the respective degrees of strength of their originators and adherents. Human phenomena like these are to be evaluated in accordance with the degree of strength of which they are symptomatic, and the degree of strength that they promote within the "great economy" of the human species. To be "valuable" for Nietzsche just means to be strong, or at least to promote the production of strong human beings. This is because he understands the sole and fundamental character of all existence to be "will to power," that is, the tendency on the part of every "centre of force" to assimilate other such centres, incorporate them into itself, and thus grow more powerful. I do not understand this as a metaphysical or ontological theory, but rather as what I will call a "pseudo-ontology"—that is, a theory that *resembles* traditional ontologies insofar as it paints a picture of how the world really is, what really exists, and so on, but does not claim that this picture is adequate to reality "in itself." Rather, it is self-consciously a human interpretation, an attempt to make sense of the reality we experience in the most comprehensive way possible for us. To make a long story

short, Nietzsche thinks that "will to power" accomplishes this better than other interpretations because it "humanizes" nature most adequately, that is, projects enough of what is familiar to us from our physio-psychology into nature that we feel we can comprehend it by analogy to ourselves. Nietzsche wants to be careful and critical with this anthropomorphism, but he ultimately thinks that it is indispensable to human thinking, and that we already employ it all the time without really being aware of what we are doing.

The philosophical methodology on which all this is based is what Nietzsche calls "historical philosophy," in contrast to metaphysical philosophy (HA 1). Historical philosophy as Nietzsche understands it can be reduced to a single guiding assumption, namely that there exist no irreconcilably opposite phenomena, and that all differences between phenomena, however extreme, are only differences of degree. Such a method is "historical" because it is committed to explaining the diversity of phenomena on the basis of development and morphology, rather than origins in absolutely opposite types of reality, which is the metaphysical approach. Crucially, this methodological commitment makes no claim about the *character* of the only type of reality that does exist, beyond the fairly obvious claim that it is one in which things change, and not a world of "being" in the Eleatic sense, which would preclude the possibility of historical development. This is important because we will see that many commentators attempt to capture the anti-dualistic character of Nietzsche's philosophy by saying that he is committed to "naturalism," which is taken to consist in some kind of commitment to continuity with empirical science. However, while Nietzsche was interested in the science of his time, he was also critical of many of its assumptions, and believed that his "will to power" theory offered more of what human beings actually want from an explanation of reality than that science did. More importantly, to

attribute to Nietzsche a commitment to continuity with empirical science, whether that of his time or ours, undermines his "will to power" theory, which would not be countenanced by that science. The commentators who read him as a "naturalist" generally claim either that he did not intend that theory seriously, or that he abandoned his commitment to it by the time he wrote his mature works. There is no convincing evidence for these claims, however often they are made. Nietzsche continued to work on the concept of "will to power" until the very end of his mental life, and the fact that he did not publish a book on the subject before that time proves nothing about his commitment to the theory.[4]

Chapter 1 of this study examines what I call the "problem of opposites" in Nietzsche's writings—that is, the question how apparently opposite phenomena come to exist, and whether their opposition is real or merely apparent. Nietzsche identifies two different ways of responding to this problem: *metaphysical philosophy*, which asserts that the oppositions in question are real; and *historical philosophy*, which asserts that they are merely apparent, and can be explained as developing one out of the other, or as both developing out of some other, more basic phenomenon. I argue, with Christopher Janaway and against Brian Leiter, that Nietzsche does not understand the assumption that absolute opposites do not exist—which both Janaway and Leiter couch in terms of "naturalism"—as a *result* of scientific inquiry, but rather as a methodological presupposition that cannot be definitively demonstrated to be true. On Nietzsche's view this presupposition has, however, been proven to be *viable* by the empirical sciences, inasmuch as cogent explanations of phenomena are possible on its basis. Here I introduce the idea, to be

4 For a good overview of the arguments involved, and a competent refutation of the notion that Nietzsche abandoned his work on "will to power," see Thomas Brobjer, "Nietzsche's *magnum opus*," *History of European Ideas* 32, no. 3 (2006), 278–94.

treated at greater length in the next chapter, that Nietzsche's motivation for adopting this presupposition is ultimately a *moral* one: because the belief in absolute opposites like soul and body, or this world and another, can prove comforting in many ways, he thinks it is that much more likely that one believes in such opposites not because one has good reason to, but because one would like them to be real. Based on the commitment to what I call "truthfulness," that is, the discipline of refusing oneself pleasant delusions, he suspends that possibility, and bases all of his thinking on the assumption that there are no absolutely opposite phenomena.

Chapter 2 explores the psychological origins of Nietzsche's commitment to truthfulness through a thematic reading of *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Untimely Meditations*, written before he announced his commitment to historical philosophy in *Human, All Too Human*. I argue that at this early time he still believed in the existence of absolute opposites, and was particularly concerned with the opposition between illusion and truth, which he respectively associated with suffering and redemption from suffering. While this association is not entirely coherent, and changes its form somewhat between BT and UM, it can be clearly identified in all of Nietzsche's works prior to HA. My basic claim is that it was this association of truth with redemption that led Nietzsche to place such a high value on truthfulness, and that this truthfulness later cannibalized the other ideals, like redemption, with which it was at first associated, because on an honest inspection they turned out to be self-deceptions. Thus truthfulness as a means to redemption dispenses with the hope of redemption, and remains as a commitment to truthfulness for its own sake, which prompts Nietzsche to adopt historical philosophy as a protective measure against self-deception, as described above. All of this is important in order to explain *why* Nietzsche is committed to historical philosophy, since I argued in Chapter 1 that the reasons for this were

moral or psychological, and not "purely cognitive." Although Nietzsche would later abandon his commitment to the absolute value of truth, he would retain his commitment to historical philosophy.

Chapter 3 considers the "naturalistic" interpretation of Nietzsche's method in detail. Engaging with the writings of Richard Schacht, Rex Welshon, and Brian Leiter, I argue that this interpretation relies on a definition of "nature" that Nietzsche never gives, commits him to an ontology that he rejects, and, despite this extra baggage, does nothing to capture the anti-dualistic character of his philosophy that is not done by the concept of historical philosophy, that is, the rejection of absolute opposites. I argue that Schacht's definition of "naturalism" does not really amount to anything more than historical philosophy, although he persists in using the term "naturalism," and does not clearly identify the rejection of absolute opposites as the basic principle of Nietzsche's methodology. Welshon's account saddles Nietzsche with a definition of "nature" as consisting of things like objects and properties—concepts that he explicitly criticizes—because Welshon thinks that Nietzsche is committed to sharing the substantive picture of reality supposedly endorsed by the empirical sciences. And Leiter's account builds an empiricist conception of causality into the foundation of Nietzsche's methodology, ignoring the fact that Nietzsche denies that causal concepts have any meaning except as projections of human psychology into nature (see Chapter 6). Considering that Nietzsche apparently believes he can say this without violating his methodology, it would be strange to find that that methodology was based on an empiricist conception of causality. I argue that one of the basic errors made by all naturalistic readings of Nietzsche is that they ignore the fact that "nature" as we know it is largely a projection of our own psychology on his account, and not something that is sufficiently

disclosed to us by the empirical sciences, to which everything apparently "supernatural" can be unproblematically reduced.

Chapter 4 takes up issues of this kind in greater detail, offering a broad sketch of Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge. I argue that there are two senses of truth that Nietzsche addresses: the *conventional* sense of truth, according to which it is true that snow is white based on the meaning of these words in the English language; and the *correspondence* sense of truth, according to which a belief is true if it corresponds to the way things are "in themselves." Nietzsche believes that truth in the latter sense is unattainable, because the concept of the "thing-in-itself" is incoherent: human beings can only conceive of external reality in terms of its relationship to us, and not as it is "in itself." Truth in the former sense is attainable, but it can only ever be "human truth," based on the cognitive capacities and interests of the human species. I argue that Nietzsche's "perspectivism" should be understood first and foremost as addressing this "human perspective" in contrast to non-human cognitive perspectives that might exist, and not the "subjective" perspectives of individuals, which merely represent more specific modifications of that shared human perspective. However, this does not mean that complete, even if merely human, objectivity is possible, since the cognitive interests of individuals can differ to such an extent as to make certain fundamental disagreements about the way the world is irresolvable. In all this I am in dialogue with Maudemarie Clark, who believes that Nietzsche's rejection of the concept of the "thing-in-itself" leaves him with no basis for the claim that human knowledge "falsifies" reality. While I think it is more appropriate to say that knowledge "interprets" reality, I argue that he can say this because there may be non-human ways of conceiving of reality that differ radically from ours, so that the rejection of the thing-in-itself does

not mean that there is no coherent sense in which our knowledge of reality could be said to be limited in principle, as Clark believes it does. That limitation, however, consists in the fact that there could be many aspects of reality that would be knowable by other types of intellect, which the human intellect ignores, simplifies, or distorts, in accordance with the interests it is adapted to serve.

Chapter 5 examines Nietzsche's conception of a "proper physio-psychology" based on "drives," which he understands as pseudo-entities that are said to underlie various psychological dispositions, and which are also constitutive of the human body. I trace the development of the concept of "drive" from HA up to his mature works, in which it expands into the concept of "will to power." I argue that "physio-psychology" in Nietzsche's sense involves correcting certain errors that arise from introspective psychology based on the results of physiological investigation, while also correcting the inability of physiology to characterize the force that is active in living bodies by incorporating the introspective notion of "willing," albeit in a revised form that eliminates common errors that attach to that notion. Thus a human subject is understood as a multiplicity, as in physiology, rather than as a unity, as in introspective psychology; but it is understood as a multiplicity of *wills* ("drives"), rather than of material components actuated by an unobservable causal force, as in physiology. I also engage with Tom Stern, who argues that Nietzsche cannot really be said to have a "theory of drives" due to the irresolvable inconsistency of his statements on the subject. I show, to the contrary, that Stern's case is overstated, and that it is possible to make a good deal of sense out of what Nietzsche says about drives.

Chapter 6 considers Nietzsche's reasons for applying the concept of "will to power" not only to human physio-psychology, but to all of reality. I argue that he does this essentially for the

same reasons that he imports the concept of "will" into physiology, namely that the phenomenon of causality is not comprehensible on a purely physical or mechanical basis. In this sense, he effectively begins from Hume's insight that we can have no knowledge of necessary causal connections either by *a priori* or *a posteriori* means. Like Hume, Nietzsche is concerned to explain why human beings believe in causality in the first place, if we have no actual knowledge of it. While Hume attributes this to the habit of seeing one event regularly follow another, Nietzsche attributes it to the fact that we are naturally disposed to understand external reality by analogy to ourselves, and specifically to interpret physical events by analogy to acts of will. We would not even have the concept of causality, he thinks, if we did not do this, so that we are left with the choice of either making this anthropomorphism explicit, or acquiescing in our inability to comprehend change. This does not mean that reality "in itself" is will to power, but only that this is the deepest possible interpretation of reality from the human perspective. Nietzsche therefore adopts this interpretation as a "pseudo-ontology," and designates the essence of reality *for human beings* as "will to power."

Chapter 7 introduces the concept of "value," and argues that Nietzsche is concerned with the overall physio-psychological power of humanity, and how to increase that power. To this end, Nietzsche uses what he had learned in his study and reflection on various moralities up to that point in order to attempt to determine which of them have the most value for that end. I examine several of the most important distinctions he makes between different types of morality, including the distinction between master and slave morality, and between moralities of "taming" and of "breeding." I ultimately argue that for Nietzsche, the most valuable moralities are those that express and promote the strongest drives, where the strongest drives are those that express the

character of reality as will to power most fully. These are the “evil” drives that he thinks most moralities, and especially the morality of Christian Europe, consider dangerous and attempt to extirpate. However, while Nietzsche believes that these “terrible” drives are older and more fundamental, he also believes that all “good” drives developed out of them, so that to extirpate the evil would also mean to extirpate the good, while to strengthen the evil would mean to strengthen the good as well.

Chapter 8 analyzes Nietzsche’s conception of “degrees of strength” in detail. The “evil” drives of which I just spoke, recall, are identified as the strongest, while the “good” drives are relatively weak in and of themselves, though not for that reason valueless. Because the concept of strength in drives is fairly straightforward, I focus mostly on the phenomenon of strength in *persons*, understood as communities of drives. I argue that Nietzsche measures strength in this sense along three axes: (1) how many drives a person has; (2) how strong those drives are individually; and (3) how well those drives are organized into a hierarchical structure of domination. I spend the rest of the chapter elaborating the symptomatology that Nietzsche thinks enables the practitioner of a “proper physio-psychology” to determine the degree of strength of a human being, focusing especially on two key types of symptoms: (1) whether a person seeks struggle and growth or peace and relaxation; and (2) whether a person’s “way of thinking and valuing” (GS 370) tends to affirm life or negate it. In doing so, I touch in more detail on the ideas of truthfulness and self-deception introduced in Chapters 1 and 2, as well as the distinction between romantic pessimism and Dionysian pessimism, which Nietzsche understands as symptoms of weakness and strength respectively.

Chapter 9 applies the analysis of strength in Chapter 8 to the "problem of value" introduced in Chapter 7. I argue that Nietzsche does not see strength as valuable and weakness as disvaluable in the straightforward sense which would imply that the former is to be encouraged and the latter discouraged or eliminated. Rather, he has a conception of the "great economy" of the human species, according to which all but the most hopelessly weak, sickly human beings are capable of contributing to the power of humanity by preparing the conditions and providing the support for the strongest human beings to arise and develop successfully. This is captured partly by his conception of ascending and descending "lines of life," according to which a weak human being may still belong to the ascending line of life—for a "line of life" encompasses many individuals over time, connected by heredity, so that a weak person may still be stronger than his parents, and may have children that are stronger than him, and so on. Weakness, in other words, can be a step on the road to strength. Nietzsche also thinks that the weak have important roles to play in a social arrangement that would support the flourishing of the strongest human beings. For these two reasons, weakness does not amount to worthlessness, and Nietzsche is able to affirm the existence of the weak, because they too can serve the end of enhancing the power of humanity.

PART ONE

NIETZSCHE'S METHODOLOGY

But this is what the will to truth should mean for you: that everything be changed into what is thinkable for man, visible for man, feelable by man.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra
("Upon the Blessed Isles")

Chapter 1: The Problem of Opposites

The first published statement of Nietzsche's philosophical method comes in the opening section of *Human, All Too Human*, and marks a decisive break from his earlier approach in *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Untimely Meditations*. Whereas in those works he had practised a species of what he would come to call "metaphysical philosophy," based on the postulate that there exist absolutely opposite types of reality, he now announces his commitment to "historical philosophy," which proceeds based on the assumption that such oppositions are merely apparent:

> *Chemistry of concepts and sensations.*—Almost all the problems of philosophy once again pose the same form of question as they did two thousand years ago: how can something originate in its opposite, for example rationality in irrationality, the sentient in the dead, logic in unlogic, disinterested contemplation in covetous desire, living for others in egoism, truth in error? Metaphysical philosophy has hitherto surmounted this difficulty by denying that the one originates in the other and assuming for the more highly valued thing a miraculous source in the very kernel and being of the "thing in itself." Historical philosophy, on the other hand, which can no longer be separated from natural science, the youngest of all philosophical methods, has discovered in individual cases (and this will probably be the result in every case) that there are no opposites, except in the customary exaggeration of popular or metaphysical interpretations, and that a mistake in reasoning lies at the bottom of this antithesis: according to this explanation there exists, strictly speaking, neither an unegoistic action nor completely disinterested contemplation; both are only sublimations, in which the basic element seems almost to have dispersed and reveals itself only under the most painstaking observation. All we require, and what can be given us only now the individual sciences have attained their present level, is a *chemistry* of the moral, religious and aesthetic conceptions and sensations, likewise of all the agitations we experience within ourselves in cultural and social intercourse, and indeed even when we are alone: what if this chemistry would end up by revealing that in this domain too the most glorious colours are derived from base, indeed from despised materials? Will there be many who desire to pursue such researches? Mankind likes to put questions of origins and beginnings out of mind: must one not be almost inhuman to detect in oneself a contrary inclination? — [HA 1]

As is so often the case with Nietzsche's writings, almost every sentence of this extremely condensed text requires interpretation both in its own right and in light of everything else he writes. I begin by presenting a close reading of this passage, drawing for clarification upon

certain key texts from HA, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Gay Science*, with the aim of showing how the considerations raised in this passage form the basis of Nietzsche's mature philosophical method.

Nietzsche begins with the claim that almost all of the fundamental problems of philosophy are concerned with the status of opposites, and that this has been the case for at least two thousand years. The central problem, which I am calling the "problem of opposites," concerns the origination of these supposed opposites: are they truly opposites at the most fundamental level, or is one perhaps reducible to the other, or are both explicable on the basis of some common origin? If the first of these alternatives were the case, such opposites would be *absolute*, that is, true opposites in an ontological sense; if either of the latter were the case, they would be *relative*, i.e., would differ by degrees, but not intrinsically. The traditional distinction between soul and body, or, in more philosophical terms, between mental substance and corporeal substance, is an example of an absolute opposition, these being so irreconcilably opposite that it seems inconceivable that they could interact. An example of a relative opposition is the distinction between hot and cold, which pretty clearly differ only by "degrees," and can be reconciled by the concept of temperature, or of particle excitation. If an opposition is absolute, it will not be possible to dissolve it by reference to anything more basic, or to reduce one of its elements to the other, whereas this will in principle be possible where relative oppositions are concerned. Nietzsche calls the type of philosophy that posits at least some oppositions as absolute *metaphysical philosophy*, while that which posits all oppositions as relative he calls *historical philosophy*. He understands these two distinct approaches to the problem of opposites as foundational methodological commitments, and believes that which of them one chooses has the

most profound consequences for the whole development of one's philosophy. Nietzsche, for his part, adopts the historical approach, with its concomitant rejection of absolute opposites. But before we examine in detail his reasons for making this commitment, it will first be necessary to take a closer look at each of these approaches.

Metaphysical philosophy, as already noted, posits *some* oppositions as absolute, but need not be committed to any wholesale rejection of relative opposites. The metaphysical philosopher can admit, for example, that hot and cold, wet and dry, are only relatively opposite, but he holds that there are some oppositions that differ absolutely. A typical example would be the commitment of metaphysical philosophers to the absolute distinction between soul and body, which corresponds nicely with the list of oppositions Nietzsche provides in HA 1. For it has been usual in the metaphysical tradition to impute rationality, sentience, logical ability, disinterested contemplation, altruism, and the ability to distinguish truth from error to the soul, while irrationality, instinctiveness, covetousness, egoism, and blindness to the truth have been attributed to the body. Each of these oppositions clearly corresponds to a traditional moral distinction. While Nietzsche signals the connection with morality only obliquely in this passage when he writes that it is "the more highly valued thing" in each case that has been said to have "a miraculous source," i.e., an origin in a type of reality absolutely opposite to that of the lowly-valued thing to which it is opposed, he believes that the motivation for regarding these oppositions as absolute is ultimately a moral one. Metaphysical philosophy regards the apparently unnatural behaviour of the saint, for example, "as a marvel and miracle to attempt a rational explanation of which is almost a sacrilege and profanation" (HA 136). Eight years later Nietzsche returns to this example, explaining the fascination that has attended the conversion of "sinners"

into "saints" on the basis of "the air of the miraculous that goes with it—namely, the immediate *succession of opposites*, of states of the soul that are judged morally in opposite ways. It seemed palpable that a 'bad man' was suddenly transformed into a 'saint,' a good man" (BGE 47). He leaves no doubt here about the motivation for positing these psychological states as absolute opposites: this was done by metaphysical philosophers who "*believed* in opposite moral values and saw, read, *interpreted* these opposites into the text and the facts" (BGE 47).

This point is made especially clear at the outset of Nietzsche's discussion of the "prejudices of philosophers" in BGE:

> "How *could* something originate out of its opposite? for example truth out of error? or the will to truth out of the will to deception? or selfless deeds out of selfishness? or the pure and sunlike gaze of the sage out of lust? Such origins are impossible; whoever dreams of them is a fool, indeed worse; the things of the highest value must have another, *peculiar origin*—they cannot be derived from this transitory, seductive, deceptive, paltry world, from this turmoil of delusion and lust. Rather from the lap of being, the intransitory, the hidden God, the 'thing-in-itself'—there must be their basis, and nowhere else." This way of judging constitutes the typical prejudgment and prejudice which give away the metaphysicians of all ages; this kind of valuation looms in the background of all their logical procedures; it is on account of this "faith" that they trouble themselves about "knowledge," about something that is finally baptized solemnly as "the truth." The fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is *the faith in opposite values*. [BGE 2]

It is evident from this passage that Nietzsche understands the commitment to absolute opposites that characterizes metaphysical philosophy as the result of a "valuation," namely of "the faith in opposite values," and not merely of "a mistake in reasoning" (HA 1). Insofar as this commitment is based on such a mistake, that mistake is itself based on a valuation. In keeping with his commitment to historical philosophy, Nietzsche writes that "'being conscious' is not in any decisive sense the *opposite* of what is instinctive: most of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts. Behind all logic and its

seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stand valuations or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life" (BGE 3). The view that rationality and irrationality, consciousness and instinct, selflessness and selfishness, and so on, are absolute opposites arises not from "the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic," whatever metaphysical philosophers believe: rather it is "a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract—that they defend with reasons they have sought after the fact (BGE 5). Such a "desire of the heart" arises from a physiological valuation, i.e., an instinctive understanding of the conditions of one's own existence, which for metaphysical philosophers include the conviction that there are absolutely opposite values. This is why they regard the one who denies the existence of such opposites not only as a fool, but "indeed worse" (BGE 2)—namely as immoral, as wicked, as one who undermines what is best and most needful for them.

Thus metaphysical philosophy, on Nietzsche's view, has its origin in a *moral prejudice*, namely the conviction that "the things of the highest value" cannot have their origin in the same type of reality as those that are disvalued. In other words, "good" things and "evil" things cannot share a common origin, but must be regarded as absolutely opposite. All that is good must originate from "the lap of being, the intransitory, the hidden God, the 'thing-in-itself'" (BGE 2)—that is, in Nietzsche's usual language, from *being*. With this he designates a type of reality "that does not contradict itself, does not deceive, does not change, a *true* world—a world in which one does not suffer" (WP 585), in contrast to the "transitory, seductive, deceptive, paltry world" of *becoming*, in which the metaphysical philosopher sees only a "turmoil of delusion and lust," i.e., evil (BGE 2). Because he "derives *suffering* from change, deception, contradiction," Nietzsche believes that the "will to truth" in the case of the metaphysical philosopher is "merely the desire

for a world of the constant" (WP 585). Access to this world is sought in "reason," which is understood as absolutely opposite to sensuous experience: "The senses deceive, reason corrects the errors; consequently, one concluded, reason is the road to the constant; the least sensual ideas must be closest to the 'true world.'" (WP 585). Compare this with the words that Plato put into the mouth of Socrates, the greatest historical martyr for metaphysical philosophy: "And indeed the soul reasons best when none of these senses troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor pleasure, but when it is most by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its search for reality."[5] Socrates apparently desires communion with this alternative reality so strongly that he does not fear his own death, nor even try to prevent it, but rather hopes that in death this desire might be fulfilled. Nietzsche would regard this as a typical example of the psychology of metaphysical philosophy, which posits the existence of a reality opposite to that of sensuous experience as the origin of everything highly valued, and calls this the "true" reality: "*The fiction of a world* that corresponds to our desires: psychological trick and interpretation with the aim of associating everything we honour and find pleasant with this true world" (WP 585). This, in brief, is the motivation that Nietzsche believes underlies the commitment to the existence of absolute opposites that characterizes metaphysical philosophy.

Historical philosophy, to the contrary, denies that there are any absolute opposites, and attempts to explain all phenomena solely on the basis of the type of reality that Nietzsche calls "becoming." This approach to philosophy proceeds on the assumption that "everything has become: there are *no eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths" (HA 2). Oppositions that metaphysical philosophers consider absolute are, on this view, merely relative, though over long

5 *Phaedo*, 65c. In *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), p. 57.

periods of time their common origin may be obscured so that they come to *appear* as absolutely opposite: “according to this explanation there exists, strictly speaking, neither an unegoistic action nor completely disinterested contemplation; both are only sublimations, in which the basic element seems almost to have dispersed and reveals itself only under the most painstaking observation” (HA 1). Nietzsche resolves to apply this method in the realm where it will do most damage to every desire that has been held in the hearts of metaphysical philosophers: in that of “the moral, religious, and aesthetic conceptions and sensations” (HA 1). The essential procedure of historical philosophy is to collapse the “higher” into the “lower,” to show that “in this domain too the most glorious colours are derived from base, indeed from despised materials” (HA 1), that “good” is only a sublimated form of “evil,” and not its opposite. Where the metaphysical philosopher sees “Christian love,” Nietzsche sees “sublimated sexuality” (HA 95)—a real horror for anyone who regards sexuality as belonging to the evil realm of the flesh, as opposed to the pure realm of the “spirit.” Likewise, where the metaphysical philosopher sees “justice,” Nietzsche sees “requital and exchange under the presupposition of an approximately equal power position” (HA 92), thus reducing something that was supposed to be unegoistic to a calculus of egoistic interest. And, as mentioned already, where the metaphysical philosopher sees a pure “will to truth” or “drive to knowledge” (BGE 6), Nietzsche sees the *post hoc* rationalization of instinctive valuations.

This last point, however, raises an obvious question about Nietzsche’s commitment to historical philosophy. For if metaphysical philosophy is based on a valuation and not on “pure” rationality, might this not also be the case with historical philosophy? Indeed, Nietzsche’s adoption of the latter method forces this conclusion on him, since it entails the rejection of any

absolute distinction between rationality and irrationality. He makes only one statement in HA 1 that looks like a rational justification for his commitment to historical philosophy, and it seems to me that it is far from decisive: "Historical philosophy, [...] which can no longer be separated from natural science, [...] has discovered in individual cases (and this will probably be the result in every case) that there are no opposites" (HA 1). First, it is questionable in what sense historical philosophy can "discover" that there are no opposites, even given its intimate connection with natural science. And further, assuming that it has discovered this "in individual cases," why does Nietzsche assume that it will make the same discovery "in every case"?

The first of these issues was touched on briefly in an exchange between Christopher Janaway and Brian Leiter on the subject of Nietzsche's "naturalism," which can be taken as synonymous with his commitment to historical philosophy (I consider the question of "naturalism" at greater length in Chapter 3). Regarding Nietzsche's denial that humanity has a "higher" or "different" origin from the rest of nature (BGE 230)—a clear instance of his commitment to the rejection of absolute opposites—Janaway writes that "the status of this as a 'result' is perhaps debatable: it is hard to say whether the exclusively empirical nature of humanity was a conclusion or an assumption of scientific investigation in the nineteenth century or at any time."[6] In HA 1, the rejection of absolute opposites is treated both as a conclusion that has been arrived at in certain cases and as a guiding assumption for future inquiries. In this respect, Nietzsche seems to be engaged in the normal scientific practice of adopting a hypothesis that has been successful in some cases in order to test its explanatory power. But in which cases does he think it has been successful, and in what sense has it been so? In HA he focuses

6 Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 37.

particularly on the success of "psychological observation" of the kind practised by La Rochefoucauld, which he describes as "a specific individual science" of which "moral observation" is a subdiscipline (HA 37). He believes that this science has "demonstrated in many instances how the errors of the greatest philosophers usually have their point of departure in a false explanation of certain human actions and sensations; how on the basis of an erroneous analysis, for example that of the so-called unegoistic actions, a false ethics is erected" (HA 37). La Rochefoucauld's procedure consists precisely in the dissolution of absolute moral oppositions by the application of suspicion: in every case he finds some "evil" motivation underlying what was supposed to have arisen from purely "good" motivations. He certainly anticipates Nietzsche's rejection of opposites when he writes: "Self-interest speaks all kinds of languages and plays all kinds of parts—even that of disinterestedness."[7]

But it is hard to see in what sense psychological observers like La Rochefoucauld can be said to have "discovered" or "demonstrated" their propositions. Like Nietzsche, La Rochefoucauld seems to be committed to finding something "evil" at the bottom of everything "good," and his method is predicated on the assumption that there is something there to find. When he writes, for example, that "[w]ith most men, love of justice is merely fear of suffering injustice," this is not at all a demonstration, but merely an assertion, albeit one that is probably true.[8] Nietzsche, in any case, is ready to grant its truth, and he believes that such insights stand as examples of the fruitfulness of historical philosophy. In what sense could this be so? For Nietzsche himself acknowledges that the majority do not find this way of thinking compelling: "it

7 François de la Rochefoucauld, *Collected Maxims and Other Reflections*, trans. E. H. Blackmore, A. M. Blackmore, and Francine Giguère (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 15.
8 Ibid., p. 25.

is hard to find any educated person in Europe who has read La Rochefoucauld or those related to him in style and spirit, and very much harder to find one who has read them and does not revile them" (HA 35). This revulsion may well be explicable on the basis of the faith in opposite values to which metaphysical philosophers and their followers are committed, but that does not change the fact that the "discoveries" of psychological observation are more contentious by far than, for example, those of anatomy and physiology; it is much easier to remain skeptical about the problem of opposites than about, say, the functioning of the human heart. However, there is another sense in which the claims of psychological observers can be taken to demonstrate the fruitfulness of historical philosophy, namely insofar as they show its ability to come up with intellectually satisfying explanations of psychological phenomena that do not rest on the assumption of absolute opposites. The "discovery" in question is perhaps not the truth of these particular claims themselves, but rather the advent of an alternative to metaphysical explanations. Thus Nietzsche writes that "if one has a mistrust of metaphysics the results are by and large the same as if it had been directly refuted and one no longer has the *right* to believe in it" (HA 21). The cogency of historical explanations lends credibility to such mistrust and makes historical philosophy seem a promising enterprise, but the nonexistence of absolute opposites remains an assumption, not something that has been "discovered."

Contra Janaway, Leiter seems to take the cogency of historical explanations as evidence that the denial of a "higher or different origin" for humanity is a result, not an assumption: "If one discovers that conscious experiences have a neurophysiological explanation, or an explanation in terms of the biochemistry of the brain, hasn't one adduced some evidence that bears on whether

man is of a 'higher or different origin' from the rest of nature?"[9] This would seem to be correct, if such a "discovery" had in fact been made—but it is not at all clear that it has been. The perennial problems involved in causal explanation generally, and perhaps in the status of causal explanations in neurophysiology especially, make Leiter's confidence on this point appear misplaced. He himself refers to "the problem of picking out the regular 'correlations' that count for purposes of causation," but takes no notice of the possibly unbridgeable gap between correlation and causation, because "ordinary and scientific practice recognizes the distinction."[10] But if all that has been demonstrated is a correlation between certain conscious states and certain states of the physical brain, one has not demonstrated that the latter are the cause of the former. That view still relies on an assumption, namely that conscious states are explicable on a physiological basis. However congenial this assumption may seem, a competent case for skepticism can still be made, and to call the explicability of conscious states by physiology a "result" or "discovery" therefore seems unwarranted. David Chalmers has devoted much of his career to defending the possibility that consciousness has a non-physical basis, which should not have been possible if consciousness had already been explained sufficiently by neurophysiology. Moreover, I know of no one who would claim that it has been so explained, though many of course believe that it can be.

The upshot of all this is that, as suggested above, Nietzsche's adoption of historical philosophy is an assumption, and not a result of the "pure" application of reason, which in any case is a possibility that this very assumption forces him to reject. Psychological observation has not "proved" that there is no such thing as a selfless action or as disinterested contemplation, and

9 Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 2ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 246.
10 Ibid., p. 257.

it is hard to see how it could do so definitively. However, historical explanations have proved viable in certain cases, and Nietzsche is committed to pushing this method as far as it can go: "Not to assume several kinds of causality [i.e., reality] until the experiment of making do with a single one has been pushed to its utmost limit (to the point of nonsense, if I may say so)—that is a moral of method which one may not shirk today" (BGE 36). He is willing to grant that "there could be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it is hardly to be disputed," but he thinks that "knowledge of it would be the most useless of all knowledge" (HA 9). This latter claim is again based on his commitment to historical philosophy, which presupposes that there is nothing that requires appeal to a metaphysical world for its explanation—a view he would later formulate more rigorously in *Twilight of the Idols*. While this view could in principle turn out to be wrong, he does not consider such a bare possibility decisive: "Nothing could be more wrongheaded than to want to wait and see what science will one day determine once and for all about the first and last things and until then to continue to think (and especially to believe!) in the *customary* fashion [...]. The impulse to desire in this domain *nothing but certainties* is a *religious after-shoot*, no more—a hidden and only apparently skeptical species of the 'metaphysical need'" (WS 16). The metaphysical philosopher, in other words, may be content to continue proffering metaphysical explanations based on the assumption of absolute opposites, unless and until the nonexistence of such opposites has been definitively proved. While these philosophers might dress up such a procedure as healthy skepticism, Nietzsche sees in it rather a disguised form of dogmatism, an unwillingness to acknowledge that metaphysical philosophy has been convincingly called into question, and that one therefore "no longer has the *right* to believe in it" (HA 21).

This attachment to metaphysical philosophy in spite of everything is, as we have seen, based on an instinctive valuation, namely the faith in opposite values. If one were being "purely" rational, one would presumably suspend judgment indefinitely, until such time as, by whatever means, the problem of opposites had received a definitive solution. But this, again, is not the course that Nietzsche follows either. Such an approach to this problem might be possible for "scholars who are really scientific men," whose thinking proceeds "*without* any essential participation from all the other drives of the scholar" (BGE 6)—in other words, for those who have no personal stake in such problems, whose real interests lie elsewhere, and who engage with them only as means to some other end (e.g., career advancement). But for a genuine philosopher, whether of the metaphysical or the historical sort, "there is nothing whatever that is impersonal: and above all, his morality bears decided and decisive witness to *who he is*—that is, in what order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand in relation to each other" (BGE 6). The metaphysical philosopher, to emphasize this point once again, is committed to the existence of absolute opposites for moral reasons, i.e., in order to produce an interpretation of the world that accords with his instinctive valuations. This will also be the case for the historical philosopher, which is why I have taken some pains to show that the commitment to historical philosophy is not a purely rational one. I hope that I have not portrayed it as especially irrational either: it is certainly no less rational than the alternative, and Nietzsche does think that there are rational considerations that speak in its favour—chief among them *simplicity*, a subject to which I will return in Chapter 4. For now, it may suffice to observe that the simplest explanation of a given phenomenon is not necessarily the correct one, so that the criterion of simplicity is itself an assumption. Having established this, I now turn to the question of *why* Nietzsche makes the

assumptions he does, that is, "at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim?" (BGE 6), which will amount to exposing the foundation of his philosophical methodology.

It may seem strange to suggest that Nietzsche's approach to philosophy has a moral motivation, considering he is perhaps best known for his uncompromising attack on what he often refers to simply as "morality." As many commentators have recognized, he actually attacks only a particular basic type of morality—namely the morality of "good and evil"—and not morality *simpliciter*, misleading though his phrasing may sometimes be. However, beginning with HA his philosophical project is in fact based on a valuation that he associates with the morality of "good and evil," and certainly with metaphysical philosophy, namely the *absolute value of truthfulness*. While it is also well known that Nietzsche ultimately calls this value into question, he does so as a consequence of his initial commitment to it, which finally allows him to see the error involved in this commitment. He tells us as much himself in the late preface to his next book, *Daybreak* (added in 1886): "in this book faith in morality is withdrawn—but why? *Out of morality!* [...] [T]his is the last moral law which can make itself audible even to us, which even we know how to *live*, in this if in anything we too are still *men of conscience*: namely, in that we do not want to return to that which we consider outlived and decayed, to anything 'unworthy of belief' [...]; that we do not permit ourselves any bridges-of-lies to ancient ideals" (D P:4). In Book V of GS, also added in 1886, he makes this point even more clearly, writing "that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science [including historical philosophy] rests —that even we 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 the truth, that truth is divine" (GS 344). There is, as Nietzsche had

realized by the time of these mature writings, a “contradiction” involved in this approach (D P:4), namely that insofar as one is animated by the millennia-old faith in the divinity of truth, one still permits oneself at least one concession to “ancient ideals,” and it is this one ideal that abolishes all the rest. Thus Nietzsche describes his project as the “self-abolition” (*Selbstaufhebung*) or “self-overcoming” (*Selbstüberwindung*) of morality (D P:4; BGE 32).

Because we are concerned at present with the foundations of Nietzsche’s philosophical method, his mature position on the value of truthfulness is best left aside; I return to this issue in Chapter 5. In his earlier books, beginning with HA, his thinking is still based on the presupposition of the absolute value of truth, which he variously calls “the pathos of truth,” “intellectual conscience” (GS 2), “will to truth at any price” (GS 344), and “extravagant honesty” (BGE 230).[11] He summarizes this attitude as follows: “*Nothing* is needed *more* than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value” (GS 344). This conviction, he ultimately believes, is based not on any straightforwardly utilitarian calculus, but rather on a moral commitment: “‘will to truth’ does *not* mean ‘I will not allow myself to be deceived’ but—there is no alternative—‘I will not deceive, not even myself’; *and with that we stand on moral ground*” (GS 344). This is why I have been speaking of the value of “truthfulness,” as opposed to that of “truth,” though Nietzsche tends to use the latter term—for, as he says, it is not so much a matter of avoiding *being* deceived as of avoiding *deceiving*. Even supposing that one were perfectly honest with oneself, insofar as this is possible, it would still be possible that what one believes is false. This is an epistemological problem, and it is not of primary interest to Nietzsche where “truth” is concerned. The crucial dichotomy for him is not that between truth and falsity, but that

11 For Nietzsche’s early fragment on “the pathos of truth,” see *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Alexander Nehamas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 248–52.

between truth and *lies*: "By lie I mean: wishing *not* to see something that one does see; wishing not to see something *as* one sees it. Whether the lie takes place before witnesses or without witnesses does not matter. The most common lie is that with which one lies to oneself; lying to others is, relatively, an exception" (A 55). It is the commitment to "truth" in this sense, the commitment to *truthfulness*, that motivates Nietzsche's commitment to historical philosophy.

Indeed, the distinction between truth and truthfulness is highly important for understanding that commitment. For, as I have established, Nietzsche adopts historical philosophy as an *assumption*, and not based on the belief that opposite types of reality have been proved not to exist, even in particular cases. Given this, as we have seen, his assumption could in principle turn out to be false: "there could be a metaphysical world" (HA 9). Again, if "truth" as such were at issue, the only appropriate response would seem to be to suspend judgment, apparently indefinitely. That Nietzsche does not respond in this way shows that something other than truth is at stake, namely, on my account, truthfulness. To suspend judgment about metaphysical explanations and regard them as potentially true may be practicable from a purely epistemic standpoint, but this is impossible when one is concerned with problems of *value*, as Nietzsche is. When once the possibility that such explanations are *lies* has entered one's mind, neutrality becomes impossible, supposing that one is committed to truthfulness as the highest value. For all the benefits that such lies might have—and Nietzsche certainly thinks that the majority benefit from them, metaphysical philosophers included—as potential lies, they must be rejected. Nietzsche writes that "one of the commonest erroneous conclusions drawn by mankind" is that "an opinion makes [one] happy, therefore it is a true opinion, its effect is good, therefore it itself is good and true" (HA 30). But the fact that an opinion makes one happy, as far as Nietzsche

is concerned, is already reason enough to be suspicious of it, for the probability is high that one holds such an opinion *because* it makes one happy, and not because one has good reasons for thinking it is true: “a strong faith that makes blessed raises suspicion against that which is believed; it does not establish ‘truth,’ it establishes a certain probability—of *deception*” (GM II:24). One who, like Nietzsche, is committed to truthfulness above all else, may even favour the opposite inference, namely that “an opinion causes pain and distress, therefore it is true” (HA 30). Because historical philosophy collapses the “higher” into the “lower,” the “good” into the “evil”—which, his mature view notwithstanding, was originally a very painful and distressing idea for Nietzsche—he adopts it provisionally as true. In this way he guards against the suspicion that he is deceiving himself.

This “will to truth at any price” is an ascetic ideal, as Nietzsche would later come to realize. For he understands the “basic will of the spirit” as a “will to mere appearance, to simplification, to masks, to cloaks, in short, to the surface,” which “is *countered* by that sublime inclination of the seeker after knowledge who insists on profundity, multiplicity, and thoroughness, with a *will* that is a kind of cruelty of the intellectual conscience and taste” (BGE 230). “The intellect,” he wrote more than a decade earlier, “as a means of preserving the individual, unfolds its main powers in dissimulation; for dissimulation is the means by which the weaker, less robust individuals survive” (TL, p. 254). Nietzsche sees this fundamental character of the intellect at work everywhere, from the crudest errors of primitive man to the loftiest flights of metaphysical philosophy: “Over immense periods of time the intellect produced nothing but errors. A few of these proved to be useful and helped to preserve the species: those who hit upon or inherited these had better luck in their struggle for themselves and their progeny. [...] Thus the

strength of knowledge does not depend on its degree of truth but on its age, on the degree to which it has been incorporated, on its character as a condition of life" (GS 110). The intellect, in other words, was not originally constituted so as to avoid false beliefs, or even to notice them, so long as they were beneficial (TL, p. 255). It has always been characterized much more, Nietzsche thinks, by the "inclination to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the manifold, and to overlook or repulse whatever is totally contradictory," even to the point of "a kind of state of defense against much that is knowable, a satisfaction with the dark, with the limiting horizon, a Yea and Amen to ignorance" (BGE 230). This is Nietzsche's basic definition of knowledge: assimilation of the new to the old, of the unfamiliar to the familiar (cf. TI VI:5)—an "all too human" definition that abolishes the absolute distinction between truth and error, in keeping with his commitment to historical philosophy.

This is the meaning of Nietzsche's suggestion that there will not be "many who desire to pursue such researches" as his "chemistry of concepts and sensations," and that one must be "almost inhuman to detect in oneself a contrary inclination" (HA 1). The "faith in opposite values" that characterizes metaphysical philosophy has, as already noted, been beneficial for the majority of human beings, and in that respect it does not matter whether such opposites truly exist. Yet the historical philosopher, to the contrary, seeks out truths that have no practical benefit, and may indeed be impossible to live with. His motto is *fiat veritas, pereat vita*—"let truth prevail, though life perish" (UM II:4). It is this attitude, in which "truth" is treated not as a means to the usual ends of life, but apparently as an end in itself, that Nietzsche calls "inhuman." Of course, historical philosophy cannot admit the legitimacy of such a distinction: "It will be immediately obvious that such a self-contradiction as the ascetic appears to represent, 'life

against life,' is, physiologically considered and not merely psychologically, a simple absurdity. It can only be *apparent*" (GM III:13). This apparent devotion to truth at the expense of life must therefore have its basis in some instinct of life, despite all appearances to the contrary. Nietzsche locates its origin in the instinct of *cruelty*: "Almost everything we call 'higher culture' is based on the spiritualization of *cruelty*, on its becoming more profound: this is my proposition" (BGE 229). This spiritual cruelty, like its more primitive counterpart, is not directed only against others: "There is also an abundant, over-abundant enjoyment at one's own suffering, at making oneself suffer—and wherever man allows himself to be persuaded to self-denial in the *religious* sense [...] he is secretly lured and pushed forward by his cruelty, by those dangerous thrills of cruelty turned *against oneself*" (BGE 229). Given Nietzsche's claim that the "will to truth at any price" originates from "that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine" (GS 344), it seems clear that this will amounts to "self-denial in the *religious* sense," and thus that it is based in the instinct of cruelty: "Indeed, any insistence on profundity and thoroughness is a violation, a desire to hurt the basic will of the spirit which unceasingly strives for the apparent and superficial—in all desire to know there is a drop of cruelty" (BGE 229).

It is significant that in this context Nietzsche again outlines the project he had earlier called a "chemistry of concepts and sensations," writing that "under such flattering colours" as those with which metaphysical philosophers have painted human nature, "the terrible basic text of *homo natura* must again be recognized":

> To translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*; to see to it that man henceforth stands before man as

> even today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before the *rest* of nature, with intrepid Oedipus eyes and sealed Odysseus ears, deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him all too long, “you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin!”—that may be a strange and insane task, but it is a *task*—who would deny that? Why did we choose this insane task? Or, putting it differently: “why have knowledge at all?” Everybody will ask us that. And we, pressed in this way, we who have put the same question to ourselves a hundred times, we have found and find no better answer— [BGE 230]

Because this passage is an explicit continuation of the thought expressed in BGE 229, namely that the drive to know the truth is based in the instinct of self-cruelty, I think it is appropriate to complete the unfinished concluding sentence with the words: “than self-cruelty.” This, at any rate, is the best reason Nietzsche says he can give for undertaking the project of “translat[ing] man back into nature.” Certainly he believes that this interpretation of human nature will be a more truthful one than the metaphysical interpretation, but unlike earlier philosophers he does not, by the time he writes these mature texts, consider the pursuit of truth justified for its own sake. Precisely because his commitment to historical philosophy requires him to reject the possibility of disinterested contemplation, he finds it necessary to furnish a *psychological* explanation for this endeavour, to explain *why* he seeks the truth about human nature in the first place. When he first announces this project in HA, he has not yet arrived at a psychological understanding of his own activity, but still seems to assume that this truth has value in and of itself, regardless of the consequences. In point of fact, it does have psychological value for Nietzsche, as he explains in his belated preface to this “book for free spirits”: insofar as one pursues the truth absolutely, even to the point of undermining all of one’s most cherished beliefs (i.e., the lies in which one would like to believe), one becomes *free* to evaluate things in a new way, without moral prejudice, including the prejudice involved in the absolute commitment to

truthfulness (HA P:6). This is the outcome of that ascetic commitment, which Nietzsche thinks requires the one who holds it to misunderstand himself for as a martyr for truth.

It is important to note the distinction between this kind of ascetic practice and that of the metaphysical philosopher, whose mode of thought appears more obviously ascetic than that of the historical philosopher. Unlike the historical philosopher, the metaphysical philosopher is ascetic with respect to almost everything *except* "truth," which serves him rather as a consolation than as an instrument of self-cruelty. His basic motivation is not truthfulness in the sense described above, but rather falseness in the face of reality, though he calls his falsehoods "truths" and invents a "true world" in which they are supposed to be manifested:

> Death, change, old age, as well as procreation and growth, are to their minds objections—even refutations. Whatever has being does not become; whatever becomes does not have being. Now they all believe, desperately even, in what has being. But since they never grasp it, they seek for reasons why it is kept from them. "There must be mere appearance, there must be some deception which prevents us from perceiving that which has being: where is the deceiver?"—"We have found him," they cry ecstatically; "it is the senses! These senses, which are so immoral in other ways too, deceive us concerning the *true* world. Moral: let us free ourselves from the deception of the senses, from becoming, from history, from lies [...]." [TI III:1]

This way of thinking is plainly ascetic in the more usual sense involving denigration of the senses and everything "worldly," and the attempt to rise above these deceptive things and commune with another, "true" reality. The problem, of course, is that "[o]ne simply lacks any [rational] reason for convincing oneself that there is a *true* world" (WP 12): "The reasons for which 'this' world has been characterized as 'apparent' are the very reasons which indicate its reality; any other kind of reality is absolutely indemonstrable. […] The criteria which have been bestowed on the 'true being' of things are the criteria of not-being, of *naught*; the 'true world' has been constructed out of the contradiction to the actual world; indeed an apparent world, insofar as it is merely a moral-

optical illusion" (TI III:6). The "true world," in other words, is nothing but "[*t*]*he fiction of a world* that corresponds to our [i.e., metaphysical philosophers'] desires" (WP 585). Plainly speaking, it is a lie that they tell themselves in order to live more happily, their insistence on calling it "truth" notwithstanding. In this crucial respect, metaphysical philosophy is not ascetic at all, but rather *hedonistic*: beliefs that generate pleasure are baptized as "truths" without the slightest conflict of conscience. In Chapter 2, I will show that it was precisely such a conflict that led Nietzsche to adopt the approach to philosophy outlined in HA 1.

Thus far I have tried to show that Nietzsche's philosophical method, which he calls "historical philosophy," is based on the rejection of absolute opposites such as rationality and irrationality, truth and error, good and evil, being and becoming, and so on. I have argued that Nietzsche adopts this approach for moral reasons, but it is also supported by his definition of knowledge as assimilation, which is what seems to be happening when one reduces something to its supposed opposite. This is an *a priori* consideration, but one based not on any metaphysical assumptions about the way being is "in itself," but rather on the nature of the human mind, which "has the will from multiplicity to simplicity" (BGE 230). On the other hand, this view of the human mind is itself based in Nietzsche's historical approach, so that the moral motivation is still primary. Nietzsche's understanding of knowledge as assimilation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2: Nietzsche's "Crisis of Conscience"

I said before that HA, in which Nietzsche announces his commitment to historical philosophy, represents a decisive break from BT and UM, in which he was still committed to a form of metaphysical philosophy based on the faith in opposite values. In his reflection on HA in *Ecce Homo* he calls it "the monument of a crisis" in which "I liberated myself from what in my nature did not belong to me" (EH HA:1). This foreign element in his nature was precisely the faith in opposite values, or what he here calls "idealism." Interestingly, the locus of this idealistic faith was never the morality of "good and evil," as Nietzsche emphasizes in his belated preface to BT, which he believes "betrays a spirit who will one day fight at any risk whatever the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence" (BT ASC:5). Rather, the opposite values with which he is primarily concerned in BT and UM are illusion and truth, which correspond to the opposition between becoming and being, suffering and redemption from suffering. I suggest that it is Nietzsche's commitment to the idea of metaphysical truth, and hence of truthfulness, as the means to redemption from the suffering inherent in life, that ultimately led to the "crisis of conscience" out of which HA emerged. For, having committed oneself to the pursuit of truth for the sake of redemption, a crisis is bound to develop if one's whole concept of redemption, and even of truth itself, turns out to be based on a lie. In such a case one may either abandon the commitment to truth, as Nietzsche thinks Pascal did, or retain it, even if doing so means destroying all hope for the redemption one had expected from it. Nietzsche, as we have seen, does the latter.

In BT, the opposition between truth and illusion is couched in Kantian or Schopenhauerian terms as the distinction between *noumenon* and *phenomenon*, between the

thing-in-itself and the way it appears to us. Nietzsche describes the former as "the truly existent primal unity" and "that mysterious ground of our being of which we are the phenomena" (BT 4); the latter he describes as "mere appearance" characterized by "the state of individuation," which is "the origin and primal cause of all suffering" (BT 10). This corresponds in essentials to Schopenhauer's distinction between the will, which is a unity, and its representations, which are characterized by the *principium individuationis* (principle of individuation). Because Schopenhauer follows Kant in identifying space and time not as properties of things-in-themselves but as forms of our intuition, that is, as pertaining only to the way things appear to us, individuation cannot be a property of things-in-themselves either. For the concept of individuation makes no sense outside a spatio-temporal framework, since we think of individual things as being distinguished by their different positions in space and time. Nietzsche explicitly endorses this reasoning in "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" (p. 261), written one year after BT, and he evidently presupposes it in BT as well. More, he seems to take for granted that suffering cannot exist apart from "individuation," which he describes as "the primal cause of evil [*Übels*]" (BT 10)—although his statements on this matter, as we will see, are not wholly consistent. We are thus presented with a picture of two "worlds" that will already be familiar from our sketch of metaphysical philosophy above: the world of "mere appearance" in which one suffers, and the "true world" that does not change and in which suffering is impossible. As is typical of metaphysical philosophy, what is most desirable is to escape from the former into the latter.

This is accomplished, according to Nietzsche, by the intoxicating effects of Dionysian tragedy, which "seeks to destroy the individual and redeem him by a mystic feeling of oneness"

(BT 2): "this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature" (BT 7). Nietzsche believes that it was the Greeks' pessimism that made this art of "metaphysical comfort" necessary for them; that is, the fact that they had "looked boldly right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature" (BT 7), and had not deceived themselves about it. This pessimism is expressed in the wisdom of Silenus, that the best thing for a human being would be to have never been born, while the second best is to die quickly (BT 3). That the Greeks did *not* seek redemption in death, Nietzsche credits to the redemptive effect of Dionysian tragedy, by means of which they could periodically transcend their individuality and be reassured "that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable" (BT 7). What Nietzsche here calls "life" is that same primal unity, "that mysterious ground of our being of which we are the phenomena" (BT 4). Although this unity, as I have said, lies beyond the suffering that arises from the state of individuation, Nietzsche still describes it as "eternally suffering," and writes that it "also needs the rapturous vision, the pleasurable illusion, for its continuous redemption" (BT 4). I do not understand in what sense this primal unity can be said to suffer, or to find its redemption in illusion, unless it is conceived as an artistically creative power that requires an outlet, that needs to express its "suffering and contradictory" character in works of art, that is, in the creation of "pleasurable illusions."

Individual human beings are themselves such illusions, insofar as we are mere appearances produced by the primal unity. Nietzsche writes that "we are merely images and artistic projections for the true author, and that we have our highest dignity in our significance as

works of art—for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (BT 5). Thus in the tragedy of life it is not only man who is redeemed by means of his annihilation as an individual, but his suffering itself is redeemed when it is seen in its metaphysical significance as a work of art, in which alone the primal unity can attain its own redemption. In Dionysian intoxication man feels himself temporarily to be "one and identical with that being which, as the sole author and spectator of this comedy of art, prepares a perpetual entertainment for itself. Only insofar as the genius in the act of artistic creation coalesces with this primordial artist of the world, does he know anything of the eternal essence of art" (BT 5). It is in this experience of oneness with the creative "author" of all being that Nietzsche believes the Greeks found the metaphysical comfort they needed to live, and even to flourish, in the face of Silenus' wisdom. In this state the suffering and transitoriness that are essential to life no longer appear meaningless, but pregnant with aesthetic significance: in some way they are pleasing to the primal unity that gives birth to them, just as Nietzsche thinks the Greeks regarded martial spectacles like the Trojan War as pleasing to the gods (GM II:7). With this in mind, though Nietzsche's "artists' metaphysics" (BT ASC:2) may appear at first to place all value beyond the world of appearance in the "truly existent primal unity," it in fact grants immeasurable value to this world insofar as it brings about the redemption of that unity.

This picture of the world certainly posits opposite types of reality—but, given the above analysis, it is not clear that this opposition is based on an opposition of *value*, which it must be if it is to count as an instance of metaphysical philosophy as defined in HA 1. For on the one hand, in BT Nietzsche describes "the state of individuation" that pertains to the world of appearance "as the origin and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself" (BT 10). The

wisdom of Silenus is that this world is terrible and worthless, that it would be better if it did not exist, and that it can be redeemed only by means of its own negation. In this there is a strong echo of what Schopenhauer calls "negation of the will to life," though the means of negation employed by the Greeks are different from those he recommends. This looks like a straightforward condemnation of the world of human life. But on the other hand, from a higher perspective than that of the individual—namely from that of the primal unity—the life of the individual appears not as terrible and worthless, but as the continually attained redemption of reality itself. This strikes me as a very unusual metaphysical view. For it is not uncommon to devalue empirical reality and locate value in an opposite type of reality; nor is it uncommon to grant some derivative value to empirical reality insofar as "by means of it the individual may be impelled to realize the redeeming vision" (BT 4). But I struggle to think of any metaphysical system that also turns this proposition around and insists that empirical reality is as necessary for the redemption of non-empirical reality as the latter is for the redemption of the former. Theologically speaking, it is as though one were to say that the fallen state of man is just as necessary for the redemption of God as God is for man to attain redemption from his fallen state. This evidently undermines the logic of any ultimate redemption for man, since this would leave God without the means for attaining His redemption.

Given these considerations, I believe that the opposition of values in BT operates only on the surface. In other words, Nietzsche is practising metaphysical philosophy *formally* insofar as he is positing opposite types of reality, but the *content* of his philosophy is not metaphysical, assuming that this would require these opposite types of reality to correspond to a fundamental opposition of values (i.e., that one would be eminently valuable, the other valueless). I say that an

opposition of values exists "on the surface" because Nietzsche's pathos at this time certainly tends toward a negative evaluation of human life, toward the sense that this life is in need of redemption, which can be attained only by way of its own negation—yet he still turns around and provides a metaphysical justification for this life that does not consist merely in the attempt to negate it. Part of the reason that he articulates this philosophy in terms of opposite types of reality is doubtless the fact that, as he later writes, "in those days I still lacked the courage (or immodesty?) to permit myself in every way an individual language of my own for such individual views and hazards—and that instead I tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and Schopenhauer's spirit and taste" (BT ASC:6). But this, perhaps, was really little more than a symptom of that foreign element that he believes infected his nature around that time: namely moral "idealism," which I equate with the faith in opposite values. I believe it was this that led Nietzsche to express in terms of an absolute opposition a view that was not in fact based in any such opposition, and even to misunderstand his own view as though this were the case. Later, instead of separating the creative principle (the "primal unity") from its creation ("mere appearance") and relegating each to a fundamentally opposite type of reality, he speaks of "[t]he world as a work of art that gives birth to itself" (WP 796), and of Dionysian tragedy not as a miracle of metaphysical transfiguration, but as a "temporary identification with the principle of life" (WP 417)—in keeping with his mature commitment to historical philosophy.

The upshot of all this for the opposition between truth and illusion is a complicated one, and we will need to move beyond BT to UM to see how Nietzsche's thinking on this problem ultimately leads to the crisis of HA. However, there are a few things we know already: first, that

there are two different senses of "truth" in play: (1) the truth about human life, namely that it is terrible and worthless in itself; and (2) the metaphysical truth attained through Dionysian intoxication, namely that human life is in fact highly valuable. Second, there are also two senses of "illusion" in play, though we have only touched on one of them so far: (1) the illusion that is human life, i.e., the whole world of appearance characterized by the state of individuation; and (2) the illusion *about* human life, namely that it is *not* terrible and worthless in itself.

This second type of illusion, according to Nietzsche, is represented in the Greek world by Socrates, whom he calls "the prototype of the theoretical optimist who, with his faith that the nature of things can be fathomed, ascribes to knowledge and insight the power of a panacea" (BT 15). He says it was "a profound *illusion* that first saw the light of the world in the person of Socrates: the unshakable faith that thought […] can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing but even of *correcting* it" (BT 15). While the Dionysian pessimist has the genuine insight into the truth about life, the Socratic optimist refuses to acknowledge this truth, insisting instead on a view of life in which it is not in need of redemption so long as one lives according to the dictates of reason—and to this extent, he is under the spell of an illusion, albeit a pleasant and helpful one which for that reason he calls "true." Thus in a sense Nietzsche affirms both truth and illusion, rather than placing them in opposition: both the terrible truth about life and the redemptive metaphysical truth are indispensable, as is the illusion which itself constitutes life, and which is understood as the source of its redemption by the one who knows the metaphysical truth. On the other hand, he opposes the type of "truth" sought by the Socratic optimist, which he regards as an illusion—and in this

sense he can be said to oppose both truth and illusion. These distinctions, as we will see, need to be made plain in order to understand what is going on in UM.

In UM II ("On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life") Nietzsche advances a critique of Socratic optimism in the form of the German historiography of his time. His basic claim is that the ceaseless accumulation of knowledge about the history of culture, which he takes to be the trademark of that historiography, is not the same thing as *having* a culture, and is in fact destructive of the ends of genuine culture. Nietzsche defines culture here as "a new and improved *physis*" (UM II:10), a transfiguration of reality through artistic creation. The proper role of historiography in relation to this task is "to inspire and lend the strength for the production of the great man" who might be capable of accomplishing such a transfiguration (UM II:9). Under these conditions, history would stand in the service of life by encouraging and guiding action, which is where Nietzsche thinks it belongs. In his time, to the contrary, he believes that "historical culture" has grown far beyond its usefulness for life, and that an abundance of historical instruction has made modern man self-ironical and cynical, and has bred in him a tendency to think of himself as living during "the *old age of mankind*: to age, however, there pertains an appropriate senile occupation, that of looking back, of reckoning up, of closing accounts, of seeking consolation through remembering what has been, in short, historical culture" (UM II:8). According to Nietzsche, "this culture has been only a kind of knowledge about culture, and false and superficial knowledge at that […] because one endured the contradiction between life and knowledge and completely failed to see what characterized the culture of genuinely cultured peoples: that culture can grow and flourish only out of life" (UM II:10). Here the conflict between life and knowledge is the same as that between illusion and truth: as we have seen, it is

precisely because the Greeks knew life so well that they needed an art of metaphysical comfort. Yet this is the rub, and what I take to be the core of Nietzsche's critique of Socratic optimism: if one avoids acknowledging the terrible *general* truth about life and places one's trust in the continual cataloguing of minute, *particular* truths, on the assumption that life can be perfected once enough such truths are known, one places one's trust in an illusion—for no amount of knowledge can correct the terrible character of life. Worse, because one shies away from this pessimistic insight, the road remains closed to the only genuine form of redemption, which is to be found in tragic art.

Nietzsche sees the German "culture" of his time as deeply sunk in Socratic optimism, pursuing the illusory "truth" that he rejects. His objective here is the same as it had been in BT, namely to find in tragic art a means of bringing about a rebirth of genuine culture in Germany. But, given the state of affairs outlined in UM II, even the presupposition for genuine culture is lacking, namely *pessimism*, the wisdom of Silenus. Nietzsche found the ideal "educator" for this wisdom in Schopenhauer. "*The Schopenhauerian man*," he writes, "*voluntarily takes upon himself the suffering involved in being truthful*, and this suffering serves to destroy his own willfulness and to prepare that complete overturning and conversion of his being, which it is the real meaning of life to lead up to" (UM III:4). Nietzsche here indulges in an explicitly teleological view of "nature," which seems to be a synonym for the "primal unity" of BT, in which the self-consciousness peculiar to man makes possible the redemption of nature from the blind striving that characterizes the lives of animals:

> To hang on to life madly and blindly, with no higher aim than to hang on to it; not to know that or why one is being so heavily punished but, with the stupidity of a fearful desire, to thirst after precisely this punishment as though after happiness—that is what it means to be an

> animal; and if all nature presses towards man, it thereby intimates that man is necessary for the redemption of nature from the curse of the life of the animal, and that in him existence at last holds up before itself a mirror in which life appears no longer senseless but in its metaphysical significance. [UM III:4]

Through man, nature comes to know itself better and better, until finally it attains "the *great enlightenment* as to the character of existence" and "feels that for the first time it has reached its goal—where it realizes it has to unlearn having goals and that it has played the game of life with too high stakes" (UM III:5). In short, it is the unthinking animal that takes the basic goals of life, like nutrition, growth, and procreation, seriously. The Schopenhauerian man has understood that these goals are meaningless in themselves, that they are merely manifestations of the "suffering and contradictory" character of the "primal unity" at the heart of things. This enlightenment is not attainable for the many, however—at least not for long—but only for "those true *men, those who are no longer animal, the philosophers, artists, and saints*; nature, which never makes a leap, has made its one leap in creating them" (UM III:5).

If it was not clear already, this last statement can leave no doubt that at this time Nietzsche is not yet practising historical philosophy. For the very essence of historical philosophy, as we have seen, is the presupposition that nature *never* makes a "leap," that there is nothing in even the most exemplary human being that is "no longer animal." Yet here, Nietzsche says explicitly that Schopenhauer's commitment to truthfulness arises from "another and higher life" than that of the animal:

> [T]here is a kind of denying and destroying that is the discharge of that mighty longing for sanctification and salvation and as the first philosophical teacher of which Schopenhauer came among us desanctified and truly secularized men. All that exists that can be denied deserves to be denied; and being truthful means: to believe in an existence that can in no way be denied and which is itself true and without falsehood. That is why the truthful man feels that the meaning of his activity is metaphysical, explicable through the laws of another and

> higher life, and in the profoundest sense affirmative: however much all that he does may appear to be destructive of the laws of this life and a crime against them. [UM III:4]

Nietzsche would later reflect that those who are committed to truth at any price "*thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this 'other world'—look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our* world?" (GS 344). Even when he wrote UM, this conflict was apparent to him—but at that time he still believed, or wanted to believe, in the existence of this "other world" that is affirmed by the truthful, and was willing to sacrifice "this world" for its sake. Here again we find truth in conflict with life, after the fashion of Silenus' wisdom in BT. The Schopenhauerian man insists upon the terrible truth about life, and ends by rejecting life based on this truth—he does so, however, based on the faith that this commitment to truthfulness, with its concomitant renunciation of life, is imbued with metaphysical significance. In renouncing life and action, he feels himself in communion with "another and higher life," which alone can explain the possibility of this renunciation: it is the "leap" that nature makes in certain rare human beings, and which is impossible for lower organisms.

There is, however, something strange in Nietzsche's claim that this Schopenhauerian renunciation of action is required for the birth of a higher culture. For in UM II he had criticized the historical culture in Germany precisely because it had a paralyzing effect on life and action, which was supposed to be necessary for promoting a higher culture, while now he insists that such a culture presupposes the pessimism of Schopenhauer, which leads to the renunciation of life and action. Nietzsche appears to be aware of this problem when he raises the question "how a new circle of duties may be derived from this [Schopenhauerian] ideal and how one can proceed

towards so extravagant a goal through a practical activity" (UM III:5). It appears that the pessimism of the Schopenhauerian man "can only turn our heads and thereby exclude us from any participation in the world of action; coherent duties, the even flow of life are gone" (UM III:5). Nietzsche's solution to this problem seems to lead back toward action in one sense, while still leading away from it in another, perhaps more profound sense. He envisions a collective cultural project undertaken on the part of "a mighty community held together, not by external forms and regulations, but by a fundamental idea. It is the fundamental idea of *culture*, insofar as it sets for each one of us but one task: *to promote the production of the philosopher, the artist, and the saint within us and without us and thereby to work at the perfecting of nature*" (UM III:5). In other words, having attained to the tragic wisdom of the Schopenhauerian man, or at least to some inkling thereof, the only task still fit to act upon is to promote the development of this wisdom as generally as possible, to the end of perfecting the self-knowledge of nature through man—and thereby abolishing all life and action.

This is the same conclusion that Nietzsche had come to in BT, though couched in slightly different terms. Having understood the tragic wisdom of Silenus, the Greeks found in Dionysian tragedy a higher perspective in which life appeared justified in spite of its terribleness. In BT this perspective was that of the artist-god who looks at life aesthetically, as a tragic work of art; in UM III, at any rate, it is that of the god that wants to know itself fully, and to that end represents itself to itself as an evolving multiplicity, as does Schopenhauer's "Will." In both BT and UM, the attainment of this perspective amounts to an *unio mystica* with the eternal ground of life, that is, with the world of being that underlies the world of becoming or appearance. Though the emphasis seems to shift from art to knowledge by the time Nietzsche writes UM III, this shift is

not fundamental. As we have seen, he includes the artist among "those who are no longer animal," and claims that the "fundamental idea of culture" involves striving to produce, among other things, genuine artists. These genuine artists would be the great tragic artists that Nietzsche longs for in BT, who express the wisdom of Silenus aesthetically, as opposed to intellectually or practically, as the philosopher and the saint respectively do.

At this time, Nietzsche saw the type of the tragic artist expressed in Richard Wagner, and the "mighty community" united by "the fundamental idea of culture" in the planned Bayreuth Festival. His essay on this subject evinces a tremendous degree of optimism about that event, and about the future of German culture in general:

> Here [at Bayreuth] you will discover spectators prepared and dedicated, people with the feeling of being at the summit of their happiness and that their whole nature is being pulled together for yet higher and wider endeavours; here you will discover the most devoted self-sacrifice on the part of the artists and, the spectacle of all spectacles, the victorious creator of a work which is itself the epitome of an abundance of victorious artistic deeds. Must it not seem almost like magic to encounter such a phenomenon in the world of today? Must those who are permitted to participate in it not be transformed and renewed, so as henceforth to transform and renew in other domains of life? [UM IV:4]

This was published in July of 1876, roughly one month before the first Bayreuth Festival. Nietzsche's notebooks from this period show that he was already beginning to have reservations about Wagner (KSA 7:32[9–52]), which he also expresses indirectly in UM IV. Indeed, he had already formulated what would come to be his principal criticisms of Wagner as an artist, namely his histrionic disposition and his incapacity for unified style, though Nietzsche does his best in that essay to interpret these failings as innovations (UM IV: 3, 7; cf. CW 7, 8). Reading Nietzsche's writings on Wagner from this period, one has the sense that he is trying desperately to maintain his belief in something that has really become unbelievable for him, namely in Wagner

as the great transfiguring artist who would bring about a renaissance of German culture. This belief finally became unsustainable in August, when the Bayreuth Festival proved not to be the "great noon" he had envisaged (EH BT:4), but a pitiable farce in which Wagner appeared not as an opponent, but as an actual representative of the kind of false German "culture" that Nietzsche had spent the past years attacking. In distress, he left for several weeks in the middle of the festival (EH HA:2), permanently souring his relationship with Wagner, and himself embarking on a new path of thought.

Though this event was painful for Nietzsche, it would be a mistake to regard it as decisive for his change in thinking at this time. As noted above, he had already begun to grow suspicious about Wagner well before the Bayreuth Festival, though he had apparently been unwilling to admit this fully. Nietzsche later tells us that "[w]hat reached a decision in me at that time was not a break with Wagner: I noted a total aberration of my instincts of which particular blunders, whether Wagner or the professorship at Basel, were mere symptoms. I was overcome by *impatience* with myself; I saw that it was high time for me to recall and reflect on myself" (EH HA:3). He ultimately came to believe that this shift in his thinking had been building for some years already, even from the time of BT, the fundamental conception of which he considers to have been distorted by his reliance on Schopenhauer's philosophy and his application of the concept of Dionysian transfiguration to the state of contemporary German culture via his enthusiasm for Wagner's music (BT ASC:6). Likewise, with respect to UM, his mature view is that the "meditations" on Schopenhauer and Wagner were written when he had already begun to outgrow his reliance on those figures: UM III, for example, was written when he "already 'believed in nothing anymore,' [...] not even in Schopenhauer" (HA II P:1). Nietzsche writes that

"where I could not find what I *needed*, I had artificially to enforce, falsify, and invent a suitable fiction for myself […] for example, that I knowingly-willfully closed my eyes before Schopenhauer's blind will to morality at a time when I was already sufficiently clearsighted about morality; likewise that I deceived myself over Richard Wagner's incurable romanticism, as though it were a beginning and not an end" (HA P:1). In short, Nietzsche had assimilated Schopenhauer and Wagner to his worldview, which was basically at odds with theirs, and in the process had distorted his own view as well.

Distorted as Nietzsche's view of things was at this time, the commitment to truthfulness that was internal to it, which he described as embodied in the "Schopenhauerian man," could not but lead eventually to the recognition of the self-deception he had committed. Despite "how much cunning in self-preservation, how much reason and higher safeguarding, is contained in such self-deception" (HA II P:1), we have seen that truthfulness as an absolute ideal is indifferent to these kinds of concerns. In his notes for UM III, Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer as a "*liberating destroyer*," writing that his "aspiration to be *truthful* […] is a *disintegrative*, destructive aspiration; yet it makes the individual *great* and *free*" (KSA 7:34[36]). In keeping with his stated interest in the "[c]ontinuation of his [i.e., Schopenhauer's] work," by which he means the absolute commitment to truthfulness, it eventually became necessary for Nietzsche to free himself from Schopenhauer, and from Wagner as well. In a note from 1887, he describes the crisis that he experienced at this time in some detail:

> *Around* 1876 I had the terrible experience of seeing everything I had previously willed *compromised*, when I realized which way Wagner was going: and I was very closely bound to him by all the bonds of a profound unity of needs, by gratitude, by the irreplaceability and absolute privation I saw ahead of me.

> Around the same time I seemed to myself almost irretrievably *imprisoned* in my philology and teaching—in something accidental and makeshift in my life: I no longer knew how to escape and was tired, worn out, used up.
>
> Around the same time I realized that my instinct was after the opposite of Schopenhauer's: it aspired to a justification of life, even in its most dreadful, ambiguous, and mendacious forms—for this I had ready the formula "Dionysian." [KSA 13:9[42]]

Nietzsche's statement on Schopenhauer here makes it especially clear to what extent he had deceived himself about the latter's point of view, since we have seen that the attempt to justify life in spite of its terrible character is already present in his earliest works. That he was able to conflate this with Schopenhauer's teaching of the denial of the will to live, as seen especially in UM III, is perhaps as perversely impressive as it is untenable. Ultimately Nietzsche was unable to continue deceiving himself about this, or about the value of Wagner's music for the creation of a higher culture. And, as we have seen him mention already (EH HA:3), his exhaustion with his scholarly duties also reached a peak at this time, undoubtedly contributing to his need for a total break with his past. This experience is described in the belated preface to HA, in which he describes the genesis of the "free spirit":

> The great liberation comes [...] suddenly, like the shock of an earthquake: the youthful soul is all at once convulsed, torn loose, torn away […]. A drive and impulse rules and masters it like a command; a will and desire awakens to go off, anywhere, at any cost […]. It is an act of willfulness, and pleasure in willfulness, if he now perhaps bestows his favour on that which has hitherto had a bad reputation—if, full of inquisitiveness and the desire to tempt and experiment, he creeps around the things most forbidden. [HA P:3]

Psychologically, this change in attitude may be likened to the ending of a passionate love affair. For it has often been observed—including by La Rochefoucauld—that love is more readily succeeded by hatred than by indifference.[12] Having lost faith in his previous ideals, Nietzsche's instinct is to mortify them, which he does coldly and methodically in HA by means of historical

12 La Rochefoucauld, p. 33.

philosophy. As we have seen, this approach to philosophy is an assumption, not a result of experiment or inquiry, and he tells us as much in a later reflection on that book: “One error after another is coolly placed on ice; the ideal is not refuted—it *freezes* to death” (EH HA:1). Nietzsche does us a great service here by stating explicitly that what is at issue in HA is not a refutation of moral idealism, but a “war” against it, waged by “a merciless spirit that knows all the hideouts where the ideal is at home” (EH HA:1). A statement from the belated preface to D could apply just as easily to HA: “in this book faith in morality [i.e., the ideal] is withdrawn—but why? *Out of morality!*” (D P:4). I take this to be an apt description of the procedure Nietzsche follows in HA, which is based not on any attempt to refute “the ideal,” but rather on a simple withdrawal of belief in it: such things are no longer taken seriously as candidates for belief, but are to be dissected and explained on another basis. Further, the reason for this, as has already been discussed, is a moral one, or one that is itself based on the belief in an “ideal”—namely the ideal of *truthfulness*. In this sense, the belief in Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian ideals is withdrawn based on the belief in another ideal which, however, has not yet been recognized as such. The commitment to this ideal runs through Nietzsche’s whole early development, and ends by cannibalizing those other ideals to which originally it was wed: the philosopher, the artist, the saint, and so on.

Let us return to the “opposite” values of truth and illusion, where we began our analysis in this chapter. While we have seen that Nietzsche’s early works are very much concerned with this opposition, it has also become clear that its status as an *absolute* opposition is by no means insisted upon in those works, at least as an absolute opposition of *value*. Even in BT, truth and illusion go together in a certain sense, insofar as the metaphysical truth attained in Dionysian

tragedy makes clear the redemptive value of illusion; and I have argued that this basic position is upheld throughout UM, even if the terminology undergoes some changes. Moreover, by the time Nietzsche wrote UM III and IV, he had already written TL, in which he argues explicitly for the claim that truth *is* an illusion (a claim that I will examine in more detail in Chapter 4). Yet *truthfulness*, as a moral commitment, is no illusion, so long as one adheres to it even to the extent of admitting what it really is: an ascetic practice in which one denies oneself the consolation that is to be found in illusion, and by no means a "pure" drive toward truth. The entanglement of the concepts of truth and illusion is expressed quite strongly in one of Nietzsche's notes from 1873, written about the same time as TL:

> Casuistry: Is it permissible to sacrifice humanity to truth?— 1) It is probably not possible. I wish to God that humanity were able to die from truth! 2) If it were possible, it would be a good death and a liberation from life. 3) Without a certain amount of *delusion*, no one can firmly believe that he is in possession of truth: skepticism will not be far behind. The question concerning whether it is permissible to sacrifice humanity to a *delusion* would have to be answered in the negative. But in practice this happens, since the belief in truth is nothing but a delusion. [KSA 7:29[8]]

Here Nietzsche again implies an absolute opposition of value between truth and illusion—insofar as, in principle, it would be permissible to sacrifice humanity for truth, but not for a delusion—and then proceeds to dissolve this opposition by identifying truth *as* a delusion. His ascetic practice, however, consists not in any delusional claim to possess the truth, but in the development of a skeptical standpoint toward all supposed truth—which upholds his commitment to truthfulness, insofar as he denies himself the delusion involved in believing oneself to be in possession of the truth. In the same note he writes that skepticism "appears to be the truly *ascetic* standpoint of the cognizant being. For it does not believe in belief and thereby destroys everything that benefits from belief." Yet he also recognizes that "[n]o one can *live* with these

doubts, just as they cannot live in pure asceticism. Whereby it is proven that belief in logic and belief itself are necessary for life" (KSA 7:29[8]). Despite his awareness of this ultimate conflict between truthfulness and life, Nietzsche is still determined at this time to see how far the commitment to truthfulness can be pushed. This, I claim, is the ultimate reason for his commitment to historical philosophy, which is calculated to destroy his previous "beliefs," along with all their questionable benefits.

Chapter 3: Naturalism and Physio-Psychology

My reading of Nietzsche's philosophical method as having its basis in his commitment to historical philosophy comes into conflict with what is probably the most common interpretation of that method today, namely that it is fundamentally a form of "naturalism."[13] The conflict between these readings may not be immediately obvious, since naturalism is taken to entail the rejection of many of the oppositions that Nietzsche does in fact reject—for example, those between soul and body, between good and evil, between this world and another, and generally between man and the rest of nature. The passage from Nietzsche most commonly cited in support of the naturalistic interpretation is one that we have looked at already, in which he states his ambition "[t]o translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*; to see to it that man henceforth stands before man as even today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before the *rest* of nature" (BGE 230). As I suggested in Chapter 1, this is a restatement of the project announced in the first section of HA, namely that of constructing a "chemistry of concepts and sensations," although that earlier text is rarely referenced by proponents of the naturalistic interpretation. Perhaps this is because it focuses on the rejection of absolute opposites, rather than on the reduction of the "supernatural" to the natural, as the text from BGE appears to do. While this latter formulation is certainly consistent with the rejection of absolute opposites, it appeals to a concept of "nature" that

13 See, for example, Leiter, pp. 244–63; Christian J. Emden, *Nietzsche's Naturalism: Philosophy and the Life Sciences in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*, ed. Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Christoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

requires some content—and that content is usually provided by the commentators themselves rather than by Nietzsche, assuming that it is provided at all. Alternatively, naturalism is said to consist in a commitment to explanations that are consistent in one way or another with the empirical sciences—a precarious position to attribute to Nietzsche, given his critical attitude toward much of the science of his time. I will here argue that both of these ways of reading Nietzsche as a naturalistic thinker are inadequate, in no small part because they privilege that aspect of his thought which coheres with the empirical sciences while ignoring the equally prominent strain that calls those sciences into question on the basis of their "human, all too human" origin—that is, their origin in our physio-psychology.[14] I conclude that these difficulties can be overcome if Nietzsche's method is understood to have its basis in the rejection of absolute opposites, as I have proposed, and not in a particular concept of "nature" or in some kind of commitment to the empirical sciences.

One of the early proponents of the naturalistic reading, which has only come into vogue within the past thirty years or so, is Richard Schacht. The term "naturalistic," he writes, "has been used to refer to so many divergent philosophical orientations […] that it signifies little more than a departure from both traditional empiricism and rationalism, and a disposition to interpret all things human in terms of the interaction of creatures of one distinctive but fundamentally natural kind with their environment and each other."[15] Schacht claims that Nietzsche's approach to philosophy is naturalistic in this broad sense, but his attempt to further specify what naturalism amounts to for Nietzsche ends up being rather vague. While he writes that Nietzsche's

14 I use this term in preference to the somewhat less awkward "psychophysiology" because Nietzsche describes his attempt to understand human nature without appeal to absolute opposites using the term *Physio-Psychologie*, not *Psycho-Physiologie*, which he could have done just as easily (BGE 23). See Chapter 5.

15 Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London and New York: Routledge, 1983), p. 53.

"naturalistic conception of human reality […] takes as its point of departure our status as instances of a certain form of life among others, [and] holds to this perspective in dealing with all aspects of our experience," this does not get us any closer to a conceptual understanding of what naturalism is supposed to be.[16] At best it resolves an undefined concept—"natural kind"—into another concept that is equally ill-defined—"form of life." While Nietzsche does give us a definition of life in BGE 259 (basically as will to power), he developed this definition on the basis of historical philosophy, so that it cannot itself be the foundation of that method; nothing resembling this general definition can be found in any of Nietzsche's books prior to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nor, indeed, does Schacht appeal to this definition anywhere in his discussion of Nietzsche's supposed naturalism. While it is true that Schacht, in his book on Nietzsche, goes some way toward making the latter's approach to philosophy intelligible, his explicit statements about Nietzsche's methodology lack precision.

Schacht has, however, returned to this issue several times, and one of his later writings on the subject captures some of the most important elements that I have argued characterize Nietzsche's methodology:

> Nietzsche takes as his point of departure the development he sums up in the phrase "the death of God"—that is, the demise of the tenability not only of the Judeo-Christian God idea but also of any other sort of religiously, metaphysically or morally envisioned different, "higher" and "truer" reality underlying or transcending the world in which we find ourselves and live our lives. He contends that, in its wake, the time has come for a "naturalization" of our understanding of ourselves and all things human (*GS* 109). His naturalizing reinterpretation proceeds on the supposition that the kind of world "this world" is—"the world of life, nature and history" [...] (*GS* 344)—is the only *kind* of world and reality there is [...]. It further proceeds in accordance with the general "guiding idea" (as I shall call it) that everything that goes on and comes to be in this world is the outcome of developments occurring within it that are owing entirely to its internal dynamics and the contingencies to which they give rise, and

16 Schacht, p. 271.

> that come about (as it were) from the bottom up, through the elaboration or relationally precipitated transformation of what was already going on and had already come to be.[17]

Here Schacht evidently recognizes that Nietzsche's methodology is based on the rejection of absolute opposites, such as those implied by the supposition of a "'higher' and 'truer' reality underlying or transcending the world in which we find ourselves," and that Nietzsche attempts to resolve these apparent oppositions by means of theories that try to explain how something can develop out of its supposed opposite. He further claims, as I have also argued, that "naturalism" (historical philosophy) is "*both* a 'regulative hypothesis' (substantively speaking) *and* a 'heuristic principle' (methodologically speaking)" (cf. BGE 15), and not a result or conclusion reached by inquiry, whether in the natural sciences or elsewhere.[18] More, he acknowledges the importance for Nietzsche's method of being "intellectually conscientious, tough minded, unsentimental, and on guard against wishful thinking," though it is not clear that he understands this disposition as the foundation of that method, as I do.[19] On these and other points, Schacht's interpretation is not at odds with mine, though he does not address the consequences of the physio-psychological strain in Nietzsche's thinking for this issue. But what is most important is the fact that Nietzsche's "naturalism," as Schacht understands it, bears little resemblance to naturalism as it is usually understood. For we are still not given a definition of "nature" that amounts to anything more than "this world," which of course begs the question what kinds of things there might be in this world, including whether there might be absolutely opposite things. Because Schacht denies that the sort of criteria often used to distinguish the natural from the supernatural—most often based in some blend of determinism and physicalism—form any part of the foundation of Nietzsche's method, it

17 Schacht, "Nietzsche's Naturalism," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012), p. 194.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., p. 195.

seems to me that the term "naturalism" carries a good deal of unnecessary baggage that the term "historical philosophy" does not.[20]

As a case in point, Rex Welshon complains that Nietzsche "never bothers" to define nature, so that this "must be done for him."[21] Welshon then proceeds to help himself to a definition of "nature" as "all of the causally efficacious phenomena (objects, properties, processes, states, events, and systems) that are found in the spatio-temporal world, including all of the physical, geological, chemical, biological, physiological, psychological, sociological, and other entities, features, and products of the earth. We shall then understand the term 'naturalism' to refer to the philosophical position that affirms that the domain of the causally efficacious is exhausted by nature so understood."[22] This is not an unusual definition of "nature" and "naturalism," but it is admittedly not based in Nietzsche's writings, and it commits him to concepts toward which he takes a highly skeptical attitude—indeed, it builds them into the foundation of his methodology, making it difficult or impossible for him to question them on pain of inconsistency. I do not claim that Nietzsche is a skeptic about causation as such, but he recognizes (and expands upon) the Humean problem that we can have no knowledge of any necessary connections between events, so that the concept of causal efficacy would be a very shaky foundation for his methodology (cf. GS 112, 127; BGE 21; WP 550-51). He is even more skeptical about most of the terms Welshon lists in parentheses, denying the existence of "objects" that are endowed with properties and persist through changing states (GM I:13; WP 549, 552), and insisting that our conceptions of "events" and "processes" are very much skewed by our

20 Ibid.
21 Rex Welshon, *Nietzsche's Dynamic Metapsychology: This Uncanny Animal* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 11.
22 Ibid.

psychology (GS 112; WP 640). While I believe I see what Welshon is gesturing at with this definition of nature, the terms he employs do more to obscure Nietzsche's view of nature than to clarify it. And, crucially, this substantive view of the natural world as populated by the sorts of entities he enumerates seems like a much more extravagant presupposition than the one on which I have argued that Nietzsche bases his methodology, namely the rejection of absolute opposites.

It is not clear, in any event, that Welshon's definition of "nature" contributes anything to his argument. For, like a number of other commentators, his definition of "naturalism" is ultimately couched in terms of a particular relationship between philosophy and the empirical sciences. A philosopher is a naturalist, on this account, if he holds philosophical inquiry to be continuous with inquiry in the empirical sciences. Welshon outlines three distinct but compatible versions of this position. The first is *substantive naturalism*, of which he claims the above definition of nature is an example: this form of naturalism "affirms that philosophy and empirical science should share the same substantive domain—that is, that they should quantify over the same kinds of things, properties, processes, and events studied by natural, psychological, and social sciences."[23] Welshon's definition of nature would therefore seem to be merely a gloss on what he takes "nature" to consist in for the empirical sciences, so that attributing this definition to Nietzsche really begs the question that he sets out to answer: *does* Nietzsche believe that philosophy should concern itself only with the kinds of things studied by the empirical sciences? Welshon makes a somewhat opaque distinction between substantive naturalism and *ontological naturalism*, the latter being "the view that philosophy and empirical science should share the same ontology, where an ontology is the set of categories (e.g., object, property, process, event,

23 Ibid.

state, and system) that an empirical view is prepared to quantify over."[24] The distinction, as I understand it, means that one can accept that all scientific or naturalistic theories must "quantify over" the same set of ontological categories, but disagree about which supposed instances of these categories count as natural. A dualistic psychology, for example, while it appeals to objects, properties, processes, and so on, does not appeal to *natural* objects, properties, and processes, so that such a theory might count as ontologically naturalistic, but not as substantively so. Here again, the criterion for determining which instances of these categories count as natural seems to be nothing more than the consensus in the empirical sciences, though some other standard could in principle be applied.

Welshon believes that Nietzsche is a naturalist in both of these first two senses, though his evidence for this is rather scant. For it is not enough simply to show that Nietzsche took an interest in the empirical sciences, or that those sciences informed many of his philosophical views. Both of these claims are certainly true, but they do not establish anything concrete with respect to Nietzsche's *methodology*, which comes prior to and informs his attitude toward the sciences. In HA 1, he writes that historical philosophy "can no longer be separated from natural science," but he does not equate the two or suggest that natural science itself forms the basis of historical philosophy. It is rather part and parcel of the rejection of absolute opposites to take the results and methods of natural science seriously, though not dogmatically, in the attempt to provide explanations for all sorts of phenomena. Substantive naturalism would seem to amount to little more than the recognition that the sorts of things studied by empirical science, whether natural or social, are real phenomena that need to be accounted for in a picture of the world based

24 Ibid.

in historical philosophy—for it is the rejection of absolute opposites, rather than any deference to the empirical sciences, that leads to the rejection of "supernatural" phenomena. Where ontological naturalism is concerned, I have already said that Nietzsche does not share an ontology with the empirical sciences, supposing that they have an ontology consisting of things like objects and properties, as in Welshon's definition.

Welshon does note, however, that "there is nothing inconsistent about Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism if he proposes that a particular ontology—one based on will to power, for example—should be shared between science and philosophy," so that he is not claiming that ontological naturalism requires Nietzsche to adopt the ontology of empirical science, but only to insist that philosophy and science must share the same ontology. But this does not seem to be Nietzsche's position either, for two reasons. First, as will be argued at length in Chapter 4, Nietzsche rejects the possibility of any full-fledged ontology, because he denies that words and concepts can ever adequately characterize being. Any concept, he says, at best "designates the essence of a thing," but never "*comprehends* it" (WP 516). This is partly a consequence of his view that becoming is the only kind of reality, while the concepts that make up our ontologies are concepts of *beings*: "The character of the world in a state of becoming" he describes "as incapable of formulation, as 'false,' as 'self-contradictory'" (WP 517). Thus there is, strictly speaking, no ontology that Nietzsche would countenance. "Philosophy in the only way I will allow it to stand," he writes, is "an attempt to describe Heraclitean becoming and to abbreviate it into signs (so to speak, to *translate* and mummify it into a kind of illusory being)" (KSA 11:36[27]). This results in what I describe in Chapter 6 as a "pseudo-ontology," because it provides a picture of the makeup of reality that broadly resembles traditional ontologies, with the

difference that it does not claim to be adequate to reality itself, but rather only an interpretation of reality. But second, even given that, it is far from evident that Nietzsche believes philosophy and science ought to share the same pseudo-ontology. Insofar as he understands them as *world-interpretations*, pseudo-ontologies are incommensurate with what Nietzsche takes to be the defining characteristic of the scientific man, namely his "*objective* spirit" (BGE 207). Unlike the philosopher, the scientific man is not a creator of world-interpretations, but "an instrument": his value lies in his *inability* to interpret reality as a genuine philosopher does, in the fact that he can do little more than "mirror" reality as faithfully as possible, i.e., provide faithful descriptions and formulations of it as it appears to the senses (BGE 207; cf. WP 618, 635). The "*objective* spirit" amounts to "the 'unselfing' and depersonalization of the spirit" (BGE 207), whereas for the philosopher "there is nothing whatever that is impersonal" (BGE 6). On this view, the empirical sciences provide a wealth of material for the philosopher to interpret (cf. BGE 211), but it is not clear how those sciences would benefit from adopting any particular philosopher's interpretation of reality ("pseudo-ontology").

The third type of naturalism Welshon discusses is *methodological naturalism*, which he attributes to Nietzsche only in a qualified way. He defines this type of naturalism as "the view that philosophy and empirical science have the same explanatory goal of discovering knowledge, and that philosophy and empirical science share the same types of methods and explanations."[25] While he thinks, as we have seen, that Nietzsche is a naturalist both substantively and ontologically, he claims that Nietzsche's supposed naturalism is "only fitfully methodological," by which he seems to mean that Nietzsche sometimes, but not always, prioritizes the kinds of

25 Ibid., p. 12.

methods and explanations preferred by the empirical sciences. This is certainly true, but—assuming, as I have argued, that there are serious problems with reading Nietzsche as a substantive or ontological naturalist—it is not much on which to base the claim that Nietzsche's methodology is fundamentally naturalistic. To say that one sometimes employs the types of methods and explanations used in the empirical sciences does not seem to me to define an interesting philosophical position.

An alternative naturalistic reading comes from Brian Leiter. Unlike Welshon, who does not see "methodological naturalism" as a central part of Nietzsche's naturalism, Leiter sees a particular type of methodological naturalism (or "M-Naturalism," in his terms) as the foundation of Nietzsche's method. He defines methodological naturalism as the view that "philosophical inquiry […] should be continuous with empirical inquiry in the sciences," and distinguishes two versions of this position, namely "Results Continuity" and "Methods Continuity":

> The Results Continuity branch of M-Naturalism requires that philosophical theories—e.g., theories of morality or of knowledge—be supported or justified by the results of the sciences: philosophical theories that do not enjoy the support of our best science are simply *bad* theories. "Methods Continuity," by contrast, demands only that philosophical theories emulate the "methods" of inquiry of successful sciences. "Methods" should be construed broadly here to encompass not only, say, the experimental method (e.g., the method of testing progressively refined claims against experience), but also the styles of understanding and explanation employed in the sciences, for example, explanation by appeal to causes, and an attempt to find the *general* causal patterns that explain the particular phenomena we observe.[26]

On Leiter's view, "Nietzsche's naturalism is fundamentally *methodological*," meaning that he is committed to the continuity of methods between philosophy and the empirical sciences, but not necessarily to continuity of results.[27] This makes Nietzsche, in Leiter's terms, a "speculative M-naturalist," which means that he is committed to limiting himself to theories that "are 'modeled'

26 Leiter, pp. 2–3.
27 Ibid., pp. 4–5.

on the sciences [...] in that they take over from science the idea that natural phenomena have deterministic causes," but not to keeping quiet about any phenomenon on which the empirical sciences have not yet had their say.[28] "Rather, the idea is that their [i.e., speculative M-naturalists'] speculative theories of human nature are informed by the sciences and by a scientific picture of how things work."[29] Leiter also attributes a limited kind of "results continuity" to Nietzsche, "namely continuity with the 'result' [...] that man is not of a 'higher … [or] of a different origin' [BGE 230] than the rest of nature."[30] Since I argued at length in Chapter 1 that this is not a result, but a presupposition, I will bracket the issue of "results continuity," and focus on Leiter's central claim that Nietzsche's method is fundamentally characterized by methodological continuity with the empirical sciences.

Just as Welshon appealed to "causal efficacy" in attempting to define the sphere of nature, Leiter broadly defines the method of the empirical sciences by appeal to "the idea that observable phenomena have causal determinants."[31] However, as I said above, Nietzsche takes seriously the Humean problem that we can have no knowledge of causal connections, whether by observation or by a priori reasoning. He writes that "[m]echanistic theory," which he takes to be the foundation of most of the science of his time, "formulates consecutive appearances, and it does so semiotically, in terms of the senses and of psychology […]; it does not touch upon the causal force" (WP 635). "We have no 'sense for the *causa efficiens*,'" he says; "here Hume was right; habit [...] makes us expect that a certain often-observed occurrence will follow another: nothing more!" (WP 550). He warns us that "[o]ne should not wrongly reify 'cause' and 'effect,' as the

28 Ibid., p. 4.
29 Ibid., p. 245.
30 Ibid., p. 6.
31 Ibid., p. 245; cf. Janaway, p. 38.

natural scientists do (and whoever, like them, now 'naturalizes' [!] in his thinking) […]; one should use 'cause' and 'effect' only as pure concepts, that is to say, as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and communication—*not* for explanation" (BGE 21). As I remarked above in my discussion of Welshon, it is extremely dubious to build concepts like cause and effect—at least as used in the empirical science of Nietzsche's time—into the foundation of his methodology, since he evidently believes he can critique these concepts on the basis of that methodology without falling into contradiction. If someone objects that some of the statements just quoted seem to posit a causal connection between various phenomena (e.g., the claim that our belief in causality is *caused* by habit), I would reiterate that I do not understand Nietzsche to deny the existence of causality, but only that we can know what causality is. Nietzsche thinks that the mechanistic concept of causality employed in the sciences is an empty concept, an *X* that stands for the mysterious connection presumed to exist between different events—and, as such, it can hardly form the basis of his philosophical method.

Leiter recognizes the need to respond to these objections, though his response itself is far from adequate. First, he calls attention to the context of the passage from BGE 21 cited above, in which Nietzsche says that "in the 'in-itself' there is nothing of 'causal connections,'" and asserts that this claim is a symptom of a "Neo-Kantian skepticism about causation" that Nietzsche gave up by the time he wrote his mature works.[32] Leiter here follows Maudemarie Clark, who is almost alone among Nietzsche commentators in not considering BGE to be one of Nietzsche's "mature" works, which she must maintain if her interpretation is to remain plausible.[33] In fact, contra

32 Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche's Naturalism Reconsidered" in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 590.

33 Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 103–9. I discuss Clark's arguments in more detail in Chapter 4.

Leiter, in BGE Nietzsche already "repudiates the intelligibility of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction," upon which Leiter takes his claim about causation in BGE 21 to depend: "Indeed, what forces us at all to suppose that there is an essential opposition of 'true' and 'false'? Is it not sufficient to assume degrees of apparentness and, as it were, lighter and darker shadows and shades of appearance [...]?"[34] (BGE 34; cf. 16). There is nothing in this of the absolute opposition between noumenon and phenomenon, between the thing-in-itself and its appearance—nor is this at all surprising, given Nietzsche's rejection of absolute opposites. Leiter's contention that Nietzsche here denies the reality of cause and effect because it belongs merely to the phenomenal realm and not to the "in-itself" is quite out of place, especially considering that Nietzsche puts "in-itself" in quotation marks, suggesting that he is not using the term in its ordinary sense. I suggest that he uses it not in any technical Kantian or Neo-Kantian sense, but simply in reference to whatever things might be like apart from human ways of conceptualizing them; and this, again, need not imply that causality does not operate in some way outside our conception of reality, but only that it does not operate in the way we conceive it to on the basis of our physio-psychology. I read Nietzsche's claim about causation in BGE 21 as a fairly straightforward psychological observation, namely that necessary causal connections are projected into reality by us rather than being "there already," a point that had been well established by Hume.[35]

Leiter appeals to another passage in defending his claim that the concept of causality is central to Nietzsche's method, this time from *Twilight of the Idols*. In the section of that work

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34 Leiter, ibid. Clark, for her part, does not deny that Nietzsche rejects the noumenal-phenomenal distinction in BGE, but claims only that he fails to draw what she considers the most obvious of conclusions from that rejection, namely that it takes away any basis for the claim that human knowledge falsifies reality. We will return to that argument in Chapter 4.

35 A similar reading can be found in Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche's* Beyond Good and Evil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 96.

entitled "The Four Great Errors," Nietzsche devotes a significant amount of space to the discussion of causality, with specific emphasis on common errors involved in causal thinking. Leiter quotes at length from the passage entitled "*The error of a false causality*," in which Nietzsche insists that

> There are no mental causes at all. […] And what a fine abuse we had perpetrated with this "empirical evidence"; we *created* the world on this basis as a world of causes, a world of will, a world of spirits. The most ancient and enduring psychology was at work here and did not do anything else: all that happened was considered a doing, all doing the effect of a will; the world became to it a multiplicity of doers; a doer (a "subject") was slipped under all that happened. It was out of himself that man projected his three "inner facts"—that in which he believed most firmly, the will, the spirit, the ego. He even took the concept of being from the concept of the ego; he posited "things" as "being" in his image, in accordance with his concept of the ego as cause. Small wonder that he later always found in things only that *which he had put into them*. The thing itself, to say it once more, the concept of thing is a mere reflex of the faith in the ego as cause. And even your atom, my dear mechanists and physicists—how much error, how much rudimentary psychology is still residual in your atom! Not to mention the "thing-in-itself" […]! The error of the spirit as cause mistaken for reality! And made the very measure of reality! And called God! [TI VI:3]

The implications of this passage are far-reaching, and a longer analysis of it must be left for Part II. However, a brief consideration of the problems with Leiter's reading of it will lead us directly into the crux of the problem for any naturalistic understanding of Nietzsche's methodology. For Leiter takes the point of this passage to be simply "[t]hat we are mistaken in thinking the conscious will is *causal* in action," a view that Nietzsche indeed held—yet this, he claims, "clearly entails no skepticism about the reality of causation."[36] It does not entail skepticism about the *reality* of causation, but it certainly entails skepticism about its *nature*, and about the possibility of our knowing its nature. This is because Nietzsche's claim here is not simply that there are no mental causes, but that *the concept of causation itself is derived from the belief in*

36 Leiter, ibid., p. 591.

mental causes (cf. BGE 36). Man has understood himself, *qua* willing subject, as a cause of effects, and has understood causation in the empirical world by analogy to himself. To employ Hume's famous example, when one billiard ball strikes another, the first ball is understood as a kind of agent ("doer"), which produces an effect on the second, causing it to move. As Hume recognized, the relation between these events is fundamentally mysterious, and our belief that some necessity attaches to it originates in our psychology—for him, on the basis of "custom" or "habit"; for Nietzsche, because we have understood the world as "a world of will" akin to our instinctive, psychological world, in which we feel ourselves to be subjects that produce effects by means of a mental activity called "willing" (cf. WP 664, 689).

Nietzsche's denial that there are mental causes thus undermines the concept of causation itself, insofar as that concept has no content except as a projection of our psychology. Leiter is correct that Nietzsche does not believe the conscious will to be causal in action (cf. BGE 19), but seems to suppose that he is entitled to fall back on some other, presumably physical concept of causation that would explain human action on the same basis as other empirical events, like the motion of billiard balls. But this cannot be the case if the concept of causation applied to empirical events is only a projection of the instinctive belief in mental causes, which Nietzsche has rejected. Leiter claims that "in the very next section of *Twilight*, Nietzsche quickly returns to his confident distinguishing of *real* from *imaginary* causes, consistent with the entire tenor of this chapter."[37] But that is not what he does. While it is true that Nietzsche discusses "the error of imaginary causes," and suggests that it is possible to make mistakes in causal thinking—hardly a controversial claim—he nowhere gives a positive concept of causation that is not derived from

37 Ibid.

psychology. Instead, his entire discussion focuses on what he calls the "causal instinct," which he attributes to our desire "to have a reason for feeling this way or that—for feeling bad or for feeling good. […] Thus originates a habitual acceptance of a particular causal interpretation, which, as a matter of fact, inhibits any investigation into the real cause—even precludes it" (TI VI:4). Such statements would present a problem for my interpretation only if I asserted that Nietzsche denied the reality of causation, and not merely our ability to know its nature. Passages like this in fact support my interpretation, since Nietzsche effectively says that our psychology prevents us from investigating the "real cause" of a phenomenon. Insofar as he does distinguish between real and imaginary causes—for example, in *The Antichrist*, when he contrasts the Christian teachings with "science, the sound conception of cause and effect" (A 49)—he does so based on his commitment to historical philosophy, rejecting as "imaginary" those causal claims that imply the existence of absolute opposites (cf. A 15). But this, as we have seen, is a methodological presupposition, and not something that Nietzsche regards as proven.

Based on the foregoing considerations, I think it is evident that the kinds of naturalism often attributed to Nietzsche fail to do justice to his thinking. Those that are based on a definition of "nature" end up burdening him with an ontology populated by entities like objects, properties, states, and events that he explicitly critiques, while saying no more in effect than that he rejects the "supernatural," which is captured much more elegantly by saying simply that he is committed to the rejection of absolute opposites. Whereas those interpretations that define naturalism as a particular attitude about the relationship between philosophy and the empirical sciences obscure Nietzsche's understanding of the fundamental differences between these pursuits, and saddle him with a thoroughgoing empiricism that cannot be reconciled with what I am calling the physio-

psychological strain in his thinking. For all the respect Nietzsche has for empirical science, and for all the scorn he pours on the Platonic and Kantian conceptions of a priori knowledge, there is a certain kind of a priority that he cannot dispense with, namely the kind that arises from human physio-psychology. We are a particular type of creature that engages with and conceptualizes the world in particular ways, and these ways of engaging with and conceptualizing things form the horizon of our knowledge. Already in HA, Nietzsche writes that the human way of conceptualizing the world is explicable by "the physiology and history of the evolution of organisms and concepts" (HA 10). "It is from the period of the lower organisms," he writes, "that man has inherited the belief that there are *identical things*" (HA 18), and it is only on the basis of this mistaken belief that we derive the concept of number (HA 19). He maintained this denial that self-identical things exist until the end of his mental life, insisting that the concept itself arises from the instinctive belief that *we* are self-identical things, i.e., that we are "subjects" (TI VI:3; WP 485, 488). And, as we have seen, our concept of causation also stands or falls with this belief, as does a concept like motion: "that all effect is motion; that where there is motion *something* is moved" (WP 635). At the door of human physio-psychology Nietzsche lays "the injection of the concept of number, the concept of the thing (concept of the subject), the concept of activity (separation of cause from effect), the concept of motion (sight and touch): our eye and our psychology are still part of it" (WP 635).

Early on, Nietzsche wrote that "[r]igorous science is capable of detaching us from this ideational world only to a limited extent" (HA 16)—and even this is a rather strong claim, considering that empirical science appeals to concepts like number, motion, cause, and effect no less than ordinary, unscientific thinking does. With regard to "the concept of the 'ego' as

substance," which is "the precondition upon which the process of reason depends," Nietzsche writes: "Here we come to a limit: our thinking itself involves this belief (with its distinction of subject, accident; deed, doer, etc.); to let it go means: being no longer able to think" (WP 487). "Rational thought," he writes elsewhere, "is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off" (WP 522). So it seems that science has no choice but to continue employing these concepts in some manner, however erroneous they may be. On the other hand, Nietzsche thinks that scientific thinking has been instrumental in allowing us to discover the erroneousness of these concepts, and to locate their origin in human physio-psychology rather than in the non-human world. This leads to an interesting circularity which, however, I do not take to be vicious; nor do I believe that it originates merely in Nietzsche's thinking, but is a genuine problem deserving of philosophical attention. By means of empirical science we attain to a better understanding of the world and ourselves—but the methods and categories employed by that science are themselves expressions of our physio-psychology, i.e., of our modes of perception and cognition, meaning that "the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these" (GS 374). In investigating nature, we are forced at some point to turn back toward ourselves, when we realize how much anthropomorphism is involved in this enterprise—but then, that very anthropomorphic procedure must be explained by appeal to our physio-psychology. In this way we move between empirical research and introspective psychology, each of which depends on the other, and neither of which can be considered foundational.

This difficulty is ignored by all naturalistic interpreters of Nietzsche, who focus on his project of "translat[ing] man back into nature" (BGE 230) as though nature itself were

sufficiently disclosed to us by empirical science. I have argued instead that Nietzsche does not attempt to reduce all phenomena to "nature," however defined, but rather to *collapse absolute oppositions* in accordance with his commitment to historical philosophy. The fact that Nietzsche ridicules "the juxtaposition of 'man *and* world [i.e., nature],' separated by the sublime presumption of the little word 'and'" (GS 346) does not mean that he understands himself to be reducing the former to the latter. Viewed from one side, his project is indeed to "translate" man into nature—but from the other, it is "an attempt to humanize things as faithfully as possible" (GS 112), that is, to translate *nature* into *man*. This is not Nietzsche's choice, as he understands it, but simply a recognition and acceptance of the anthropomorphic character of human cognition. We must, he thinks, work self-consciously within this framework in order to craft an interpretation of the world that gives us the feeling of comprehending it, which essentially involves assimilating unfamiliar things to familiar things (BGE 230; TI VI:5).

Chapter 4: Perspectivism and Truth

It remains to consider the sense in which Nietzsche can claim that his or any interpretation of reality is *true*. I have said that Nietzsche's primary concern is truthfulness, and not truth in the sense that epistemologists address when they ask what we can know and how we can know it. However, he has a great deal to say about truth in this latter sense as well, and his belief that this kind of truth is unattainable is, it seems to me, one of his most important reasons for emphasizing the importance of truthfulness. The claim that "there is no truth" is often attributed to Nietzsche, and certainly he maintains this in some sense—the difficulty lies in identifying the precise sense in which he does so. Unlike Maudemarie Clark, whose influential interpretation I will discuss below, I do not believe that Nietzsche's view on truth changed in essentials from the one expressed in the early essay "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense" (1873), although he later abandoned some of the metaphysical concepts he there employed in expressing that view. Probably the most direct statement of his position on truth in that essay is that "truths are illusions that are no longer remembered as being illusions" (p. 257). One reason interpreters like Clark believe that Nietzsche changed his tune about this later on is the absence in his later works (though not in his late *Nachlass*) of anything resembling the claim that truths are illusions. Indeed, I do not think this was ever the best way of expressing the basic insight, not least because, as Clark points out, to call truths illusions seems to be to contrast them with something that is not illusory, which presumably would be true.[38] I argue that, in his mature works, Nietzsche expresses the same insight using the concepts of "interpretation" and "perspective," which do not suggest that what we call "truths" are false or illusory, but only that they are very

38 Clark, pp. 65–69.

partial and limited insofar as they apply only within a human way of conceptualizing reality, and have no meaning outside it. This turns out to have important consequences for Nietzsche's whole approach to philosophy, as I will show.

Nietzsche's reflections on truth in TL are motivated explicitly by his desire to explain the possibility of *truthfulness*, that is, "how an honest and pure drive for truth could have arisen among them [i.e., human beings]" (p. 254). If one assumes that the human intellect aims fundamentally at apprehending the truth about reality, this question does not seem difficult to answer: in that case, man would strive for truth because he has what might be called a "faculty" that is adapted for distinguishing between truth and falsehood (cf. GS 354). But Nietzsche denies that the human intellect is adapted for that purpose: "The intellect, as a means of preserving the individual, unfolds its main powers in dissimulation; for dissimulation is the means by which the weaker, less robust individuals survive, having been denied the ability to fight for their existence with horns or sharp predator teeth" (p. 254). Though he does not give any examples, one can imagine the ways in which such an intellect would be helpful when "the individual wants to maintain himself against other individuals," namely by means of clever ruses and so on (p. 254). Even in this respect, the intellect appears as a capacity for making things seem *other* than what they are, rather than for scrupulously recognizing them as they are. But the intellect is not just used to deceive others: it also involves self-deception, and cannot dispense with this if it is to succeed in its task of preserving the individual. As we shall see, Nietzsche believes that conceptual thinking as such involves self-deception, insofar as "[e]very concept comes into being through the equation of non-equal things" (p. 256). What is important for conceptual thought is not that these concepts are adequate to reality, but that they represent reality in a way that is

useful for the thinker (cf. GS 354). This might not count as self-deception in and of itself, assuming that we were conscious that this is what we do when we think conceptually—but by and large we are not. When we represent reality to ourselves in this way, according to Nietzsche, we believe that we are doing something else, namely apprehending the essence of reality "in itself." This is the self-deception involved in believing oneself to possess the truth, which, together with the understanding that this "truth" is useful, forms the basis of the "drive for truth."

This belief that one possesses the truth about reality hinges on an unconscious conflation of two different senses of "truth," which Nietzsche distinguishes in TL. In the first sense, which I will call the *conventional* sense, a proposition is true if it accords with linguistic convention: "snow is white" would be true in this sense, while "snow is black" would be false, owing to the social conventions that govern the application of these terms in the English language. However, in the second sense, which I will call the *correspondence* sense, Nietzsche claims that such statements are false, because they do not reflect reality itself, but "only […] the relations between things and men" (p. 256). In reality there is no snow, no whiteness, and no being ("is")—at least, it would be strange if there were, since we derive these concepts not from knowledge of reality "in itself," but from our own "nerve stimuli." The conflation of these two senses of truth, according to Nietzsche, leads us to believe that because we can say conventionally true things about the world of human experience—e.g., that snow is white—we can and do say things that are true in the sense of corresponding to reality itself, apart from how it appears in human experience—indeed, we naïvely take the human experience of reality for reality itself. Nietzsche rejects this latter claim, but it remains to explicate his reasons for doing so. Having established

this contrast between two senses of truth, it will now be necessary to examine each in more detail, both as expressed in TL and in Nietzsche's mature works.

In TL, Nietzsche evidently understands words and concepts as very closely related, if not precisely identical. His account here seems essentially the same as the one he gives much later: "Words are acoustical signs for concepts; concepts, however, are more or less definite image signs for often recurring and associated sensations, for groups of sensations" (BGE 268). Although in TL he seems to identify concepts more closely with words than with the images they signify, I think that the differences between these two accounts can be explained by their context. For in that work he begins with nerve stimuli ("sensations") and traces their development into words via the intermediaries of images and sounds: "A nerve stimulus first transformed into an image—the first metaphor! The image then reproduced in a sound—the second metaphor!" (p. 256). In this description we begin with a particular stimulus or sensation, which is transformed into an image, then into a sound, and only *then*, presumably over some period of time, into a word, which "immediately becomes a concept precisely because it is not intended to serve as a reminder of the unique, entirely individualized primal experience to which it owes its existence, but because it has to fit at one and the same time countless more or less similar cases" (p. 256). This is an account of the process by which we derive abstract, general concepts from particular, concrete experiences—and if it is true that "every word immediately becomes a concept," it is hard to see much difference between words and concepts, except that words are audible and concepts are not. However, by moving in the opposite direction, from words back toward sensations, as he does in BGE, Nietzsche is able to clarify this distinction somewhat. For now he asks not how words and concepts first come into being, but how they are related to each other.

And he tells us, sensibly enough as it seems to me, not that words *are* concepts, but that they are *signs* for concepts, which he identifies with images. On this account it is images that bear the actual abstract content, not words, which merely refer to the images. Words may indeed be necessary for the genesis of abstract concepts, as Nietzsche suggests in TL, even if the words themselves are only signs for those concepts, as he claims in BGE. I therefore think that these accounts are consistent, despite their apparent tension.

The upshot of this is that, at least according to the account in TL, language is necessary for conceptual thinking (cf. GS 354). Therefore, assuming that the predicate "true" can be applied only to propositions consisting of words that signify concepts, the existence of truth itself depends on whatever these words and concepts depend on. Nietzsche calls attention to one important prerequisite for the existence of words and concepts—and hence of truth—namely *social interaction*:

> To the extent that the individual wants to maintain himself against other individuals, in the natural state of things he has used the intellect mostly for dissimulation alone; but since man […] wants to live in a society or herd, he needs a peace settlement and he tries to make at least the most brutal *bellum omnium contra omnes* vanish from his world. This peace settlement entails something that looks like the first step towards attaining that mysterious drive for truth. At this point what is henceforth to be called "truth" is fixed, i.e. a universally valid and binding designation of things is invented and the legislation of language supplies the first laws of truth. For it is here that the contrast between truth and lie first comes into being. The liar uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make the unreal appear as real: he says, for example, "I am rich," when the correct designation of his condition would be "poor." [TL, p. 254-55]

Nietzsche writes that "[c]onsciousness is really only a net of communication between human beings; it is only as such that it had to develop; a solitary human being who lived like a beast of prey would not have needed it" (GS 354). For such an individual, he believes, unconscious thinking would suffice: "Man, like every living being, thinks continually without

knowing it; the thinking that rises to *consciousness* is only the smallest part of all this—the most superficial and worst part—for only this conscious thinking *takes the form of words, which is to say signs of communication*, and this fact uncovers the origin of consciousness" (GS 354). Nietzsche suggests in this passage that consciousness, which he evidently identifies with the stream of words we "speak" in our heads, exists only to facilitate the organization and speaking of those words to others, and the comprehension of the words they speak to us. For a solitary individual, the images signified by those words would have been enough.

This leads to what I take to be the main thrust of Nietzsche's reflections on language in TL, and especially his claim that "the legislation of language supplies the first laws of truth" (p. 255). A solitary individual would "think" only unconsciously, presumably having some kind of awareness of sensations and mental images which would, however, be non-linguistic, and therefore unconscious in Nietzsche's sense. Such individuals would seem to come very close to solipsism: an external world impinges upon them, but as far as they are concerned it does so always and only in the way it seems to to them. Now, is the situation with social groups that share linguistic conventions so different? What has been added in such cases, according to Nietzsche, is not knowledge of reality "in itself," but only the ability to designate "the relations between things and men," that is, experiences that are shared between human beings (TL, p. 256; cf. BGE 268). When one says that "snow is white," although one believes oneself to be speaking about something that has reality in itself, in fact one speaks only about a mental image that signifies a group of associated sensations. The word "snow" refers to such an image, which itself refers to tactile sensations like coldness and wetness, in conjunction with the visual sensation of whiteness; the term "white" picks out this last sort of sensation more particularly. These are all

abstract concepts that result from the equation of unequal experiences—for Nietzsche takes it for granted that no two visual experiences of whiteness, for example, are ever identical. "As certainly as no leaf is ever completely identical to another," he writes, "so certainly the concept of leaf is formed by arbitrarily shelving these individual differences or forgetting the distinguishing features" (TL, p. 256). How much might one be able say about a *particular* leaf or a *particular* experience of whiteness, if only language gave us the resources? The reason it does not, according to Nietzsche, is because every such experience is, strictly speaking, unique and incomparable, which also makes it incommunicable. Only the broad outlines of such experiences can be communicated, by reducing their particularity to the generality of images that are shared with others, and that can be called up in others' minds by means of the words that designate them.

Nietzsche's account of words and concepts, both in TL and in his mature works, makes it clear that human beings never talk about external reality in itself, but only about our experiences ("nerve stimuli" or "sensations"). Moreover, as I have just indicated, it is only possible to talk about experiences that are shared with others: "To understand one another, it is not enough that one use the same words; one also has to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences; in the end one has to have one's experiences in *common*" (BGE 268). Because language, and thus conscious thinking, can only be "about" shared human experiences, "it is entirely anthropomorphic and does not contain a single point which would be 'true in itself,' i.e., real and universally valid apart from man. Basically, the searcher for such truths seeks only the metamorphosis of the world into man; he struggles for an understanding of the world as something resembling humans and he achieves at best a sense of assimilation" (TL, p. 259). This basic claim will be familiar from the preceding chapters, but it should now be evident why

Nietzsche is committed to it. The nature of consciousness itself, as I have said, precludes the possibility of non-anthropomorphic knowledge: "This is the essence of phenomenalism and perspectivism as *I* understand them: Owing to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface- and sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal; all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalization" (GS 354). The "superficialities" to which the world is reduced by our way of "knowing" it are all derived from shared human experience—for the imperative that drives our "knowledge" is simply that "[s]omething strange is to be reduced to something *familiar*," that is, to the human (GS 355; cf. 112). Here man's "method is to set man up as the measure of all things, but he makes the mistake of believing that he has these things directly in front of him as pure objects" (TL, p. 259). I have argued that Nietzsche's method corrects this error insofar as he consciously interprets reality by analogy to human experience by means of a "pseudo-ontology."

The sections from GS quoted above come from Book V of that work, which was written around the same time as BGE, and can therefore be regarded as belonging among Nietzsche's "mature" works. His discussion of the character of truth and knowledge in these texts has, as it seems to me, only one significant difference from his treatment of these subjects in TL, namely that in that early work he had appealed to the Kantian distinction between the thing-in-itself and its appearance, while in his mature works he rejects that distinction as incoherent. He writes in TL that "[w]e believe that we know something about the things themselves when we talk about trees, colours, snow, and flowers, and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things which do

not correspond in the slightest to the original entities. […] [T]he mysterious X of the thing-in-itself appears first as a nerve stimulus, then as an image and finally as a sound" (p. 256). While this looks like a straightforward endorsement of the distinction between the thing-in-itself and its appearance, Nietzsche makes two other statements in TL that would seem to mitigate this conclusion. First, he had already said that "to infer from the nerve stimulus the existence of a cause outside us is the result of a false and unjustified application of the principle of sufficient reason" (p. 255). Despite the solipsistic conclusions to which insistence on this claim would lead, the fact that Nietzsche advances it at all shows that he retains a healthy skepticism about the concept of the thing-in-itself. Nor can he be faulted for effectively putting this claim on ice, as every philosopher does—for solipsism, if it is taken seriously, probably cannot be refuted; and we have seen that Nietzsche is content to suspend belief in a great many things without refuting them. Second, in discussing the distinction between the individual and the species, he says that this distinction "is also anthropomorphic and does not stem from the essence of things, even though we dare not say that it does not correspond to it, because that would be a dogmatic assertion and as such just as unprovable as its opposite" (p. 257). This could apply equally to any of our concepts, including those of "trees, colours, snow, and flowers," which, however, he has just said "do not correspond in the slightest to the original entities" (p. 256)—a dogmatic assertion by his own admission.

Rather than dogmatically presupposing the distinction between the thing-in-itself and its appearance, Nietzsche calls attention in TL to the dogmatism involved in such a distinction, though he still appeals to it for the sake of making his point. He may be doing the same thing when he appeals to the "school language" of "subject" and "object" (cf. WP 636), writing that

"correct perception—which would mean the adequate expression of an object in the subject—seems to me a self-contradictory absurdity" (p. 260). Here again Nietzsche remained committed to the basic insight expressed in TL, that "knowledge" itself involves interpretation, so that it is contradictory to talk of knowing anything "in itself," that is, as it is when it is *not* known by us. In GS, after telling us that "all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalization," he immediately adds the following:

> You will guess that it is not the opposition of subject and object that concerns me here: This distinction I leave to the epistemologists who have become entangled in the snares of grammar (the metaphysics of the people). It is even less the opposition of "thing-in-itself" and appearance; for we do not "know" nearly enough to be entitled to any such distinction. We simply lack any organ for knowledge, for "truth": we "know" (or believe or imagine) just as much as may be *useful* in the interests of the human herd, the species […]. [GS 354]

In its mature form, rather than being based on any consideration of subjects and objects, things-in-themselves and appearances, Nietzsche's denial that human knowledge can adequately represent reality is applied to these distinctions themselves. For what gives us the right to assert that, notwithstanding the inadequacy of our concepts as faithful representations of non-human reality, our conception of this inadequacy is itself adequate as a representation of our situation in relation to that reality? "The intellect cannot criticize itself," Nietzsche writes, "simply because it cannot be compared with other species of intellect and because its capacity to know would be revealed only in the presence of 'true reality,' i.e., because in order to criticize the intellect we should have to be a higher being with 'absolute knowledge'" (WP 473). Thus even Kant's claim that reason can discover its own limits, that we can *know* the limits of our knowledge, is for Nietzsche an overestimation of our capacity for knowledge.

I suggested above that Nietzsche appeals in BT to metaphysical concepts which, however, turn out to be dispensable with respect to his basic view, and I think that something similar is going on with his invocation of the "thing-in-itself" in TL, written only about a year later. Although his argument seems at one point to rely on this concept, he also offers a different account of the limited character of our knowledge—not by comparison to knowledge of things-in-themselves, but rather to non-human ways of knowing. He insists "that the world perceived by an insect or a bird is completely different from that perceived by man, and that it would be quite pointless to ask which of the two perceptions of the world is more correct, because the answer would require the prior application of the standard of *correct perception*, i.e., a non-existent standard" (p. 260). True, this kind of argument does not establish that the human way of perceiving the world is *incorrect*, but only that it is partial and limited. There is indeed a standard of correct perception *for humans*, namely the consensus of the social group that is expressed in linguistic conventions—but, as we have seen, this standard has nothing to do with reality "in itself," but only with our anthropomorphic world of words and concepts. The problem is that, given the regularity with which human beings apply these concepts, they come to be taken for something more than an anthropomorphic interpretation, namely for an adequate representation of reality itself: "only forgetting that he is a subject, and an *artistically creative* subject at that, enables man to live with a degree of peace, certainty, consistency" (p. 259). In other words, the conviction that our concepts are adequate to reality has a comforting and stabilizing effect, since their truth seems to be guaranteed by something independent of us, which is fixed and stable in itself; and this conviction is encouraged by the fact that all "normal" human beings seem to perceive and conceptualize reality in basically the same ways. At this level, the "artistically

creative subject" is not an individual human being, but man himself, considered as a social organism. The fact that, in the ongoing process of "triangulation," our basic concepts are rarely contradicted leads to the belief that they are universally valid: "The regularity that impresses us so much in the movement of stars and in chemical processes basically coincides with those properties that we ourselves bring to things, so that ultimately we are impressed by ourselves" (p. 261).

This is one of the main ways in which Nietzsche uses the term "perspectivism," namely in reference to what might be called the "human perspective." He reaffirms this position in Book V of GS, where we have already seen him reject the distinction between the thing-in-itself and its appearance:

> [T]he human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these. We cannot look around our own corner: it is a hopeless curiosity that wants to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be; for example, whether some beings might be able to experience time backward, or alternately forward and backward (which would involve another direction of life and another concept of cause and effect). But I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner. Rather the world has become "infinite" for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations*. [GS 374]

Perspectivism in this sense indeed amounts to a form of modesty, insofar as it is an admission that the human way of conceptualizing reality is not universally valid—even if it seems so to us—but is only a scheme of interpretation adapted for the needs of a particular type of animal. What then is being interpreted? Nietzsche writes that "the world, apart from our condition of living in it, the world that we have not reduced to our being, our logical and psychological prejudices, does not exist as a world 'in-itself'; it is essentially a world of relationships" (WP 568). "[T]he world of 'phenomena,'" he tells us, "is the adapted world which we feel to be real. The 'reality' lies in

the continual recurrence of identical, familiar, related things in their logicized character […]; the antithesis of this phenomenal world is not 'the true world,' but the formless-unformulatable world of the chaos of sensations—*another kind* of phenomenal world, a kind 'unknowable' for us" (WP 569). However, the "sensations" that Nietzsche mentions here cannot be merely *our* sensations before they have been transformed into words and concepts, since this would again lead to solipsism or, at best, quietism about what the world is like apart from our way of conceptualizing it. Strictly speaking, such quietism would appear to follow from the above considerations. However, an interpretation is still possible, though it will necessarily be an anthropomorphic one —and we have seen that Nietzsche wants to give such an interpretation.

Maudemarie Clark argues that, after having given up the concept of the thing-in-itself, to which she believes Nietzsche was firmly committed in TL, he does indeed identify "reality with the chaos of sensation."[39] The problem as she sees it is that if there are no things-in-themselves, then there is no longer any basis for the claim that human knowledge falsifies reality—what Clark calls the "falsification thesis"—for, in that case, what is there to be falsified? As I have noted, I think that the term "falsification" is too strong and that "interpretation" is preferable, but Clark is correct that Nietzsche often uses the former term. On her view, Nietzsche's claim in TL that "truths are illusions" is grounded in his denial that our concepts can adequately represent things-in-themselves, so that if he later denies the coherence of the concept of things-in-themselves, he will require some other basis for claiming that our concepts are inadequate.[40] Clark appeals to his claim that "the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface- and sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner" (GS 354), writing that "[w]hen

39 Clark, p. 122.
40 Ibid., pp. 91–93, 120.

Nietzsche then concludes that consciousness involves corruption and 'falsification,' the most natural interpretation is that consciousness falsifies precisely sense impressions, which can enter consciousness only in communicable, or 'logicized' (universal), and therefore falsified, form."[41] This is certainly a claim that Nietzsche makes, but Clark seems to expect more from it than I think is warranted. For it is one thing to say, as Nietzsche does, that conscious thinking "falsifies" (reinterprets) sensations, and quite another to say that "the data of sensation constitute reality," a claim that Nietzsche does not make, notwithstanding his distinction between the world of anthropomorphic concepts and "the world of the chaos of sensations" (WP 569).[42] Why, indeed, would Clark attribute this strange view to Nietzsche?

The reason, as I have suggested already, is that she sees no other way of reconciling the "falsification thesis" with Nietzsche's rejection of the thing-in-itself. Clark attributes to Nietzsche a "representational model of knowledge [which] he inherited from Schopenhauer," though she does not define this "model" very explicitly, merely appealing to Schopenhauer's dictum that "the world is my representation."[43] Nietzsche does hold a representational model of knowledge in a sense, if "representation" and "interpretation" can be used interchangeably; however, Clark does not understand by the former term what Nietzsche does by the latter, so that the conclusion she draws from his "representationalism" ends up being misguided. "Nietzsche has only two options," she writes: "Either there are independently existing things which cannot be direct objects of knowledge or only representations exist. The first option commits him to the thing-in-itself; the second amounts to subjective idealism."[44] Clark thinks that, having rejected the thing-

41 Ibid., pp. 120–121.
42 Ibid., p. 121.
43 Ibid., p. 117–125; cf. Schopenhauer, p. 3.
44 Ibid., p. 118–119.

in-itself, Nietzsche is stuck with a "subjective idealism" (roughly what I have referred to as "solipsism") in which only representations exist. In this case, they are not representations *of* any "independently existing things," but are themselves the only reality—meaning that they presumably cannot be false. She appeals to the "chaos of sensations" in order to explain how Nietzsche can claim at one and the same time that our knowledge falsifies and that there is no thing-in-itself to be falsified: "If only representations exist, it could seem plausible to identify reality with whatever part of the representations we do not 'make up.' The naturalized Kantian understanding of representations makes sensations the only given aspect, the only thing not made up by our minds."[45] Leaving aside the question whether the "naturalized Kantian understanding of representations" necessarily entails this claim—and, if it does, that would be a powerful piece of evidence against Clark's view that Nietzsche is committed to such an understanding—the identification of our sensations with reality itself seems an odd claim to make. Clark is right that this would amount to something like Berkeleyan idealism. Her confidence in attributing such a view to Nietzsche is probably bolstered by the fact that she thinks he ultimately abandoned this position as incoherent, which she argues it is. For my part, I do not think that she has properly understood Nietzsche's view on representation and falsification.

Clark believes that Nietzsche realized the incoherence of the view that sensation is the reality that is falsified by our representations by the time he wrote BGE, though she has a hard time explaining why he still advances the falsification thesis in that work. She appeals to the following enigmatic passage in support of this claim:

45 Ibid., p. 122.

> To study physiology with a clear conscience, one must insist that the sense organs are *not* phenomena in the sense of idealistic philosophy; as such they could not be causes! […] What? And others even say that the external world is the work of our organs? But then our body, as a part of the external world, would be the work of our organs! But then our organs themselves would be—the work of our organs! It seems to me that this is a complete *reductio ad absurdum*, assuming that the concept of a *causa sui* is something fundamentally absurd. Consequently, the external world is *not* the work of our organs—? [BGE 15]

I call this passage enigmatic because, rather than solving the problem, as Clark takes it to do, it drives home the *difficulty* of the problem. On her reading, the point is simply that "one cannot consistently give an empirical (i.e., physiological) account of the role of sensations in knowledge, and yet reduce to arrangements of sense data the sense organs presupposed by that account. […] It follows that empirical accounts cannot provide a basis for equating reality with the chaos of sensations, since they must presuppose that sense organs and bodies are real."[46] That is indeed Nietzsche's point. But his final sentence is suggestive: is this *reductio* enough to allow us positively to say that the external world we experience is *not* a product of our sense organs? I think the answer to this question is obviously negative. Physiology teaches us that the empirical world we experience is indeed conditioned by our sense organs, by the structure of our brains, and so on, as Clark recognizes.[47] Yet those organs are themselves part of the empirical world when we study them in that way, so that they also condition our physiological investigations. I have called attention to this circularity already, and I do not see how this passage manages to defuse it. At best it refutes idealism, so long as the form of idealism in question is committed to the idea that the sense organs are causes of sensations. Clark believes that, having rejected the thing-in-itself, Nietzsche falls into an idealism of precisely this kind, and that BGE 15 was written when he finally recognized the incoherence of that position.

46 Ibid., p. 123.
47 Ibid., p. 122.

However, Clark's whole reconstruction of Nietzsche's "idealism" is misguided, for one simple reason: Nietzsche does *not* at any point identify reality with the "chaos of sensations." Even the text she appeals to in support of this claim contradicts it, but she suppresses that section in her quotation—as I have also done above, in order to introduce the disagreement more fully. After he has written that "the antithesis of this phenomenal world is not 'the true world,' but the formless-unformulatable world of the chaos of sensations," Nietzsche goes on to say the following:

> [Q]uestions, what things "in-themselves" may be like, apart from our sense receptivity and the activity of our understanding, must be rebutted with the question: how could we know that things exist? "Thingness" was first created by us. The question is whether there could not be many other ways of creating such an apparent world—and whether this creating, logicizing, adapting, falsifying is not itself the best-guaranteed reality; in short, whether that which "posits things" is not the sole reality; and whether the "effect of the external world upon us" is not also only the result of such active subjects—The other "entities" act upon us; our adapted apparent world is an adaptation and overpowering of their actions; a kind of defensive measure. The subject alone is demonstrable; hypothesis that only subjects exist—that "object" is only a kind of effect produced by a subject upon a subject—a *modus* of *the subject*. [WP 569]

Here Nietzsche is clearly rejecting the concept of the thing-in-itself, but not precisely in the sense that Clark claims. For she identifies things-in-themselves with "independently existing things" (i.e., existing independently of human beings), so that the denial of things-in-themselves amounts to the denial of an external world ("subjective idealism"). However, Nietzsche never denies that there are independently existing "things"—taking that word in a very loose sense—but only that there are things-in-themselves, which he understands as persistent substrata that act as bearers of properties and have fixed essences. A "thing" in this sense is a kind of discrete unity, analogous to our psychological experience of the subject as a unity (WP 485); it is "in-itself" because it has its own essence that does not depend on anything outside itself (WP 558). Insofar as Nietzsche

rejects both of these claims, he rejects the thing-in-itself: "The 'thing-in-itself' is nonsensical. If I remove all the relationships, all the 'properties,' all the 'activities' of a thing, the thing does not remain over; because thingness has only been invented by us owing to the requirements of logic, thus with the aim of defining, communication (to bind together the multiplicity of relationships, properties, activities)" (WP 558). As we have seen, Nietzsche insists that "the world, apart from [...] our logic and psychological prejudices, does not exist as a world 'in-itself'; it is essentially a world of relationships" (WP 568). So Nietzsche certainly does believe in independently existing "things," namely these "relationships" themselves.

In the passage quoted above he tells us something about the character of these relationships, though I think he expresses himself more clearly in other texts. Here he says that the relationships in question obtain between "subjects," which he identifies with the "creating, logicizing, adapting, falsifying" powers that, for example, posit "things" (WP 569). His procedure is to collapse the distinction between subject and object, so that independently existing "things" like our sense organs are not objects perceived by a subject, but are themselves subjects that produce effects on other subjects: "That things possess a constitution in themselves quite apart from interpretation and subjectivity, is a quite idle hypothesis: it presupposes that interpretation and subjectivity are not essential, that a thing freed from all relationships would still be a thing" (WP 560). Nietzsche's position is that "interpretation and subjectivity" are essential to reality itself, and not something that pertains only to man, so to speak, as an exception to the rule. He says of physicists that "they left something out of the constellation without knowing it: precisely this necessary perspectivism by which every center of force [i.e., every subject]—and not only man—construes all the rest of the world from its own viewpoint,

i.e., measures, feels, forms, according to its own force—They forgot to include this perspective-setting force in 'true being'—in school language: the subject" (WP 636). Of course, as we have seen, Nietzsche also regards the subject as an interpretation, that is, as a *product* of the "perspective-setting force[s]" he describes. The subject is a fictional substratum that, based on our linguistic conventions, we say underlies the activity of these forces. There is subjective interpretation, but, strictly speaking, "[o]ne may not ask: 'Who then interprets?' for the interpretation itself [...] exists (but not as a 'being' but as a process, a becoming) as an affect" (WP 556). I emphasize this point especially: the activity of interpretation is not attributable to any agent, but exists in its own right, as a process. "Now there is no other mode of action whatever," Nietzsche writes; "and the 'world' is only a word for the totality of these actions" (WP 567).

This picture of reality as composed of interpretative forces, which Nietzsche explicitly identifies with the concept of "will to power" (WP 556), will be examined in Part II. At this point my aim has only been to give a sketch of that worldview, because, having done so, it becomes possible to see an alternative to Clark's dichotomy between the commitment to the thing-in-itself on the one hand and "subjective idealism" on the other, which I take to be a false dilemma. Her argument was that the commitment to "independently existing things" amounted to the commitment to the thing-in-itself, while the rejection of this commitment amounted to the claim that "only representations exist." Although these positions are supposed to be mutually exclusive, we have seen that Nietzsche is able to hold both at the same time. While he rejects the thing-in-itself as he understands it, this does not mean he rejects independently existing "things"—but these things are precisely "representations," that is, subjective processes of interpretation, and not objects. Thus he claims that only representations exist—but not only *human* representations, as

Clark suggests; rather, as I have said, the independently existing world is itself made up of representations, which are real. One of Clark's most important errors is to assume that representations are something that only human beings, or perhaps only creatures with cognitive abilities, possess. Nietzsche applies this concept more broadly, and does not take it to depend on consciousness or cognition, although these are instances of it. That is to say, they are instances of *interpretation*, which I am using interchangeably with "representation" only to make clear the connection to Clark's argument. For one thing, the term "representation" implies some original "object" (which will be another process of interpretation) that is left unchanged, and merely re-presented in the mind of a subject. While this will sometimes be the case—for example, in the interpretation of a text, which is presumably where Nietzsche got the metaphor—most such processes involve imposing a new order on the "object" itself, forcing it to change in accordance with a different scheme of interpretation.

Nietzsche expresses this picture of interpretation as overpowering ("imposing") quite vividly in the Second Essay of GM:

> [W]hatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a *becoming master*, and all subduing and becoming master involves a new interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous "meaning" and "purpose" are necessarily obscured or even obliterated. […] But purposes and utilities are only *signs* that a will to power has become master of something less powerful and imposed upon it the character of a function; and the entire history of a "thing," an organ, a custom can in this way be a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations […]. The "evolution" of a thing, a custom, an organ is thus […] a succession of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of subduing, plus the resistances they encounter, the attempts at transformation for the purpose of defense and reaction, and the results of successful counteractions. [GM II:12]

This does not sound like "representation" in the idealist sense sense that Clark attributes to Nietzsche in GS and BGE. His claim that an organ, for example, is "a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations" does not mean that the organ is an object that a subject represents to itself in novel ways, but that it is *itself* a process of fluctuating power relations, whether it becomes conscious for a "subject" or not. This does not make it a thing-in-itself, because its "essence" is flux and consists only in its relation to other such processes, rather than being held "in-itself" (cf. WP 635). The changes that occur in the organ are attributable to "subjects," insofar as Nietzsche sometimes speaks of interpretative processes as though they were the activities of subjects. However, he is careful to point out that this is only a useful fiction, and such "subjects" would in any case bear little resemblance to the conscious, human subjects Clark seems to have in mind, which should be obvious when we reflect that a single organ of the human body already contains a multiplicity of them. Their "interpretations" are not pictures on a mental movie screen, as they seem to be for the idealist, but real, causal processes in the world.

Nietzsche makes this clear in one of the most important sections of BGE, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 6. Here he suggests that these processes in "the so-called mechanistic (or 'material') world" are best conceptualized by analogy to the human affect of "will to power," and immediately adds the following: "I mean, not as a deception, as 'mere appearance,' a 'representation' (in the sense of Berkeley and Schopenhauer) but as holding the same rank of reality as our affect—as a more primitive form of the world of affects" (BGE 36). One wonders why Clark does not take account of this passage, considering that she attributes to the Nietzsche of BGE a "representational model of knowledge," which he is supposed to have taken over from Schopenhauer. I agree that his reflections in BGE 15 have the effect of

undermining such a model, but BGE 36 shows that he is already attempting to formulate an alternative, in which our organs can be both "representations" and independently existing things—and indeed, based on the argument in BGE 15, it seems that they must be both, because Nietzsche is willing to maintain neither that we have immediate access to external reality (cf. BGE 16), nor that our organs have no reality except as conscious representations. Clark believes that, although Nietzsche had effectively undermined representationalism in BGE 15, he did not yet draw the conclusion that he no longer had any basis for claiming that human knowledge falsifies reality, since our representations either falsify themselves (which she considers absurd), or things-in-themselves (which Nietzsche had rejected), or the "chaos of sensations" (which I have shown Nietzsche does not equate with the "reality" being falsified).[48] Thus he continued to talk of knowledge falsifying reality, even though he no longer had any basis for that assertion. I do not consider this reading very charitable assuming there is an alternative, since it suggests that Nietzsche himself was unable to see what is fairly obvious. I believe I have succeeded in showing that an alternative reading is viable, in which Nietzsche's claim that knowledge "falsifies" (interprets) reality is defensible despite his rejection of both things-in-themselves and idealist representationalism.

Let this suffice for now as an answer to the question of what perspectives are "on"—that is, upon what subject matter interpretation operates—so that we may proceed to consider the nature of perspectival interpretation itself in more detail. In a sense, Clark shares my view that when Nietzsche speaks of "perspectivism" he is often concerned with what I have called the "human perspective," rather than with "subjective" perspectives belonging to individual human

48 Ibid., pp. 124–125.

beings. On her view, perspectivism simply amounts to the claim that, because there are no things-in-themselves to be known, the criterion of truth is defined solely by the cognitive capacities and interests of human beings: "Understood in this way, perspectivism gives us no reason to deny that many human beliefs are true, however. The perspectival character of knowledge places no limit whatsoever on our cognitive capacities."[49] In other words, many of our beliefs are true in the conventional sense described above, and that is all we could want from our beliefs after we have rejected the criterion of correspondence to things-in-themselves as incoherent. From the human perspective it is true that snow is white, and it is meaningless to ask whether it is "really" white "in itself." However, one may still ask whether there might be other cognitive perspectives in which such concepts as "snow" and "white" would themselves be meaningless, owing to the existence of different cognitive interests and capacities belonging to creatures different from us. Clark does not take this possibility to place any serious limitation on human knowledge, and in a way she is correct: any non-human cognitive perspectives that might exist would be inaccessible to us in principle, and could therefore have no consequences for us in determining whether our beliefs are true or false. But, on the other hand, this way of viewing the matter seems rather more "practical" than philosophical. If the existence of cognitive perspectives that differ radically from our own is a live possibility, then we are forced to admit the possibility that there is far *more* to reality than what can be known from the human perspective. This would seem to place an important limit on our cognitive capacities.

Clark does not deny that our cognitive capacities are limited. However, we have seen that their limitation does not consist in their inability to adequately represent things-in-themselves,

49 Ibid., p. 134.

which do not exist. On her view, insofar as our cognitive capacities are limited, they are so with respect to our "cognitive interests," i.e., "the cognitively relevant properties we want from a theory or set of beliefs *other than truth* (e.g., simplicity, comprehensiveness, etc.)."[50] The reason truth is irrelevant is that, if there are no things-in-themselves with essences that can be known, the criterion of truth simply is the satisfaction of our cognitive interests, so that truth itself cannot be numbered among those interests. This again sounds like the conventional sense of truth, in which a proposition is "true" if it uses the agreed-upon terms to designate experiences that are shared with other human beings with whom one is trying to communicate. The application of these terms is not entirely arbitrary, but must cohere, as we have seen, with certain conceptual categories that are basic to human thinking—"subject" and "attribute," "cause" and "effect," and so on—as well as with the basic tendency of that thinking to reduce the complex to the simple, and the non-human to the human. Although Clark's definition of the term is somewhat more vague, these are the sorts of things she seems to have in mind when she speaks of "cognitive interests." At any rate, they are the sorts of things that Nietzsche has in mind when he writes that "[r]ational thought is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off" (WP 522). Accordingly, it seems plausible that some human cognitive perspectives (i.e., "theories or sets of beliefs") will satisfy the requirements of that scheme better than others, and will thus have a greater right to be called "true." Clark's claim is that, if there is any coherent sense in which our cognitive capacities can be said to be limited, it is only insofar as they are not always able to fully satisfy these cognitive interests.

50 Ibid., p. 48; cf. 141.

Clark's interpretation indeed seems to "set man up as the measure of all things" (TL, p. 259), which I have argued Nietzsche does as well, because he considers this unavoidable (cf. BGE 3, 23).[51] However, as the above quotation from GS 374 makes clear, man is the measure of all things only *for man*. There could be other kinds of creatures that not only have radically different cognitive capacities from ours, but also radically different cognitive *interests*—and this is a point that Clark fails to address. She writes that Nietzsche "admits the conceivability of beings with cognitive powers superior to those we possess even in principle," but still holds that, if such beings exist, "our best theory [about the way reality is] would be false only if the cognitively superior beings in question had reason to reject it in accord with *our* own best standards of rational acceptability."[52] Strictly speaking this is correct: if man's cognitive interests are the measure of truth and falsity *for man*, then any claim about truth or falsity that will be meaningful to a human being must be made in the context of those interests. Thus Clark sees our cognitive capacities as limited only insofar as they do not always hit upon the truth—that is, insofar as they do not always fully satisfy our cognitive interests, which provide the criterion of truth. Nietzsche, on the other hand, seems to say that our cognitive capacities are limited, in large part, precisely *by* our cognitive interests, by the fact that we conceive of reality in specific and partial ways that facilitate the preservation of creatures like us. Thus a set of beliefs about reality that fully satisfied our cognitive interests would not for that reason be a comprehensive theory of reality, because it would necessarily ignore all those aspects of reality in which we have no "interest." This does not necessitate that all of our beliefs are false; in the conventional sense, most of them are probably true. However, it does mean that Nietzsche's perspectivism imputes

51 Compare the discussion in Clark and Dudrick, pp. 54–56.
52 Clark, p. 49.

important limitations to our cognitive capacities with respect to the external world, which possibly contains an infinite number of non-human perspectives, and not merely with respect to our own cognitive interests. Clark's analysis downplays or denies the "infinity" of perspectives that Nietzsche postulates by eliding the fact that the existence of radically different cognitive interests is conceivable, which might intimate to us the limitations of our own cognitive capacities.

I have so far been speaking about the "human perspective" as such, that is, the basic perceptual and conceptual scheme that Nietzsche believes is shared by all human beings. I have said that perspectives are not something that only human beings have, but that, where human perspectives are concerned, Nietzsche considers the *species* more fundamental than the individual human "subject." However, there is also variation *within* the human perspective—that is, between the perspectives of different individuals—and this observation brings us back to the question with which we began this chapter: what makes one human interpretation of reality more true than another?

Clark's answer appeals, as we have seen, to the satisfaction of our cognitive interests. Human perspectives can do a better or worse job of satisfying those interests, and a perspective that satisfies them fully, "at the ideal limits of human inquiry," is *ipso facto* a true perspective.[53] In advancing this interpretation, Clark is attempting to counter the claims of commentators who believe that Nietzsche's perspectivism amounts to a form of relativism in which every human perspective is as "true" as every other, leaving no basis upon which to privilege one over

53 Ibid., p. 49.

another.[54] Nietzsche clearly does consider some human perspectives more true than others—the difficulty lies in identifying his criterion of truth. I think Clark does manage to identify part of that criterion, though it is the more obvious and trivial part, namely that any perspective that human beings can deem "true" must accord with shared human cognitive interests, and it must do so to a greater extent than other perspectives with which it might be in competition. For example, the heliocentric model of the solar system outdoes the geocentric model according to this standard, because it allows us to conceptualize that system in terms of motions that are fairly simple and regular, as opposed to the complex and chaotic geocentric picture—taking it for granted that simplicity and regularity are cognitive interests common to all human beings. Clark writes that "we think of one perspective as superior to another if it gives the occupants of both perspectives more of what they want from a theory—would better satisfy their standards of rational acceptability—than does the other perspective."[55] In other words, the adherent of the geocentric model can be induced to acknowledge the superiority of the heliocentric model if he can be shown that, according to his own "standards of rational acceptability," the latter model does a better job of solving the problem with which he is concerned than does the former. Thus Clark believes that human perspectives can in principle be evaluated as to their truth or falsity, so that perspectivism does not amount to a form of relativism in which "anything goes."[56]

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54 See especially Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); but also Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); and Alan Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 1990). This way of reading Nietzsche has fallen out of favour in the Anglophone world over the past thirty years, due in part to the influence of Clark's work.

55 Clark, p. 141.

56 Ibid., p. 139.

This conclusion seems straightforward enough so long as we assume that the decisive cognitive interests are always shared entirely by the "occupants" of different perspectives. However, Clark sees the possibility that "people with different perspectives may accept different standards of rational acceptability," which complicates matters immensely.[57] Notwithstanding the great number of cognitive interests that are held in common by all human beings, if there is significant variation with respect to even a single such interest, it might be impossible in principle to determine which of a set of opposed perspectives is more true, if their opposition centred on that particular interest. Clark attempts to avoid this problem by suggesting "that for any two conflicting perspectives, there may be a third perspective that is neutral in regard to what is at issue between the two," on the basis of which their disagreement can be adjudicated.[58] She does not say that Nietzsche's perspectivism entails "that this is always (or even usually) a practical possibility," but only that perspectivism does not rule it out. I agree with her that such a "third perspective" may sometimes exist. The problem is that there may also be many cases in which no such perspective exists, which would force us to admit that many sets of incommensurable human perspectives may be impossible to evaluate with respect to which is more true. If Nietzsche's criterion of truth is the satisfaction of human cognitive interests, and those interests vary to some extent between one individual and another, then he will fall back into a form of relativism in which a belief can be true "from my perspective" (i.e., from the point of view of my cognitive interests), and false from yours. This is not the conclusion that Clark wants to draw, but I don't see how she can avoid it without insisting that cognitive interests are shared uniformly between all individuals, which evidently is not the case.

57 Ibid., p. 141.
58 Ibid., p. 141.

Fortunately, I think that Nietzsche's criterion of truth involves a good deal more than the mere satisfaction of cognitive interests, however important that satisfaction may be. Clark essentially admits that she is leaving out a large part of the picture in her discussion of perspectivism, though she seems not to see the problem with this procedure. At the outset of that discussion she writes: "'Perspectivism' is the claim that all knowledge is perspectival. Nietzsche also characterizes values as perspectival, but I shall be concerned here only with his perspectivism regarding knowledge."[59] However, the suggestion that questions of knowledge and questions of value are separable for Nietzsche does not seem tenable:

> [M]ost of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts. Behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stand valuations or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life. For example, that the definite should be worth more than the indefinite, and mere appearance worth less than "truth"—such estimates might be, in spite of their regulative importance for *us*, nevertheless mere foreground estimates, a certain kind of *niaiserie* which may be necessary for the preservation of just such beings as we are. Supposing, that is, that not just man is the "measure of things"—[BGE 3]

The sorts of "valuations" that Nietzsche mentions here—for example, that the definite is more valuable than the indefinite—sound a lot like what Clark calls "cognitive interests." Indeed, it is hard to see how the concept of "interest" would not imply an evaluation: if I have an interest in comprehending the world in a certain way, this suggests that doing so seems good or desirable to me. The cognitive valuations described in this text are those that are shared by all human beings because they are necessary for the preservation of the human species—but according to Nietzsche they are valuations nonetheless. Incidentally, the final line of this text also seems to support my contention above that, insofar as man is the measure of all things *for man*, the conceptualization

59 Ibid., p. 127.

of the world that results from these valuations may be regarded as true; while, insofar as there may be many other ways of conceptualizing the world on the basis of different cognitive valuations, our shared conceptualization may still be regarded as "mere foreground."

However, let us be charitable and assume Clark realizes that "interests" and "values" are not so easily distinguished. Perhaps when she brackets Nietzsche's claims about values being perspectival, she is not referring to the shared values she calls "cognitive interests," but rather to those values that are not necessarily shared by all human beings—the sorts of values that people disagree over. Perhaps perspectival knowledge can be treated solely on the basis of shared human cognitive interests, which, because they are held in common, form a more solid basis of agreement than we usually expect from "values"—perhaps even a kind of objectivity. Nietzsche does suggest that something like this is possible in certain cases: "among scholars who are really scientific men […] you may really find something like a drive for knowledge, some small, independent clockwork that, once well wound, works on vigorously *without* any essential participation from all the other drives of the scholar" (BGE 6). Such a human being might indeed judge the cognitive matters with which he is concerned solely in terms of the cognitive interests of human beings in general, and be willing and able in most cases to step back to a neutral perspective should disagreement arise about those interests. However, Nietzsche considers this a highly exceptional kind of case, precisely because, as a rule, cognition is employed as a *tool* for the satisfaction of some psychological "drive" or "affect," which conceptualizes the world in accordance with its own valuation. If there are some scholarly types for whom this is not the case, Nietzsche thinks that this is because their scholarly work simply does not engage them affectively, but is rather only a means to some other end. Where "pure cognition" of this rare kind

is concerned, shared human cognitive interests may indeed be enough to settle most disagreements between perspectives, and Clark might therefore be right to consider those interests as distinct from what are usually called "values"—even if, strictly speaking, that is what they are for Nietzsche.

But things are different when affects come into play, which Nietzsche thinks they do in most all important cases: "Indeed, if one would explain how the abstrusest metaphysical claims of a philosopher really came about, it is always well (and wise) to ask first: at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim?" (BGE 6). Nietzsche understands a "morality" in this sense as "a *sign language of the affects*" (BGE 187), and says that it "bears decided and decisive witness to *who he* [i.e., the philosopher] *is*—that is, in what order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand in relation to each other" (BGE 6). Far from aiming simply at the satisfaction of shared human cognitive interests, philosophical perspectives aim primarily at the vindication of a personal morality, which expresses the psychological drives of the philosopher:

> Accordingly, I do not believe that a "drive for knowledge" is the father of philosophy; but rather that another drive has, here as elsewhere, employed understanding (and misunderstanding) as a mere instrument. But anyone who considers the basic drives of man to see to what extent they may have been at play just here as *inspiring* spirits (or demons and kobolds) will find that all of them have done philosophy at some time—and that every single one of them would like only too well to represent just *itself* as the ultimate purpose of existence and the legitimate *master* of all the other drives. For every drive wants to be master —and it attempts to philosophize in *that spirit*. [BGE 6]

Nietzsche's psychology of drives will be examined at length in Chapter 5. For now, it suffices to say that "drives" (or "affects," or "instincts") are processes of interpretation that are more fundamental than conscious thinking, and that themselves give rise to that thinking (cf. BGE 36). Human cognitive interests are broadly shared because all human beings share a basic set of

physio-psychological drives that are conditioned by our similar physio-physiology. However, the relations among these drives, the "order of rank" in which they stand relative to one another, can differ greatly between individuals, meaning that different individuals will interpret the world differently in accordance with the demands of their most powerful drives. When a disagreement between human perspectives arises on *this* basis, it cannot be resolved by retreating to a neutral cognitive perspective, because such a perspective would not satisfy the dominant drives on either side of the dispute, which are concerned with interpreting the world in accordance with their own valuations, and not with cognitive neutrality. Such a cognitive dispute could only be resolved by resolving the affective dispute, that is, by a physio-psychological change in one or both parties to the dispute.

As an example, consider the incompatible world-interpretations of Heraclitus and Parmenides. To put the matter somewhat simply, Heraclitus believed that becoming and change are real, and that the appearance of permanence is merely illusory; Parmenides held the opposite, namely that change is illusory and that permanent, unchanging being is the only reality. To what neutral cognitive perspective could these two withdraw in order to resolve their disagreement? Heraclitus might argue that his perspective is borne out by empirical experience, which teaches that, on careful examination, nothing stays the same, that everything is constantly changing. However, Parmenides would reply that this is precisely why empirical experience is not to be trusted: it shows things as if they changed, but change is a logical impossibility, because it entails the incoherent notion that being transforms into non-being and vice versa. Heraclitus, to the contrary, would deny the reliability of a logic that cannot be made to cohere with the world we actually experience, and that leaves one with no option but to downgrade that world to the status

of an illusion. Insofar as Heraclitus appeals to experience while Parmenides appeals to logic, their cognitive interests would seem to be fundamentally incompatible, leaving no neutral perspective from which their disagreement could be resolved. I think that Nietzsche would explain the insolubility of this disagreement on the basis of incompatible affective needs: in Parmenides, a need for "logic, the conceptual understandability of existence—for logic calms and gives confidence—in short, a certain warm narrowness that keeps away fear and encloses one in optimistic horizons"; in Heraclitus a need for "*destruction*, change, and becoming," prompted by "overflowing energy" (GS 370). This is a simplistic characterization, but it should suffice for a first indication of the way in which Nietzsche ranks perspectives. He does not rank them solely according to how well they satisfy shared cognitive interests, nor even according to how well they satisfy the psychological drives that prompt them—rather, he ranks them according to *which* drives prompt them, and whether the dominance of those drives in an individual is an expression of relative strength or weakness. In the given case, he would consider Heraclitus' view a symptom of strength, and Parmenides' a symptom of weakness.

Although a full explication of Nietzsche's reasons for making this diagnosis cannot be given yet, a provisional sketch should be possible at this point. In evident sympathy with Heraclitus, he writes that "[t]he reasons for which 'this' [empirical] world has been characterized as 'apparent' are the very reasons which indicate its reality; any other kind of reality is absolutely indemonstrable" (TI III:6; cf. III:1-3). This is immediately followed by the corresponding claim that "[t]he criteria which have been bestowed on the 'true being' of things [e.g., by Parmenides] are the criteria of not-being, of *nothing*; the 'true world' has been constructed out of contradiction to the actual [empirical] world" (TI III:6). Now this would seem to be a mere restatement of the

disagreement described above, with the only difference being that Nietzsche takes a side, whereas I put the matter in more neutral terms. It should be apparent that he takes sides here in accordance with his historical methodology, which forces him to reject the absolute opposition between a true and an apparent world. However, if absolute opposites do not exist, Nietzsche needs some way of explaining the delusion of those, like Parmenides, who believe in them. I touched on this issue in my comparison of historical and metaphysical philosophy in Chapter 1, when I cited his discussion of "the faith in opposite values" (BGE 2): the metaphysical philosopher "derives *suffering* from change, deception, contradiction," and therefore creates for himself in thought a world "that does not contradict itself, does not deceive, does not change, a *true* world—a world in which one does not suffer" (WP 585). Nietzsche makes this point again in the text we have just been examining: "To invent fables about a world 'other' than this one has no meaning at all, unless an instinct of slander, detraction, and suspicion against life has gained the upper hand in us: in that case, we avenge ourselves against life with a phantasmagoria of 'another,' a 'better' life" (TI III:6). Thus he explains Parmenides' perspective as arising from an *affective evaluation of existence*, and specifically a negative evaluation. Although that perspective is couched in cognitive terms, it does not originate fundamentally from any cognitive considerations, but rather from an affective need which is not open to refutation on the basis of such considerations.

"A condemnation of life by the living," Nietzsche writes, "remains in the end a mere symptom of a certain kind of life: the question whether it is [cognitively] justified or unjustified is not even raised thereby" (TI V:5). This claim would apply equally to an affirmation of life, such as that of Heraclitus. If what is at issue between him and Parmenides is an affective attitude toward life—or, more specifically, toward change, which Nietzsche considers a basic

characteristic of life—then the relative value of their perspectives can be judged in accordance with their respective attitudes, and with the degree of strength or weakness that each represents. Put differently, because Nietzsche is committed to the rejection of absolute opposites, he cannot grant that a human judgment about the value of life or its most basic features can be true, because such judgments are necessarily made from *within* the perspective of human life, and as such cannot characterize that life as a whole:

> One would require a position *outside* of life, and yet have to know it as well as one, as many, as all who have lived it, in order to be permitted even to touch the problem of the *value* of life: reasons enough to comprehend that this problem is for us an unapproachable problem. When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with the way of looking at things, which is part of life: life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values. From this it follows that even that anti-natural morality which conceives of God as the counter-concept and condemnation of life is only a value judgment of life—but of what life? of what kind of life? I have already given the answer: of declining, weakened, weary, condemned life. [TI V:5]

Neither a perspective that condemns life nor one that affirms it can strictly be "true"—but, relative to the phenomenon of life itself, the former can be regarded as sicker, the latter as healthier. If life is simply what I am, and the judgment I make about the value of life is just part and parcel of the form of life that I am, Nietzsche thinks that this judgment can be regarded as a symptom that indicates whether I am a healthy or sick, strong or weak, "ascending" or "descending" form of life (cf. TI IX:33). Insofar as it is life itself that makes this judgment, there would seem to be something amiss in cases in which life condemns itself. Nietzsche believes that such instinctive value judgments about life are what give rise to the cognitive perspectives put forward by all important philosophers, and that the disagreements among these perspectives cannot be resolved on a purely cognitive basis, because these different value judgments lead to different cognitive interests, as in the case of Heraclitus and Parmenides. The only standard by

which such perspectives can be ranked according to Nietzsche is a symptomatology based on the concept of degrees of strength.

However, there is at least one sense in which Nietzsche believes that "stronger" perspectives are also more true—and here we return again to the notion of *truthfulness*. We have already seen that truth, for Nietzsche, cannot be counted on to be pleasant and comforting, and is often terrible and frightening: it would therefore make sense if truthfulness, the discipline of denying oneself pleasant illusions, were something of which only relatively strong human beings were capable. Indeed, that is exactly what he tells us: "the strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the 'truth' one could still barely endure—or to put it more clearly, to what degree one would *require* it to be thinned down, shrouded, sweetened, blunted, falsified" (BGE 39). The "truth" Nietzsche refers to here is still truth relative to the human perspective—but not everyone, he thinks, is strong enough to acknowledge that truth in its entirety. Nietzsche considers it a condition of existence for the majority of human beings to elide truths which, cognitively speaking, they would be perfectly capable of recognizing, because to recognize such truths would make life unendurable for them. "How much one needs a *faith* in order to flourish," he writes, "how much that is 'firm' and that one does not wish to be shaken because one *clings* to it, that is a measure of the degree of one's strength (or, to put the point more clearly, of one's weakness)" (GS 347). What are being "clung to" here are precisely those pleasant illusions that almost everyone, on Nietzsche's view, finds more appealing than the terrible truth. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, what is at stake for Nietzsche is not fundamentally an epistemic problem, although he engages with such problems as well, but a psychological problem, and specifically a problem of strength. Truthfulness and psychological strength are ultimately

inseparable for Nietzsche, the latter being a precondition for the former. Zarathustra's *Übermensch*, he says, "conceives reality *as it is*, being strong enough to do so" (EH IV:5); and he likewise tells us that "[e]rror (faith in the ideal [i.e., in pleasant illusions]) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*" (EH P:3). These striking statements will be examined at greater length in Part III. I cite them here only in order to show that the concept of strength is central to Nietzsche's way of ranking perspectives, including when it is the "truth" of those perspectives that is at issue.

A similar insight is expressed in one of Brian Leiter's early essays, though curiously he does not return to it in his later writings on Nietzsche. I have argued, contra Clark, that human perspectives are not conditioned solely by cognitive capacities and interests, but that in most cases they also involve an affective component that is not reducible to these capacities and interests. Leiter calls this the "Doctrine of Epistemic Affectivity," which he glosses as the claim that "all knowledge presupposes some 'interest' or 'affect.'"[60] On this basis, he suggests that

> Nietzsche's general view, put somewhat crudely, is something like this: (i) the truth about the world is "terrible"; (ii) only certain sorts of people can tolerate knowing this truth—call them the "strong"; (iii) the vast majority—call them the "weak"—prefer various and sundry lies and falsifications (though they persist in calling these "truths"); (iv) the strong and weak differ, in part, in terms of their respective interests and needs [i.e., affects]; (v) the strong can know (at least some aspects of) the "terrible truth" precisely because they possess the right sort of constitutive interests and affects; (vi) that is, (at least some of) the interpretive interests of the strong will not distort reality, while those of the weak will and do.[61]

This seems basically in line with what I have said above. However, I think that Leiter underestimates the full force of Nietzsche's perspectivism when he writes that the "'terrible truth' must be established on other grounds" than considerations of strength and weakness, "for example, empirical adequacy, explanatory potency, and the like." This suggests that the terrible

60 Brian Leiter, "Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*" in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 343.

61 Ibid., p. 346.

truth can be established solely on the basis of shared human cognitive interests, without individual affective interests coming into play at all. Indeed, Leiter suggests that, once this truth has been established independently, "we should be able to extrapolate from it to those interpretive [i.e., affective] interests that will be ill-disposed to recognizing it."[62] The problem is that, on Nietzsche's view, such an extrapolation is not possible from the standpoint of shared human cognitive interests alone, but only from the standpoint of the affective interests of the strong, which first make it possible to know the terrible truth. If Leiter were correct on this point, then Nietzsche would have to consider the disinterested scholar to be the one most capable of recognizing that truth, and of articulating a rank-order of strength and weakness on its basis, which is not the case (cf. BGE 207, 211).

I have already argued that Nietzsche's rejection of absolute opposites is based in an affective commitment to "truthfulness"—that is, the suspension of belief in everything pleasant and comforting, in an effort to avoid self-deception—and not in cognitive considerations alone. He calls the picture of reality that results from this approach "terrible" precisely because all traditional forms of consolation are lacking in it: personal immortality, genuine moral goodness, absolute knowledge, and so on. So I think that Leiter is basically correct in saying that there are three sorts of "terrible truths" that are important for Nietzsche: terrible *existential* truths, terrible *moral* truths, and terrible *epistemic* truths.[63] In short, all of us are destined to suffer, die, and be forgotten; all of nature, including human nature, is irredeemably "evil" when judged according to traditional moral standards; and even our most basic beliefs about the world and ourselves may be delusions. However, all of these claims depend on Nietzsche's commitment to truthfulness and

62 Ibid., p. 347.
63 Brian Leiter, "The Truth is Terrible," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 49, no. 2 (2018), pp. 151–73.

on the rejection of absolute opposites that results from it—and, for that reason, his terrible truth is not derived purely from shared human cognitive interests, and probably could not be. The terrible existential truths would seem not to obtain if one accepted that there was an absolutely opposite kind of life in which suffering and death were absent; nor would the terrible moral truths, if one accepted the existence of purely moral motivations that were absolutely opposite to the amoral ones often observed; nor the terrible epistemic truths, if one accepted the possibility of some kind of transcendent knowledge. To the objection that there is not much cognitive justification for positing any of these things, I would first respond that the standard of justification depends on one's individual cognitive interests, which for Nietzsche are conditioned by one's affective interests. Second, I would say that there is not much more cognitive basis for positing the non-existence of any of these things, the proper cognitive attitude apparently being to suspend judgment. Insofar as one does not suspend judgment, but claims that these consoling beliefs are delusions and that the truth is therefore terrible, this will be the result of one's individual affective interests, and not merely of shared human cognitive interests. For these reasons, the terrible truth cannot be established by, or for, those who lack the affective interests that are characteristic of the strong, including truthfulness.

I believe that Leiter's error on this point results from the fact that he provides no definition of weakness and strength except as a tendency to distort reality and as a tendency not to do so: "So if he [i.e., Nietzsche] is right in thinking that the 'terrible truth' about reality will only be cognizable by agents with sufficiently robust interpretive interests—namely, the 'strong'—then those interests just will be the nondistorting ones."[64] I do not see how this

64 Leiter, "Nietzsche's Perspectivism," p. 346.

interpretation can avoid circularity, since it is only the strong who can know the terrible truth, while the strong themselves are defined as those human beings whose "interpretive interests" allow them to know that truth. We have seen that Leiter thinks the terrible truth can and must be established independently of considerations of strength and weakness, which seems to contradict his claim that strength is required to become aware of that truth. I think the reason for this is that Leiter's "doctrine of epistemic affectivity"—that is, his claim that for Nietzsche "all knowledge presupposes some 'interest' or 'affect'"—amounts to little more than Clark's claim that human beliefs can only be true relative to human cognitive interests.[65] These seem to be the only kind of "interests" Leiter believes would come into play in establishing the terrible truth, although certain individual affective interests would still be able to distort that truth: "for example, those interpretive interests that are moralistic, seduced by the metaphysics of grammar, and the like."[66] The former kind of interests, by definition, do not distort the truth, because truth is defined in relation to those interests—and this is apparently Leiter's only reason for calling those interests "strong," in contrast to the "weak" interests that distort the truth. He says nothing whatever about the character of either of these types of interests that goes beyond their distorting or non-distorting relationship to the truth. Therefore, despite the fact that his interpretation superficially appears to make considerations of strength and weakness central to Nietzsche's perspectivism, these terms end up designating nothing more than dispositions to distort the truth or not to do so, and as such they could have been left out without altering the account.

Beyond the fact that, as we will see in Part III, Nietzsche has much to say about strength and weakness apart from their relationships with truth, his discussion of those relationships

65 Ibid., p. 349.
66 Ibid., p. 347.

themselves is not limited to the question of distortion or non-distortion: “How much truth does a spirit *endure*, how much truth does it *dare*? More and more that became for me the real measure of value” (EH P:3). We may understand the question of how much truth a spirit can “endure” in line with the above considerations: that is, to what extent it is capable of denying itself pleasant illusions, and to what extent it requires such illusions as conditions of existence. In this sense, the highest degree of strength would correspond to the highest degree of truthfulness. On the other hand, the question of how much truth a spirit “dares” will require a different kind of answer. Here it is not simply a matter of refusing to distort the reality one experiences, but of *altering* that reality in accordance with one’s own affective interests, that is, with one’s values. This does not mean that one simply adopts a “worldview” that accords with those values—for, strictly speaking, one’s values already constitute such a worldview—but that one actually attempts to *change the world* in accordance with one’s own values. Here it is important to remember what was said above, namely that perspectival interpretation is not limited to mere mental representation, but is an active causal process in the world. “*Genuine philosophers*,” Nietzsche writes, “*are commanders and legislators:* they say, ‘*thus* it *shall* be!’ They first determine the Whither and For What of man […]. With a creative hand they reach for the future, and all that is and has been becomes a means for them, an instrument, a hammer. Their ‘knowing’ is *creating*, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is—*will to power*” (BGE 211). This kind of creativity may express itself in very diverse ways, “whether in the realm of *logic* or *political* (moral) thought or *art*”: a Caesar or Napoleon, no less than a Plato or a Goethe, is the author of “creations of value that have become dominant and for a time are called ‘truths’” (BGE 211). By altering reality in accordance with one’s values, one moves beyond the mere recognition of truth

to the “creation” of truth—and the latter is at least as important for determining one’s degree of strength as the former.

Here it is worth mentioning a brief but important passage that will be examined in more detail in Chapter 8, in which Nietzsche makes clear that this creative alteration of reality is distinct from the kind of self-deception about reality that he thinks is characteristic of weakness. This bears emphasizing especially in cases like those of art and philosophy, in which this alteration is achieved by means of “representation” as opposed to “concrete” action, as for example in politics. Even granting that some such representations are symptomatic of strength instead of weakness, why would they not still be self-deceptions in the same sense?

> “I want this and that”; “I wish that this and that were so”; “I know that this and that is so.”—the degrees of strength: the man of *will*, the man of *desire*, the man of *faith*. [KSA 12:9[104]]

The man of will says “I want,” the man of desire says “I wish,” and the man of faith says “I know.” Here we are mainly concerned with the first and third type, which correspond to the distinction between the creator of truth and the self-deceiver. The self-deception of the latter consists in the fact that he convinces himself that the world is already in accord with his values, without any effort being required on his part to make it so: the metaphysical philosopher is a typical example of this mentality, as we have seen. The creator of truth, to the contrary, acknowledges that the world does not accord with his values in and of itself, but realizes that it can be made to do so, whether by means of representation, concrete action, or both. “Whoever does not know how to lay his will into things,” Nietzsche writes, “at least lays some *meaning* into them: that means, he has the faith that they already obey a will” (TI I:18)—and, if he can convince himself that this will corresponds to his own values, so much the better, insofar as he

thereby avoids the necessity of imposing his values on reality himself. The creator of truth, to the contrary, "places the value of things precisely in the lack of any reality corresponding to these values and in their being merely a symptom of strength on the part of the value-positers" (WP 13). Nietzsche contrasts these two attitudes under the heading "antagonism in the degrees of strength of [different] natures": on the one hand, "to know that something *is* thus and thus"; on the other, "to act such that something *becomes* thus and thus" (KSA 12:9[60]). This is the basic difference between the creator of truth and the self-deceiver, which Nietzsche understands as a difference in their relative degrees of strength.

The purpose of this study is to explicate Nietzsche's standard of value, which I claim is based on this concept of degrees of strength. I have already called attention to the circularity of his thinking, and that circularity has forced me to say quite a few things about this concept before I have had the chance to develop it fully. Unfortunately, I see no alternative at this point but to ask the reader to be patient, and to trust that what has been said here will become more clear on the basis of what follows. I do not think it is possible to understand Nietzsche's perspectivism without understanding his concept of degrees of strength, nor to understand that concept without understanding his perspectivism. However, because one must begin somewhere, I have chosen to begin with perspectivism, in order to explicate the theory of truth and knowledge that supports the standard of degrees of strength, while acknowledging that the latter supports the former as well. I have argued, first, that the most important perspective when considering questions of human knowledge is the shared perspective of the human species, rather than individual "subjective" perspectives. I have suggested that this allows for at least a minimal degree of objectivity, despite the fact that for Nietzsche there are no objects "in themselves" to be known,

simply because all human beings conceive of external reality in much the same ways based on what Clark calls our cognitive capacities and interests. However, I have also insisted, contra Clark, that external reality cannot be regarded as being exhausted by our knowledge, even at its ideal limits, because there may exist radically different ways of conceiving of that reality to which we can have no access. Second, I have argued that the minimal degree of objectivity afforded by the shared human perspective is not sufficient, on Nietzsche's view, for solving the fundamental disputes of philosophy. This is because the human perspective is modified in every individual by affective interests that lead to the development of relatively diverse cognitive interests, which in turn lead different people to adopt incommensurable views about what is true. Finally, I have suggested that, because such disputes cannot be resolved simply on the basis of shared human cognitive interests, Nietzsche attempts instead to resolve them on the basis of the affective interests from which they arise, and that he does so according to a symptomatology based on the concept of degrees of strength. The picture of knowledge that emerges from this is one in which, in the two senses outlined above, the perspectives that are most symptomatic of strength are also the most true perspectives.

It is now possible on this basis to offer an answer to the question with which this chapter began, namely: in what sense can Nietzsche claim that an interpretation of the world is true? First, it can be said that he does not regard his or any other world-interpretation as "true" in the sense of adequate correspondence to things-in-themselves, the very concept of which he rejects as incoherent. That is why I have suggested that his "will to power" interpretation is best regarded as a "pseudo-ontology"—a concept which I will develop further in Part II—because it purports to describe the basic character of reality, while at the same time acknowledging that this

description is valid only from a human perspective. However, the fact that other, incommensurable perspectives on reality are also possible for human beings does not mean that all of them are equally valid. For Nietzsche thinks, first, that will to power ultimately does the best job of satisfying our shared human cognitive interests, for reasons that will be examined in Part II. I have not denied that this is an important part of his criterion of truth, although I have taken pains to show that it is not exhaustive of that criterion, as Clark and Leiter believe. Second, Nietzsche's will to power interpretation is based on an uncompromising recognition of the "terrible truth" about reality, that is, on the commitment to truthfulness, which he considers essential for avoiding self-deception—and, as we will see, he believes that all other interpretations of reality are based on self-deception of one kind or another. Finally, for reasons that will become more clear as we proceed, Nietzsche believes that to interpret the world as will to power expresses a higher degree of strength than that expressed by any other interpretation. Because I have argued that these three considerations constitute Nietzsche's criterion of truth, if his will to power interpretation satisfies them better than alternative interpretations, then Nietzsche would have the right to call that interpretation "true" on the basis of his historical methodology.

PART TWO

NIETZSCHE'S WORLDVIEW

Hear, then, my word, you who are wisest. Test in all seriousness whether I have crawled into the very heart of life and into the very roots of its heart.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra
("On Self-Overcoming")

Chapter 5: Physio-Psychology

I have said that Nietzsche's commitment to historical philosophy (i.e., the rejection of absolute opposites) requires him to "translate man back into nature" (BGE 230), but also to "translate" nature into man, that is, into something that human beings can understand on the basis of our psychology. While these two aims are not strictly separable—for the "nature" to which man is to be reduced must be the "humanized" nature just mentioned, and the concept of the human that is thus applied to nature must be a "naturalized" one—I will attempt to separate them for the sake of a clear explication of Nietzsche's project. Accordingly, this chapter will examine his attempt at translating man into nature, that is, into the animal. Historical philosophy must assume that there is no absolute opposition between human and animal nature, and that the former can be explained as having developed out of the latter.

We have seen that, at the time he wrote HA, Nietzsche described the project of translating man into nature in terms of a "chemistry of concepts and sensations" (HA 1). Ten years later, in BGE, he outlines that project in more detail under the rubric of a "proper physio-psychology":

> All psychology so far has got stuck in moral prejudices and fears; it has not dared to descend into the depths. To understand it as morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power* [*Morphologie und Entwicklungslehre des Willens zur Macht*], as I do—nobody has yet come close to doing this even in thought—insofar as it is permissible to recognize in what has been written so far a symptom of what has so far been kept silent. The power of moral prejudices has penetrated deeply into the most spiritual world, which would seem to be the coldest and most devoid of presuppositions, and has obviously operated in an injurious, inhibiting, blinding, and distorting manner. A proper physio-psychology [*eigentliche Physio-Psychologie*] has to contend with unconscious resistance in the heart of the investigator, it has "the heart" against it: even a doctrine of the reciprocal dependence of the "good" and the "wicked" drives [*Triebe*], causes (as refined immorality) distress and aversion in a still hale and hearty conscience—still more so, a doctrine of the derivation of all good drives from wicked ones. If, however, a person should regard even the affects [*Affekte*] of hatred, envy, covetousness, and the lust to rule as conditions of life, as factors which, fundamentally and essentially, must be present in the general economy of life (and must, therefore, be further

> enhanced if life is to be further enhanced)—he will suffer from such a view of things as from seasickness. And yet even this hypothesis is far from being the strangest and most painful in this immense and almost new domain of dangerous insights; and there are a hundred good reasons why everyone should keep away from it who—*can*. On the other hand, if one has once drifted there with one's bark, well! all right! let us clench our teeth! let us open our eyes and keep our hand firm on the helm! We sail right *over* morality, we crush, we destroy perhaps the remains of our own morality by daring to make our voyage there—but what matter are *we*! Never yet did a *profounder* world of insight reveal itself to daring travelers and adventurers, and the psychologist who thus "makes a sacrifice"—it is *not* the *sacrifizio dell' intelleto*, on the contrary!—will at least be entitled to demand in return that psychology shall be recognized again as the queen of the sciences, for whose service and preparation the other sciences exist. For psychology is now again the path to the fundamental problems. [BGE 23]

A number of key claims can be distilled from this text. First, Nietzsche claims that all psychology hitherto has been distorted by moral prejudices, that is, by the "faith in opposite values" (BGE 2), which has led to the posit of absolutely opposite types of reality corresponding to those values. Second, he characterizes his "proper physio-psychology," which rejects this "faith" and proceeds on the basis of historical philosophy, as "morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*." Third, he presents three physio-psychological theses, each of which is meant to disturb the moral conscience of metaphysical philosophers more than the last: (1) that "good" and "wicked" drives are mutually dependent; (2) that "good" drives are in fact derived from "wicked" ones; and (3) that "wicked" drives are indispensable for human life, and for that reason must be intensified rather than extirpated. Now there is an obvious inconsistency between the first and second of these theses: for if "good" drives are *derived* from "wicked" ones, then the latter are the ground of the former, so that there cannot also be a relationship of "reciprocal dependence" between them. However, given the context in which Nietzsche presents these "doctrines," I do not think they need to be understood as direct statements of his own position, but rather as suggestive "steps" toward that position, intended to emphasize the psychological difficulty it

involves. He also alludes to a teaching that is more disturbing even than these, which he does not state explicitly. Fourth, he makes plain the self-cruelty that we have seen is involved in such investigations, even counseling those who are not animated by this drive to avoid them (cf. BGE 229, 230). Finally, he claims that psychology should "again" be recognized as "the queen of the sciences" and as "the path to the fundamental problems," which reflects his insight that the categories of both the empirical sciences and of a priori metaphysics ultimately originate in human physio-psychology—hence the need to "translate" nature into man, which I will discuss in Chapter 6.

Several of these claims have already been examined in detail, and I reiterate them here only for the sake of pointing out the cohesiveness of Nietzsche's thinking on these matters. In this chapter I will be concerned primarily with the novel claim that a "proper physio-psychology" is to be understood as "morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*." The importance of the morphological aspect should already be fairly evident, since we have seen that Nietzsche is concerned with the question of how something can originate from its supposedly absolute opposite (HA 1). Because historical philosophy assumes that absolute opposites do not exist, it must therefore attempt to explain apparently opposite phenomena as diverse forms (*morpheōs*) of one basic type of reality. The idea is that, owing to the character of that basic type of reality, it develops over time into a plurality of forms, some of which appear so different as to be mistaken for absolutely opposite types of reality. This is the kind of "development" that Nietzsche has in mind in this passage—for example, the development of "wicked" drives into "good" ones, which appear to be their absolute opposite. This is not a mere restatement of his rejection of absolute opposites, because here he ventures an actual characterization of the basic

type of reality that underlies such morphological development, namely *will to power*. The aim of this chapter is to show how Nietzsche arrives at that concept.

To this end, it will first be helpful to return to one of the earlier passages in Part I of BGE. Nietzsche often places a dense summation at the end of the subdivisions of his books that synthesizes the various ideas expressed in them, and BGE 23 is a clear example of this. Based on his commitment to historical philosophy, Nietzsche has already told us that it is necessary to reject "soul atomism," which he defines as "the belief which regards the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*" (BGE 12). For to posit such a soul would be to return to the idea of absolutely opposite types of reality: one that is characterized by destructibility, temporality, divisibility, and so on (i.e., becoming), and another to which these characteristics do not apply (i.e., being). With this rejection of the atomistic soul, however, "it is not at all necessary to get rid of 'the soul' at the same time, and thus to renounce one of the most ancient and venerable hypotheses"—an important qualification, since the "soul" (*psyche*) is the subject of psychology. Nietzsche therefore presents alternative versions of the "soul-hypothesis" that are in keeping with his commitment to historical philosophy: "such conceptions as 'mortal soul,' and 'soul as subjective multiplicity,' and 'soul as social structure of the drives and affects' want henceforth to have citizens' rights in science" (BGE 12). It seems clear that these are intended to be three statements of the same hypothesis, each more detailed than the last: we are told, first, that on this view the soul is mortal; then, that it is a "subjective multiplicity"; and finally, what kind of "subjectivities" constitute that multiplicity, namely "drives and affects." With this hypothesis, Nietzsche retains the concept of the soul, while doing away with the "atomism" of the traditional Platonic-Christian conception, which implies the existence of

absolute opposites (viz., being and becoming): "the *new* psychologist puts an end to the superstitions which have so far flourished […] around the idea of the soul" (BGE 12).

I made fairly liberal use in Part I of a couple of concepts that I had not yet had occasion to analyze in detail—namely "drive" (*Trieb*) and "affect" (*Affekt*), both of which appear to denote the same basic sort of thing for Nietzsche. For my purposes there I was satisfied to speak of these things as unconscious motivations that determine the content of conscious thinking, and that do not fundamentally aim at "truth" in any sense of that word. The quotations I have just presented emphasize again that these are not motivations that are "had" by a human subject, but that what we call a human subject is constituted by a multiplicity of such motivations and their interactions. For that reason, it is all the more important to get clear about what "drives" and "affects" are. Nietzsche ultimately holds that they are wills to power, and our present aim is to discover why he does so—but *what* precisely is he saying are wills to power in this case? This question can be asked especially because Nietzsche often appeals to drives and affects prior to his development of the concept of will to power, so that although these concepts are ultimately synonymous in an important sense, they are not so from the point of view of the development of his thought. For that reason, I think it is first necessary to inquire into the character of these entities, after which it will be easier to understand how Nietzsche arrives at the concept of will to power.

Early on, Nietzsche defines a "drive" as an "*inclination* [*Neigung*] *for something*," associating this concept with those of "wish" (*Wunsch*) and "desire" (*Verlangen*) (HA 57). He makes clear in this passage that a human being has a multiplicity of drives, and can for that reason be regarded "not as *individuum* but as *dividuum*." Each of these drives, he tells us, necessarily involves an evaluation: "A drive to something or away from something divorced from

a feeling that one is desiring the beneficial and avoiding the harmful, a drive without some kind of knowing evaluation [*erkennender Abschätzung*] of the worth of its goal, does not exist in man" (HA 32). We can ignore for now the question of what "beneficial" and "harmful" amount to—for, as I will argue, Nietzsche's answer to that question was still somewhat confused at this time, and remained so until he arrived at the concept of will to power. But however "benefit" and "harm" are to be understood, it is clear that each drive *regards* some things as desirable and others as undesirable, attempting to acquire the former and avoid the latter. This description is deliberately vague, because there seem to be a great many things that a drive can desire, and it can also desire them in different ways. Nietzsche understands a drive as a kind of psychical organism that requires "nutriment" (*Ernährung*), which it obtains from experiences that contain—or that it interprets as containing—the sorts of things it desires: "Its needs and capacities are so far the same as those which physiologists posit for everything that lives, grows, and multiplies" (BGE 230). The characteristic activity of drives would thus seem to be analogous to physical hunger: "with the satisfaction of a need an alleviation and temporary relaxation of the drive occurs"; however, "in the long run a drive is, through the practice in satisfying it, *intensified*" (HA 212). Every drive wants, in other words, "to incorporate new 'experiences,' to file new things in old files—growth, in a word" (BGE 230). The more opportunities it has to do this, the more powerful it becomes, and the more its "power to appropriate the foreign" increases. By contrast, if it is denied such opportunities, "in a little while it will grow faint, and after a couple of days or months of non-gratification it will wither away like a plant without rain" (D 119). The analogy with hunger seems fairly strong when one considers that digestion is essentially a process of assimilating those parts of our food that can be integrated into our bodies, and expelling the rest

—which is why Nietzsche says that "'the spirit' is relatively most similar to a stomach" (BGE 230).

However, this close analogy notwithstanding, the modes of nutriment of the drives are more complex and varied than those of the stomach. For in the latter case, "hunger" is always a desire for what Nietzsche calls "the saturation of an emptiness," which is not always the case where drives are concerned (D 119). Although this is one way in which a drive can be satisfied, sometimes a drive also desires the "exercise of its strength [*Kraft*], or discharge of its strength" (D 119). These too Nietzsche regards as forms of "nourishment," insofar as a drive is nourished by getting what it wants, regardless of what that might be. Where it desires to exercise its strength, this may be understood by analogy to what we usually call "exercise," whether of a physical or mental kind: the goal of running, or of playing chess, is not to *exhaust* oneself physically or mentally (i.e., to "discharge" one's strength), but to have an opportunity of *exercising* that strength, which seems to us desirable. While such exercise is generally attended by pleasure, and the lack of opportunity for it by displeasure (e.g., muscle tension, boredom), I will leave aside for now the question whether pleasure is the fundamental motivation underlying this activity. A good example of a drive's desire to *discharge* its strength is probably sexual desire, which rises to a pitch of tension that requires release; this release is also associated with pleasure. Whichever of these things a drive wants, the attainment of that thing will nourish the drive—that is, relax it in the short term while strengthening it in the long term, so that in the future its demands for gratification will become more vehement.

Another way that the psychological drives differ from the drive for sustenance is that hunger "is not content with *dream food*; but most of the drives, especially the so-called moral

ones, *do precisely this*—if my supposition is allowed that the meaning and value of our *dreams* is precisely to *compensate* to some extent for the chance absence of 'nourishment' during the day" (D 119). Nietzsche had already suggested that dreams could be explained as reactions to physical stimuli, both internal and external, that are encountered during sleep: "the dream is the *seeking and positing of the causes* of this excitement of the sensibilities, that is to say the supposed causes" (HA 13; cf. TI VI: 4). Whereas the actual cause of a given sensation may be, for example, the position of the sleeper, or his blood pressure or digestion, or a sound outside in the street, he *invents* another cause, often much more fantastic than the real one: his arm is numb not because he has been lying on it, but because he has been bitten by a venomous snake; he hears sirens not because a fire truck is passing outside, but because he is being pursued by the police; and so on. However, Nietzsche does not give a satisfactory explanation in HA for the *variety* of causal interpretations that arise in dreams, that is, for the fact "that the inventive reasoning faculty [i.e., the faculty of causal interpretation] *imagines* today a *cause* for the nervous stimuli so very different from the cause it imagined yesterday, though the stimuli are the same" (D 119). Especially considering that he sees a large element of "habit" in waking causal interpretations—one assumes that similar effects are produced by similar causes (TI VI:4)—he needs to explain the inconstancy of the causal interpretations in dreams. In D he tells us that "the explanation of this is that today's prompter of the reasoning faculty was different from yesterday's—a different *drive* wanted to gratify itself, to be active, to exercise itself, to refresh itself, to discharge itself" (D 119). Nietzsche's idea is that when psychological drives do not find the sorts of experiences they need for nourishment in waking life, they can actually *create* such experiences for themselves by directing the process by which we invent causes for various sensations while

asleep. Which drives direct this process on a given day depends on which of them are strongest and most in need of nourishment.

It has been necessary to give a brief sketch of the way drives operate in dreams, because Nietzsche thinks this is only a more obvious form of the way they operate when we are awake: "Waking life does not have this *freedom of interpretation* possessed by the life of dreams, it is less inventive and unbridled—but do I have to add that when we are awake our drives likewise do nothing but interpret various stimuli and, according to their requirements, posit their 'causes'? that there is no *essential* difference between waking and dreaming?" (D 119). It is not only while we are asleep that many of our drives can nourish themselves with "dream food," but while we are awake as well. And they do so in precisely the same way, namely by interpreting experiences as opportunities for their gratification:

> Take some trifling experience. Suppose we were in the marketplace one day and we noticed someone laughing at us as we went by: this event will signify this or that to us according to whether this or that drive happens at that moment to be at its height in us—and it will be a quite different event according to the kind of person [i.e., social structure of drives] we are. One person will absorb it like a drop of rain, another will shake it from him like an insect, another will try to pick a quarrel, another will examine his clothing to see if there is anything about it that might give rise to laughter, another will be led to reflect on the nature of laughter as such, another will be glad to have involuntarily augmented the amount of cheerfulness and sunshine in the world—and in each case a drive has gratified itself, whether it be the drive to annoyance or to combativeness or to reflection or to benevolence. This drive seized the event as its prey: why precisely this one? Because, thirsty and hungry, it was lying in wait. (D 119)

Unlike physical hunger, which requires a very specific kind of material for its gratification—though I note in passing that what one regards as "edible" really depends on how hungry one is—it seems that most drives can *create* their own sustenance out of the "raw material" of almost any experience. If one is in a sour mood, one can find something to be annoyed about even under the most agreeable circumstances, which in consequence of this "drive to annoyance" are not

experienced as agreeable. "What then are our experiences?" Nietzsche asks. "Much *more* that which we put into them than that which they already contain! Or must we go so far as to say: in themselves they contain nothing? To experience is to invent?" (D 119). If this suggestion were taken to its logical conclusion, it would imply that we do not experience external reality at all, which is not Nietzsche's view. However, he does consider it impossible to distinguish definitively between an event and our interpretation of that event. As he puts it earlier in the same passage, "our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text" (D 119). Thus the activity of the human "spirit," understood as a social structure of drives, does seem to resemble digestion: "The spirit's power to appropriate the foreign stands revealed in its inclination to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the manifold, and to overlook or repulse whatever is totally contradictory—just as it involuntarily emphasizes certain features and lines in what is foreign, in every piece of the 'external world,' retouching and falsifying the whole to suit itself" (BGE 230). What form this "falsification" takes depends, as we have seen, on which drives are clamouring most vehemently for gratification at a given time.

But what drives are there? How many are there? Do all human beings have the same set of drives in varying degrees of intensity, or might one person entirely lack a drive that another has? Do some people have more drives than others, perhaps even a great many more? How is one drive to be clearly distinguished from another in the first place? And how much can we really *know* about drives, considering that human knowledge itself is supposed to be conditioned by their activity? All of these questions naturally arise from the foregoing discussion, though Nietzsche does not give clear answers to many of them. I think, however, that his use of the

concept of “drive” can be understood fairly well by examining the things he does say about these issues, even if the result is not as clear as some commentators would like.

While we might expect a psychological theory of this kind to posit a “short list” of fundamental drives—for example, drives toward self-preservation, procreation, pleasure, and so on—to which all human activity can be reduced, Nietzsche does not proceed in that way. His reductive project, as we will see shortly, is concerned only with providing a unified account of the nature of “drive” itself as will to power, and not with limiting the number of individual drives that can be appealed to in psychological explanations. We saw him refer above to “the drive[s] to annoyance or to combativeness or to reflection or to benevolence” (D 119), and these are just a few of the immense number of things that he calls “drives.” Elsewhere he speaks of “the drive to [self-]preservation” (HA 99), “the aphrodisiac drive” (HA 214), “the drive to clean and clear thinking, to moderation and restraint of feeling” (HA II:196), “the drive to domination” (WS 31), the “sympathetic, charitable, reconciliatory, ameliorating drives” (WS 41), the “drive to distinction” (D 113), “drives to tenderness or humourousness or adventurousness” (D 119), “the drive to praise or blame” (D 140), “the drive to attachment and care for others” (D 143), “the social drive of timidity” (D 174), “the drive for the preservation of the species” (GS 1), “the drive for truth” (GS 110), “the drive to doubt, the drive to negate, the drive to wait, the drive to collect, the drive to dissolve” (GS 113), “strong and dangerous drives, like an enterprising spirit, foolhardiness, vengefulness, craftiness, rapacity, and the lust to rule” (BGE 201), and so on. It therefore seems that “drive” is a very loose conception that can be applied to almost any psychological disposition, of which there are obviously too many to enumerate. While Nietzsche does deny that there exist fundamental drives for self-preservation (BGE 13) or for truth (GS

344), that is because these sorts of aims are ultimately incompatible with the nature of "drive" as he understands it, which rather aims at assimilation and "falsification." Any drive that is appealed to for the sake of psychological explanation must be intelligible *as* a drive—that is, ultimately, as a will to power—but apart from this requirement Nietzsche seems content to work with a very liberal understanding of what drives there might be.

When Nietzsche once refers to "our fifty separate drives" (D 422), this is evidently an arbitrary number meant to suggest that we have a lot of them; he could as easily have said "our hundred separate drives." Indeed, he had already told us that "[h]owever far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of *drives* which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of their *nutriment* remain wholly unknown to him" (D 119). Because for Nietzsche "thinking is merely a relation of these drives to each other" (BGE 36), it follows that whatever knowledge we have of them will ultimately be nothing more than the "knowledge" that some of them have of themselves and the others—that is, the interpretation that our more dominant drives have of the whole community of drives, insofar as this enters our consciousness. Nietzsche makes this especially clear when he discusses possible means for "combating the vehemence of a drive," that is, for reigning in a drive that has been overfed and has begun to tyrannize the others to a dangerous extent, sacrificing too much of their nourishment to its own:

> [*T*]*hat* one *desires* to combat the vehemence of a drive at all, however, does not stand within our own power; nor does the choice of any particular method; nor does the success or failure of this method. What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of *another drive* which is a *rival* of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us […]. While 'we' believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it

> is one drive *which is complaining about another*; that is to say: for us to become aware that we are suffering from the *vehemence* of a drive presupposes the existence of another equally vehement or even more vehement drive, and that a *struggle* is in prospect in which our intellect is going to have to take sides. (D 109)

According to Nietzsche, it is not even possible to "become aware" that a particular drive is getting out of control except from the perspective of another, similarly vehement drive that dislikes this state of affairs and wants to change it, presumably because the latter drive feels that its prospects for nourishment are being threatened. Where there are no similarly vehement drives, that is, where the tyrannical drive in question has attained hegemony over the others, it will not be possible for that drive to enter consciousness as a threat—at least not strongly or for long—because it will have a virtual monopoly on consciousness. A good example of this is probably extreme addiction, in which one finds it impossible to "admit that one has a problem." The issue of "combating the vehemence of a drive" illustrates from one angle the larger problem involved in knowing about one's drives, namely that there is no possible perspective "beyond" the drives from which they could be observed and judged without any of their own interests coming into play. Our "image of the totality of [our] drives" (D 119) is therefore only the image that our dominant drives have of the others and of themselves, based on their own interests.

We saw in Chapter 4 that Nietzsche equates consciousness with linguistic thinking, that is, with the words that we "speak" in our heads. He thinks that there are several ways in which words and their associated concepts distort the reality we experience, and this also places profound limitations on our ability to know about our drives:

> Language and the prejudices upon which language is based are a manifold hindrance to us when we want to explain inner processes and drives: because of the fact, for example, that words really exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes and drives; and where words are lacking, we are accustomed to abandon exact observation because thinking there becomes

> painful […]. Anger, hatred, love, pity, desire, knowledge, joy, pain—all are names for *extreme* states: the milder, middle degrees, not to speak of the lower degrees which are continually in play, elude us, and yet it is they which weave the web of our character and our destiny. (D 115)

Not only is our consciousness of our drives always conditioned by the interests of our dominant drives, but the linguistic nature of that consciousness itself guarantees that our "knowledge" here will always be relatively superficial. These two points are intimately related: for if our dominant drives monopolize our consciousness, then the others probably only enter consciousness prominently when they produce a powerful effect on those dominant drives—in other words, we only become conscious of their extreme states. Considered from another angle, this is also the reason why our dominant drives monopolize our consciousness: the more vehement a drive, that is, the more often it expresses itself to a "superlative degree," the more it enters consciousness. Our consciousness of our dominant drives is therefore just as distorted as our consciousness of our other drives, insofar as we become conscious of them only in their extreme states, even if such states are more common with them than with the others. But when our dominant drives are satisfied and "resting," others step into the foreground and eclipse these milder states of the dominant drives, so that we take their extreme states for the drives themselves. "Only now does the truth dawn on us," Nietzsche writes, "that by far the greatest part of our spirit's activity remains unconscious and unfelt. But I suppose that these drives which are here contending against one another understand very well how to make themselves felt by, and how to hurt, *one another*" (GS 333). The problem is that only the most extreme events in this interplay among the drives become conscious, mediated by the interests of the dominant drives and by the linguistic character of consciousness, so that we cannot "know" anything about our drives with certainty.

However, if the concept of drive is supposed to be the basis of Nietzsche's physio-psychology, then he would seem to think that he *does* know something about drives. Yet, as we have seen, any such knowledge cannot be based on introspection alone, "as though knowledge here got hold of its object purely and nakedly as 'the thing in itself,' without any falsification on the part of either the subject or the object"; the concept of "immediate certainty," he writes, is a "*contradictio in adjecto*" (BGE 16). Nietzsche considers it necessary to "maintain the phenomenality of the inner world, too: everything of which we become conscious is arranged, simplified, schematized, interpreted through and through—the actual process of inner 'perception,' the causal connection between thoughts, feelings, desires, between subject and object, are absolutely hidden from us" (WP 477). He thinks that introspective psychology as such typically, and perhaps necessarily, posits those three erroneous "inner facts" that we saw him critique in Part I, namely "the will, the spirit, [and] the ego" (TI VI:3). In introspection we are wont to understand all inner events as acts of will, and to attribute all of these acts to one agent, namely the "spirit," "ego," or "subject." But this view of ourselves does not mesh with the discoveries of empirical physiology, which identifies no unitary cause behind the multiplicity of events in our bodies, and does not conceive of such events as acts of will. In an unpublished note from around the time of BGE, Nietzsche claims to take "[t]he body and physiology as the starting point," because in this way "[w]e gain the correct idea of the nature of our subject-unity, namely as regents at the head of a community (not as 'souls' or 'life forces')" (WP 492). Because Nietzsche is committed to historical philosophy, he must attempt to understand psychology and physiology as continuous, and refrain from positing an underlying unity in the psyche that is not

found in the body. To this extent, he uses the findings of physiology to correct the errors that he believes arise from exclusive reliance on introspection.

However, as we saw in Part I, Nietzsche also understands physiology, and empirical science in general, as limited insofar as it is itself conditioned by human psychology, and can say nothing about the nature of causal connections: it can "only *describe* processes, not explain them" (WP 660). To rely exclusively on physiology would be to abandon the concept of *will*, from which Nietzsche believes our entire conception of causal power is derived. Physiology is the kind of "interpretation that permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more" (GS 373), which seems *prima facie* to omit the psyche from physio-psychology. To avoid this consequence, Nietzsche thinks it is necessary to supplement empirical observation with a concept of psychical force drawn from introspection: "The only force that exists," he writes, "is of the same kind as that of the will: a commanding of other subjects, which thereupon change" (WP 490). This presupposes that there are willing subjects, though we have seen that Nietzsche conceives of a human being not as a single such subject, but as a community of them: "The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general" (WP 490). However, we have also seen that Nietzsche understands subjects themselves as fictions, albeit necessary ones insofar as "[i]n order to think and infer it is necessary to assume beings" (WP 517). Likewise, although he employs the concept of will, he also says that "there is no such thing as will" (WP 488), and suggests that our conscious experience of willing may be simply "a language of signs for something altogether different, namely something that does not will and is unconscious" (WP 676). Despite the likelihood that

neither of these concepts are adequate to reality apart from the way we consciously experience it, to dispense with them would be to jettison the best resources we have for constructing a conceptual interpretation of reality. Nietzsche therefore retains the introspective "distinction between the 'seat of a driving force [i.e., the subject] and the force itself [i.e., will],'" but only as "a sign language derived from our logical-psychical world" (WP 625). "Drive" is the name that Nietzsche gives to these willing subjects that constitute the human psyche.

I think that this helps to explain why Nietzsche uses the concept of drive so loosely. Based on the above considerations, it would be strange if he thought it were possible to discretely distinguish one drive from another, or to enumerate precisely how many drives a human being has. Rather, this picture of the human soul as composed of a multiplicity of drives is simply meant to be an alternative to "soul atomism" that does not violate Nietzsche's commitment to historical philosophy, which the latter does when it identifies the soul as belonging to an absolutely opposite type of reality to that of the body. Tom Stern appears to basically agree with this, although he calls the latter position the "Socratic picture" of the soul, and does not attempt to explain why Nietzsche is so concerned to find an alternative to it.[67] However, Stern maintains that "Nietzsche did not in fact have anything like a coherent account of 'the drives', according to which the self, the relationship between thought and action, or consciousness could be explained," so that his attempt to find an alternative to the atomistic or Socratic view of the soul is ultimately a failure.[68] While Stern raises some important concerns about the possibility of understanding Nietzsche's concept of drive, I think that his conclusion is overstated. The

67 Tom Stern, "Against Nietzsche's 'Theory' of the Drives," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, no. 1 (2015), pp. 121–40.
68 Ibid., p. 121.

problem, as I see it, is that the kind of "theory" of drives that Stern expects Nietzsche to provide is impossible in principle if Nietzsche's views about the limitations of human knowledge are correct. Although Stern is not very clear about what a good theory would amount to here, he does think that such a theory would be able to "explain" the self, the relationship between thought and action, and consciousness. "But how could we possibly explain anything?" Nietzsche asks. "We operate only with things that do not exist: lines, planes, bodies, atoms, divisible time spans, divisible spaces [and willing subjects]. How should explanations be possible at all when we first turn everything into an *image*, our image! It will do to consider science as an attempt to humanize things as faithfully as possible" (GS 112; cf. 355). However, even if "humanization" is the furthest we can go in seeking explanations, Stern would still object that Nietzsche's concept of drive is a poor instance of this procedure, because "the things Nietzsche says about drives [...] are so deeply and centrally conflicting, and in so many ways, that no coherent position can be formed."[69] For if nothing else, a humanized interpretation of a phenomenon should at least satisfy our cognitive interests insofar as possible, and one of these interests is coherence. But, unlike Stern, I think that Nietzsche's concept of drive satisfies this criterion—at least to the extent that this can be expected on the basis of his methodology.

Stern points out, first of all, that Nietzsche often uses the terms "instinct" (*Instinkt*), "affect" (*Affekt*), and "tendency" (*Hang*) as synonyms for "drive" (*Trieb*), insisting that these "are prima facie very different things and (with the exception of 'drive' and 'instinct') would have been in the usage of Nietzsche's day."[70] But, at the risk of stating the obvious, we are interested in the use that Nietzsche, rather than his contemporaries, makes of these terms, and in his usage

69 Ibid., p. 122.
70 Ibid., p. 124.

there is no *prima facie* difference between them, which is Stern's whole point. Nevertheless, Stern helps himself to definitions of these terms that do not come from Nietzsche's texts, and attempts on that basis to impute inconsistency to Nietzsche. He defines "drive" and "instinct," for example, as "forces which impel an animal to act in a way which *looks* rational and purposive, but for which reason and purpose, in the animal itself, are evidently lacking."[71] Yet Nietzsche nowhere says that there must be any particular appearance of rationality in the actions that arise from our drives; indeed, because he sees *all* of our actions as arising in this way, it seems obvious that drives can also give rise to the most irrational of actions. Stern's insistence on saddling Nietzsche with this definition is quite strange, considering he acknowledges that "drive" and "instinct" thus defined are meant to explain apparently conscious and rational behaviour in unconscious animals, which in human beings would be understood as resulting from conscious, rational deliberation.[72] But Nietzsche does not believe that conscious rationality accounts for this kind of activity in human beings either: "For we could think, feel, will, and remember, and we could also 'act' in every sense of that word, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness'" (GS 354). Nietzsche makes a distinction between "reason" and "the way reason enters consciousness," and he apparently believes that animals possess the former as well, writing that "[m]an, *like every living being*, thinks continually without [consciously] knowing it" (GS 354; my emphasis). As we saw in Part I, the function of consciousness for Nietzsche is to facilitate linguistic communication, and nothing more. Because he does not think that consciousness explains complex, purposive behaviour in humans, he is not in need of a concept

71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., p. 124.

of “drive” or “instinct” that explains them on a non-conscious basis in animals. This entire problematic is alien to his thinking.

However, that does not prevent Stern from suggesting that drives and instincts cannot be the same as “tendencies,” because there need not be any particular appearance of rationality in the latter.[73] He also argues that tendencies, for Nietzsche, “do not appear to be tied to biological needs,” whereas drives and instincts probably are according to the usage of those terms that was current in Nietzsche’s time.[74] Stern gives several examples of tendencies that are supposed to be “non-biological,” one of which is the tendency toward democracy (BGE 239).[75] However, he overlooks the fact that only a few pages later Nietzsche says of “Europe’s *democratic* movement” that “behind all the moral and political foregrounds to which such formulas point, a tremendous *physiological* process is taking place” (BGE 242). Given Nietzsche’s commitment to historical philosophy, it is not surprising that he does not distinguish between biological and non-biological motivations—his methodology, as I have argued, prevents him from doing so. Even when Nietzsche speaks of “*unnatural* tendencies” (e.g., GM II:24), which Stern takes as evidence that tendencies cannot be the same as drives and instincts, he does not understand these tendencies as opposed to “natural” ones in any absolute sense.[76] Rather, he is careful to point out that “such a self-contradiction as […] ‘life *against* life’ is, physiologically considered and not merely psychologically, a simple absurdity. It can only be *apparent*” (GM III:13). Nietzsche nowhere admits the possibility of “unnatural” tendencies in any absolute sense, but only of tendencies that *appear* to be so, and he tells us this explicitly. Moreover, I have already shown that Nietzsche

73 Ibid, p. 126.
74 Ibid, p. 125.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid, pp. 125–6.

identifies a "drive" as a *Neigung* (HA 57), which is translated variously as "inclination," "propensity," "proclivity," or "tendency." These are the same words that are normally used to translate *Hang*. Contrary to Stern's claim that drives and instincts cannot be identified with tendencies, Nietzsche tells us fairly clearly that they are the same thing.

Stern's argument that drives, instincts, and tendencies cannot be the same as *affects* seems more compelling. In this case, we do appear to be dealing with things that are *prima facie* quite different. The word *Affekt* refers, in ordinary usage, to a strong excitation or arousal of feeling, not to an inclination toward or away from something, as Nietzsche says that "drive" does (HA 32, 57). Although I criticized Stern for relying on the ordinary definitions of key terms when it comes to understanding the use that Nietzsche makes of them, it is evident that Nietzsche often *does* use "affect" in the ordinary sense. He writes, for example, that conscious willing is characterized by "the affect of the command," that is, "the affect of superiority in relation to him who must obey" (BGE 19). In this passage he makes it clear that this affect is *not* to be credited with the success of the willing, which is rather to be attributed to the unconscious "'under-wills' or under-souls" that actually carry it out (i.e., the drives). Nietzsche also identifies affects with "feelings of pleasure and unpleasure," which he says are "*reactions of the will*" brought about by the success or failure of what is willed (KSA 13:11[71]): the affect of command just mentioned would result from success, while an affect of frustration would presumably result from failure. This seems to establish that drives and affects are not the same thing for Nietzsche, but that the latter are a conscious reflection of the activity of the former. However, Nietzsche does not always use "affect" in this way; at other times, it seems to be simply another synonym for "drive." For example, he writes that "[t]he will to overcome an affect is ultimately only the will of another, or

of several other, affects" (BGE 117). Rather than being a conscious feeling resulting from the willing of the drives, here affects appear to *be* drives, to the extent that Nietzsche is able to make precisely the same point about their interaction that we have already seen him make about the interaction of drives (D 109). He writes elsewhere that "the affects one and all desire to be gratified" (WP 929), which again makes them sound like drives—for how can a *feeling* be "gratified"? Based on the quotations above, an affect was supposed to be a *reaction* to the gratification or non-gratification of the drives. But, what is perhaps most startling, in an unpublished note from 1885 we find Nietzsche making reference to "the driving affects" (*die treibenden Affekte*) (KSA 12:1[54]). How are we to make sense of this?

I think Stern is correct that this problem cannot be solved on these terms. Nietzsche simply does not always use the term "affect" in the same way: sometimes it refers, in the ordinary sense, to a strong feeling, while at other times it refers to a drive. To be sure, where it refers to a feeling, that feeling will ultimately be a result of the activity of the drives, and strictly speaking a *part* of that activity which is inseparable from it. To the extent that an affect can be conceived as distinct from the totality of drive activity, this is only because it enters our consciousness, whereas the majority of that activity does not. However, everything that Nietzsche says about the drives suggests that they also "feel," in addition to "thinking" and "willing," so that the majority of our affective life probably does not enter consciousness either (GS 333). Thus, although the concept of "affect" is not sufficient to characterize drives as a whole, it is an essential element of their nature. Sometimes Nietzsche uses the term "affect" to denote this part of their nature insofar as it enters consciousness; at other times, he uses it to denote drives themselves—perhaps with specific reference to the affective part of their nature, although this does not always seem to be

the case. The entanglement of these concepts in Nietzsche's thinking makes sense for another reason as well. He has told us that we only become conscious of the extreme states of our drives, and that for this reason we mistakenly take these extreme states for the drives themselves, overlooking their milder states (D 115). Well, is an "affect," understood as a strong excitation of feeling, not likely to be one of the main ways in which these "extreme states" of the drives enter our consciousness? Indeed, it almost seems as though this would be the *only* way in which they could be experienced as "extreme," since Nietzsche regards conscious "thinking" as "the least vigorous and therefore also the relatively mildest and calmest form of thinking" (GS 333), and claims that the main ingredient in the conscious experience of "willing" is itself an affect (BGE 19). If we usually become conscious of our drives only in their extreme states, by means of the powerful affects that attend these states, then Nietzsche would seem to have good grounds for conflating drives and affects, because in practice we do this anyway, and cannot do otherwise.

Stern also wonders how Nietzsche can claim to have a psychological theory of drives while at the same time insisting that our knowledge of our drives is necessarily very limited and distorted: "I know of no attempt at an explanation anywhere in the literature [...] as to how Nietzsche can both hold that drive-activity is in great part non-conscious, unknowable to individuals and necessarily poorly conceptualized *and* claim intricate knowledge of the workings of the drives of others, to the extent that he can describe them in detail."[77] This would indeed be a problem, if Nietzsche ever claimed to possess such knowledge—but, as far as I can see, he does not. Stern cites, for example, Nietzsche's frequent claims about supposedly "moral" or "unegoistic" actions actually being the result of immoral or egoistic drives, which I argued in Part

77 Ibid., p. 129.

I follow from his methodological presuppositions. Nietzsche does not believe that he "knows" this in the sense that the physiologists of his time knew that the heart and not, say, the brain was responsible for pumping the blood, and he never suggests that he knows it in that sense. Moreover, he develops his theory of drives on the *basis* of the presupposition that there are no absolutely opposite motivations, so that it is wrong to suggest that he regards this as resulting from "knowledge" about drives. Stern also mentions what he calls "comparative moral group-psychology" (e.g., accounts of the different dominant drives that animated Christians and ancient Greeks), as well as "drive-biographies" (e.g., Nietzsche's psychological portraits of Socrates, Wagner, etc.).[78] These kinds of cases are more difficult to explain, insofar as Nietzsche does seem to think that he knows something about the drives of the persons and groups he analyzes that goes beyond what follows directly from his historical methodology, or from the historical record. With respect to Socrates, Nietzsche speaks of the "anarchy of his instincts [i.e., drives]," which supposedly explains the former's proclivity for dialectic, among other things (TI II:4); he claims that Jesus of Nazareth harboured an "instinctive hatred of reality," which he identifies as "a consequence of an extreme capacity for suffering and excitement" (A 30); and he writes that "[o]ne cannot begin to figure out Wagner until one figures out his dominant instinct," which according to Nietzsche was histrionic rather than musical (CW 8). Even considering that he knew Wagner personally, what Nietzsche says about drives would seem to rule out the possibility of his knowing any such thing about Wagner, or even about himself—much less about Jesus or Socrates.

78 Ibid.

Unlike Stern, I do not see this as a problem for Nietzsche, because I do not find him claiming to "know" these things about the drives of others in any very strict sense. Rather, these kinds of claims arise from what I call Nietzsche's physio-psychological "symptomatology," which I will discuss in detail in Part III. The basic idea is that, although one cannot observe a person's drives directly, it is possible to make inferences about them based on the way they express themselves in observable behaviour (including utterances, the creation of artistic and philosophical works, etc.). Nietzsche describes this procedure as "that most difficult and captious form of *backward inference* in which the most mistakes are made" (GS 370), and does not deny that some of his attempts to employ it might result in error, though he does believe himself to be especially adept at avoiding such errors (cf. EH I:1). For example, although he offers an account of Jesus as representing a coherent psychological "type," he still admits that "the type *might* actually have been peculiarly manifold and contradictory. Such a possibility cannot be excluded altogether" (A 31). Nietzsche does not claim to *know* that his interpretation of Jesus' psychology is correct, but offers it as a speculative account, in keeping with the basic assumptions of his symptomatology. One of these is that the general tendency to avoid conflict is a symptom of physio-psychological weakness or *décadence* (cf. GS P:2), and he believes he finds this tendency expressed in the dictum "resist not evil" that is attributed to Jesus (A 29; cf. Matthew 5:39). He also believes that the preoccupation with rationality is a symptom of weakness, and accordingly interprets Socrates as a *décadent*—often as though he were simply raising an intriguing possibility (TI II: 3, 4, 7), but sometimes with a stronger note of conviction (TI II: 9, 10, 12). Based on his own presuppositions, Nietzsche cannot claim to have "knowledge" of these cases, but only to offer an interpretation based on the information available to him; this applies equally

to his analysis of Wagner, and of the various "moral groups" to which Stern alludes. These interpretations may be more or less convincing, but it is hard to see how any of them could be confirmed as *true* in the way that an autopsy could, for example, confirm a diagnosis of brain cancer. Nietzsche seems to have hoped that advancements in physiology might be able to bridge this kind of gap, but he did not believe that to have been accomplished in his time. A more detailed solution to these problems will require a deeper understanding of Nietzsche's physio-psychological symptomatology, and must therefore be left for Part III.

Nietzsche's description of human consciousness as "a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text" applies to our consciousness of our drives no less than our consciousness of external reality (D 119). To speak of drives at all is therefore to speak metaphorically, as Nietzsche admits when he writes of a drive's desire for "gratification—or exercise of its strength, or discharge of its strength, or the saturation of an emptiness—these are all metaphors" (D 119). Insofar as drives are understood as willing subjects, Nietzsche's considered position is that they do not exist: they are fictional entities intended to be conceivable by us, insofar as our way of thinking necessarily "misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a 'subject'" (GM I:13). Strictly speaking, the concept of "drive" does what we have seen that all concepts do, namely equate things that are unequal (TL, p. 256). No two instances of anger, love, hope, jealousy, and so on are ever identical, but we experience some of these as more similar than others and assimilate them into a concept, which is how we get these words in the first place. Our tendency to equate the unequal, combined with our instinctive belief that every event can be traced back to some entity that causes it, leads to the posit of the subject, which Nietzsche defines as "the fiction that many similar states in us are the

effect of one substratum: but it is we who first created the 'similarity' of these states" by means of the process of conceptual assimilation just mentioned (WP 485). On his view "there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything" (GM I:13). But if every psychological "event" that we experience is incomparably unique, and apparently similar ones cannot even be attributed to the same "subject," then we lose all ability to think or speak about our psychology, since we have no words for unique events, but only for identical "beings" and their supposed activities. The concept of drive is not intended to overcome this limitation, but only to replace the picture of the human being as "individuum" with that of the human being as "dividuum" (HA 57), in order to avoid positing the soul as belonging to a different type of reality than that of the body. Nietzsche's procedure here seems to be the same one that he describes elsewhere in a different connection, namely "to replace the improbable with the more probable, possibly one error with another" (GM P:4)—the standard of probability and improbability being provided by Nietzsche's assumption that there are no absolute opposites.

Based on these considerations, "physio-psychology" can be defined as a synthesis of physiology and psychology which takes over from the former the idea of the human being as a multiplicity that requires nourishment in order to grow—thus correcting the introspective view that we are self-sufficient unities, which implies the existence of absolute opposites—and from the latter the concept of the willing subject, making it possible to characterize the elements of that multiplicity in a way that does not ignore their causal power, as physiology necessarily does. But what makes such a physio-psychology "proper"? What I have described amounts to a definition of that approach, which is rather unique in itself—but I believe that something more is needed to

make it "proper" in Nietzsche's sense, namely the correct concept of "will." Unlike Schopenhauer, who asserts that the "will itself […] lies outside the province of the law of motivation," as a blind, insatiably striving force that wills now according to this motive, now according to that, Nietzsche maintains that "[t]here is no such thing as 'willing,' but only a willing *something*: one must not remove the aim from the total condition" (WP 668).[79] Because he understands a human being as a community of willing subjects (i.e., drives), it is necessary for him to provide an account of what willing itself is, including the basic "aim" that is inherent in all willing as such. We know that Nietzsche characterizes his physio-psychology as "*the doctrine of the development of the will to power*" (BGE 23), but this concept requires a good deal of investigation to be properly understood: for simply to say that all willing aims at "power" is not very illuminating, and is even misleading if one relies on the everyday definitions of "will" and "power." However, as I have noted, Nietzsche did not originally understand drives as wills to power: rather, this conception of them developed over a relatively long period of time, and it is necessary to trace that development in some detail in order to arrive at an adequate understanding of his final position. I will argue that in HA Nietzsche understands drives as directed toward pleasure and away from displeasure, which he seems tenuously to equate with utility and disutility for preservation. In D the emphasis on pleasure remains, but the equation of pleasure with utility for preservation is mostly abandoned in favour of a conception of pleasure as the "feeling of power" (*Machtgefühl*), which can even run counter to the interests of preservation. Finally, in GS V and BGE, Nietzsche resolves this tension by positing two basic types of pleasure, both of which are explicable as forms of "will to power."

79 Schopenhauer, p. 106.

In a note written in 1873, about five years before HA, Nietzsche claims that "[a]ll drives are connected with pleasure and displeasure […] and there is no drive that has no premonition of pleasure in its own satisfaction" (KSA 7:29[16]). In HA he writes that "[i]n our primary condition, all that interests us as organic beings in any thing is its relationship to us in respect of pleasure and pain" (HA 18), and claims that "[k]nowledge [i.e., historical philosophy] can allow as motives only pleasure and pain, utility and injury" (HA 34). If Nietzsche does not treat pleasure and utility for preservation as perfectly synonymous at this point, he certainly sees a fundamental connection between them. He describes "custom" as "the union of the pleasant and the useful," which seem almost indistinguishable: "because one feels happy with a custom, or at least can preserve one's existence by means of it, this custom is necessary, for it counts as the *sole* condition under which one can feel happy; a happy life seems to derive from this custom alone" (HA 97). His explanation of "evil" acts is more explicit: "All 'evil' acts are motivated by the drive to preservation or, more exactly, by the individual's intention of procuring pleasure and avoiding displeasure" (HA 99). In this text Nietzsche seems to consider the goal of pleasure as more fundamental than the goal of preservation—but three sections later, he writes that "two points of view *suffice* to explain all evil acts perpetrated by men: one desires pleasure or to ward off displeasure; it is always in some sense a matter of self-preservation" (HA 102). This text seems, to the contrary, to explain the goal of attaining pleasure and avoiding displeasure as an instance of the goal of preservation, rather than the other way around. Nietzsche returns again to this theme two sections later, writing that "one causes suffering, robs or kills, in order to preserve or protect oneself, to ward off personal harm" (HA 104). Thus far, though the connection between the goals of pleasure and preservation is somewhat ambiguous, it is clear that they are intimately

related, and the view that pleasure and displeasure serve the end of preservation seems to have the edge over the view that preservation is a means to pleasure, understood as the more fundamental goal.

This view is complicated, however, by Nietzsche's definition in the same text of pleasure as the "feeling of one's own power, of one's own strong excitation" (HA 104). An action that produces this feeling, he says, "occurs for the purpose of preserving the wellbeing of the individual," which seems to confirm the idea that pleasure is ultimately pursued for the sake of preservation. However, Nietzsche goes on to write: "Without pleasure no life; the struggle for pleasure is the struggle for life" (HA 104). While this would still seem to leave open the question whether pleasure or preservation is the more fundamental aim, this might not present a serious problem assuming that these things were basically coextensive: they could even be understood as two aspects of the same basic aim, namely the result (preservation) and the consciousness of having attained it (pleasure). In that case, it might not make sense to ask whether the drives "fundamentally" will preservation or pleasure, these being in essence one and the same thing. The problem, however, is that Nietzsche does not treat preservation as coextensive with pleasure in all cases—for there is no obvious reason why the "feeling of one's own power, of one's own strong excitation" (HA 104) should necessarily have any utility for preservation; in many cases it might even have disutility for that end. When Nietzsche speaks of "the enjoyment of the feeling of revenge or of a powerful excitation of the nerves," of the "pleasure it gives to vent our power on others," the "pleasure in one's superiority," and "the pleasure of gratification in the exercise of power," he evidently considers these pleasures superfluous, or even counterproductive, from the standpoint of preservation: "in the midst of nature we procure pleasure for ourselves by breaking

off branches, loosening stones, fighting with wild animals, and do so in order to become aware of our strength" (HA 103). While these activities might be explicable in terms of their utility for preservation—say, as means of preserving one's strength for the eventuality of self-defense—that is not how Nietzsche explains them here. He makes it quite clear that drives seek the feeling of their own power, and are willing to take risks to attain that feeling.

This problem is made more obvious when considering the phenomenon of asceticism, with which Nietzsche was deeply concerned from the time of his earliest works. Already in HA he gives a sketch of the ascetic saint, who subjects himself to "self-contempt" and "self-torture" in order to attain a feeling of self-mastery. The saint foregoes all that is usually called "pleasure," i.e., everything that produces the pleasant feelings associated with preservation: he mortifies his body through "hunger and flagellation, dislocation of limbs," and also his psyche through the "simulation of madness" (HA 140; cf. D 14). Nietzsche describes this as a means to "the discharge of his emotion, to relieve his state of tension" (HA 138), which may or may not have preservation as its motive. However, his more explicit explanation of the phenomenon of asceticism is again based on the desire to feel one's own power: "For certain men feel so great a need to exercise their strength and lust for power that, in default of other objects or because their efforts in other directions have always miscarried, they at last hit upon the idea of tyrannizing over certain parts of their own nature, over, as it were, segments or stages of themselves" (HA 137). Here Nietzsche speaks of a "tyrannically demanding something in his [i.e., the ascetic saint's] soul," which may be understood as a strong drive that derives its gratification from the mortification of the other drives of the saint's nature—more specifically, from the feeling of power that it derives from this mortification. In such activity Nietzsche identifies a "pleasure in

emotion as such" (HA 140), and not only in those emotions usually considered pleasant: the ascetic saint subjects himself to the most unpleasant emotions imaginable, in order to derive from this a higher pleasure based in the feeling of his power over himself (more exactly, the power of one or more of his drives over the others). Indeed, Nietzsche comes very close in HA to equating pleasure with displeasure, which demonstrates his need to work out the meaning of these concepts more clearly:

> *Thirst for profound pain*. When it has passed, passion [*Leidenschaft*] leaves behind an obscure longing for itself and even in departing casts a seductive glance. To be scourged by it must have afforded us a kind of joy [*Lust*]. The milder sensations, on the other hand, appear insipid: it seems we always prefer the more vehement displeasure [*Unlust*] to a feeble pleasure [*Lust*]. [HA 606]

In D, the association of pleasure with preservation seems to fall away almost entirely, while the definition of pleasure as "the liveliest feeling of power" (D 113) becomes more central. Nietzsche even writes that a people's "*need for the feeling of power*" often makes them "*ready* to stake their life, their goods, their conscience, their virtue so as to acquire that higher enjoyment" (D 189). If it were at bottom a question of preserving their existence, this would be just as unthinkable as would be the desire to go out "fighting with wild animals" (HA 103). However, while the feeling of power is more and more accorded pride of place among human motivations, Nietzsche still seems to regard it as but one motive among others: in this passage he sets it next to "utility and vanity," while elsewhere he contrasts it with "pride" (D 128). Moreover, we cannot take him to be denying the existence of a kind of pleasure that is associated with actions that contribute to preservation, though he does not discuss this much in D.

At this point we are tracing the piecemeal development of a theory of willing that has not yet been integrated into a coherent whole. The main *goals* of willing under consideration, as we

have seen, are pleasure, preservation, and the feeling of power. Sometimes pleasure is understood as a result of the will to preservation, sometimes as the motive that leads to preservation, and at other times as a feeling of power that is at least neutral towards, and possibly even destructive of the ends of preservation. It therefore seems that we are dealing with two different types of pleasure: one that is associated with the preservation of one's existence, and one that is associated with the excitation of one's feeling of power. These two types of pleasure are evidently in tension with one another, since what preserves my existence may not elicit in me "the liveliest feeling of power," and what excites this feeling is by no necessity the same as what preserves my existence. Nietzsche focuses more on the latter type of pleasure in D than he had done in HA, but he still has offered no explicit theory that could unify the two—and this is a problem given his rejection of absolute opposites, which requires him to attempt to provide a unitary characterization of the willing of the drives.

In GS he comes closer to articulating such a theory, though he still does not positively answer the question whether there is any type of motivation besides the desire for the feeling of power. In a section titled "On the doctrine of the feeling of power," he writes that "[b]enefiting and hurting others are ways of exercising one's power upon others; that is all one desires in such cases" (GS 13)—so it seems, in this realm at least, that the type of pleasure identified with the feeling of power is the sole motivation Nietzsche admits. He also states clearly that "[w]hether benefiting or hurting others involves sacrifices for us does not affect the ultimate value of our actions. Even if we offer our lives, as martyrs do for their church, this is a sacrifice that is offered for *our* desire for power or for the purpose of preserving our feeling of power." Given this, it is once again evident that this type of pleasure has nothing directly to do with preserving one's

existence, which can even be sacrificed for the sake of this pleasure. But the key innovation in this passage is that Nietzsche marks a difference in degree between the desire for the feeling of power in different natures:

> Certainly the state in which we hurt others is rarely as agreeable, in an unadulterated way, as that in which we benefit others; it is a sign that we are still lacking power, or it shows a sense of frustration in the face of this poverty; it is accompanied by new dangers and uncertainties for what power we do possess, and clouds our horizon with the prospect of revenge, scorn, punishment, and failure. It is only for the most irritable and covetous devotees of the feeling of power that it is perhaps more pleasurable to imprint the seal of power on a recalcitrant brow—those for whom the sight of those who are already subjected (the objects of benevolence) is a burden and boredom. What is decisive is how one is accustomed to *spice* one's life: it is a matter of taste whether one prefers the slow or the sudden, the assured or the dangerous and audacious increase of power; one seeks this or that spice depending on one's temperament. [GS 13]

This distinction between those who seek a safe, reliable increase of their feeling of power and those who seek a risky and dangerous increase helps us begin to unify the disparate types of pleasure outlined above: for the former looks very much like the desire for the sort of pleasure that attends preservation, while the latter unmistakably resembles the desire for a strong excitation of the feeling of power that even scorns preservation. This passage strongly implies that the desire for preservation is merely the desire to preserve one's feeling of power at a given level, and this would apply even if the "level" in question were that of bare subsistence, that is, of merely preserving one's existence. Thus the distinction between preservation and the feeling of power is perhaps a merely apparent one: in both cases the feeling of power is the ultimate goal. On this basis, the two types of pleasure we have identified can be better distinguished in accordance with the strength of one's desire for the feeling of power: does one seek to preserve one's feeling of power, or to increase it, and to what extent?

Nietzsche returns to this distinction later in GS, where he discusses the significance of displeasure for the preservation and enhancement of the species:

> *Wisdom in pain.* There is as much wisdom in pain [*Schmerz*] as there is in pleasure [*Lust*]: both belong among the factors that contribute the most to the preservation of the species. […] In pain I hear the captain's command: "Take in the sails!" The bold seafarer "man" must have mastered the art of doing a thousand things with his sails; otherwise he would be done for in no time, and the ocean would swallow him. We must learn to live with diminished energies, too: As soon as pain gives its safety signal the time has come to diminish them; some great danger or other, a storm is approaching, and we are well advised to "inflate" ourselves as little as possible. True, there are people who hear precisely the opposite command when great pain approaches: Their expression is never prouder, more warlike, and happier than it is when a storm comes up; indeed, pain itself gives them their greatest moments. This is the heroic type, the great *pain bringers* of humanity, those few or rare human beings who need the very same apology that pain itself needs—and truly, one should not deny it to them. They contribute immensely to the preservation and enhancement of the species, even if it were only by opposing comfortableness and by not concealing how this sort of happiness nauseates them. [GS 318]

Here we find the same ambiguity that was expressed so clearly in HA 606: for some people, at least in some cases, displeasure is more pleasurable than pleasure itself, meaning that there must be more than one concept of pleasure in play. The two types discussed in this passage correspond nicely with those outlined in GS 13, though this may not be immediately apparent from Nietzsche's phrasing. The first type experiences pain as a signal to behave in a self-preserving way, to accept a certain diminution of his "energies" (i.e., of his feeling of power) in order to avoid the risk of having an even greater diminution forced upon him. "When stepped on," Nietzsche later observes, "a worm doubles up. That is clever. In that way he lessens the probability of being stepped on again" (TI I:31). The second type, to the contrary, experiences pain as a stimulus to a greater feeling of power, and as an opportunity to express his power against some resistance—rather than doubling up, he rears up. In both cases, pain amounts to an awareness that one's feeling of power is threatened: the difference lies in how one responds to

this threat, "depending on one's temperament" (GS 13). Though Nietzsche does not say so explicitly in these passages, we will see that one's "temperament" in this respect is ultimately a function of one's feeling of power: the more powerful one feels, the more likely it is that one will derive pleasure from "pain," that is, from resistance. Conversely, the less powerful one feels, the more likely one is to experience "pain" as an existential threat, that is, as something displeasurable that must be avoided.

Let us survey the ground we have covered so far—for up to this point, we have examined many different texts, and multiplied concepts of pleasure, pain, power, and preservation almost to the point of confusion. I am suggesting that Nietzsche reduces all of these to the feeling of power, in the following way. First, there are two types of pleasure: one consists in the feeling that one's power is securely fixed at a certain degree, whatever that may be (this includes, but is not limited to, the pleasure that attends the bare preservation of one's existence); while the other consists in the feeling that one's power is *increasing*. Accordingly, there are two types of displeasure as well: the first consists in the feeling that one's power is *not* secure, that it may be subject to diminution; the second consists in the feeling that one's power is not *increasing*, which may mean either that it is decreasing or simply that it is stagnating. The first type of pleasure corresponds to the second type of displeasure, insofar as the feeling that one's power is securely fixed amounts to the feeling that it is not increasing significantly; and the first type of displeasure corresponds to the second type of pleasure insofar as any dramatic increase in one's feeling of power is attended by dangers that threaten to diminish it perhaps even more dramatically. The first type of pleasure and displeasure are characteristic of human beings who experience a relatively low intensity of the feeling of power, while the second type pertain to those who are used to a relatively high intensity

of this feeling. The desire for preservation is therefore only a weaker form of the desire for the feeling of power.

One question that needs to be asked at this point is whether "power" and the "feeling of power" are the same thing. For it seems evident that one may *feel* powerful, in some sense, yet not be powerful in fact, or not as powerful as one feels. In D, for example, when Nietzsche writes of a people's "*need for the feeling of power*," he tells us that this need can make them "*ready* to stake their life, their goods, their conscience, their virtue so as to acquire that higher enjoyment and as a victorious, capriciously tyrannical nation to rule over other nations (or to think it rules)" (D 189). In this case, if *actually* ruling over other nations would amount to having power, whereas merely *thinking* that one rules would mean that one feels more powerful than one actually is, then power and the feeling of power are in principle separable. However, Nietzsche does not always talk this way in D. When he discusses the origin of the recognition of rights and duties, he moves seamlessly from "feeling of power" to "power" as though the two are interchangeable: "The rights of others constitute a concession on the part of our feeling of power [*Gefühls von Macht*] to the feeling of power of those others. If our power appears to be deeply shaken and broken, our rights cease to exist; conversely, if we have grown very much more powerful, the rights of others, as we have previously conceded them, cease to exist for us" (D 112). He does the same in GS 13, as we saw above: although this text is entitled "On the doctrine of the feeling of power," it mainly discusses the imposition of *actual* power on others, whether by benefiting or harming them, though such imposition is evidently supposed to give rise to the *feeling* of power as well. The question therefore remains open at this point as to whether the fundamental motivation that Nietzsche posits in all willing is *power* itself, or the *feeling* of power.

If the former, it would be possible that what makes one powerful in fact does not make one feel powerful, or does not make one feel as powerful as one might by other means; if the latter, conversely, what makes one feel powerful might not be what would make one most powerful in fact.

It must be remembered, however, that this basic motivation, which Nietzsche is so far calling the "feeling of power," is not attributed to human beings considered as unified subjects, but to each of the many *drives* of which a human being is composed. Because these are the fundamental physio-psychological units that Nietzsche acknowledges, it is evident that the striving for the feeling of power does not operate primarily between human beings or peoples (D 112, 289), but rather *within* human beings. And this insight, it seems to me, gives us the key to answering the question whether "power" and the "feeling of power" are the same or different. There are at least two senses of the latter term in play: first, the feeling of power experienced by an individual drive, which may not become conscious at all, and will in any case become so only in a distorted form, owing to the influence of the other drives; and second, a human being's conscious experience of the feeling of power, which arises from the total state of the relations among his drives. In the former sense, I suggest, the feeling of power can be identified with power as such—a drive feels powerful because, relative to the other drives, it is powerful. Our psychical life consists in relations of "commanding and obeying, on the basis, as already said [in BGE 12], of a social structure composed of many 'souls' [i.e., drives]" (BGE 19), and those drives that command are powerful relative to those that are commanded by them. Our conscious experience of these relations, however, is subject to a good deal of distortion, based in part on our instinctive belief that we are unified, willing subjects. In the conscious experience of willing,

aside from “a complex of sensation and thinking,” Nietzsche identifies the main ingredient as “an *affect*, and specifically the affect of the command. […] A man who *wills* commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience” (BGE 19). This “affect of the command” seems to be the same as the feeling of power, though in the case of conscious willing one always *feels* that one commands more than one really does:

> [I]nasmuch as in the given circumstances [i.e., when we consciously will something] we are at the same time the commanding *and* the obeying parties, and as the obeying party we know the sensations of constraint, impulsion, pressure, resistance, and motion, which usually begin immediately after the act of will; inasmuch as, on the other hand, we are accustomed to disregard this duality, and to deceive ourselves about it by means of the synthetic concept “I,” a whole series of erroneous conclusions, and consequently of false evaluations of the will itself, has become attached to the act of willing—to such a degree that he who wills believes sincerely that willing *suffices* for action. […] In short, he who wills believes with a fair amount of certainty that will and action are somehow one; he ascribes the success, the carrying out of the willing, to the will itself, and thereby enjoys an increase of the feeling of power [*Machtgefühls*] which accompanies all success. [BGE 19]

In this connection, Nietzsche makes it abundantly clear that power and the feeling of power are not the same. On the basis of naïve introspection, Nietzsche thinks it is normal to believe that the cause of an action—for example, a physical movement—is simply one’s having willed it: “Every thoughtless person […] is convinced that when he does something—strike something, for example—it is he that strikes, and that he did strike because he *willed* it. He does not see any problem here; the feeling of *will* seems sufficient to him not only for the assumption of cause and effect but also for the faith that he *understands* their relationship” (GS 127). Although “[h]e knows nothing” of “the mechanism of what happened and the hundredfold fine work that needs to be done to bring about the strike, or of the incapacity of the will in itself to do even the tiniest part of this work” (GS 127), nevertheless “the person exercising volition adds the feelings of delight of his successful executive instruments, the useful ‘under-wills’ or under-souls

[…] to his feelings of delight as commander" (BGE 19). The "person" in this case must be identified with "the synthetic concept 'I'" (BGE 19), which is not a subject underlying thinking, as it naïvely seems to be, but "only a synthesis which is *made* by thinking" (BGE 54). In some unconscious sense, different from conscious thinking but similar enough to be analogous to it, it is the individual drives that think; and conscious thinking "is merely a relation of these drives to each other" (BGE 36). The content of consciousness, the perspective of the "I," is determined by one's dominant drives, which interpret the activity of the lesser drives that they command as *their own* activity, much as I might naïvely regard a movement of my hand as an activity of my will, ignoring the innumerable muscular events that must occur for that movement to take place, which I do not consciously will. The conscious feeling of power is therefore deceptive with regard to actual power, and this means that power and the feeling of power ("affect of the command") cannot be the same.

Now that we have some understanding of the psychological dynamics underlying the feeling of power, we must ask what *power* itself is for Nietzsche. The answer to this will not be straightforward, because, as we have seen, it must be given in terms that we can understand, that is, in terms drawn from the framework of our physio-psychology. Because Nietzsche claims that we have no concept of power except that derived from the experience of willing, which physiology teaches us is deceptive, the best he can do is attempt to purify that concept of unnecessary errors while retaining those that are indispensable for comprehension. We have seen this procedure at work already, when he eliminates the idea of the human being as willing subject, but retains this concept in characterizing the constituent parts of the human psyche ("drives"). In characterizing power as such, as opposed to the feeling of power, he retains the

analogy with willing, which involves intentionality (WP 668), but argues that this intentionality is far less important than our conscious experience of willing would lead us to believe:

> *Two kinds of causes that are often confounded.*—This seems to me to be one of my most essential steps and advances: I have learned to distinguish the cause of acting from the cause of acting in a particular way, in a particular direction, with a particular goal. The first kind of cause is a quantum of dammed-up force [*Kraft*] that is waiting to be used up somehow, for something, while the second kind is, compared to this force, something quite insignificant, for the most part a little accident in accordance with which this quantum "discharges" itself in one particular way—a match versus a ton of powder. Among these little accidents and "matches" I include so-called "purposes" as well as the even much more so-called "vocations": They are relatively random, indifferent, almost arbitrary in relation to the tremendous quantum of force that presses, as I have said, to be used up somehow. The usual view is different: People are accustomed to consider the goal (purposes, vocations, etc.) as the *driving* force [*treibende Kraft*], in keeping with a very ancient error; but it is merely the *directing* force [*dirigirende Kraft*]—one has mistaken the helmsman for the steam. [GS 360]

This text makes it even more evident why the *feeling* of power associated with conscious willing cannot amount to power as such. For that "affect of the command" obviously presupposes a command that has some content, that is the expression of a goal or purpose, and is predicated on the belief that this command itself is sufficient to bring about the attainment of that purpose. But in fact, Nietzsche thinks, the goal that is commanded is relatively unimportant, despite its centrality in our conscious experience of willing. What is more important is the amount of power ("force") that is present—for without this it would be impossible to act at all, regardless of the goal.

Nietzsche makes it clear that this concept of power is not to be identified with willing in a strict sense: "It is part of willing that something is commanded […]. That state of tension by virtue of which a force seeks to discharge itself—is not an example of 'willing'" (WP 668). "Willing," in this strict sense, occurs only within a hierarchical structure of forces such as a human being, in which some drives press others into service to varying degrees. To this extent,

drives appear less like what Nietzsche calls "*driving* forces" and more like what he calls "*directing* forces," which require the presence of a driving force in order to direct its discharge in a particular way. Because drives are defined based on what they are "to"—sex, domination, artistic creation, and so on—they may be nothing more than tendencies to discharge force in different ways. Indeed, we have seen that Nietzsche identifies a drive as a *Neigung*, a "tendency" (HA 57). However, a tendency is not a causal power, but only a description of a regularity, and as such Nietzsche does not find it satisfying as an explanation of our physio-psychological life—for the goal of explanations, as we have seen, is to produce a feeling of comprehension by reducing the unfamiliar to the familiar (GS 355; WP 479). It is for this reason that he assimilates such tendencies to the concept of will, interpreting them not as mere regularities but as activities on the part of willing subjects. The distinction between the directing force and the driving force, however, can only be apparent: it is "a sign language derived from our logical-psychical world" (WP 625). As I have emphasized, Nietzsche's rejection of absolute opposites prevents him from positing any fundamental distinction between agents and their activities, and for this reason the directing forces (i.e., the drives) must be understood, strictly speaking, as expressions of the driving force itself.

However, by the time Nietzsche wrote BGE, his main term for the kind of willing that characterizes the drives was no longer a desire for the "feeling of power" (though we have seen that he still uses this term, e.g., in BGE 19), but rather *will to power*. It was necessary to digress from the thread we had been following in order to clarify the distinction between the feeling of power and power itself. Having done that, we must now investigate the difference between power and *will to* power. I do not believe that a definition of "will to power" can be attained simply by

taking up the definitions of "will" and "power" we have so far examined and bridging them by means of the word "to." Nietzsche seems most often to use "will to power" as a unitary term of art, having its own definition that encompasses more than a particular relationship between "will" and "power." I suggest that this term, rather than merely connecting these two concepts, represents an attempt at *synthesizing* the concept of a "directing force" (will) with that of a "driving force" (power), which I have said that Nietzsche must do in order to avoid violating his rejection of absolute opposites. A few remarks on the relationship between "will" and "power" will help to demonstrate the value of this approach.

If we were to parse "will to power" in the way I just suggested against, its definition would be something like "the affect of commanding toward driving force." This is not so bad, but it really tells us very little. For, first, it still retains the distinction between the directing force and the driving force, so that it is unclear what is being directed ("commanded") toward the driving force, if not the driving force itself, which is what the directing force supposedly directs. Moreover, it is hard to know how to characterize the directing force itself except as a form of driving force in its own right—for what is the fundamental distinction between directing and driving, except that the former seems to involve driving *in a particular direction*, while the latter is a mere force without any definite direction? In the case of human action, Nietzsche seems to think that this can hold up as a relative distinction. However, strictly speaking the distinction between the driving force and the directing, "commanding" force implies that in every instance of the operation of a force, it operates under some form of compulsion, which Nietzsche consistently denies. "Compulsion in things certainly cannot be demonstrated," he writes: "the rule proves only that one and the same event is not another event as well. Only because we have

introduced subjects, 'doers,' into things does it appear that all events are the consequence of compulsion exerted upon subjects—exerted by whom? again by a 'doer.'" (WP 552; cf. BGE 22). But, on the other hand, Nietzsche believes that we *need* to introduce subjects into events in order to make them comprehensible, and this involves introducing the fiction of compulsion into them as well. When he calls attention to "our inability to interpret events otherwise than as events caused by intentions," he adds almost immediately: "Question: is intention the cause of an event? Or is that also an illusion? Is it not the event itself?" (WP 550).

Strictly speaking, Nietzsche believes that the intention is merely a part of the event, and not its cause. In separating the directing force from the driving force, "[a] condition that accompanies an event and is itself an effect of the event is projected as the 'sufficient reason' for the event," based on "the relation of tensions in our feeling of power […], of a resistance overcome" (WP 689). In other words, the affect of commanding that characterizes our experience of willing, because it is essentially a feeling of power or of the overcoming of a resistance, gives rise to the belief that this affect is itself the *cause* of the events in connection with which it is experienced, whereas in reality we can say only that it is part of that complex of events, and not the "sufficient reason" for their occurrence. Accordingly, Nietzsche says that

> one should take the doer back into the deed after having conceptually removed the doer and thus emptied the deed; that one should take doing *something*, the 'aim,' the 'intention,' the 'purpose,' back into the deed […].
>
> All 'purposes,' 'aims,' 'meaning' are only modes of expression and metamorphoses of one will that is inherent in all events: the will to power. To have purposes, aims, intentions, *willing* in general, is the same thing as willing to be stronger, willing to grow—and, in addition, willing the means to this.
>
> The most universal and basic instinct in all doing and willing has for precisely this reason remained the least known and most hidden, because *in praxi* we always follow its commandments, because we *are* this commandment— [WP 675]

In this way, Nietzsche synthesizes the directing force and the driving force, or, in his terms, takes the doer back into the deed. As we have seen, he insists that "[t]here is no such thing as 'willing,' but only a willing *something*" (WP 668), so that he is obligated to explain the origin of the "something" that is willed in any particular case. And he cannot explain it by appeal to a subject with intentions, however useful this may be as a manner of speaking, because he regards the belief in willing subjects as a mere psychological illusion, albeit one that we cannot entirely dispense with. He must therefore locate the intention, the "something" that is willed, in the willing force itself, understood as a sort of pseudo-subject that encompasses both the "doer" and the "deed." Because such forces are not directed by neutral substrata that might choose to will this or that, but contain a purpose within themselves which characterizes all of their diverse activities, Nietzsche's commitment to historical philosophy requires him to define this purpose in unitary terms to which the apparent variety of purposes can be reduced. His name for this basic kind of purpose that is inherent in all force, as we have just seen, is "will to power."

But what is will to power? I have argued that with this concept Nietzsche attempts to synthesize the directing force and the driving force, but the concept itself still requires elucidation. In the text we just examined, Nietzsche described will to power as "willing to be stronger, willing to grow," which is only slightly more clear. He writes that "life"—upon which the "hypothesis" of will to power is based—"is specifically a will to the accumulation of force" (WP 689), and says that "every specific body [i.e., every center of force] strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (– its will to power) and to thrust back all that resists its extension" (WP 636). Those constellations of force that do not resist sufficiently are overpowered and assimilated, "until at length that which has been overwhelmed has entirely gone over into the

power domain of the aggressor and has increased the same" (WP 656). Nietzsche sees this dynamic at play in the simplest organic functions like the nutrition of protoplasm, which "takes into itself absurdly more than would be required to preserve it" (WP 651), as well as in the highest spiritual activities of human beings: "The spirit's power to appropriate the foreign stands revealed in its inclination to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the manifold, and to overlook or repulse whatever is totally contradictory [...]. Its intent in all this is to incorporate new 'experiences,' to file new things in old files—growth, in a word—or, more precisely, the *feeling* of growth, the feeling of increased power" (BGE 230). To this extent, "will to power" designates a basic tendency on the part of every center of force to expand and increase itself by forcibly incorporating what is foreign and different. This does not necessarily entail the destruction of those foreign elements, but only their adjustment and assimilation within the sphere of power of the incorporating force. The concept of "interpretation" that we examined in Part I is another name for this process.

However, Nietzsche does not always speak of will to power as a tendency toward the accumulation of force, but sometimes rather as the apparently opposite tendency toward the *discharge* of force: "A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its force—life itself is will to power" (BGE 13; cf. WP 650). These two tendencies are evidently related, since to discharge force presupposes that some force has already been accumulated; moreover, the process of accumulation must also involve some expenditure of force, since Nietzsche conceives of it as an active overpowering, not as a passive reception. Will to power therefore appears bivalent: on the one hand it is a tendency to accumulate force, and on the other a tendency to discharge this force again once its accumulation has resulted in an unsustainable state of tension. It is this latter aspect

of the will to power that Nietzsche refers to when he writes that the primary cause of a human action is "a quantum of dammed-up force that is waiting to be used up somehow" (GS 360). The concept of will to power is needed not only to unify this "driving force" with the "directing force" that determines the manner in which it will be discharged, but also to unify these two basic tendencies toward accumulation and discharge, in keeping with Nietzsche's commitment to historical philosophy. Every "center of force"—which, strictly speaking, is the only kind of pseudo-subject Nietzsche ultimately admits—strives to accumulate as much force as possible until, if it is successful, it has accumulated more than it can control, and must discharge it in some manner (cf. WP 654). This view is still based in human psychology, but Nietzsche has done his best to eliminate the willing subject insofar as possible, along with the various errors that adhere to that concept—most importantly, the belief in the conscious will as cause, and the concomitant separation of the doer from the deed.

With this, we are finally able to characterize the higher-level pseudo-subjects that Nietzsche posits at the level of physio-psychology: "drives" are wills to power. They are not simple centers of force, of the kind that Nietzsche pictures operating at the most minute levels of reality, but rather complex, high-level constellations of such centers, all of which have been assimilated to some controlling motive. A human being is a hierarchical community of an indefinite number of such constellations, in which the more powerful dominate the less powerful, and often also compete against one another for ultimate dominance. It is the power relations among these drives that constitute what is typically called one's "personality." Each of them is a specifically developed form of will to power, which is why Nietzsche characterizes his physio-psychology as "morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*" (BGE 23):

> *Unitary conception of psychology.*—We are accustomed to consider the development of an immense abundance of forms as compatible with an origin in unity.
>
> that the will to power is the primitive form of affect [i.e., driving force], that all other affects are only developments of it.
>
> that it is notably enlightening to posit *power* in place of individual "happiness" (after which every living thing is supposed to be striving); "there is a striving for power, for an increase of power";—pleasure is only a symptom of the feeling of power attained, a consciousness of a difference (— there is no striving for pleasure: but pleasure supervenes when that which is being striven for is attained: pleasure is an accompaniment, pleasure is not the motive —);
>
> that all driving force is will to power, that there is no other physical, dynamic, or psychic force except this. (WP 688)

Nietzsche begins this note by reiterating his rejection of absolute opposites, which requires him to assume that "an immense abundance of forms"—in this case, the immense variety of drives that constitute the human psyche—can be explained as developments of a single, original type of drive, namely the will to power. This is the common element that he finds in every drive: all of them, however different they may appear, strive for nourishment and growth, assimilating as much of the "external world" (including the other drives) as they can to their own perspective and mode of interpretation. Insofar as every drive is a will to power, its fundamental desire is "to incorporate everything" in this manner (WP 657): "But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies [i.e., drives] and ends by coming to an arrangement ('union') with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power" (WP 636). As we will see in the next chapter, Nietzsche thinks that the wide variety of physio-psychological drives in human beings, and in other animals, is largely a result of a "division of labour" among these different wills as they "conspire together for power." Each requires a different kind of object or experience for its nourishment, according to which we distinguish it from the others, and in general its attainment of this nourishment benefits the "community" of

drives as a whole—although this is certainly not always the case, and we will see in Part III that Nietzsche thinks certain drives can even be parasitic upon the whole.

In this chapter I have tried to show what Nietzsche means by "a proper physio-psychology," and why he considers this approach superior to both "soul atomism," which is based on naïve introspection, and to empirical physiology, which necessarily lacks a concept of causal power. The former requires one to posit the soul and the body as belonging to different types of reality, thus violating Nietzsche's rejection of absolute opposites; while the latter elides the "soul" altogether, preferring to speak only of the "body," which at best results in an accurate description of observable phenomena, but not in an explanation of them. The goal of Nietzsche's physio-psychology is to dissolve the opposition between the soul and the body, to understand them as belonging to the same fundamental type of reality, which is not possible on the basis of either of these approaches. For this reason, on the one hand, he imports physiological notions into psychology—namely the conception of the human soul as a multiplicity of subjects that require nourishment—while on the other he imports psychological notions into physiology—namely the concept of the willing subject. This attempt to synthesize psychology and physiology corresponds to his attempt to "translate man back into nature" (BGE 230), while at the same time "translating" nature into man. I said at the outset that these two projects are not strictly separable, though I have attempted to focus on the former here, leaving the latter for the next chapter. Having come this far, it seems to me that the artificial distinction between them has become somewhat blurry, and accordingly I turn now to the "translation" of nature into man, and thus to the exposition of everything that has so far been left out.

Chapter 6: Will to Power in Nature

I argued in Part I that Nietzsche's philosophy is not a form of "naturalism," in part because this designation suggests a reduction of the "non-natural" to the "natural," where the latter term is taken to denote reality as it is supposedly conceived by the empirical sciences, namely as matter subject to natural laws and necessary causal relations. We saw there that Nietzsche believes the concept of matter, as well as those of "necessity" and "law," are derived from our psychology, and do not pertain to the way reality is independently of that psychology (cf. WP 634-5). That is why he writes that psychology is "the queen of the sciences" and "the path to the fundamental problems" (BGE 23)—for all science is conditioned first of all by human psychology, including moral prejudices, and this must be taken into account in order to arrive at the best scientific understanding of the world. This is one reason why I began by giving an account of psychology as Nietzsche understands it. If all science is conditioned by human psychology, then a critique of science must be based on a "proper" understanding of that psychology. Nor can Nietzsche dispense with such a critique: for if he is to maintain his commitment to historical philosophy, he cannot say that the fundamental principle of psychology is will to power, while appealing to another principle (e.g., mechanistic causation) to explain the rest of reality. Faced with such a dilemma, the only recourse his methodology allows is to reduce one of these principles to the other, or to reduce both to some third principle. We have seen already that his procedure will be to reduce "the so-called mechanistic (or 'material') world" to will to power (BGE 36), because he believes that the mechanistic concept of causation is an empty one, and because he admits "no other physical, dynamic, or psychic force" besides will to

power to which both of these principles could be reduced (WP 688). I have described this as a "translation" of nature into man, that is, into human psychology, understood as will to power.

Nietzsche's main published outline of his interpretation of the world as will to power is found in BGE 36. However, before turning to that passage, consider a notebook entry written around the same time:

> A. Psychological *point of departure*:
> — our thinking and valuating is only an expression of desires [i.e., drives] that govern it
> — desires become more and more specialized: their unity is *the will to power* (to take the term from the strongest of all drives, which has directed all organic development up to now)
> — reduction of all basic organic functions to the will to power
> — question whether it is not the moving force [*mobile*] in the inorganic world as well? For the mechanistic interpretation of the world still needs a moving force.
> — "law of nature": as a formula for the unconditional production of relations and degrees of power
> — mechanical *movement* is only a means of expression of an inner event
> — "cause and effect" (KSA 12:1[30])

I quote this here by way of demonstrating the continuity of these ideas with the ones we have just been examining in the previous chapter. First of all, Nietzsche makes clear that the "point of departure" for his interpretation of the world as will to power is psychological, and alludes directly to the "drives" that we have seen constitute the human psyche, reiterating that their "unity" as drives lies in their character as wills to power. He then suggests that "all basic organic functions"—in other words, the phenomena of life—can be understood as sharing this character. This should not be surprising, since we have seen that he draws on the physiological concepts of nourishment and growth in characterizing the drives, for the sake of attempting to understand the soul and the body as belonging to the same type of reality. Third, and most important for our present inquiry, Nietzsche suggests that will to power, understood as the basic "moving force" both in human psychology and in life more generally, could also perhaps be applied to the

"inorganic world" as a replacement for the mechanistic concept of force, which is empty in and of itself. The "mechanical movement" that we observe could then be explained as resulting from an "inner event" that is not observable—namely a will to power—in much the same way that the bodily movements of human beings are understood as arising from the willing of their drives. He also suggests that "laws of nature," as well as "cause and effect," could be sufficiently explained on this basis.

This idea requires a more careful and detailed formulation, and happily Nietzsche gives us one. The following is probably the most philosophically controversial text that he published. I quote it in full because my analysis in this chapter will follow it closely:

> Suppose nothing else were "given" as real except our world of desires and passions [i.e., drives], and we could not get down, or up, to any other "reality" besides the reality of our drives—for thinking is merely a relation of these drives to each other: is it not permitted to make the experiment and to ask the question whether this "given" would not be *sufficient* for also understanding on the basis of this kind of thing the so-called mechanistic (or "material") world? I mean, not as a deception, an "appearance" [*Schein*], a "representation" [*Vorstellung*] (in the sense of Berkeley and Schopenhauer) but as holding the same rank of reality as our affect—as a more primitive form of the world of affects in which everything still lies contained in a powerful unity before it undergoes ramifications and developments in the organic process (and, as is only fair, also becomes tenderer and weaker)—as a kind of drive-life [*Triebleben*] in which all organic functions are still synthetically intertwined along with self-regulation, assimilation, nourishment, excretion, and metabolism—as a *pre-form* of life. In the end not only is it permitted to make this experiment; the conscience of *method* demands it. Not to assume several kinds of causality until the experiment of making do with a single one has been pushed to its utmost limit (to the point of nonsense, if I may say so)—that is a moral of method which one may not shirk today—it follows "from its definition," as a mathematician would say. The question is in the end whether we really recognize the will as *effective* [*wirkend*], whether we believe in the causality of the will: if we do—and at bottom our faith in this is nothing less than our faith in causality itself—then we have to make the experiment of positing the causality of the will hypothetically as the only one. "Will," of course, can affect only "will"—and not "matter" (not "nerves," for example). In short, one has to risk the hypothesis whether will does not affect will wherever "effects" are recognized—and whether all mechanical occurrences are not, insofar as a force is active in them, will-force, will-effect [*Willenskraft, Willens-Wirkung*]. Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire drive-life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the

> will—namely, of the will to power, as *my* proposition has it; suppose all organic functions could be traced back to this will to power and one could also find in it the solution of the problem of procreation and nourishment—it is *one* problem—then one would have gained the right to determine *all* effective force [*wirkende Kraft*] as—*will to power*. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its "intelligible character"—it would be "will to power" and nothing else. (BGE 36)

It should be apparent that the content of this text closely resembles that of the note quoted above, though it is presented in a somewhat different order. Most importantly, Nietzsche does not mention will to power here until close to the end of the text, appealing instead to a more general notion of "will" throughout. However, it is evident from the outset that he identifies this "will" with "the reality of our drives," and he has already told us explicitly that he regards drives as wills to power (BGE 23). Perhaps he takes this approach in order to avoid over-complicating his hypothesis about will-causality right out of the gate.

Summarized in what I take to be a more direct way, the argument of this text runs as follows. First, as we saw both in Part I and in the discussion of drives in the last chapter, we as human beings are locked into a particular perspective on reality that is determined by our physio-psychology, and we have no access to any other perspective on reality (cf. GS 374). Nietzsche emphasizes that "thinking" cannot help us to overcome this limitation, as many philosophers have believed, because the concepts employed in thinking belong to our physio-psychological perspective no less than do our "desires and passions," and are actually only an expression of the latter (GS 333). For this reason, Nietzsche has no alternative but to accept reality as it appears through the lens of our physio-psychology as "given," as the only starting point upon which to base an interpretation of the world. However, it is important to note that he places "given" in quotation marks, signaling that what he has in mind is not an "immediate certainty," which he has

already told us is a "*contradictio in adjecto*" (BGE 16), and which he again dismisses almost immediately before the text we are examining (BGE 34). We have seen quite clearly that Nietzsche does not understand his "proper physio-psychology" as an immediate certainty, but rather only as the deepest interpretation that is possible from a human perspective, in keeping with the rejection of absolute opposites.

Second, moving to the end of the text, Nietzsche makes explicit how "the reality of our drives" that he accepts as "given" is to be understood, namely as will to power. Whereas in the opening lines he emphasized the psychological dimension of physio-psychology, referring to "our world of desires and passions," here he calls attention to the physiological dimension, as we saw him do in the note quoted above: "all organic functions" are to be explained as forms of will to power, including "procreation and nourishment," as well as "self-regulation […] excretion, and metabolism." Nietzsche refers to these organic functions, taken together with our "desires and passions," as "our entire drive-life," making it clear once again that he understands psychology and physiology as continuous. "Desires and passions" are for him a complex kind of organic function, while even the apparently cruder and simpler organic functions, like nourishment and excretion, still share the psychical character of desires and passions, which he calls "drive" or "will to power." This, at any rate, is the hypothesis he presents here, which is essentially an encapsulation of the physio-psychological theory that we examined in the last chapter. As I have said, it is not enough for Nietzsche to limit himself to psychology, to the "soul," while excluding the "body": his commitment to historical philosophy requires him to understand these things as belonging to the same basic type of reality. Assuming that this were accomplished, he suggests that such an understanding would amount to the best theory of *life* that is possible from a human

perspective, and not only the best theory of human physio-psychology. Physiology makes it plain that human beings, considered as biological life forms, are not essentially different from any other form of biological life, so that if we are justified in explaining *our* kind of life as will to power, the same explanation should be applicable to terrestrial life in general. As always, Nietzsche's historical methodology requires him to pursue this line of interpretation, because it prevents him from positing fundamentally different types of life if this is not absolutely necessary for explanation.

Finally, returning to the beginning of the text, Nietzsche suggests that the one thing he accepts as "given," which amounts to will to power, could perhaps be applied not only to life in general, but to the "inorganic" world as well. If it were not already obvious that he makes this move for the methodological reasons just cited, he tells us as much himself, writing that "the conscience of *method* demands" that we not "assume several kinds of causality until the experiment of making do with a single one has been pushed to its utmost limit." Because Nietzsche recognizes that we have no empirical access to the causal connections between events, and because he believes that we originally derive the concept of causation from the conscious experience of willing, he considers it necessary to apply a concept of will "wherever 'effects' are recognized," that is, to understand all causality as will-causality. Since there is no other concept of causality available to us, the only alternative would be to abandon talk of causation altogether, or to persist in employing the empty mechanistic concepts of cause and effect, which would amount to the same thing insofar as these concepts merely describe sequences of events without saying anything about the necessity that connects them. Further, even if the mechanistic concept of causation were not an empty one, and even if Nietzsche were not committed to the rejection of

absolute opposites as a methodological principle, to posit two different kinds of causality, one psychical and one physical, would raise all of the traditional problems of mind-body dualism, and particularly the problem of interaction: for "will," as he says, "can affect only 'will'—and not 'matter' (not 'nerves,' for example)." Although Nietzsche thinks that our conscious experience of willing is deceptive, and we have seen that he takes pains to purge the concept of "will" of a number of unnecessary errors that arise from introspection, he still does not deny that "will to power" is capable of producing bodily movements, which would be inexplicable if "will" and "matter" operated according to fundamentally different kinds of causality. A more typical approach to solving this problem is of course to deny the existence of will-causality, and to attempt to explain "willing" itself on a mechanistic basis. However, this approach only makes sense if one thinks that the mechanistic concept of causality has explanatory power, which Nietzsche denies. Consequently, he moves in the opposite direction and denies the existence of mechanistic causality, attempting to explain "matter" on the basis of a particular form of "will"—namely, will to power.

The foregoing represents only a broad summary of Nietzsche's argument in this crucial text. I already gave in the last chapter an analysis of the psychological theory of will to power that he here accepts as "given." However, it is still necessary to explain Nietzsche's reasons for thinking that the only concept of causality that has any explanatory power is "the causality of the will." While I have indicated some of these reasons already, a more thorough treatment is needed in order to do justice to the argument we are examining. It will also be necessary to examine in detail Nietzsche's attempt to explain biological life on the basis of will to power, thus completing our understanding of his physio-psychology by filling out the physiological part of the picture to

a greater degree than was possible in the previous chapter. All of this is necessary preparation for understanding the concept of degrees of strength, which derives its justification as the correct standard of value from the interpretation of reality —or, at minimum, of life—as will to power. I have emphasized already that Nietzsche's thought is not linear but "circular," that his key ideas tend to mutually support one another rather than certain less fundamental ones being supported by other, more fundamental ones. Accordingly, I do not claim that Nietzsche first developed his interpretation of the world as will to power, and only afterward derived the standard of degrees of strength from it. Rather, these ideas seem to have developed together in a fairly complex way, and I again consider it necessary to introduce a somewhat artificial separation between them for the sake of clear explanation. It is important to understand the basic worldview on which "degrees of strength" makes sense as a standard of value—but, as we will see in Part III, this worldview itself is understood as a symptom of a certain degree of strength, so that neither of these concepts can be said to support the other without also at the same time being supported by it.

Although Nietzsche tells us in BGE 36 that "we have to make the experiment of positing the causality of the will hypothetically as the only one," it took him some time to come to that conclusion. Just a few years earlier he had written that "it is only in intellectual beings that pleasure, displeasure, and will are to be found; the vast majority of organisms has nothing of the sort" (GS 127)—and neither, of course, does the inorganic world. Contrary to his later description of the inorganic as "a *pre-form* of life" (BGE 36), he claims here that "[t]he living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type" (GS 109), which fits with the common procedure of attempting to reduce the apparent causality of the will to mechanistic causality. However, Nietzsche already saw at this time that man's belief in causality resulted from his naïve belief in

the causal power of willing: "the feeling of *will* seems sufficient to him not only for the assumption of cause and effect but also for the faith that he *understands* their relationship" (GS 127).

> Now man believed originally that wherever he saw something happen, a will had to be at work in the background as a cause, and a personal, willing being. Any notion of mechanics was far from his mind. But since man believed, for immense periods of time, only in persons (and not in substances, forces, things, and so forth), the faith in cause and effect became for him the basic faith that he applies wherever anything happens—and this is what he still does instinctively: it is an atavism of the most ancient origin. (GS 127)

This basic critique of the belief in the causality of the will should be familiar from the previous chapter, where we saw Nietzsche reject the idea "that willing *suffices* for action" (BGE 19). Here he presents a similar critique: "He [i.e., man] is convinced that when he does something—strike something, for example—it is he that strikes, and that he did strike because he *willed* it. […] He knows nothing of the mechanism of what happened and of the hundredfold fine work that needs to be done to bring about the strike, or of the incapacity of the will in itself to do even the tiniest part of this work" (GS 127). So we see Nietzsche *denying* the causal power of will, not only in earlier works like GS, but also in BGE, in which he nevertheless insists that we must posit the causality of will as the only type of causality. Yet even in his last works he still denies that the will has causal power. After recapitulating his theory that the concept of causation is originally derived from the fact that we "believed ourselves to be causal in the act of willing [and] thought that here at least we caught causality in the act," he goes on to say:

> Meanwhile we have thought better of it. Today we no longer believe a word of all this. The "inner world" is full of phantoms and will-o'-the-wisps: the will is one of them. The will no longer moves anything, hence does not explain anything either—it merely accompanies events; it can also be absent. […] What follows from this? There are no mental causes at all. The whole of the allegedly empirical evidence for that has gone to the devil. That is what follows! And what a fine abuse we had perpetrated with this "empirical evidence"; we *created*

> the world on this basis as a world of causes, a world of will, a world of spirits. The most ancient and enduring psychology was at work here and did not do anything else: all that happened was considered a doing, all doing the effect of a will; the world became to it a multiplicity of doers; a doer (a "subject") was slipped under all that happened. (TI VI:3)

What are we to make of this? In all of these passages, Nietzsche combines the claim that the concept of causality is derived from the conscious experience of willing with the claim that this is an error, that the conscious will does not and cannot cause anything, even the apparently simplest bodily movements. He refers to the "mechanism" involved in the performance of such movements (GS 127), and insists that "[t]here are no mental causes at all," which might seem to imply that the causes of such movements are "physical" (TI VI:3). Many commentators have read him this way, as we saw in Chapter 3. However, as I emphasized there, Nietzsche cannot simply help himself to a mechanistic concept of causality as a replacement for "mental" causes, because according to him the concept of causality itself is derived from the instinctive belief in mental causes. I find it striking that so many commentators seem not to regard this as a problem, apparently because they believe Nietzsche to be satisfied with the Humean definition of causality as constant conjunction.[80]

Maudemarie Clark exemplifies this kind of approach, emphasizing that "Nietzsche does not believe in the causality of the will," and citing many of the same passages I have quoted above.[81] She writes that BGE 36 "may give the impression that Nietzsche supports the causality of the will because otherwise he would have to give up something we cannot do without, 'our

80 See, for example, Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 258–61; Ivan Soll, "Nietzsche's Will to Power as a Psychological Thesis," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43, no. 1 (2012), pp. 118–29; Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 103–147; and Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 207.

81 Clark, p. 214.

faith … in causality itself.' If so, it seems to me that Nietzsche is playing with us, for he clearly believes we can do without this faith."[82] Clark cites only one piece of direct evidence for the claim that Nietzsche thinks we can dispense with the "faith in causality":

> [o]ne should not wrongly reify "cause" and "effect," as the natural scientists do (and whoever, like them, now "naturalizes" in his thinking), according to the prevailing mechanical doltishness which makes the cause press and push until it "effects" its end; one should use "cause" and "effect" only as pure concepts, that is to say, as conventional fictions for the sake of designation and communication—*not* for explanation. [BGE 21]

However, the causal concepts that Nietzsche warns us against reifying are specifically the "mechanical" ones employed by natural scientists, which are not usually understood to involve willing. Although he believes that these concepts retain a vestigial element of the belief in the will as cause, and suggests as much in this passage, his main point is that it is an error to understand causality in terms of "unfree will," that is, to understand the "cause" as a subject that *compels* another subject to produce the "effect." Nietzsche defines "the doctrine 'of the unfreedom of the will'" as the belief that "you do what you do not voluntarily but unwillingly, i.e., under coercion" (KSA 12:1[44]). This conception, which pertains originally to persons, is projected into "material" reality by means of the conceptual separation of the doer from the deed, the cause from the effect; that is, the "interpretation of every event either as an act or the suffering of an act," in both cases on the part of a subject (WP 546):

> From the fact that something ensues regularly and ensues calculably, it does not follow that it ensues *necessarily*. That a quantum of force determines and conducts itself in every particular case in one way and manner does not make it into an "unfree will." "Mechanical necessity" is not a fact: it is we who first interpreted it into events. We have interpreted the formulatable character of events as the consequence of a necessity that rules over events. But from the fact that I do a certain thing, it by no means follows that I am compelled to do it. Compulsion in things certainly cannot be demonstrated: the rule proves only that one and the same event is

82 Clark, p. 216.

> not another event as well. Only because we have introduced subjects, "doers," into things does it appear that all events are the consequences of compulsion exerted upon subjects—exerted by whom? again by a "doer." Cause and effect—a dangerous concept so long as one thinks of something that causes and something upon which an effect is produced. (WP 552)

It is this particular conception of the causality of "unfree" will that Nietzsche criticizes in BGE 21, and not the causality of will as such, as Clark suggests. It is the idea of "necessity," in the sense that every event is understood as an imposition by one subject upon another, with the imposing subject having itself been prevailed upon by another to perform this act of imposition, and so on, insofar as every "cause" is also understood as the "effect" of some prior cause. Nietzsche writes, to the contrary, that "[e]very centre of force [i.e., subject] adopts a perspective toward the entire remainder, i.e., its own particular valuation, mode of action, and mode of resistance" (WP 567). The fact that a given "centre of force" always responds in the same way to the same kind of stimulus does not mean that the stimulus *compels* it to do so, but only that to do so is in its nature. The effect is therefore not "necessary," assuming that this would require its cause to be understood as "a condition [i.e., a subject] […] in which the effect was already inherent" (WP 551). According to Nietzsche, this latter conception is derived from the experience of performing an action under coercion: if someone puts a gun to my head and gives me orders, I do not feel myself to be acting in accordance with my own "valuation," but rather with his; my actions (i.e., the "effects") do not seem to come from me, but from him. In such a situation, it can be said that the effect is "already inherent" in the gunman as an intention which he compels me to act upon, rather than being inherent in me. This seems quite different from performing an action in the absence of compulsion, in which case one feels that one responds to a given stimulus according to one's own preference, and that one would be free to do otherwise. Although we have

seen that Nietzsche considers these introspective assessments erroneous—for, strictly speaking, I still behave according to my own preference in yielding to the gunman, and I am never "free" to do something other than what I do—he believes that they form the psychological basis of much of our causal thinking, and infect that thinking with the same sorts of errors that they themselves involve. The specific error he is concerned with in BGE 21 is the assumption that regularity in events is explained by external compulsion, that a "centre of force" always responds to the same stimulus in the same way because the stimulus compels it to do so, rather than because it "wants" to do so. "The 'unfree will' is mythology," Nietzsche writes; "in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills" (BGE 21). This is not a rejection of the concept of will-causality, as Clark suggests, but rather an attempt at purging that concept of the errors that arise from the introspective belief in the "unfree will."

Clark apparently believes that Nietzsche understands causality simply as constant conjunction, writing that he "differs from Hume only in claiming that our misunderstanding of determinism comes from our projection of our own experience of willing […] into our idea of causality," which might seem to be supported by BGE 21.[83] If Nietzsche accepts that causality is nothing but constant conjunction, then he might advise retaining causal concepts as "conventional fictions" while dispensing with the dimension of causal thinking that is merely a psychological projection of our experience of willing. This would seem to be Clark's reading, although she also points out that Nietzsche "does not in any later book [than BGE] call causal concepts 'fictions' or deny their role in explanation."[84] However, if Nietzsche understands causality merely as constant conjunction, it is hard to see how causal concepts could play any role in explanation, as opposed

83 Clark, p. 217.
84 Clark, p. 216.

to "designation and communication" (BGE 21), since they could at most describe the spatio-temporal relations between events, without explaining the necessity of those relations. This might not make them precisely "fictions," but they could with justice be called explanatorily empty, even if descriptively useful—for the goal of an explanation is to tell us *why* some state of affairs obtains, while a description aims simply to detail that state of affairs itself, without needing to account for it.

In a sense Clark is right in saying that Nietzsche understands causality as constant conjunction, but I think she is wrong in suggesting that he is satisfied with such an understanding. "The question 'why?'" he writes, "is always a question after the *causa finalis*, after the 'what for?' We have no 'sense for the *causa efficiens*': here Hume was right; habit (but not only that of the individual!) makes us expect that a certain often-observed occurrence will follow another: nothing more!" (WP 550). However, as Clark correctly notes, the "habit" that Nietzsche thinks underlies our belief in causality is not merely that of expecting conjunctions of events in the future to resemble those in the past, as Hume suggested, but rather the habit of interpreting all events as "caused by intentions" (WP 550): "We have absolutely no experience of a cause; psychologically considered, we derive the entire concept from the subjective conviction that *we* are causes, namely, that the arm moves— But that is an error" (WP 551). Nietzsche certainly accepts that empirical observation tells us nothing about the causal powers that are active in the world, nor does he think that we can know anything about them through a priori reasoning. But he sees this as a *problem*, because it places a severe limit on our ability to comprehend the world: "Mechanistic theory formulates consecutive appearances, and it does so semiotically, in terms of the senses and of psychology (that all effect is motion; that where there is motion *something* is

moved); it does not touch upon the causal force" (WP 635). The descriptive value of such "formulas" notwithstanding, they do not *explain* anything, and for that reason the world seems fundamentally incomprehensible: "The calculability of the world, the expressability of all events in formulas—is this really 'comprehension'?" (WP 624).

As we saw in Part I, Nietzsche is not concerned with comprehending reality "in itself," which he regards as an incoherent ambition. Rather, by "comprehension" he always means assimilation, that is, the reduction of the unfamiliar to the familiar (TL, p. 259; GS 355; BGE 230; TI VI:5). Even the concept of "being," in the general sense of "existing," he identifies as a "universalization of the concept 'life' (breathing), 'having a soul,' 'willing, effecting'" (WP 581): "we have no idea of it apart from the idea of 'living.'—How can anything dead 'be'?" (WP 582). Nietzsche thinks that this is the origin of the primitive animism alluded to already, according to which "man believed […] only in persons" (GS 127). To be a "person" in this sense means to be a willing subject, and the universalization of this concept results in a view of the world as "a world of will, a world of spirits" (TI VI:3). Already in D, Nietzsche had observed that "for many thousands of years it was thought that *things* (nature, tools, property of all kinds) were also alive and animate, with the power to cause harm and evade human purposes," and that people tried to behave in such a way as to supplicate such entities and remain on their good side (D 23). On such a worldview, as we have seen, there is no concept of mechanical causation, that is, no concept of "an event divorced from intent" (WP 627). Rain and its absence, stormy seas and calm seas, the proper or improper functioning of a tool, a piece of property having been mislaid—none of these things are regarded as accidents, but as intentional acts on the part of willing subjects.

> The propositions, "no effect without a cause," "every effect in turn a cause" appear as generalizations of much more limited propositions: "no effecting without willing"; "one can have an effect only on beings that will"; "no suffering of an effect is ever pure and without consequences, but all suffering consists of an agitation of the will" (toward action, resistance, revenge, retribution). But in the pre-history of humanity both sets of propositions were identical: the former were not generalizations of the latter, but the latter were commentaries on the former. (GS 127)

To say it again, this entire worldview resulted from the assimilation of the non-human to the human, from the unconscious attempt to understand the world as similar to ourselves, because we feel at least that we "know" something about ourselves, that we are comprehensible to ourselves, even if this is an error.

Nietzsche believes that the mechanistic worldview represents an attempt at overcoming this kind of anthropomorphism, although it is ultimately unsuccessful:

> 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 and stress: in short, one pays heartfelt homage to the principle of the greatest possible stupidity […]. Meanwhile, a presentiment, or anxiety, is to be noted among select spirits involved in this movement, as if the theory had a hole in it […]. One cannot "explain" pressure and stress themselves, one cannot get free of the *actio in distans*:—one has lost the belief in being able to explain at all, and admits with a wry expression that description and not explanation is all that is possible […]. (WP 618)

In short, Nietzsche thinks that the attempt to be "scientific," which is thought to entail the proscription of teleology ("reason" and "purpose") from our picture of reality, has ended up making it impossible to explain reality at all—"explanation" still being understood as the reduction of the unfamiliar to the familiar, in order to produce a feeling of comprehension. The mechanistic interpretation may seem to serve that end insofar as it appeals to familiar ideas like

matter and motion, but Nietzsche regards the mechanistic versions of these concepts as incomprehensible in and of themselves, however much they might seem to fit with common sense. He thinks that atomistic materialism derives its "atom" concept from our "psychical 'experience'" of being a unified subject, eliminating the subjective element in this experience while retaining the element of unity, which we cannot really comprehend except as the unity of a subject (WP 635; cf. 636). Non-atomistic materialism does not fare any better, because "[w]e need 'unities' in order to be able to reckon" (WP 635), and there are no unities to be found in the absence of simple, indivisible parts. Materialism thus leaves us with a choice between two interpretations of the world that are ultimately incomprehensible, because they do not assimilate non-human nature to human nature to the degree necessary for producing a feeling of comprehension. If we cannot think except in terms of unities, and we cannot properly think of a unity without subjective qualities, then neither the rejection of unity nor the posit of non-subjective unity can possibly satisfy our cognitive interests when it comes to comprehending reality. Further, if the concept of causality is derived from the conscious experience of being a willing subject, the attempt to conceive of reality without appeal to will or purpose necessarily makes it impossible to comprehend the connections between events. Nietzsche suggests that "were the whole of nature to have occurred to man from the outset as something impersonal [i.e., non-subjective], consequently not willing," then we would have believed instinctively "in the *fieri e nihilo*, the effect without cause" (KSA 12:16[16])—in which case the mechanistic interpretation, which "does not touch upon the causal force," might have been more satisfying (WP 635). But as things stand, he thinks, "the psychological necessity for a belief in causality lies in the inconceivability of an event divorced from an intention," so that to exclude all

intentionality from our interpretation of the world means that we necessarily also exclude causality from that interpretation: "The belief in *causae* falls with the belief in *télē*" (WP 627).

Although the mechanistic interpretation appeals to causal "forces" like attraction and repulsion, Nietzsche thinks that such concepts really have no content once they have been emptied of will and intention: "'Attraction' and 'repulsion' in a purely mechanistic sense are complete fictions: a word. We cannot think of an attraction divorced from an *intention*.— The will to take possession of a thing or to defend oneself against it and repel it—that, we 'understand': that would be an interpretation of which we could make use" (WP 627). Psychologically speaking, this is indeed how we conceive of attraction and repulsion—but the mechanistic interpretation denies that such conceptions belong in scientific thinking, precisely because they are teleological, that is, because they imply will and intention, concepts which might be applicable to intelligent beings, but not to the physical world. Nietzsche, to the contrary, insists that "[a] force we cannot imagine is an empty word and should be allowed no rights of citizenship in science" (WP 621). The mechanistic concepts of attraction and repulsion are examples of such unimaginable forces, which masquerade as explanations when in fact they are only words that are used to fill explanatory gaps. The refusal to posit anything resembling teleology in the physical world, in spite of the fact that this makes genuine explanation impossible, seems to be what Nietzsche has in mind when he speaks of "the principle of the greatest possible stupidity" (WP 618). The commitment to a mechanistic interpretation of the world, "an interpretation that permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more" (GS 373), requires one to interpret the world as "stupid," that is, as devoid of intelligence and intention, and therefore as a fundamentally different type of reality than that of

human physio-psychology. No genuine feeling of comprehension is possible on the basis of such an approach: "A 'scientific' [i.e., mechanistic] interpretation of the world," Nietzsche writes, "might therefore still be one of the *most stupid* of all possible interpretations of the world, meaning that it would be one of the poorest in meaning" (GS 373).

Of course, Nietzsche is himself interested in a "scientific interpretation of the world"—but he boldly rejects the supposition, still generally accepted today, that a scientific interpretation must avoid positing any kind of teleology:

> The victorious concept "force," by means of which our physicists have made God out of the world, still needs to be completed: an inner world must be ascribed to it, which I designate as "will to power," i.e., as an insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive, etc. Physicists cannot eradicate "action at a distance" from their principles; nor can they eradicate a repellent force (or an attracting one). There is nothing for it: 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. In the case of an animal, it is possible to trace all its drives to the will to power; likewise all the functions of organic life to this one source. (WP 619)

Nietzsche's basic position is that "[t]he only force that exists is of the same kind as that of the will" (WP 490), because that is the only kind of force we can "imagine." He does not of course mean the "will" as it appears on the basis of naïve introspection, but rather "the will to power," which we saw in the last chapter is intended to correct the errors involved in the everyday conception of willing, insofar as possible. That conception amounts to the belief that "the will" is a unified subject whose conscious intentions are capable of producing actions, which Nietzsche considers completely erroneous. But the realization that "will" in this sense does not exist makes possible "a real rechristening: one sees so little will that the word becomes free to designate something else" (WP 95). This explains how Nietzsche is able to posit the causality of the will as the only one, while at the same time insisting that the will does not cause anything: in the former

case he means "will to power," while in the latter he means the naïve concept of "will." I grant that he could express this distinction more clearly, but the ambiguity does not justify dismissing his argument in BGE 36, as Clark does. For one thing, he already provides a revised concept of willing in BGE 19, namely as "commanding and obeying, on the basis […] of a social structure composed of many 'souls' [i.e., drives]," so that one should naturally ask whether in BGE 36 he means "will" in this sense or in the ordinary sense that he rejects. Moreover, we have seen that in BGE 23 he identifies "will to power" as the foundation of a "proper physio-psychology" that is meant to correct the psychological errors that have arisen from the "prejudices of philosophers," including errors about "the will," and in BGE 36 he appeals specifically to "will to power" as the sole type of causality. I do not see much justification for conflating these two concepts of "will," as Clark does, and thereby saddling Nietzsche with a major inconsistency that can only be resolved by a reading of BGE 36 according to which it does not mean what it says.

Unlike most commentators who reject Nietzsche's interpretation of the world as will to power, Jean-Etienne Joullié takes seriously the argument of BGE 36, although I think he misunderstands it. According to him, while Nietzsche intended this interpretation to provide a superior alternative to atomistic materialism, "the world as will to power amounts to a convoluted but recognizable version of materialism insofar as it presents all the problems for which Nietzsche dismissed materialism."[85] Joullié's argument is that the interpretation of the world as will to power still posits the existence of entities that interact causally with one another, even if these are called "power quanta" or "wills to power" instead of "atoms," and even if the concept of causality employed is not a mechanistic one. He seems to think that Nietzsche's objection to

85 Jean-Etienne Joullié, *The Will to Power: Nietzsche's Last Idol* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 119.

atomistic materialism is that it is "superficial," and that this is so because it relies on concepts, like those just mentioned, that originate in our psychology rather than in the external world. Atomistic materialism is therefore only a "surface-interpretation" that can describe events but not explain them, and Joullié thinks that this is equally true of the will to power: "Nietzsche's arguments to the effect that causation is an unwarranted human interpretation and that the notions of 'cause' and 'effect' are conventional fictions do not lose their force when applied to a vision of a world consisting of power interactions."[86] He writes that "power, just like causation, is a human interpretation; both are 'conventional fictions for the purpose of description or communication' [BGE 21]. Power is not an empirical notion but a perspective-laden qualifier added to an observed relationship or natural event. […] It is, in fact, a surface-interpretation devoid of descriptive power."[87] This seems to me to be based on a misunderstanding both of Nietzsche's fundamental objections to materialism, and of his reasons for preferring an interpretation of reality based on will to power.

According to Joullié, Nietzsche objects to atomistic materialism because it "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, […] it remains unable to account for most important and basic phenomena, including force, intention, and life."[88] This should all sound familiar from our analysis above, and at first glance it would appear to be a competent summary of Nietzsche's arguments against materialism. However, I think that Joullié lays his emphasis in the wrong place here, and this leads him to

86 Ibid., p. 124.
87 Ibid., p. 125.
88 Ibid., p. 106.

believe that Nietzsche's "will to power" interpretation is a failure, because he misunderstands what Nietzsche is trying to do with it. Whereas I have argued that Nietzsche is mainly concerned with attributing an "inner world" to force in order to make causality feel comprehensible (WP 619), Joullié believes that his primary aim is to *abolish* the concepts of causality and individuation ("atoms"), because they make reality appear fragmentary when in fact it is continuous. He therefore objects to Nietzsche's will to power interpretation on the ground that it fragments reality into distinct "power quanta" that relate causally to one another on the basis of "will," meaning that it is no better than materialism at achieving the end for which it was designed. For this reason, "Nietzsche's world as will to power quanta is a recognizable, albeit convoluted, version of atomism" according to Joullié.[89] His discussion of the need to attribute an "inner world" to force is rather limited, but he seems to think that this part of Nietzsche's project fails because "power, just like causation, is a human interpretation," and that its status as such prevents it from being applied to the "inner" aspect of reality.[90] This would make sense assuming, as Joullié seems to, that Nietzsche is attempting to characterize the inner essence of reality "in itself," albeit with our own inner experience taken as "what is certain," and thus as the starting point.[91] This is Schopenhauer's procedure, but it is not Nietzsche's, as I have argued. For Nietzsche, "will to power" is indeed a human interpretation, but it is a far more complete one than the mechanistic causal interpretation, and is therefore preferable for the sake of making reality comprehensible.

89 Ibid., p. 136.
90 Ibid., p. 125.
91 Ibid., p. 110.

To begin with his "atomism" objection, Joullié correctly notes that Nietzsche's vision of reality as will to power entails individuation:

> A world of competing power quanta and of will to power "manifesting itself only against resistances" [WP 656], implies that there must be more than one power quantum or centre of will to power. If not, […] 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.[92]

The argument is that Nietzsche cannot claim that reality is will to power "and nothing else" (BGE 36) while at the same time conceiving of the world as a multiplicity of individual "wills to power," because this would require that something other than will to power exists in the gaps between these wills: "if the world is made of will to power manifested in different 'entities' […], 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."[93] Conceptually speaking, this is a powerful objection, and it is one that I do not believe Nietzsche was able to fully sort out in his lifetime. Although he once says that he "believe[s] in absolute space as the substratum of force" (WP 545), the posit of absolute space comes with its own attendant difficulties, and he does not provide much detail about the conception he is referring to here. Elsewhere, he writes that the world is "set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be 'empty' here or there, but rather as force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces" (WP 1067). This does seem to raise Joullié's question about the substratum. The metaphor of "waves" makes sense only by reference to a liquid that is enclosed in something yielding, like the Earth's atmosphere, so that when the

92 Ibid., p. 130.
93 Ibid.

concentration of liquid increases in one place and decreases in another, it displaces some "air" on the one hand, and, on the other, is displaced by the same. A quantity of liquid concentrated in a vessel and completely filling it must remain uniformly concentrated throughout, as there is no "substratum" relative to which its concentration can increase or decrease. This is a serious conceptual problem for someone committed to historical philosophy, since it seems to make the posit of one single type of reality incoherent so long as one does not want to characterize that reality as uniform and stable, and thereby do away with multiplicity and change.

However, as Joullié notes, problems also arise if one posits a dualism along the lines of "atoms and void." In the end, the problem of the substratum applies to any interpretation of reality as individuated, so that it is not an interesting criticism of Nietzsche's will to power interpretation in particular. Atomistic materialism suffers from the same problem, as Joullié realizes—but he is mistaken in thinking that will to power is specifically an attempt to solve that problem. I do not say that Nietzsche was unaware of the problem of the substratum, nor that he had no interest in solving it, especially given his rejection of absolute opposites. However, I have emphasized that this is a *conceptual* problem because, strictly speaking, Nietzsche does not think the concepts from which it arises are adequate to reality: "We need 'unities' in order to be able to reckon: that does not mean we must suppose that such unities exist" (WP 634). While Joullié is clearly aware that Nietzsche denies the existence of unities, and that the posit of atoms as actually existing is one of his reasons for criticizing atomism, he does not seem to understand that Nietzsche regards the use of such fictional concepts as necessary, because without them we would be unable to think. Conceptual thinking, at bottom, "handles only formulas for what remains the same. That is why this assumption [i.e., that there are things that remain the same]

would not be proof of reality: 'beings' are part of our perspective. […] The fictitious world of subject, substance, 'reason,' etc., is *necessary*" (WP 517); "to let it go means: being no longer able to think" (WP 487).

It is true that, upon deeper reflection, the concepts that make up this "fictitious world" contain incoherences like the problem of the substratum, and that in such cases we also become unable to think—but these, as I have said, are not unique to Nietzsche's will to power interpretation, but infect all attempts at conceiving of the world as individuated. Nietzsche did at least as much as any philosopher before him to call attention to the incoherence of many of our fundamental concepts, and it seems unfair to criticize him for having failed to solve conceptual problems that may be insoluble in principle. Joullié even levels the criticism, which has also been advanced by Clark, that "[i]f 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."[94] This seems facile, insofar as the same argument can be applied to words like "being" and "existence" themselves, and we know that the attempt to distinguish being relative to "non-being" comes with its own host of problems, not least of which is that such an approach implies that non-being exists, which by definition it does not. If Joullié is comfortable speaking of "whatever exists," I do not see why a more specific characterization of that existence as "will to power" should be so problematic.

Joullié thinks that this characterization is problematic for another reason as well, namely that "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."[95]

94 Ibid., p. 130; cf. Clark, p. 210.
95 Ibid., p. 129.

Strange as it seems in the context of Nietzsche's thought, he apparently thinks that such correspondence would be necessary to make "explanation" possible, as opposed to mere description. Joullié thinks it is for this reason that Nietzsche denies the explanatory power of materialistic formulations: because these rely on concepts like causality and unity ("atom") that are derived not from external reality but from human psychology, they cannot explain anything about that reality, but can only provide a descriptive "surface interpretation" of it. Although he realizes Nietzsche admits that will to power is a human interpretation (e.g., BGE 22), he still thinks that this undermines its explanatory power, because he assumes that explanation requires correspondence to "an ultimate reality." However, I have already argued at length that this is not how Nietzsche understands "explanation," which means for him precisely an *interpretation* that assimilates the unfamiliar to the familiar. He denies that explanation in Joullié's sense is possible at all (GS 112), so that, as with the concept of will, "the word becomes free to designate something else" (WP 95). It is therefore no objection to a theory's explanatory power that it does not correspond to reality "in itself," which Nietzsche considers an incoherent ambition, and therefore a superfluous concept. Because he thinks that Nietzsche's will to power interpretation is supposed to be superior to the mechanistic one in terms of such correspondence, it is not surprising that Joullié considers it a failure. However, as I have shown, Nietzsche's ambition in attributing an "inner world" to force is not that this should correspond to "ultimate reality," but that it should make our philosophical conception of reality more complete by reducing something unfamiliar ("force") to something familiar ("will to power").

It is clear that Joullié misunderstands this when he writes that "the ultimate objective of this alternative perspective was no different from that put forward by the natural scientist: it

remained […] an attempt to make the world calculable."[96] But we have seen repeatedly that one of the only *virtues* Nietzsche attributes to the mechanistic interpretation is precisely its ability to make reality calculable, and it is not clear how this ability would be improved in any way by attributing an "inner world" to the sequences of events thus calculated; nor does Nietzsche ever say that this would be the case. Joullié says that the will to power interpretation is "formulated with the view of producing useful predictions, as a road to power over nature," as though this were not already accomplished well by the mechanistic interpretation.[97] Nietzsche never suggests that mechanistic materialism is deficient in its ability to make predictions, but only in its ability to explain the necessity of the events predicted, which is not a problem if we are concerned with "power over nature" in the sense of producing bridges, dams, and airplanes. True, Nietzsche does believe that one acquires "power over nature" in a deeper sense by interpreting it in accordance with a human mode of thinking (WP 517, 552), but this is clearly not what Joullié has in mind—and, in any event, this view of Nietzsche's depends on the idea that the world, and therefore also our "knowledge," is best understood as will to power, which Joullié denies. Because he thinks that "will to power" for Nietzsche is meant to serve the same ends as mechanistic materialism, it is again not surprising that he considers it a failure: for what does supplementing the concept of force with an "inner world" of "will to power" do to improve our calculations and predictions? Probably nothing. Joullié writes that "power, just like [mechanistic] causation, is a human interpretation; both are 'conventional fictions for the purpose of description or communication,'" alluding to BGE 21.[98] But that is not the purpose of the concept of will to power, which is

96 Ibid., p. 128.
97 Ibid., p. 137.
98 Ibid., p. 125.

intended to facilitate not description or communication but *comprehension*, in the sense already explained. That this concept is "not an empirical notion" but rather "an addition to observation" is no objection to it, since to attribute an "inner world" to force means precisely to attribute to it a quality that is not empirically observable, but that makes it vividly relatable for us. One could still call this a "conventional fiction" or a "surface-interpretation" insofar as it is a projection of our psychology, but such terms have little meaning unless one can say what interpretation would be "deeper" or less "fictional," which Joullié does not.

I do not want my claims in the last paragraph to be misunderstood: I do not say that Nietzsche's interpretation of the world as will to power would have no consequences for our scientific understanding of the world, but only that it would not make the mechanistic interpretation any better at doing what it does, namely describe observations and make predictions based on observed regularities. But it does not *explain* such regularities, as we have seen, and it therefore leaves our scientific picture of the world incomplete, unless we have a very narrow definition of "science." Nietzsche objects specifically to those "mechanists who nowadays like to pass as philosophers and insist that mechanics is the doctrine of the first and last laws on which all existence must be based as on a ground floor" (GS 373), as though mechanistic description were the deepest possible interpretation of reality, as well as the most "objective" one. Yet even the concept of "natural law," which is appealed to in an attempt to explain how some observed regularities can be more than potentially accidental correlations, is an addition to observation according to Nietzsche, and moreover one that is based on a moral prejudice:

> Forgive me as an old philologist who cannot desist from the malice of putting his finger on bad modes of interpretation: but "nature's conformity to law," of which you physicists talk so proudly, as though—why, it exists only owing to your interpretation and bad "philology." It is

> no matter of fact, no "text," but rather only a naïvely humanitarian emendation and perversion of meaning, with which you make abundant concessions to the democratic instincts of the modern soul! "Everywhere equality before the law; nature is no different in that respect, no better off than we are"—a fine instance of ulterior motivation, in which the plebeian antagonism to everything privileged and autocratic as well as a second and more refined atheism are disguised once more. "*Ni Dieu, ni maître*"—that is what you, too, want; and therefore "cheers for the law of nature!"—is it not so? But as said above, that is interpretation, not text; and somebody might come along who, with opposite intentions and modes of interpretation, could read out of the same "nature," and with regard to the same phenomena, rather the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power—an interpreter who would picture the unexceptional and unconditional aspects of all "will to power" so vividly that almost every word, even the word "tyranny" itself, would eventually seem unsuitable, or a weakening and attenuating metaphor—being too human—but he might, nevertheless, end by asserting the same about this world as you do, namely, that it has a "necessary" and "calculable" course, *not* because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely *lacking*, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment. Supposing that this also is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well, so much the better. (BGE 22)

Contemporary philosophers of science are likely to find this passage strange, and with good reason: for, as they use the term, a "law of nature" is roughly a statement about a regularity that is universally and necessarily true (e.g., that no signal moves faster than the speed of light). Nietzsche would have no quarrel with this concept of a law of nature, though he would warn against "reifying" it, as we saw him do with respect to the mechanistic concepts of cause and effect, and insist that it should be used only for "designation and communication" (BGE 21). But Nietzsche means something quite different when he refers to "laws of nature." For him, this is a quasi-theological notion, a vestige of the belief that the world is ordered in accordance with "laws" set down by God, although he thinks the physicists of his time are content to dispense with God while retaining this picture of the world as governed by laws. Recall the discussion of "unfree will" earlier in this chapter, where we saw that Nietzsche believes the mechanistic concept of causality, in which the "cause" is thought to *compel* the "effect," is a projection of the

psychological experience in which it seems that “you do what you do not voluntarily but unwillingly, i.e., under coercion” (KSA 12:1[44]). Nietzsche makes it clear that “laws of nature” in his sense also involve the projection of this experience of unfreedom into the world: “That something always happens thus and thus is here interpreted as if an entity [*Wesen*] always acted thus and thus as a result of obedience to a law or a lawgiver, while it would be free to act otherwise were it not for the ‘law’” (WP 632). As opposed to its contemporary usage in philosophy of science, where the concept of “law” has no real connection to the concepts of legislation, obedience, and so on, Nietzsche understands a “law of nature” as a piece of “legislation” that is supposed to be universally binding on all phenomena, and that is therefore able to explain observed regularity as something more than accidental correlation—namely, as obedience to the laws of nature. Previously, it was thought that these laws had been set down by God, and that obedience to them was enforced by His will. But the physicist does not believe in God, as Nietzsche points out, so that the continued appeal to “laws” is as fruitless as the appeal to “attraction” and “repulsion” understood purely mechanistically, that is, as devoid of will.

As we know, Nietzsche does not think it is possible to dispense with a concept of will in order to make reality intelligible. But he locates this will not in a “law” that somehow exists over and above events, but rather in the events themselves:

> That something happens thus and thus is here interpreted [by physicists] as if an entity [*Wesen*] always acted thus and thus as a result of obedience to a law or a lawgiver, while it would be free to act otherwise were it not for the “law.” But precisely this thus-and-not-otherwise might be inherent in the entity, which might behave thus and thus, not in response to a law, but because it is constituted thus and thus. All it would mean is: something cannot also be something else, cannot do now this and now something else, is neither free nor unfree but simply thus and thus. *The mistake lies in the fictitious insertion of a subject*. (WP 632)

The posit of “laws of nature” is therefore a result of the posit of subjects, conceived as neutral substrata that are “free” to behave in various ways under the same conditions, so that their always behaving in one and the same way is thought to require an explanation based on something outside those subjects themselves that compels them to behave as they do. However, because there are no such subjects on Nietzsche’s view, this is really not in need of explanation; the “entities” that he appeals to in this text are not subjects that might act freely or unfreely, but rather “quanta of power” that are determined by their nature to behave in particular ways. “A quantum of power,” he writes, “is designated by the effect it produces and that which it resists” (WP 634), so that it is really only a pseudo-entity defined in terms of activity (its “effects”), and not a substratum that gives rise to that activity. Thus Nietzsche’s will to power interpretation certainly provides an alternative understanding of regularity, even if it does not make our descriptions or calculations of that regularity any more accurate. And according to his presuppositions it is also a superior understanding, insofar as the concept of “law” has become an empty metaphor, and especially because that concept depends on the separation of the doer from the deed, which implies the existence of absolute opposites: “The degree of resistance and the degree of superior power—that is the question in every event: if, for our day-to-day calculations, we know how to express this in formulas and ‘laws,’ so much the better for us!” (WP 634).

As I said above, Nietzsche also thinks that will to power can provide a superior understanding of biological life. This concept, as we have seen, is meant to express the character of our physio-psychological life insofar as we can grasp it, and Nietzsche therefore takes it as his “point of departure” for understanding life in general (KSA 12:1[30]). If the mechanistic interpretation cannot even explain “matter” in a satisfying way, it will certainly be unable to

explain "life," and the neo-vitalist movement of the nineteenth century demonstrates that this problem was recognized even by many who were satisfied by mechanistic explanations of the "inorganic" world. Nietzsche's rejection of absolute opposites of course prevents him from distinguishing between inert matter and a "life-force" that operates upon it, as the neo-vitalists did, and we have seen that for this reason he attempts to understand matter itself as an expression of the life-force he calls "will to power," that is, as a "*pre-form*" of "life" as it is usually understood (BGE 36). We saw in the Chapter 5 that drives do not aim fundamentally at preservation, but rather at nourishment, growth, and expansion of power. Because this concept is drawn in part from physiology, Nietzsche must also deny that the organic functions of life aim fundamentally at preservation, in spite of frequent appearances to the contrary:

> Physiologists should think before putting down the self-preservation drive [*Selbsterhaltungstrieb*] as the cardinal drive of an organic being. A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its force [*Kraft*]—life itself is will to power—: self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*. In short, here as everywhere else, let us beware of *superfluous* teleological principles—one of which is the self-preservation drive (we owe it to Spinoza's inconsistency). Thus method, which must be essentially economy of principles, demands it. (BGE 13)

I think it is unfortunate that Nietzsche here asserts that the "discharge" of force is the cardinal drive of an organic being, since we have seen that he thinks the drive to assimilation is just as basic—indeed, in a sense it is more basic, because a discharge of force presupposes a prior accumulation of force. He may put the matter in these terms simply to emphasize the contrast with self-preservation: for "assimilation" can be understood merely as an attempt to preserve oneself, that is, "to replace what has been lost" (WP 652), whereas "discharge" is at least not readily reducible to self-preservation. Of course, it is obvious that organisms *do* preserve themselves, but for Nietzsche this is a side-effect of the tendency to grow, which he understands

as the fundamental drive of life. But still, it is difficult to see how self-preservation could be a side-effect of the tendency to discharge force, except insofar as force must first be accumulated to that end, thus resulting in preservation of the organism. I here make an exception to my usual approach and suggest that Nietzsche is not saying precisely what he means in this text, but rather using "discharge of force" as a rhetorical shorthand for "will to power," which he clearly understands as involving both accumulation and discharge of force (cf. BGE 230, 259; WP 656-58).

Indeed, "assimilation" (*Assimiliren*) and "appropriation" (*Aneignung*) had been central concepts in Nietzsche's biological thinking even before he developed the concept of "will to power." His notes on this subject draw heavily upon the work of anatomist Wilhelm Roux, whose major innovation had been to apply the Darwinian concept of a "struggle for existence" not only between organisms, but also *within* individual organisms.[99] His aim in doing so was to explain the development of complex, apparently purposive organic processes, which he doubted could be explained sufficiently based on selection at the level of organisms themselves. In a note from 1881, Nietzsche writes that "one has discovered *struggle* [*Kampf*] everywhere again and speaks of the struggle of the cells, tissues, organs, organisms" (KSA 9:11[128]). The basic character of an organic "entity," he says, is that it "assimilates the next, converts it into its own property (property is first nourishment and accumulation of nourishment), it seeks to incorporate as much as possible, not merely to *compensate* for loss—it is *greedy*" (KSA 9:11[134]). Nietzsche understands this "greed" as a necessary condition of life as we know it, since without it life might

99 See Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, "The Organism as Inner Struggle: Wilhelm Roux's Influence on Nietzsche" in *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*, trans. David J. Parent (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 161–82.

at most preserve itself, but would not grow: "If a quality of the cell is constituted such that the assimilation exceeds the decomposition, then overcompensation of consumption, *growth* occurs: so this important property establishes its *domination* over the other qualities. We know of no organism, no cell, that does not have this power in a stage of its life: without it, life itself could *not spread*" (KSA 9:7[95]). This helps to explain why Nietzsche later says that he takes the name "will to power […] from the strongest of all drives, which has directed all organic development up to now" (KSA 12:1[30])—for, although he ultimately understands will to power as the only kind of "drive" there is, he arrives at that understanding by taking our physio-psychology as his "point of departure" for interpreting reality, which presupposes that he has already developed an understanding of our organic ("physiological") nature. Because growth is a basic characteristic of life as we know it, and because growth requires an entity to consume "absurdly more than would be required to preserve it" (WP 651), Nietzsche concludes that growth is a more accurate conception of the basic character of life than is preservation.

This insight helps us to understand why Nietzsche identifies the "self-preservation drive" as a "*superfluous* teleological principle" (BGE 13). I take his reference to "Spinoza's inconsistency" to mean that Spinoza ought not to have posited a *conatus* for self-preservation, given that Spinoza was committed to the rejection of purpose in nature. If every being strives to preserve itself, as Spinoza believed, then the activity of every being would seem to be conditioned by a purpose, namely preservation, which is precisely what he wanted to deny. Clark attributes a similar inconsistency to Nietzsche, writing that his claim that "[a] living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its force" is merely "another case of precisely what he was criticizing in

the passage: superfluous teleological principles."[100] She suggests that, just as Nietzsche thinks it is superfluous to posit a *drive* for preservation in order to explain preservation, it is also superfluous to posit a drive to discharge force in order to explain the fact that organisms discharge force: "The behaviour of living organisms simply is a venting of strength [i.e., force], and any positing of a will, a 'seeking,' to vent this strength, seems completely superfluous."[101] Clark holds this because she thinks that such behaviour "can probably be explained mechanistically," so that all teleological principles are superfluous.[102] But we have seen that Nietzsche thinks a certain kind of teleological principle, namely will to power, "cannot be thought out of the mechanistic order without thinking away this order itself" (WP 634), because such a principle is necessary in order to make causality intelligible. His point in BGE 13 is not that physiologists should avoid teleological principles *as such* because they are superfluous, but that physiologists should avoid those teleological principles that *are* superfluous because they can be reduced to other, more basic teleological principles. Because he is committed to historical philosophy, Nietzsche would say the same about all principles, teleological or otherwise: "method," he reminds us, "must be essentially economy of principles" (BGE 13). Nietzsche sees the basic character of life as a drive to assimilate and grow, and considers the posit of a drive for self-preservation superfluous because it can be explained as a result of the former, more basic drive.

100 Maudemarie Clark, "Nietzsche's Doctrine of the Will to Power: Neither Ontological nor Biological," *International Studies in Philosophy* 32, no. 3 (2000), p. 123.
101 Ibid.
102 Maudemarie Clark, "Nietzsche's Doctrines of the Will to Power," *Nietzsche-Studien* 12, no. 1 (1983), p. 462.

Clark also objects that, because he understands assimilation and growth as more fundamental to life than preservation, "need or hunger disappears in the picture Nietzsche paints of nutrition," citing the following passage:[103]

> Let us take the simplest case, that of primitive nourishment: the protoplasm extends is pseudopodia in search of something that resists it—not from hunger but from will to power. Thereupon it attempts to overcome, appropriate, assimilate what it encounters: what one calls "nourishment" is merely a derivative phenomenon, an application of the original will to become *stronger*. (WP 702)

According to Clark, Nietzsche arrives at this understanding "by focusing on aspects of the nutritional process related to strength—overcoming of obstacles and growth in strength—and by ignoring the protoplasm's need for food in order to survive."[104] Although Nietzsche does hold that, in simple cases like that of protoplasm, nutrition is motivated not by a desire for preservation but by the "desire to incorporate everything" (WP 657), he certainly does not ignore the fact that protoplasm must eat in order to survive: he simply denies that this is the ultimate reason why it eats. Clark cites this passage as representative of Nietzsche's understanding of nutrition in general, which would suggest the view that even complex organisms like horses and human beings eat not because we need nutrition in order to survive, but simply out of a will to power, which seems ridiculous on its face. Thankfully, that is not Nietzsche's position. When he says that "what one calls 'nourishment' is merely a derivative phenomenon," Clark apparently takes this to mean that it is just another name for the desire to incorporate everything, which is true in the case of protoplasm. However, this primordial activity is not "what one calls 'nourishment'" ordinarily—rather, "nourishment" usually refers precisely to the physical need to eat in order to sustain oneself, which is associated with the feeling we call "hunger." Nietzsche

103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.

does not deny the reality of this need in more complex organisms, but he understands it as "a specialized and later form of the drive [to eat], an expression of a division of labour in the service of a higher drive that rules over it"—that "higher drive" being the organizational centre of the organism as a whole (WP 651).

Simply put, an organism as complicated as a human being requires a good deal of maintenance. Whereas the simplest organisms require relatively little maintenance, and achieve it by default through constant consumption, higher organisms have had to develop complex systems for ensuring that their stores of various resources are continually replenished. The basic constituents of such organisms, namely different kinds of cells, still strive fundamentally for assimilation, although their efforts in that direction are constantly checked by one another, and their "unity" as an organism means that they exist within a hierarchical structure of command and obedience that includes a division of labour. It is this organism as a whole that experiences "hunger" as a motivation, owing to the complexity of its needs, and not the simpler parts that make it up, which might at most experience an unpleasant sensation of "not enough to assimilate"—their aim, however, would still be unlimited assimilation, not mere replenishment. "It is not possible to understand hunger as the *primum mobile*," Nietzsche writes, because "[t]o understand hunger as a consequence of undernourishment means: hunger as the consequence of a will to power that no longer achieves mastery" (WP 652). In other words, "hunger" in the ordinary sense already presupposes an established complex of wills to power that must work to maintain itself, that is, to prevent itself from decaying through loss of resources as it strives for growth, that is, greater power. In the primordial case "[i]t is by no means a question of replacing a loss—only later, as a result of the division of labour, after the will to power has learned to take

other roads to its satisfaction, is an organism's need to appropriate *reduced* to hunger, to the need to replace what has been lost" (WP 652). Clark does not mention these texts, which demonstrate that her claim that "need or hunger disappears in the picture Nietzsche paints of nutrition" is mistaken. He claims only that hunger is not fundamental to life, but is rather "only a narrower adaptation after the basic drive for power has won a more spiritual form" (WP 656).

We have seen that Nietzsche believes nourishment and procreation form "*one* problem" that is to be resolved on a unitary basis (BGE 36). In a sense, assimilation and growth are already procreation, but within the same organism in the form of the continual generation of cells, tissues, and so on. By the word "procreation," however, Nietzsche generally means the generation of a separate organism similar to the first, in the ordinary sense of the term, and he understands this phenomenon as a consequence of the economics of assimilation. Again beginning with the primordial case, he writes that "[a] protoplasm divides in two when its power is no longer adequate to control what it has appropriated: procreation is the consequence of an impotency" (WP 654). At least in the case of the simplest organisms, he seems to think that procreation and excretion are essentially the same: "propagation among amoebas seems to be the throwing off of ballast […]. The excretion of useless material" (WP 653). Like hunger, procreation is "only derivative; originally: where one will was not enough to organize the entire appropriated material, there came into force an opposing will which took in hand the separation; a new centre of organization, after a struggle with the original will" (WP 657). In other words, Nietzsche thinks that simple organisms like amoebae split in two ("procreate") as a consequence of their incessant consumption: the quantum of power that acts as their "centre of organization" can only organize a finite amount of other such quanta before it begins to lose control of them and is forced to cede

some of them to another similarly powerful quantum that emerges within the same system. He thinks that this understanding again supports the claim that life does not aim fundamentally at preservation, because when an amoeba eats incessantly “it does not thereby ‘preserve itself,’ it falls apart” (WP 651). Unfortunately, Nietzsche does not say much about the relation between nourishment and procreation in more complex organisms, but it seems likely that he would again explain their forms of procreation as resulting from a division of labour between different types of cells, and, in the case of sexual reproduction, also between different phenotypes. The aim, as in the case of nutrition, would to maintain the established complex of wills to power, this time by creating more similar complexes before the old ones decay.

Because Nietzsche understands an active drive to assimilate and grow as fundamental to life, he must also reject “adaptation” as the basic explanation for evolution and morphology, where adaptation is understood as passive adjustment to environmental conditions under the pressure of natural selection. He does not deny that organisms adapt to their environments, but he again considers this a derivative of the basic drive to grow, and therefore as an *active* adjustment, alongside which an organism also adjusts the external environment to suit itself. Nietzsche writes that

> all events in the organic world are a subduing, a *becoming master*, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation […]. The “evolution” of a thing, a custom, an organ is thus […] a succession of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of subduing, plus the resistances they encounter, the attempts at transformation for the purpose of defense and reaction, and the results of successful counteractions. The form is fluid, but the “meaning” even more so. The case is the same even within each individual organism: with every real growth in the whole, the “meaning” of the individual organs also changes […]. (GM II:12)

The "meaning" of an organ here refers to what is usually called its "function," that is, the "purpose" it serves relative to the organism as a whole. Nietzsche insists that the meaning of an organ in this sense is quite fluid, and that the purpose it can be shown to serve does not explain the fact that it exists in the first place: rather, that purpose is the result of its being pressed into service and "interpreted" by more powerful forces within the organism. The existence of organs like the hand or the eye, in earlier forms, is not explained by their present functions, but by some other functions that were imposed on them at an earlier point in their developmental history, and which presumably effaced still earlier forms and functions: "the entire history of [...] an organ [...] can in this way be a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another" (GM II:12). The adaptationists that Nietzsche criticizes would agree with this in a sense, but would understand the "function" of an organ as a result of its form: insofar as the eye can see, and sight confers an adaptive advantage, seeing can be said *post facto* to be the function of the eye. Although Nietzsche would agree that the present form of an organ determines to a large extent what new functions can be imposed upon it, he also understands the intended function as capable of altering the form, which the adaptationist would deny.

Like mechanistic materialism, Nietzsche identifies adaptationism as another result of "the now prevalent instinct and taste which would rather be reconciled even to the absolute fortuitousness, even the mechanistic senselessness of all events, than to the theory that in all events a *will to power* is operating" (GM II:12; cf. BGE 22). He believes that this "idiosyncrasy" has

> already taken charge of all physiology and theory of life—to the detriment of life, as goes without saying, because it has robbed it of a fundamental concept, that of *activity*. Under the influence of the above-mentioned idiosyncrasy, one places instead "adaptation" in the foreground, that is to say, an activity of the second rank, a mere reactivity; indeed, life itself has been defined as a more and more efficient inner adaptation to external conditions (Herbert Spencer). Thus the essence of life, its *will to power*, is ignored; one overlooks the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions, although "adaptation" follows only after this; the dominant role of the highest functionaries within the organism itself in which the will to life appears active and form-giving is denied. (GM II:12)

This "reactive" picture of life is evidently a result of the commitment to mechanistic materialism, and the consequent attempt to reduce the phenomena of life to complex mechanistic interactions in which, as we have seen, will and intention are supposed to be absent. The purpose of this chapter has been to show why Nietzsche rejects such an understanding, and what alternative he proposes. Beginning with life as we experience it, which he says "is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation" (BGE 259), he attempts to apply this understanding to the "inorganic" world as well, and thus to present a unitary picture of reality as "will to power," from the apparently simplest physical interactions to the highest manifestations of the human spirit. I have emphasized that Nietzsche's commitment to historical philosophy requires him to make such an attempt. As a result, he denies that there is any essential difference between the "organic" and the "inorganic," writing that "[t]he entire distinction is a prejudice" (WP 655). Whereas the mechanical interpretation attempts to reduce the organic to the inorganic, leading to a picture of reality as essentially "dead," Nietzsche moves in the opposite direction and presents a vision of reality as being just as "alive" as we are, albeit in different forms. He thinks that this is necessary not only to make sense of the apparent teleology in the

"organic" realm, but also to make sense of causality itself, which can really only be comprehended on the basis of a concept of will.

PART THREE

NIETZSCHE'S STANDARD OF VALUE

"Man must become better and more evil"—thus *I* teach.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra
("On Self-Overcoming")

Chapter 7: The Problem of Value

Nietzsche's concern with what I will call the "problem of value" (cf. GM I:17) can be traced to his earliest works. In fact, he tells us that "the question of where our good and evil really *originated*," and particularly "the problem of the origin of evil," had concerned him since at least the age of thirteen, when he wrote an essay crediting God with the existence of evil (GM P:3). His youthful fascination with Schopenhauer, who essentially explains the world as the work of an evil god known as "the Will," seems to continue this line of thinking, which still makes itself felt in BT and UM. In this early period, Nietzsche still took seriously the absolute opposition between "good" and "evil," and, as we saw in Chapter 2, followed Schopenhauer in regarding the truth as belonging to the side of goodness, and as offering the possibility of redemption from evil. I argued there that the shift in Nietzsche's thinking around the time of HA arose from this commitment to truthfulness, which led him to suspect that the belief in absolutely opposite values was a piece of self-deception by means of which one could be reconciled to the terrors of existence, namely by positing an opposite kind of existence in which the terrors of this one are absent. This suspicion, on my account, motivated him to commit to an interpretation of reality that would deny the existence of all absolute oppositions, trying instead to explain the appearance of such oppositions on the basis of a single type of reality, which he would ultimately come to call "will to power." Having made this commitment, it no longer made sense for Nietzsche to inquire into the origins of "good" and "evil," understood as absolutely opposite types of phenomena: rather, he says that this commitment "soon transformed my problem into another one: under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? *and what value do they themselves possess?*" (GM P:3). In other words, the question was no longer that of the

origin of "good" and "evil" themselves, but that of the origin of the *belief* in this opposition, which requires explanation assuming that the opposition itself is merely apparent. Yet Nietzsche says that even this inquiry was "only one means among many" that he employed for the sake of answering a more basic question, namely that of "the *value* of morality," that is, of the judgments "good" and "evil" (GM P:5). This was his starting point for addressing the problem of value.

Nietzsche uses the term "morality" in several different senses, and this can sometimes create confusion. In the broadest sense, as we shall see, a morality is a system of evaluations of various kinds of human drives: there are and have been many and diverse moralities, and Nietzsche considers some to be more valuable than others. On the other hand, Nietzsche often uses the singular term "morality" to refer not to this broad class of evaluative systems, but rather to the morality of Christian Europe. Likewise, he sometimes uses the terms "good" and "evil" in reference to the attitudes of approbation and disapprobation that characterize all systems of evaluation—but often he uses them to refer to the particular content that these terms hold for European Christian morality. Thus when he writes that "[w]hat was at stake was the *value* of morality," he goes on to add that "[w]hat was especially at stake was the value of the 'unegoistic,' the instincts of compassion, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice"—in other words, those qualities that European Christian morality identifies as "good" (GM P:5). Nietzsche tells us that his pursuit of the problem of value began with his interest in the "problem of the *value* of compassion and of the morality of compassion," and that it was this problem that led him to inquire into the origins of that morality, and eventually to investigate other types of morality as well. Although this problem "seems at first to be merely something detached, an isolated question mark," Nietzsche insists that "whoever sticks with it and *learns* how to ask questions here will experience what I

experienced—a tremendous new prospect opens up for him, a new possibility comes over him like a vertigo, every kind of mistrust, suspicion, fear leaps up, his belief in morality, in all morality, falters—finally a new demand becomes audible" (GM P:6). Having begun by questioning the morality of compassion in order to determine its value, Nietzsche apparently found himself asking more and more questions about different moralities and their respective values, until he finally felt impelled by "a new demand":

> Let us articulate this *new demand*: we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called in question*—and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed (morality as consequence, as symptom, as mask, as tartufferie, as illness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, as remedy, as stimulant, as restraint, as poison), a knowledge of a kind that has never yet existed or even been desired. One has taken the *value* of these "values" as given, as factual, as beyond all question; one has hitherto never doubted or hesitated in the slightest degree in supposing "the good man" to be of greater value than "the evil man," of greater value in the sense of furthering the advancement and prosperity of man in general (the future of man included). But what if the reverse were true? What if a symptom of regression were inherent in the "good," likewise a danger, a seduction, a poison, a narcotic, through which the present was possibly living *at the expense of the future*? Perhaps more comfortably, less dangerously, but at the same time in a meaner style, more basely?— So that precisely morality would be to blame if the *highest power and splendour* actually possible to the type man was never in fact attained? So that precisely morality was the danger of dangers? [GM P:6]

Here we see Nietzsche mixing his usage of the word "morality." When he says that "we need a *critique* of moral values," this is apparently meant to apply to all moral values, and not only to those of Christian Europe. However, when he questions whether the "good man" is really of greater value than the "evil man," he appears to use these terms as they are defined by the morality of Christian Europe. There are certainly other moralities whose conceptions of goodness do not resemble his description. Further, Nietzsche is concerned here that goodness might be a "poison" or "narcotic," while just a few lines before he had referred to "morality as […] remedy,

as stimulant," meaning that what he calls poisonous cannot be morality as such, but a particular morality, namely that of Christian Europe. Thus Nietzsche announces the necessity for a critique of *all* moral values, and at the same time indicates the probable consequences of such a critique for European Christian morality—namely, that it is not very valuable. Indeed, although it seems possible in principle to separate the critique of that morality from the critique of all morality, from the perspective of the development of Nietzsche's thought these two projects are closely related. We saw him tell us above that the latter, more comprehensive project was an outgrowth of the former, and this certainly seems to be the case when one looks at the writings of his early maturity. There are two key texts from that period in which he raises the subject of a critique of morality in general, and in both he orients his discussion around the need for a critique of the morality of Christian Europe. It is worth examining these texts not only for the insight they give into the origin of Nietzsche's broader project, but also because they provide further details about how he intends to proceed with it.

Nietzsche sensibly insists that a critique of morality cannot be undertaken before one has acquired a sufficient grasp of the actual history of various moralities. He had himself pursued such an understanding since the period when he wrote HA, in which he calls for a "*chemistry* of the moral […] sensations" (HA 1) and devotes a lengthy section to "the history of the moral sensations" (HA 35-107). However, Nietzsche accuses the "science of morals" in his time of neglecting this preparatory work, assuming instead that the morality of Christian Europe amounts to morality as such, and endeavouring to provide a rational foundation for it, as opposed to a religious one. This fixation on European Christian morality to the exclusion of all others makes it

impossible, on his account, for this "science of morals" to apprehend what he calls "the problem of morality itself," that is, the question of the relative value of *different* moralities:

> The moral sentiment in Europe today is as refined, old, diverse, irritable, and subtle, as the "science of morals" that accompanies it is still young, raw, clumsy, and butterfingered […]. Even the term "science of morals" is much too arrogant considering what it designates […]. One should own up in all strictness to what is still necessary here for a long time, to what alone is justified so far: to collect material, to conceptualize and arrange a vast realm of subtle feelings of value and differences of value which are alive, grow, beget, and perish—and perhaps attempts to present vividly some of the more frequent and recurring forms of such living crystallizations—all to prepare a *typology* of morals. To be sure, so far one has not been so honest. With a stiff seriousness that inspires laughter, all our philosophers demanded something far more exalted, presumptuous, and solemn from themselves as soon as they approached the study of morality: they wanted to supply a *rational foundation* for morality—and every philosopher so far has believed that he has provided such a foundation. Morality itself, however, was accepted as "given." How remote from their clumsy pride was that task which they considered insignificant and left in dust and must—the task of description—although the subtlest fingers and senses can scarcely be subtle enough for it. Just because our moral philosophers knew the facts of morality only very approximately in arbitrary extracts or accidental epitomes—for example, as the morality of their environment, their class, their church, the spirit of their time, their climate and part of the world—just because they were poorly informed and not even very curious about different peoples, times, and past ages—they never laid eyes on the real problems of morality: for these emerge only when we compare *many* moralities. In all "science of morals" so far one thing was *lacking*, strange as it may sound: the problem of morality itself; what was lacking was any suspicion that there was something problematic here. What the philosophers called "a rational foundation for morality" and tried to supply was, seen in the right light, merely a scholarly variation of the common *faith* in the prevalent morality; a new means of *expression* for this faith; and thus just another fact within a particular morality; indeed, in the last analysis a kind of denial that this morality might ever be considered problematic—certainly the very opposite of an examination, analysis, questioning, and vivisection of this very faith. [BGE 186]

Although Nietzsche insists here that "what alone is justified so far" is the preparation of a "typology of morals," that is, the careful study of the documented facts about diverse moralities and the attempt to classify them based on their similarities and differences, this admonition is evidently intended for the practitioners of the "science of morals" that he criticizes—for Nietzsche, as we have seen, wants to put such an understanding to use for the sake of determining

the *value* of these different moralities. However, as I noted above, by the time he published this text Nietzsche had already laboured for the better part of ten years to develop such a "typology," and versions of many of his mature claims about morality can already be found in his early works: most notably the distinction between master and slave morality (HA 45; cf. BGE 260, GM I); but also the interpretation of the ascetic ideal as a means of self-mastery for the sake of self-preservation (HA 139; cf. GM III:13); the claim that primitive morality essentially consists in obedience to custom for its own sake (HA 96; D 9; cf. BGE 188, GM II:2); and the identification of "justice" with the mutual consideration that arises between parties of roughly equal power (HA 92; D 112; cf. BGE 259, GM II:11). Nietzsche, in other words, has done his homework, and believes that he is in a position to approach the question of the value of different moralities, which has not even occurred to those who practise the "science of morals" he criticizes.

This is unfortunately not the place to critically evaluate Nietzsche's claim that previous moral philosophy had never questioned the value of European Christian morality, though such a study might yield very interesting results. I take it that this claim applies only to European moral philosophy done since that morality rose to predominance: for it would be anachronistic to suggest that Aristotle, for example, was a partisan of it. To be an exception to this, one would have to do more than simply reject the morality of Christian Europe, as a number of nihilists had already done in Nietzsche's time: rather, one would have to actually *criticize* that morality on the basis of an independent standard of value. One of Walter Kaufmann's most peculiar errors is to deny that Nietzsche does this, asserting that his critique of European Christian morality amounts to "an internal critique," resulting in "the alleged discovery that our morality is, *by its own*

standards, poisonously immoral."[105] Although Nietzsche does make this kind of argument, if that were all he did his critique of morality would not go much beyond what La Rochefoucauld, among others, had already done. But Nietzsche speaks of "the overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality" (BGE 32). Kaufmann lays his entire emphasis on the "self-overcoming"—arising from the moral commitment to truthfulness, as we saw in Chapter 2—while ignoring the straightforward "overcoming." With respect to the latter, the only possible exception to Nietzsche's claim that comes to mind is Machiavelli, who may indeed have criticized the morality of Christian Europe according to an independent standard, even if his critique was largely esoteric.[106] Nietzsche, despite praising Machiavelli as one who saw "reason in *reality*—not in […] 'morality'" (TI X:2), does not seem to consider him an exception, but insists that the question of the value of morality—whether in the general or in the European Christian sense—has never been seriously posed:

> It is evident that up to now morality was no problem at all but, on the contrary, precisely that on which after all mistrust, discord, and contradiction one could agree—the hallowed place of peace where our thinkers took a rest even from themselves, took a deep breath, and felt revived. I see nobody who ventured a *critique* of moral valuations […]. I have scarcely detected a few meagre preliminary efforts to explore the *history of the origins* of these feelings and valuations (which is something quite different from a critique and again different from a history of ethical systems). […] These historians of morality (mostly Englishmen) do not amount to much. Usually they themselves are still quite unsuspectingly obedient to one particular morality and, without knowing it, serve that as shield-bearers and followers—for example, by sharing that popular superstition of Christian Europe which people keep mouthing so guilelessly to this day, that what is characteristic of moral actions is selflessness, self-sacrifice, or sympathy [*Mitgefühle*] and compassion [*Mitleiden*]. Their usual mistaken premise is that they affirm some consensus of the nations, at least of tame nations, concerning certain principles of morals, and then they infer from this that these principles must be unconditionally binding also for you and me; or, conversely, they see the truth that among different nations moral valuations are *necessarily* different and then infer from this that *no* morality is at all binding. Both procedures are equally childish. The mistake made by the

105 Kaufmann, pp. 111, 113.
106 See Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

> more refined among them is that they uncover and criticize the perhaps foolish opinions of a people about their morality, or of humanity about all human morality—opinions about its origin, religious sanction, the superstition of free will, and things of that sort—and then suppose that they have criticized the morality itself. But the value of a command "thou shalt" is still fundamentally different from and independent of such opinions about it and the weeds of error that may have overgrown it—just as certainly as the value of a medication for a sick person is completely independent of whether he thinks about medicine scientifically or the way old women do. Even if a morality has grown out of an error, the realization of this fact would not as much as touch the problem of its value. Thus nobody up to now has examined the *value* of that most famous of all medicines which is called morality; and the first step would be—for once to *question* it. Well then, precisely this is our task. [GS 345]

Apart from strongly reiterating his claim that the value of morality has never been questioned, Nietzsche here distinguishes more explicitly between the kind of preparatory work we saw him discuss above, and the critique itself for which that work is meant to be a preparation. He insists that neither a "history of the origins" of moral evaluation, nor a "history of ethical systems" amounts to the kind of critique he advocates, though both of these kinds of history plainly help to prepare the ground for such a critique. As to the former, he probably has in mind his sometime friend Paul Rée, whose *Der Ursprung der moralischen Empfindungen* ("On the Origin of the Moral Sensations") appeared in 1877. Nietzsche would later criticize at some length Rée's hypothesis that the moral concept of "goodness" originated from the enjoyment of benevolent acts—that is, that one originally called an action "good" because one felt it to be beneficial to oneself—insisting that this concept originated instead from the spontaneous self-affirmation of the rulers of societies, who felt themselves to be "good" in contrast to the ruled (GM I:1-2). Nietzsche speaks here of "English psychologists," and mentions Herbert Spencer (GM I:3), but the theory he criticizes in most detail is Rée's, who was Prussian, not English. Nietzsche seems, however, to think that Rée follows what he takes to be the characteristic approach of the English in psychological matters, which he says is "*by nature* unhistorical" (GM

I:2). Indeed, he claims to have attempted to influence Rée "in the direction of an actual *history of morality*, and to warn him in time against gazing around haphazardly in the blue after the English fashion"—an endeavour that he fears was ultimately a failure (GM P:7). Apart from the unhistorical nature of this kind of approach, which merely tries to come up with plausible speculative accounts of the origins of moral phenomena without actually studying the history of those phenomena, Nietzsche also charges the English in particular with ignoring the diversity of moralities and equating European Christian morality with morality as such: "When the English actually believe that they know 'intuitively' what is good and evil, when they therefore suppose that they no longer require Christianity as the guarantee of morality, we merely witness the *effects* of the dominion of the Christian value judgment and an expression of the strength and depth of this dominion: such that the origin of English morality has been forgotten" (TI IX:5). Apart from the fact that a history of the origins of moral phenomena would not amount to a critique of morality in the sense that Nietzsche has in mind, such "histories" as those of Rée and Spencer do not even get the facts right according to him, because they neglect actual history in favour of "intuitive" speculation.

In this text Nietzsche mentions another group that he had not discussed in the previous text we examined, namely those who "see the truth that among different nations moral valuations are *necessarily* different and then infer from this that *no* morality is at all binding" (GS 345). While it is not clear who he has in mind among his contemporaries, except perhaps a mass of relatively shallow nihilists, this kind of view goes back to the Greek sophists, who Nietzsche says "verge upon the first *critique of morality*, the first *insight* into morality:—they juxtapose the multiplicity (the geographical relativity) of the moral value judgments;—they let it be known that

every morality can be dialectically justified; […] they postulate the first truth that a 'morality-in-itself,' a 'good-in-itself' do not exist, that it is a swindle to talk of 'truth' in this field" (WP 428). According to this description, the sophists were more worldly than the practitioners of the "science of morals" that Nietzsche criticizes in his day: they were aware of the wide variety of moralities that actually existed, and correctly concluded that none of them could be absolutely binding for all peoples, times, and places. However, it is not clear that any sophist held the stronger view that "*no* morality is at all binding" (GS 345). For it is easy to admit that a given morality might bind one by means of its usefulness, or by the esteem in which one holds its founders, or simply because, when in Rome, one does as the Romans do—none of which would legitimate its claim to be "morality-in-itself." Nietzsche's idea, as we shall see, is that a morality may be binding insofar as it is "a will to power in the service of the species (or of the race or *polis*)" (WP 428), that is, insofar as it is a condition of preservation and growth. This is why he writes "that among different nations moral valuations are *necessarily* different" (GS 345), namely because those conditions differ from one place, time and people to another. This makes it especially clear why he describes the inference that no morality then has any authority as "childish"—for why should one throw away the guarantee of one's existence simply because it is not the guarantee of existence for everyone everywhere? But Nietzsche claims that the nihilist does precisely that: being committed to the belief that European Christian morality is "morality-in-itself," and having been forced to admit the falsity of that belief, one becomes discouraged with morality in general. "One interpretation has collapsed," he writes; "but because it was considered *the* interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain. […] The mistrust of our previous valuations grows until it becomes the

question: 'Are not all 'values' lures that draw out the comedy without bringing it closer to a solution?'" (WP 55). This seems to be the type of person to whom Nietzsche is alluding in the passage above, namely what he calls the "European nihilist."

However, it will be pertinent to ask in exactly what sense the morality of Christian Europe has "collapsed" as an interpretation of the world. We saw in Part I that, on Nietzsche's view, that interpretation has become untenable because it has been found to be based in self-deception, that is, because it has turned out not to be true relative to the human perspective. This is summed up well in one of his writings on the kind of nihilism just mentioned: "the sense of truthfulness, developed highly by Christianity, is nauseated by the falseness and mendaciousness of all Christian interpretations of the world and history; rebound from 'God is truth' to the fanatical faith 'all is false'" (WP 1). While Nietzsche knew about this "rebound" from experience, and believed that it was important for diagnosing nihilism, his ultimate objection to European Christian morality cannot be that it is not true (although the fact that it is mendacious, that it is not *truthful*, is part of his objection to it, as we will see). For we have just seen him say that "even if a morality has grown out of an error, the realization of this fact would not as much as touch the problem of its value" (GS 345). Its value must therefore be determined according to something else, which Nietzsche does not mention here. However, we have seen that in the Preface to GM he is somewhat more explicit, referring to "value in the sense of furthering the advancement and prosperity of man in general," which he identifies with the attempt to attain "the *highest power* […] actually possible to the type man" (GM P:6). This should not be surprising, since we have seen that Nietzsche understands reality as will to power "and nothing else," in keeping with his rejection of absolute opposites (BGE 36). Because human beings, and human phenomena like

morality, are part of reality, and are therefore to be understood as will to power, which we have seen amounts to the drive to assimilate and grow—that is, to increase in power—there is really no other standard for Nietzsche to apply in judging the value of a morality than how well it serves that end.

This raises more questions than it answers, however, and my ambition in this study is to answer those questions as clearly and comprehensively as possible. First of all, it will be important to arrive at a clearer understanding of what "values" (or "valuations") and "moralities" really are, and how they are related to one another. It will also be necessary to determine how these are related to drives, which are the basic constituents of human physio-psychology according to Nietzsche, and must therefore have an important role to play in understanding values and moralities. I will argue that values for Nietzsche are more or less intense attitudes of approbation and disapprobation toward various drives and their activities, while moralities are essentially larger systems composed of a number of such values—European Christian morality, for example, combines approbation for compassion and truthfulness (among other things) with disapprobation for sensuality and selfishness (again among other things). Individual values like these may appear in different moralities, where their expression and relative importance may differ depending on the other values with which they are combined. On my view, it is still the drives that are essential, since these are fundamentally what values address: some are lauded and deemed good, even holy, while others are denigrated as bad or wicked; the activities that characterize the former are encouraged and rewarded, while those that characterize the latter are discouraged and punished. But Nietzsche, as we have seen, does not adopt a relativist stance with regard to the variety of moralities: some of them encourage drives that should be discouraged for

the sake of increasing the power of life, while others discourage drives that should be encouraged. The "problem of value" is therefore chiefly the problem of the value of different *drives*, which leads by extension to the problem of the value of different types of *persons* (i.e., communities of drives) and *moralities* (i.e., ideal hierarchies of drives). In the end, I will argue, Nietzsche's project is a matter of identifying the most powerful drives, as well as the most powerful kinds of persons, and determining the value of different moralities according to whether they promote or hinder the preservation and enhancement of those drives and persons.

This qualification is especially important because, as we will see below, Nietzsche thinks that every drive has some utility for life, and every morality that actually exists has utility for some type of person. To deny this would be to say that some phenomena of life run counter to the basic character of life as assimilation and growth, which implies the existence of absolute opposites. At most, Nietzsche can—and does—say that certain phenomena express a weakened and attenuated form of this character, but not that they are in opposition to it. For this reason, it is necessary to understand clearly what he means by "the advancement and prosperity of man in general" (GM P:6), as opposed to the advancement and prosperity of particular men. In a sense Nietzsche does aim at the "prosperity" of all human beings within their proper sphere, but certainly not at their "advancement" beyond that sphere. He believes that differing degrees of strength are natural and necessary, and that those human beings who represent the highest of those degrees are the only ones from whom any real elevation of the power of humanity can be expected. Nietzsche never really changed his early view that "[m]ankind must work continually at the production of individual great men—that and nothing else is its task" (UM III:6). The only proper concern when it comes to the enhancement of a species, he writes, "is the individual

higher exemplar, the more uncommon, more powerful, more complex, more fruitful," and not "the mass of its exemplars and their wellbeing" (UM III:6). For now I merely indicate this line of thinking in a preliminary way, for the sake of clarifying how Nietzsche is able to discriminate about the value of drives and moralities that, within their own spheres, can all be said to have a great deal of value. This is a problem that will be examined in the next two chapters, which Nietzsche puts in terms of the question "value *for what?*" (GM I:17).

We saw in Chapter 4 that Nietzsche defines "valuations" (*Werthschätzungen*) as "physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life" (BGE 3). Although he does not consider self-preservation to be the ultimate goal of life, his appeal to it in this passage makes a certain amount of sense insofar as he is discussing the categories of logical thinking, which he thinks developed as they did under a selective pressure to be able to make judgments about the world quickly (GS 111). Judgments themselves are valuations according to this way of thinking, since they arise from a physiological need to interpret the world in a certain way, and not from the fact that the world *is* that way (WP 516). The central question with respect to any judgment, Nietzsche writes, "is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating" (BGE 4). This applies not only to logical judgments, but to all evaluations, insofar as to evaluate is to make a judgment about value, which is always done in relation to the form of life that one is. Nietzsche sees evaluation even in the simplest forms of organic life, all of which have a characteristic "estimate in regard to assimilation or excretion" of whatever they come in contact with (WP 641). From the semipermeable membrane of a cell, which allows certain molecules to enter while keeping others out, to the behaviour of a mother bear that is gentle toward her offspring and ferocious toward any other creature that approaches,

the organic world is suffused with evaluation. Indeed, even in the "inorganic" world every "centre of force" evaluates, insofar as this amounts to "being specific, definitely acting and reacting thus and thus," as we saw in Chapter 6 (WP 636). At this point, it should not be surprising that Nietzsche does not regard evaluation as a phenomenon exclusive to conscious thinking: rather, it is a way of describing the kind of activity that characterizes a will to power, which we have seen conducts itself in specific ways in relation to other such wills that it encounters. "The standpoint of 'value,'" he writes, "is the standpoint of conditions of preservation and enhancement for complex forms of relative life-duration within the flux of becoming. […] 'Value' is essentially the standpoint for the increase or decrease of these dominating centres [i.e., wills to power]" (WP 715).

Moralities, as I have said, are *systems* of value constituted by a number of individual valuations that support each other well enough to get along together, and that provide more or less effectively for the preservation and enhancement of their adherents. A morality in this sense is a conscious phenomenon, like an established law, although Nietzsche occasionally uses the term "morality" to denote "the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon of 'life' comes to be" (BGE 19), which are usually unconscious, at least in the everyday sense, and seem to more closely resemble the "values" outlined above. Morality is certainly reducible to "value" in that sense, but in Nietzsche's ordinary usage of the term it denotes something more specific, namely consciously-established hierarchies of drives and their activities. Morality in this sense is a social phenomenon, as is consciousness, which we saw in Chapter 4 "does not really belong to man's individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature" (GS 354). Along the same lines I argued there, a solitary individual would certainly evaluate, just as he would be able to "think,

feel, will, remember, and also […] 'act' in every sense of that word" (GS 354)—but he would not have a "morality" in the strict sense, just as he would not have a concept of objective truth, because for both of these things he would need other human beings to check his judgments, whether about the way the world is, or about what is valuable and disvaluable. And indeed, in the latter case "check" should be understood less in the sense of "verify" than in the sense of "impede"—to prevent the individual from evaluating on his own account, to force him to evaluate after the fashion of his social group, whatever that may be. This, according to Nietzsche, is the basic and original characteristic of all morality, although it has become significantly less obvious in more recent times:

> *Concept of morality of custom* [*Sittlichkeit der Sitte*].— In comparison with the mode of life of whole millennia of mankind we present-day men live in a very immoral age: the power of custom is astonishingly enfeebled and the moral sense so rarefied and lofty it may be described as having more or less evaporated. That is why the fundamental insights into the origin of morality are so difficult for us latecomers […]. This is, for example, already the case with the *chief proposition*: morality is nothing other (therefore *no more!*) than obedience to customs, of whatever kind they may be; customs, however, are the *traditional* way of behaving and evaluating. […] The free human being is immoral because in all things he is *determined* to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition: in all the original conditions of mankind, "evil" signifies the same as "individual," "free," "capricious," "unusual," "unforeseen," "incalculable." Judged by the standard of these conditions, if an action is performed *not* because tradition commands it but for other motives (because of its usefulness to the individual, for example), even indeed for precisely the motives that once founded the tradition, it is called immoral and is felt to be so by him who performed it: for it was not performed in obedience to tradition. [D 9]

Although Nietzsche suggests here that many customs or traditions—though certainly not all (D 16)—originated for sound practical reasons, those reasons seem to have little to do with morality. Once a custom has been established, according to Nietzsche, morality requires that one abide by it for its own sake, regardless of the consequences. In prehistoric times, he thinks, the real function of morality was to make human beings consistent and obedient, even if that goal

was not consciously intended. Despite the practical benefits that may have arisen from many customs, Nietzsche still insists that "[a]mong barbarous peoples there exists a species of customs whose purpose appears to be custom in general: minute and fundamentally superfluous stipulations […] which, however, keep continually in the consciousness the constant proximity of custom, the perpetual compulsion to practise customs: so as to strengthen the mighty proposition with which civilization begins: any custom is better than no custom" (D 16). The reason why any custom, however bizarre and irrational, is better than no custom according to Nietzsche, is that it was by means of customs that human beings learned to be obedient and to take responsibility for themselves and their actions. He returns to this subject again in GM, showing again the consistency of his thinking on these matters:

> This precisely is the long story of how *responsibility* originated. The task of breeding an animal with the right to make promises evidently embraces and presupposes as a preparatory task that one first *makes* men to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable. The tremendous labour of that which I have called "morality of custom" […]—the labour performed by man upon himself during the greater part of the existence of the human race, his entire *prehistoric* labour, finds in this its meaning, its great justification, notwithstanding the severity, tyranny, stupidity, and idiocy involved in it: with the aid of the morality of custom and the social straitjacket, man was actually *made* calculable. [GM II:2]

This morality of obedience to custom can be understood as a kind of mutual assimilation of human beings to one another, for the sake of the preservation and enhancement of the power of the social group—though this is a somewhat misleading way of putting the point, since it suggests that there are individual human beings to be assimilated; in reality, of course, our social nature can be traced back to the lower animals from which we evolved, and thus predates our "human nature." Nietzsche's view is that the "individual" human being is a late development that has only been partially completed even today, while our original condition is characterized by a

herd mentality according to which everything comes back to the interests of the social group. Alluding to a more primitive human condition, he writes that "[t]o be a self and to esteem oneself according to one's own weight and measure—that offended taste in those days." According to Nietzsche, "[a]n inclination to do this would have been considered madness; for being alone was associated with every misery and fear […] and the more unfree one's actions were and the more the herd instinct rather than any personal sense found expression in an action, the more moral one felt" (GS 117). In earlier times it was absolutely necessary that human beings should be as similar to one another as possible, so that they could understand one another and thus aid one another in the struggle to live and prosper: "The greater the danger is, the greater is the need to reach agreement quickly and easily about what must be done. […] The human beings who are more similar, more ordinary, have had, and always have, an advantage; those more select, subtle, strange, and difficult to understand easily remain alone, succumb to accidents, being isolated, and rarely propagate" (BGE 268). While Nietzsche is talking here about the necessity for human beings to use the same words in the same way for the sake of mutual understanding, his point applies equally to the necessity of acting in accordance with the same customs: for it is only thus that human beings are made "like among like, regular, and consequently calculable" (GM II:2), and this is necessary if they are to hold together as a group. Thus morality originally had the effect of making human beings predictable and obedient to shared customs, which in the most successful cases reflected the conditions for their preservation and enhancement, not as individuals, but as a group:

> *Herd instinct.*— Wherever we encounter a morality, we also encounter valuations and an order of rank of human drives [*Triebe*] and actions. These valuations and orders of rank are always expressions of the needs of a community and herd: whatever benefits it most—and

> second most, and third most—that is also considered the first standard for the value of all individuals. Morality trains the individual to be a function of the herd and to ascribe value to himself only as a function. The conditions for the preservation of different communities were very different; hence there were very different moralities. Considering essential changes in the forms of future herds and communities, states and societies, we can prophesy that there will yet be very divergent moralities. Morality is herd instinct in the individual. [GS 116]

This is the most general sense in which Nietzsche understands "morality," namely as a system of evaluations of different drives and behaviours insofar as these are felt to benefit or harm the social group. The interests of single human beings, who certainly have their own interests as organisms, if not necessarily as "individuals" in Nietzsche's sense, are subordinated to those of the group. Nietzsche writes that "'moral evaluation,' insofar as it is a social evaluation, measures men exclusively according to the effects they produce," while "the value of a man in himself is underrated, almost overlooked, almost denied" (WP 878). Indeed, it seems that this "almost" itself may be a later development, that in prehistory the concept of "the value of a man in himself" would never have occurred to anyone. The basic tendency of morality, according to Nietzsche, is to judge "the value of man only in relation to men" (WP 878). However, as we have just seen him insist "that a 'morality-in-itself,' a 'good-in-itself' do not exist" (WP 428), it seems somewhat strange for him to speak of "the value of a man in himself." We saw in Part II that Nietzsche sometimes uses terms for the sake of expression that, strictly speaking, he rejects, and I believe that is what he is doing here. His point is not that a man can have unconditional value, apart from all relations, but that there are higher perspectives from which to measure the value of a man than that of the social group: "To appraise the value of a man according to how useful he is to men, or how much he costs, or what harm he does them—that is as much—or as little—as to appraise a work of art according to the effects it produces. But

in this way, the value of a man in comparison with other men is not even touched upon" (WP 878). Nietzsche here means "value" in the higher sense we have mentioned already, namely "value in the sense of furthering the advancement and prosperity of man in general" (GM P:6), and not merely that of a single people or social group. The group may be right in judging that a given individual presents a danger to it—but without a reason to think that the interests of that group are more important for enhancing the power of humanity than are those of the individual in question, Nietzsche would consider this a limited perspective for judging value, even if it has been the predominant one throughout history. "The strongest and most evil spirits," he writes, "have so far done the most to advance humanity […]. Usually by force of arms, by toppling boundary markers, by violating pieties—but also by means of new religions and moralities. […] What is new, however, is always evil, being that which wants to overthrow the old boundary markers and the old pieties; and only what is old is good" (GS 4). A people will understandably find the one who questions its traditions dangerous and call him "evil," but that is no standpoint from which to judge his value for enhancing the power of humanity according to Nietzsche.

It is worth observing in this connection that, although Nietzsche considers moral evaluations of this kind to be narrow-minded in comparison with the more comprehensive view he tries to adopt, he does not understand such narrow-mindedness as necessarily harmful for the enhancement of the power of humanity. To the contrary, he considers it invaluable as a means of discipline, and thinks that it has produced many great things precisely *because* of its narrowness:

> Every morality is, as opposed to *laisser aller*, a bit of tyranny against "nature"; also against "reason"; but this in itself is no objection, as long as we do not have some other morality which permits us to decree that every kind of tyranny and unreason is impermissible. What is essential and inestimable in every morality is that it constitutes a long compulsion […]. Consider any morality with this in mind: what there is in it of "nature" teaches hatred of the

> *laisser aller*, of any all-too-great freedom, and implants the need for limited horizons and the nearest tasks—teaching the *narrowing of our perspective*, and thus in a certain sense stupidity, as a condition of life and growth. "You shall obey—someone and for a long time: *else* you will perish and lose the last respect for yourself"—this appears to me to be the moral imperative of nature which, to be sure, is neither "categorical" as the old Kant would have it (hence the "else") nor addressed to the individual (what do individuals matter to her?), but to peoples, races, ages, classes—but above all to the whole human animal, to *man*. [BGE 188]

Insofar as Nietzsche has a quarrel with the narrowness of moral perspectives, this is because such perspectives are inappropriate as the starting point for a "science of morals," that is, for an attempt to describe and explain moral evaluations, as opposed to a mere attempt to justify some set of them. Despite the fact that moral evaluations are not adequate to reality, that is, that they ignore much that can be known by human beings about the reality we experience, we saw in Chapter 4 that Nietzsche considers such selection and simplification indispensable for our thinking, and evaluates judgments not according to their truth or falsity, but according to their utility for the preservation and enhancement of life (BGE 4). While he sometimes attacks the narrowness of a moral interpretation directly (e.g., A 54; EH IV:4; WP 351), we shall see that he usually does so when he considers that interpretation harmful for life and wants to point out its "stupidity" in order to undermine it. Narrow-mindedness and stupidity are essential for life on Nietzsche's view, but they have no place in a "science of morals," the goal of which is to take the subtlest and most comprehensive look possible at the phenomena of morality. Such a view is necessary precisely in order to get beyond the practice of evaluating in accordance with the relatively narrow interests of "peoples, races, ages, classes," and evaluate these things and their respective moralities in accordance with their contribution "to the whole human animal, to *man*." This ambition is expressed particularly well in "On the Thousand and One Goals," where Zarathustra says: "A thousand goals have there been so far, for there have been a thousand

peoples. Only the yoke for the thousand necks is still lacking: the one goal is lacking. Humanity still has no goal. But tell me, my brothers, if humanity still lacks a goal—is humanity itself not still lacking too?"

We have seen that Nietzsche thinks it necessary to develop a "typology of morals" (BGE 186) before the problem of the value of different moralities for life can be addressed. It is necessary, in other words, to distinguish between different fundamental types of morality before one can begin to discuss the relative value they might have for life. I have said that, unlike the moral philosophers he chastises, Nietzsche spent the better part of ten years working to develop such a typology, and it will be important here to indicate some of the results of that labour. Although it will not be possible to do so comprehensively—for this would require a careful exegesis of, among other things, the entirety of GM, which it seems to me has been discussed nearly to death already in the literature—I will emphasize a couple of aspects that I consider most important for our present purposes. One of these is the famous distinction between master morality and slave morality, or the morality of "good and bad" versus the morality of "good and evil," which Nietzsche considers one of his most decisive insights with regard to morality:

> Wandering through the many subtler and coarser moralities which have so far been prevalent on earth, or still are prevalent, I found that certain features recurred regularly together and were closely associated—until I finally discovered two basic types and one basic difference. There are *master morality* and *slave morality*—I add immediately that in all the higher and more mixed cultures there also appear attempts at mediation between these two moralities, and yet more often the interpenetration and mutual misunderstanding of both, and at times they occur directly alongside each other—even in the same human being, within a *single* soul. The moral discrimination of values has originated either among a ruling group whose consciousness of its difference from the ruled group was accompanied by delight—or among the ruled, the slaves and dependents of every degree. In the first case, when the ruling group determines what is "good," the exalted, proud states of the soul [i.e., affects] are experienced as conferring distinction and determining the order of rank. The noble human being separates from himself those in whom the opposite of such exalted, proud states finds expression: he

> despises them. It should be noted immediately that in this first type of morality the opposition of "good" and "*bad*" means approximately the same as "noble" and "contemptible." One feels contempt for the cowardly, the anxious, the petty, those intent on narrow utility […]. Noble and courageous human beings who think that way are furthest removed from that morality which finds the distinction of morality precisely in compassion, or in acting for others, or in *désintéressement*; faith in oneself, pride in oneself, a fundamental hostility and irony against "selflessness" belong just as definitely to noble morality as does a slight disdain and caution regarding compassionate feelings and a "warm heart." It is different with the second type of morality, *slave morality*. Suppose the violated, oppressed, suffering, unfree, who are uncertain of themselves and weary, moralize: what will their moral valuations have in common? Probably, a pessimistic suspicion about the whole condition of man will find expression, perhaps a condemnation of man along with his condition. The slave's eye is not favourable to the virtues of the powerful […]. Conversely, those qualities are brought out and flooded with light which serve to ease existence for those who suffer: here compassion, the complaisant and obliging hand, the warm heart, patience, industry, humility, and friendliness are honoured —for here these are the most useful qualities and almost the only means for enduring the pressure of existence. Slave morality is essentially a morality of utility. Here is the place for the origin of that famous opposition of "good" and "evil": into evil one's feelings project power and dangerousness, a certain terribleness, subtlety, and strength that does not permit contempt to develop. According to slave morality, those who are "evil" thus inspire fear; according to master morality it is precisely those who are "good" that inspire, and wish to inspire, fear, while the "bad" are felt to be contemptible. […] One last fundamental difference: the longing for *freedom*, the instinct for happiness and the subtleties of the feeling of freedom belong just as necessarily to slave morality as artful and enthusiastic reverence and devotion are the regular symptoms of an aristocratic way of thinking and evaluating. [BGE 260]

The basic distinction that Nietzsche draws here is between the way that powerful human beings who are conscious of their power evaluate, and the way that powerless human beings who are conscious of their powerlessness do so. We saw in Chapter 5 that Nietzsche identifies happiness (i.e., "pleasure") with the feeling of power, and this description of the masterly, aristocratic attitude shows vividly in what way he thinks pleasure and power go together. Happiness in this sense is the basic experience of the master type, who simply feels himself and his equals to be "good," precisely because he feels powerful: "The noble type of man experiences *itself* as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, 'what is harmful to me is harmful in

itself'; it knows itself to be that which first accords honour to things; it is *value-creating*. Everything it knows as part of itself it honours: such morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of fullness, of power that seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension" (BGE 260). Although the master recognizes the difference between himself and the slave, and feels contempt for the powerlessness and unhappiness of the slave, Nietzsche insists that his self-conception does not depend on this comparison: "the noble man […] conceives the basic concept 'good' in advance and spontaneously out of himself and only then creates for himself an idea of 'bad,'" which is merely "an after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade" (GM I:11). In other words, were it possible for this noble type to go through life without ever encountering anyone he felt to be less than his equal, he would have no use for the conceptual contrast of "good" and "bad," but his attitude toward himself and his equals would otherwise remain the same. "The 'well-born,'" Nietzsche writes, "*felt* themselves to be 'happy'; they did not have to establish their happiness artificially by examining their enemies, or to persuade themselves, *deceive* themselves, that they were happy" (GM I:10).

The slave type, to the contrary, does not instinctively feel himself to be "good," for he is powerless and therefore unhappy. He resents those who are powerful and happy; he would like to revenge himself against them, and this is how his conception of "good" originates: "While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside,' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself'; and *this* No is its creative deed" (GM I:10). If the original fact of master morality is the conviction that one is good, the original fact of slave morality is the conviction that the powerful, the masters, are evil, and that,

insofar as one is different from them, one is necessarily "good." Nietzsche attributes the most prodigal development of slave morality to the Jews, who

> dared to invert the aristocratic value-equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God) […], saying "the wretched alone are the good; the poor, impotent, lowly are the good; the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly alone are pious, alone are blessed by God, blessedness is for them alone—and you, the powerful and noble, are on the contrary the evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity; and you shall be in all eternity the unblessed, accursed, and damned!" [GM I:7]

This amounts, according to Nietzsche, to the attitude that one is more "good" the less one resembles the powerful and happy, that is, the more powerless and unhappy one is. This way of evaluating is basically a means of taking revenge against the powerful, by slandering them and, if possible, taking away their good conscience about their power; and of consoling and strengthening the powerless by giving them a good conscience about their powerlessness. One of the main strategies for accomplishing this depends on the doctrine of "free will," that is, the belief that the powerless are "good" (i.e., powerless) because they *choose* to be so, while the powerful are "evil" (i.e., powerful) for the same reason. We know that Nietzsche rejects this notion of freedom, which depends upon the erroneous distinction between being and doing, between a "subject" and its activity:

> To demand of strength that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome, a desire to throw down, a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs, is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength. A quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect —more, it is nothing other than precisely this driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language (and of the fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it) which conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a "subject," can it appear otherwise. […] When the oppressed, downtrodden, outraged exhort one another with the vengeful cunning of impotence: "let us be different from the evil, namely good! And he is good who does not outrage, who harms nobody, who does not attack, who does not requite, who leaves revenge to God, who keeps himself hidden as we do, who avoids evil and desires little from life, like us, the patient, humble, and just" —this, listened to

> calmly and without previous bias, really amounts to no more than: “we weak ones are, after all, weak; it would be good if we did nothing *for which we are not strong enough*”; but this dry matter of fact, this prudence of the lowest order […] has, thanks to the counterfeit and self-deception of impotence, clad itself in the ostentatious garb of the virtue of quiet, calm resignation, just as if the weakness of the weak—that is to say, their *essence*, their effects, their sole ineluctable, irremovable reality—were a voluntary achievement, willed, chosen, a *deed*, a *meritorious* act. This type of man *needs* to believe in a neutral independent “subject,” prompted by an instinct for self-preservation and self-affirmation in which every lie is sanctified. [GM I:13]

To put the matter succinctly, slave morality—that is, the morality of the powerless—begins with resentment against the powerful, the masters, whom it calls “evil.” The natural corollary of this attitude is that whoever is not like the masters, whoever is not powerful, is therefore “good.” In order to make this into a virtue, it is necessary to deceive oneself into believing that one has *chosen* to be powerless, that one could also *choose* to be “evil” (i.e., powerful), but that one forbears out of a commitment to moral goodness. There is a symmetry between the positive and negative moral concepts of master and slave morality, insofar as the human being the former calls “good” is called “evil” by the latter, while the one that the latter calls “good” is called “bad” by the former (GM I:11). Nietzsche makes it clear that this symmetry arises from the fact that slave morality is a *reaction* against master morality, that its existence presupposes the existence of master morality and resentment against the masters on the part of the powerless (GM I:10).

It is important to emphasize that in the kind of primordial case that Nietzsche focuses on, the “power” of the masters is not a matter of arbitrary social privilege—as seems to have been the case, for example, in the decadent aristocracies of the 18th century. Nietzsche also insists that “their predominance did not lie mainly in physical strength but in strength of the soul—they were more *whole* human beings (which also means, at every level, ‘more whole beasts’)” (BGE 257).

> Let us admit to ourselves, without trying to be considerate, how every higher culture on earth so far has *begun*. Human beings whose nature was still natural, barbarians in every terrible sense of the word, men of prey who were still in possession of unbroken strength of will and lust for power, hurled themselves upon weaker, more civilized, more peaceful races, perhaps traders or cattle raisers, or upon mellow old cultures […]. In the beginning, the noble caste was always the barbarian caste […]. [BGE 257]

According to Nietzsche, the masters were powerful not merely in the sense that they subjugated others, but *physio-psychologically*. They had more and stronger drives, and were therefore more robust and capable human beings, spiritually as well as physically. It was this, and not their social dominance, that made them instinctively happy: for Nietzsche says that their happiness preceded their consciousness of the difference between themselves and the ruled classes, and that they despised the latter because they evidently did not share in that happiness. Indeed, it is precisely the slave who must compare himself with some "other" in order to convince himself of his happiness, which increases in proportion as he is able to feel himself superior to that other. This, as we have seen, is really the purpose of slave morality: to make the slave feel that he is superior to the master because he is "good." But the masters really are superior to the slaves according to Nietzsche's physio-psychology, and thus have no need to convince themselves of this in order to feel their superiority: they are "strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate" (GM I:10), and happiness is the natural condition of such natures. This certainly does not apply to every human being who happens to be in a position of social dominance: "There is only nobility of birth, only nobility of blood [i.e., physio-psychological nobility]. (I am not speaking here of the little word '*von*' or of the Almanach de Gotha: parenthesis for asses)" (WP 942). We may grant that the happiness of the masters is increased in some measure by their consciousness of the power they wield over the subjected classes, but

Nietzsche makes it clear that this is merely an afterthought on their part, and not the original source of their happiness.

We will return to Nietzsche's claim that master morality belongs to a stronger, more complete type of human being, for it is a paradigm case of the application of his symptomatology based on degrees of strength. But for now it is worth emphasizing again that, in spite of the high value he assigns to this type of person for the enhancement of the power of humanity, he does not acquit the master's moral perspective of the kind of narrow-minded "stupidity" discussed above. Because the master takes little interest in the slave, merely feeling contempt and a degree of detached compassion for him, the master tends to misunderstand the slave and his entire sphere of existence:

> When the noble mode of valuation blunders and sins against reality, it does so in respect to the sphere with which it is *not* sufficiently familiar, against a real knowledge of which it has indeed inflexibly guarded itself: in some circumstances it misunderstands the sphere it despises, that of the common man, of the lower orders; on the other hand, one should remember that, even supposing that the affect of contempt, of looking down from a superior height, *falsifies* the image of that which it despises, it will at any rate be a much less serious falsification than that perpetrated on its opponent […] by the submerged hatred, the vengefulness of the impotent. There is indeed too much carelessness, too much taking lightly, too much looking away and impatience involved in contempt, even too much joyfulness, for it to be able to transform its object into a real caricature and monster. [GM I:10]

Although Nietzsche's description here seems rather sympathetic in comparison to the outright falsification of the master's psychology perpetrated by the slave, who creates a monstrous caricature of the master as the "evil man," what he is describing is plainly a kind of narrow-mindedness that pertains to the masterly type. The master is typically not very curious about the slave, and would probably find any real attempt to understand him both depressing and debasing. In addition, Nietzsche writes that "[a] race of such men of *ressentiment* [i.e., slaves] is bound to

eventually become *cleverer* than any noble race; it will also honour cleverness to a far greater degree: namely, as a condition of existence of the first importance; while with noble men […] it is far less essential than the perfect functioning of the regulating *unconscious* instincts" (GM I:10). This again speaks to the health and strength of the master: for, as we will see, Nietzsche believes that "[a]ll perfect acts are unconscious and no longer subject to will; consciousness is the expression of an imperfect and often morbid state in a person" (WP 289). A high degree of consciousness that can adopt the broadest possible perspectives is, however, necessary for one who would develop a "science of morals"—and therefore, notwithstanding the high value that Nietzsche's version of such a science attributes to master morality, this morality could no more form the basis of that science than could the morality of Christian Europe. *Every* morality, as we have seen, involves a "narrowing of our perspective" (BGE 188), and one who would question the value of all morality must be capable of standing outside all moral perspectives, and of entering into different such perspectives at will (HA P:6).

This consideration of Nietzsche's distinction between master and slave morality leads us into consideration of another, related distinction that belongs to his "typology of morals," namely that between moralities of "taming" (*Zähmung*) and moralities of "breeding" (*Züchtung*). Slave morality, with its hatred of the strong and dangerous human being, is clearly an example of the former: according to this morality, "the *meaning of all culture* is the reduction of the beast of prey 'man' to a tame and civilized animal, a *domestic animal*" (GM I:11). "This is the great, the uncanny problem which I have been pursuing the longest," Nietzsche writes: "the psychology of the 'improvers' of mankind" (TI VII: 5).

> At all times they have wanted to "improve" man: this above all was called morality. Under the same word, however, the most divergent tendencies are concealed. Both the *taming* of the beast, man, and the *breeding* of a particular kind of man have been called "improvement." Such zoological terms are required to express the realities—realities, to be sure, of which the typical "improver," the priest, neither knows anything, nor wants to know anything. To call the taming of an animal its "improvement" sounds almost like a joke to our ears. Whoever knows what goes on in menageries doubts that the beasts are "improved" there. They are weakened, they are made less harmful, and through the depressive effect of fear, through pain, through wounds, and through hunger, they become sickly beasts. It is no different with the tamed man whom the priest has "improved." […] Physiologically speaking: in the struggle with beasts, to make them sick *may* be the only means for making them weak. This the church understood: it *ruined* man, it weakened him—but it claimed to have "improved" him. [TI VII:2]

> Let us consider the other case of so-called morality, the case of *breeding* a particular race and kind. The most magnificent example of this is furnished by Indian morality, sanctioned as religion in the form of "the law of Manu." Here the task set is to breed no less than four races at once: one priestly, one warlike, one for trade and agriculture, and finally a race of servants, the Sudras. Obviously, we are here to longer among animal tamers: a kind of man that is a hundred times milder and more reasonable is the condition for even conceiving of such a plan of breeding. […] Yet this organization too found it necessary to be *terrible*—this time not in the struggle with beasts, but with their counter-concept, the unbred man, the mishmash man, the chandala. And again it had no other means for keeping him from being dangerous, for making him weak, than to make him *sick*—it was the fight with the "great number." [TI VII:3]

We have seen that every morality is a "social straitjacket" (GM II:2) that subordinates the interests of the individual to those of the group, however understood, and it is therefore not surprising that every morality has need of "terrible" means for dealing with those individuals who are perceived as posing a threat to its authority. Nietzsche had already discussed these means at some length in the Second Essay of GM, but without distinguishing explicitly between the ways they are employed in moralities of taming and moralities of breeding. In the former type of morality, all available means are used to *weaken* those human beings who manifest strong drives, in order to make them docile and hence governable. In the morality of breeding, by contrast, the aim of weakening is secondary to the aim of *strengthening*, and is employed only against those

who are considered worthless for that aim. Strengthening in this case is to be understood quite subtly as the strengthening of particular drives, that is, the cultivation of certain dominant drives that should rule over the others, perhaps in conjunction with the selective weakening of drives that would obstruct this end. Whereas taming aims at a general weakening and depression of all the drives, the goal of breeding is to create a *type* of person by cultivating a particular relation of command and obedience among his drives—or, in the example of the Indian caste system, four types. In keeping with his rejection of absolute opposites, Nietzsche understands this undertaking as not only psychological, but *physio*-psychological, meaning that he uses the term "breeding" in a literal as well as a metaphorical sense: "Breeding, as I understand it, is a means of storing up the tremendous forces of mankind so that the generations can build upon the work of their forefathers—not only outwardly, but inwardly, organically growing out of them and becoming something stronger" (WP 398). Taming, on the other hand, does the opposite: it aims to dissipate the force that human beings have inherited, to make them weak in order to make them harmless. The standpoint of breeding belongs to master morality and its aristocratic attitude, while that of taming belongs to slave morality and its *ressentiment* against the strong (TI VII:4).

Now Nietzsche also wants to "improve" mankind, as we have seen, and his approach to this is obviously much closer to the standpoint of breeding than that of taming—although every attempt at breeding will also entail some degree of taming of certain elements, as we have seen him emphasize. How this might look in practice will be discussed in Chapter 9 below. For now, it is important to get clear about what precisely Nietzsche is concerned to evaluate with respect to the enhancement of the power of humanity: in this connection he discusses values and moralities, drives and persons, and it will be necessary to sort out more exactly the relations among these

things, and particularly to answer the question which of them are more and less fundamental to the problem of value as he conceives it. As I said above, my view is that *drives* are the fundamental objects of concern here, considering that persons are reducible to them and they are the basic subject matter of values and moralities. Although Nietzsche most often speaks not of the "value of drives" but of the "value of values" or the "value of morality," I will argue that this is because values and moralities are of the greatest practical concern for the enhancement of the power of humanity, because they ordain which drives are to be encouraged and which discouraged. The enhancement of that power, as we shall see, depends upon the enhancement of the power of certain drives, and probably upon a diminution of the power of others. Drives, in turn, are constitutive of human beings, which Nietzsche understands as communities of drives. Now, apart from the individual strength of the drives themselves, different types of communities (i.e., persons) result from different combinations of drives in differing degrees of strength, and these communities can also be stronger or weaker. And from different types of persons arise different types of morality, which are both symptomatic of those persons' degree of strength, and can be considered in terms of the *effect* of the evaluations that constitute them upon the strength of drives and persons in general. Let us now proceed to examine these distinctions in more detail.

It may seem strange that I have said nothing about what is probably the most common object of evaluation for moral philosophers, namely *actions*. If Nietzsche is concerned with enhancing the power of the human species, would it not make sense for him to consider how different kinds of actions help or hinder this end? Although he may sometimes speak that way, he ultimately understands actions only as *symptoms* of something deeper and more decisive, namely

of *persons*. No action, according to him, can be evaluated in and of itself, but only in relation to the person who performs it:

> How false is the idea that the value of an action must depend upon that which preceded it in consciousness!— And morality has been judged according to this, even criminality—
> The value of an action must be judged by its consequences—say the utilitarians—: to judge it by its origins implies an impossibility, namely that of *knowing* its origins.
> But does one know its consequences? For five steps ahead, perhaps. Who can say what an action will stimulate, excite, provoke? As a stimulus? Perhaps as a spark to touch off an explosion?— The utilitarians are naïve— And in any case we must first *know what* is useful: here too they look only five steps ahead— They have no conception of the grand economy, which cannot do without evil.
> One does not know the origin, one does not know the consequences:— does an action then possess any value at all? […]
> [C]ould one reduce the value of an action to physiological values: whether it is the expression of a complete or an inhibited life? It may be that its *biological* value is expressed in this—
> If therefore an action can be evaluated neither by its origin, nor by its consequences […] then its value is "*x*," unknown— [WP 291]

Nietzsche seems to say both that the value of an action cannot be judged according to its origin, because its origin cannot be known, and that perhaps it *can* be judged according to its origin in either a "complete or an inhibited [form of] life." In the former case he is criticizing the belief that it is possible to know precisely how an action originated based on "that which preceded it in consciousness," that is, the conscious intention with which it was performed. The problem he is concerned with is not really the one he attributes here to the utilitarians, namely that it is impossible to know for certain what a person's intention was in performing a given action, but the deeper problem that conscious intentions cannot be regarded as explanations for actions: "The [conscious] will no longer moves anything, hence does not explain anything either—it merely accompanies events; it can also be absent. The so-called *motive*: another error. Merely a surface phenomenon of consciousness, something alongside the deed that is more likely to cover up the

antecedents of the deed than to represent them" (TI VI:3). We saw this in Chapter 5, where we examined Nietzsche's claim that the real cause of an action is "a quantum of dammed-up force that is waiting to be used up somehow," while the intention "is, compared to this force, something quite insignificant, for the most part a little accident in accordance with which this quantum 'discharges' itself in one particular way" (GS 360). The "quantum of force" he refers to is, roughly speaking, a person, and the value of any action can therefore be considered only in relation to that person.

Nietzsche makes this point at greater length in BGE, in a passage that is worth quoting in full, because it both clarifies the present point and helps us to situate it within the larger framework of his evaluative project:

> During the longest part of human history—so-called prehistorical times—the value or disvalue of an action was derived from its consequences. The action itself was considered as little as its origin. It was rather the way a distinction or disgrace still reaches back today from a child to its parents, in China: it was the retroactive force of success or failure that led men to think well or ill of an action. Let us call this the *pre-moral* period of mankind: the imperative "know thyself!" was as yet unknown. In the last ten thousand years, however, one has reached the point, step by step, in a few large regions of the earth, where it is no longer the consequences but the origin of an action that one allows to decide its value. On the whole this is a great event which involves a considerable refinement of vision and standards; it is the unconscious aftereffect of the rule of aristocratic values and the faith in "descent"—the sign of a period that one may call *moral* in the narrower sense. It involves the first attempt at self-knowledge. Instead of the consequences, the origin: indeed a reversal of perspective! Surely, a reversal achieved only after long struggles and vacillations. To be sure, a calamitous new superstition, an odd narrowness of interpretation, thus became dominant: the origin of an action was interpreted in the most definite sense as origin in an *intention*; one came to agree that the value of an action lay in the value of the intention. The intention as the whole origin and prehistory of an action—almost to the present day this prejudice dominated moral praise, blame, judgment, and philosophy on earth. But today—shouldn't we have reached the necessity of once more resolving on a reversal and fundamental shift in values, owing to another self-examination of man, another growth in profundity? Don't we stand at the threshold of a period which should be designated negatively, to begin with, as *extra-moral*? After all, today at least we immoralists have the suspicion that the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is *unintentional* in it, while everything about it that is intentional,

> everything about it that can be seen, known, "conscious," still belongs to its surface and skin —which, like every skin, betrays something but *conceals* even more. In short, we believe that the intention is merely a sign and symptom that still requires interpretation—moreover, a sign that means too much and therefore, taken by itself alone, almost nothing. We believe that morality in the traditional sense, the morality of intentions, was a prejudice, precipitate and perhaps provisional—something on the order of astrology and alchemy—but in any case something that must be overcome. The overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality—let this be the name for that long secret work which has been saved up for the finest and most honest, also the most malicious, consciences of today, as living touchstones of the soul. [BGE 32]

Here Nietzsche again uses the term "morality" in a specific, somewhat narrow sense to refer, not only to the morality of Christian Europe, but to the type of morality that judges the value of an action based on the conscious intention that accompanied its performance (although European Christian morality is surely an example of this type). We are all familiar with this type of moral reasoning, in which an action may have the worst of consequences without us judging its performer morally blameworthy, because he did not *intend* to bring about those consequences, but rather some better ones. A more extreme formulation would be Kant's categorical imperative, according to which one is not to consider consequences at all in determining what action to perform—one may even act in a way that one *knows* will bring about the worst consequences, so long as one's action is in conformity with that imperative; and, conversely, one may not violate that imperative even if doing so would have better consequences. Kant's aim was precisely to eliminate consideration of things like consequences, which on his view have nothing to do with moral action, understood as action that proceeds from a "good will," that is, from a good intention—not the intention to bring about good consequences, but the pure intention to act in conformity with the concept of duty, regardless of the consequences. Consideration of the consequences brings selfish interests into moral deliberation, where Kant thinks they have no

place. This is a more radical version of the "morality of intentions" than one encounters elsewhere, but Kant is arguably correct in drawing the conclusions of such a morality.

Certainly, even in more ordinary cases, it is not thought to be enough simply to intend to bring about good consequences: one must want to bring them about *for good reasons*. European Christian morality has at various times been almost obsessed with the problem of determining the real motive of even the most beneficent action. Whether, for example, I help the poor out of "genuine compassion," or in order to feel more righteous than my neighbour, or with the expectation that my generosity will be recognized and rewarded, apparently makes all the difference. According to the morality of Christian Europe—which, it will be recalled, is a "morality of compassion" (GM P:6)—giving to the poor would seem to be an obviously good action. But it is not morally good if it is done with the wrong intention. It has been believed, according to Nietzsche, that the intention is the cause of the action, and that morally good actions arise only from morally good intentions. But this, he says, is false. An intention is not the cause of an action, but only appears to be so from the standpoint of introspection, in which "[a] condition [i.e., the intention] that accompanies an event [i.e., the action] and is itself an effect of the event is projected as the 'sufficient reason' for the event" (WP 689). In other words, the conscious intention is *part* of a complex of events that also includes all of the unconscious antecedents that go into the "action," and not the cause of those antecedent events occurring. The intention, Nietzsche says, is rather an accompanying *symptom* of the real cause, which we have seen is a quantum of force that seeks expression. Nietzsche suggests that the conscious intention *might* tell us something about that quantum of force—for example, about its degree of strength or the relations among the drives that constitute it—but only if it is taken as part of a more

comprehensive picture of that quantum, since on its own it is bound to be more misleading than informative. Conscious intentions are simply not central or important enough to explain much.

However, the issue is not only explaining actions, but *evaluating* them. Unlike Nietzsche, every morality of intentions believes that the conscious intention that accompanies an action not only explains it, but also serves as the measure of its value. If we take the example of European Christian morality, an action performed with the intention, say, of alleviating the suffering of others would count as a "good" action, whatever its outcome; whereas an action taken with the intention, for example, of increasing one's own power would count as an "evil" action, again regardless of the outcome. Other moralities of intention that identify quite different kinds of intentions as "good" or "evil" may indeed exist, but what all such moralities have in common is that they judge the value or disvalue of an action in accordance with the value or disvalue they place upon the conscious intention. Nietzsche, to the contrary, thinks that "the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is *unintentional* in it" (BGE 32), by which he seems to mean the unconscious drives that give rise to it. But this cannot be quite right, because we have already seen him rule out the possibility of determining the value of an action based on its *origin* (WP 291), regardless whether that origin is conscious or unconscious. I argued in Chapter 5, contra Tom Stern, that Nietzsche does not claim to possess specific and exact knowledge about the drives that constitute any particular human being, and that his "drive biographies" are necessarily speculative. This becomes important again here, because it suggests the impossibility of *knowing* which drives prompt an action, or even of gauging their strength, when all we have to work from is the action itself. On the other hand, as I have indicated already, and as we will see in detail in Chapter 8, Nietzsche regards actions as *symptoms* of the community of drives that performs them,

allowing one to infer which drives dominate in that community, how strong they are, and so on. It is largely in this way that he proposes to determine the degree of strength of an individual or a people, and thereby its value for the enhancement of the power of humanity. But how can he accomplish this if it is impossible to move from an action to an assessment of the strength of the drives that prompted it?

I think the answer is that a single action is never enough to allow us to make a judgment about this. Nietzsche says that "the intention is merely a sign and symptom that still requires interpretation" (BGE 32), and how much more true this must be for actions themselves! Indeed, the attempt to explain actions by means of conscious intentions is already an effort to interpret actions and make some sense of them, since in themselves they seem practically inscrutable. Nietzsche regards this as having at one time counted as "a considerable refinement of vision and standards," though it is still related to the kind of interpretation he proposes as is astrology to astronomy, or alchemy to chemistry. His point is not that one may infer much about a person's degree of strength by considering one or two of his actions, and thus gain the right to pass judgment on the actions themselves in accordance with that strength. Rather, one must remember that the value of an action *in itself* is "'*x*,' unknown" (WP 291): from the point of view of Nietzsche's symptomatology, an action cannot be said to have value or disvalue in and of itself. Because questions of value in this sense are questions of strength, everything comes back to the *person*, to the community of drives from which actions arise. Indeed, strictly speaking, "drives" are nothing but activities, so that it is arbitrary and unfair to try to evaluate a tiny part of that activity that happens to express itself outwardly as an "action" while ignoring all the rest. To be sure, the only way of arriving at a picture of the structure of drives that constitute a person is by

examining the activity of those drives as it expresses itself outwardly—but not only in coarse actions like murder or martyrdom, but in what one says and writes, in one's moods, habits, and whole manner of behaviour. This must come as close as possible to a total picture of the person, the entirety of his life and works, and not be limited to a few loud actions or utterances, which cannot be properly interpreted without reference to the whole. Thus judgments about the value of actions are entirely reduced to judgments about the value of persons: not *what* is done, but *who* does it. Nietzsche says that "an action in itself is perfectly devoid of value: it all depends on *who* performs it. One and the same 'crime' can be in one case the greatest privilege, in another a stigma" (WP 292). How he determines what sorts of actions are appropriate for what sorts of persons will be examined in Chapter 9.

It should be clear from my analysis in Chapter 5 that any talk about persons will ultimately resolve into talk about drives, since these are the physio-psychological constituents of human beings. The question of the value of a person therefore amounts to the question of the value of the drives of which he is made up—value again by reference to the enhancement of the power of humanity. For I have said that every morality has value for some ends, however narrow, and this is also true of drives, which are the basic subject of moral evaluations: "The affects [i.e., drives] are one and all useful, some directly, others indirectly; in regard to utility it is quite impossible to fix any scale of values—even though in economic terms the forces of nature are one and all good, i.e., useful, and also the source of so much terrible and irrevocable fatality. The most one could say is that the most powerful affects are the most valuable, in as much as there are no greater sources of strength" (WP 931). The fact that Nietzsche here identifies value with strength shows that he is thinking in terms of enhancing the power of humanity, since we have

seen that some conceptions of value, like the morality of taming, regard strength rather as disvaluable. But what does he mean by "the most powerful affects"? For it seems that this could refer either (1) to *all* drives, regardless of their character, that express themselves very strongly; or (2) to some specific subset of drives that Nietzsche considers more "powerful" than the others in virtue of their essential character, regardless of their intensity in a given case. If the former, then any drive, whether compassion or the lust to rule, could be numbered among the "most powerful" drives so long as it expressed itself strongly enough: Mother Teresa and Caesar might then be on a par in terms of power in their respective spheres. If the latter, then—anticipating somewhat my answer to this question—Caesar would be judged the more powerful, because the lust to rule is by its nature a more powerful drive than compassion, even if it is weaker than compassion in some individuals.

I believe that (2) is the correct answer. While weaker drives may dominate stronger ones in a given person, just as Nietzsche thinks that weaker human beings usually dominate in the herd, this does not mean that those drives are actually stronger in and of themselves. One way of putting this point is that the "most powerful" drives are those that are most indispensable for life, that is, those that express the character of life as will to power most fully. Nietzsche says that "life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation—but why should one always use those words in which a slanderous intent has been imprinted for ages?" (BGE 259). Because this is basically a description of the will to power, which is the fundamental character of life, it applies to all drives strictly speaking. However, as just suggested, some drives express this character more fully than others, and Nietzsche calls

these the "most powerful" drives. The morality of Christian Europe has hit upon this distinction as well, but rather slanders them as the most "evil" drives, to which Nietzsche calls attention at the end of the quotation above. As a morality of taming, it was in the interest of that morality to distinguish the strongest drives, which are *eo ipso* the most dangerous, in order to weaken and dominate them. Thus European Christian morality, although it slanders and caricatures the strongest drives while valourizing the weaker ones, draws the distinction between them fairly clearly, and Nietzsche therefore often formulates his rank-order of drives in terms of strength as a reversal of the moral rank-order of Christian Europe:

> For all the value that the true, the truthful, the selfless may deserve, it would still be possible that a higher and more fundamental value for life might have to be ascribed to deception, selfishness, and lust. It might even be possible that what constitutes the value of these good and revered things is precisely that they are insidiously related, tied to, and involved with these wicked, seemingly opposite things—maybe even one with them in essence. [BGE 2]

> [A] person should regard even the affects of hatred, envy, covetousness, and the lust to rule as conditions of life, as factors which, fundamentally and essentially, must be present in the general economy of life (and must, therefore, be further enhanced if life is to be further enhanced) […]. [BGE 23]

> We think that hardness, forcefulness, slavery, danger in the alley and the heart, life in hiding, stoicism, the art of experiment and devilry of every kind, that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical in man, everything in him that is kin to beasts of prey and serpents, serves the enhancement of the species "man" as much as its opposite does. Indeed, we do not even say enough when we say only that much; and at any rate we are at this point, in what we say and keep silent about, at the *other* end from all modern ideology and herd desiderata—as their antipodes perhaps? [BGE 44]

> In the grand economy of the whole, the terrible [i.e., "evil"] aspects of reality (in affects, in desires, in the will to power) are to an incalculable degree more necessary than that form of petty happiness which people call "goodness"; one actually has to be quite lenient to accord the latter any place at all […]. [EH IV:4]

Nietzsche makes it clear—at first tentatively, using hypothetical phrasing, but later quite explicitly—that the drives we are wont to call "evil" and "terrible" are in fact the most valuable,

because they are the strongest. Although Nietzsche's point is to reverse the usual evaluation of these drives, his focus on their terrible, destructive character should not cause us to forget that all "good" drives are derived from "wicked" ones (BGE 23), and that this is precisely "what constitutes the value of these good and revered things" (BGE 2). Nietzsche suggests, for example, that the phenomenon of Christian love grew out of Jewish hatred of the powerful peoples (GM I:8); that what we call "love" in the romantic sense is a "spiritualization" (*Vergeistigung*) of sexuality, which is originally anything but a tender impulse (TI V:3; cf. BGE 260); that love of one's enemies in the healthy, non-Christian sense, is a "spiritualization of *hostility*" (TI V:3), and so on.[107] To say it again, every drive has value in some context, for something: but the terrible, dangerous, destructive drives are ultimately also the most creative and fruitful, giving birth even to the milder, more peaceable and benevolent drives. It is obvious that one could dispense with the latter without diminishing the power of humanity in the big picture, since so long as one still has the terrible drives—which originally are the only drives that exist in nature according to Nietzsche—subtler and more refined, "spiritualized" forms of them are bound to emerge again. This is basically what Nietzsche has in mind when he defines his physio-psychology as "morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*" (BGE 23), namely the attempt to trace all of our diverse drives back to this single fundamental drive, to "the terrible basic text of *homo natura*" (BGE 230), in keeping with his commitment to historical philosophy. On the other hand, if it were possible to dispense entirely with the terrible drives, one would thereby abolish life, and with it the milder drives as well. Although this is *not* possible, we will see that Nietzsche worries that it is possible to weaken the terrible drives enough that humanity

107 On the point about sexuality, see Robert Briffault, "The Origin of Love," in *The Making of Man*, ed. V. F. Calverton (New York: Modern Library, 1931): 485–528.

would become stagnant and uncreative. And because those drives are fundamental to life, and give rise to all that is not considered to be "terrible," to weaken them really means to weaken human life as such, in direct opposition to Nietzsche's aim of enhancing the power of humanity.

This rank-order of drives in terms of strength is the point of departure for Nietzsche's attempt to solve "the problem of value," the solution of which would amount to "the determination of the *order of rank among values*" (GM I:17). We have seen that "values" in this sense are approbative or disapprobative judgments about different drives and their activities, while a "morality" is a more or less consistent combination of a number of such judgments. Because Nietzsche believes that the deepest interpretation of life, and by extension of all reality, is *will to power*, he reckons this as the true measure of value by which all others are to be judged: "There is nothing to life that has value, except the degree of power—assuming that life itself is the will to power" (WP 55). To the question "What is good?" he answers bluntly: "Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself" (A 2). Now, among the diverse moralities to which Nietzsche calls attention, some are bound to serve that end better than others, while some will actively frustrate it. The goal of his "critique of moral values" (GM P:6) is therefore to sort out which kinds of moral evaluations express and promote the strongest drives of life to the highest degree, and, conversely, which kinds express and promote the weakness of those drives. The former would be the most valuable values, while the latter would be relatively valueless. With respect to any set of values, Nietzsche asks: "Have they hitherto hindered or furthered human prosperity [i.e., power]? Are they a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life? Or is there revealed in them, on the contrary, the plenitude, force, and will of life, its courage, certainty, future?" (GM P:3). It is clear in this

passage that he looks at the problem of value from two different and equally important perspectives: first, from that of the observable *consequences* of a way of evaluating for the power of humanity; and second, from that of the *origin* of a way of evaluating in either abundant or impoverished life, that is, in relatively strong or relatively weak human physio-psychology. Thus he asks, to put it briefly, of what degree of strength a given morality is *symptomatic*, and what degree of strength it actually *promotes*. He usually seems to think that moralities that are symptomatic of strength also promote strength, and vice versa, but we will see that there are some exceptions. The next two chapters will examine these two ways of approaching the problem of value in detail.

Chapter 8: Degrees of Strength

"Strength," as I shall use the term, is conceptually distinct from "force," although the former is reducible to the latter. The word "force" almost always implies a compulsion exerted by a grammatical subject on something outside itself, as when I am forced off my feet by an earthquake, or when one billiard ball strikes another and forces it to move. We saw in Part II that Nietzsche thinks of drives and power quanta as "forces" in this sense, although he considers it erroneous to attribute "their" activities to subjects: "A quantum of force [*Quantum Kraft*] is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect—more, it is nothing other than precisely this driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language […] which conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a 'subject,' can it appear otherwise" (GM I:13). Forces in this sense are pseudo-subjects that are said to underlie various characteristic kinds of activity—that is, they are "conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and communication" (BGE 21); the only part of them that is actually "real" is the activity itself, the exertion of compulsion. This, as I said, is the ordinary sense of "force" in English, and it is one of the primary senses of *Kraft*, which I have so far translated as "force." But *Kraft* has another, equally prominent sense that is not well captured by "force": for it can also denote integrity or durability, as in *ein kräftiges Gebäude*, "a strong building." When discussing more fundamental forces like drives or power quanta, this latter sense of *Kraft* is not very pronounced, because these are among the simplest "things" that Nietzsche recognizes, and he does not analyze them into heterogeneous parts. Where these are concerned, the word "force" seems perfectly appropriate. At this point, however, we want to understand how Nietzsche evaluates human beings, understood as *communities* of drives, and here *Kraft* in the sense of

integrity is just as important as *Kraft* in the sense of exerting compulsion. I therefore translate Nietzsche's expressions *Kraftgrade* and *Grade der Kraft* as "degrees of strength," breaking with my previous practice of translating *Kraft* as "force." This usage of "strength" seems to adequately capture the dual sense of *Kraft* just explained: for one may *exercise* strength on something outside oneself, but strength is also "toughness," one's capacity to maintain oneself in the face of both external and internal pressures. To be sure, this latter kind of strength is derivative of the former, insofar as it only exists where there is a complex of heterogeneous forces that have come together in a "community," and insofar as the cohesion of that community is ultimately a result of the compulsion these forces exert on one another. However, when considering organisms as complex as human beings, this kind of *Kraft* is just as important as the kind I have called "force," and we will see that it is fundamental to Nietzsche's physio-psychological symptomatology.

Before considering that symptomatology in detail, it will be helpful to give a preliminary account of the way in which Nietzsche understands strength as a matter of "degrees." I suggest that he does so along three axes, which are defined most clearly in the following note from 1884: "The highest man would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, and in the relatively greatest strength [*Stärke*] that can be endured [i.e., integrated]" (KSA 11:27[59]). According to this, one's degree of strength would be determined by three factors: (1) how many drives one has; (2) how powerful those drives are individually; and (3) how well those drives are integrated into a cohesive "community." Where the *number* of drives is concerned, we saw in Chapter 5 that Nietzsche does not consider it possible to enumerate a person's drives precisely, owing primarily to their status as pseudo-entities that are inferred from the experience of relatively similar psychological states, and spoken of as though they were the causes of those states. Nevertheless,

Nietzsche believes that there is a real distinction between simpler and more complex human beings, and sometimes expresses this idea using the language of drives. In *Zarathustra* he expresses it in different terms, writing of "[t]he most comprehensive soul," by which he means a superlatively complex human being ("On Old and New Tablets" 19). Nietzsche tells us that he is concerned with "[t]he human soul and its limits, the range of inner human experiences reached so far, […] the whole history of the soul *so far* and its as yet unexhausted possibilities" (BGE 45), and tries to conceive of a human being who "could finally contain all this in one soul" (GS 337). We will return to this idea in Chapter 9, when considering Nietzsche's concept of "the great synthetic man" (WP 883)—for now I mention it only by way of demonstrating Nietzsche's concern with the complexity of souls, that is, the multiplicity of drives of which human beings are composed. But this example is again a superlative case: perhaps a more common one concerns the master and slave moralities outlined in Chapter 7, which Nietzsche says can sometimes "occur directly alongside each other—even in the same human being, within a *single* soul" (BGE 260). Although drives themselves cannot be precisely enumerated, it seems evident that, according to Nietzsche's way of thinking, a human being whose valuations involve some idiosyncratic mixture of both master and slave morality is more complex than one whose valuations embody one of those moralities to the exclusion of the other. The former human being, Nietzsche would say, has a greater "multiplicity of drives" than the latter.

But this multiplicity is only one of the three "axes" along which Nietzsche measures the strength of a human being, and in itself is not enough to determine the degree of that strength. This is made particularly clear in the following remarks about the state of European peoples in Nietzsche's time:

> In an age of disintegration that mixes races indiscriminately, human beings have in their bodies the heritage of multiple origins, that is, opposite, and often not merely opposite, drives and value standards that fight each other and rarely permit each other any rest. Such human beings of late cultures […] will on the average be weaker human beings: their most profound desire is that the war they *are* should come to an end. […] But when the opposition and war in such a nature have the effect of one more charm and incentive of life—and if, moreover, in addition to his powerful and irreconcilable drives, a real mastery and subtlety in waging war against oneself, in other words, self-control, self-outwitting, has been inherited or cultivated, too—then those magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable ones arise, those enigmatic men predestined for victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is found in Alcibiades and Caesar […]. They appear in precisely the same ages when the weaker type with its desire for rest comes to the fore: both types belong together and owe their origin to the same causes. [BGE 200]

More explicitly, both the strong *and* the weak type described owe their respective origins to the multiplicity of their drives, which is therefore no guarantee of strength—indeed, Nietzsche suggests that the more common result of such multiplicity is weakness. We saw in Chapter 5 that every drive has its own characteristic form of "nourishment" that it strives to obtain, and that different drives often compete for the opportunity to satisfy their "hunger." Now the more drives one has, and the more incompatible their demands, the more likely it is that their mutual struggle will leave them all exhausted and unable to nourish themselves adequately: for such people, "everything is unrest, disturbance, doubt, attempt; the best forces have an inhibiting effect, the very virtues do not allow each other to grow and become strong" (BGE 208). Here the difference between the stronger and weaker type depends on the *individual strength* of their various drives, with strength being understood in the more basic sense of "force." The question is how much "energy" these drives have to continue struggling with one another over a prolonged period, and perhaps over a lifetime. In most cases, Nietzsche thinks that they wear themselves out eventually, resulting in an overall state of exhaustion that usually expresses itself as a desire for peace and

rest. Where the drives in question are strong enough to withstand this perpetual struggle, the result is a physio-psychologically powerful human being like Alcibiades or Caesar.

However, even this choice of examples intimates that there is more to "strength" than just having powerful drives. Although Nietzsche does not explicitly call attention here to the differences between Alcibiades and Caesar, readers of ancient history know that those differences are profound. Caesar was a hardened soldier, a masterful general, and a shrewd politician; Alcibiades was all of these things as well, but he was also the opposite—a drunken, lecherous hedonist, and ultimately a traitor to his city. While the life of Caesar evinces an impressive cohesion of character, Alcibiades is one of the most fascinatingly contradictory personages of the ancient world, dabbling in philosophy, eloquence, and sport alongside his political and military affairs, and generally displaying an exceptional talent for anything in which he took an interest. But this is not because Alcibiades had a greater multiplicity of drives than Caesar, or because his drives were individually stronger—rather, it is because in Caesar's case a relatively small number of drives were able to dominate the others and press them into service, whereas Alcibiades' drives remained in a state of perpetual struggle in which now this drive, now that one dominated. Even if one's drives are individually strong enough not to become exhausted in their struggle with one another, that is not enough to make them into a *community*, but rather only a loose-knit association of contrary impulses. We saw in Chapter 6 that Nietzsche understands the body as a "dominance structure [*Herrschaftsgebilde*]" (WP 660) in which certain drives act as "regents at the head of a community," and emphasizes "the dependence of these regents upon the ruled and […] an order of rank and division of labour as the conditions that make possible the whole and its parts" (WP 429). While this character as a hierarchical dominance structure applies in some

measure to all physio-psychological organisms—for its complete disintegration would result in the death of the organism, and its partial disintegration would result in severe illness—there is evidently more room for chaos and disharmony among "psychological" drives than among those that constitute cells, organs, and tissues. Regardless of the individual strength of a person's drives, strength in the fullest sense requires unity and cohesion among them, which always means that the majority are dominated and commanded by a minority, an "aristocracy in the body" (WP 660).

Nietzsche writes that "where the plant 'man' shows himself strongest, one finds instincts that strive powerfully *against* one another […] but are controlled" (KSA 11:27[59]). Based on the analysis in Chapter 5, it should be obvious that this "control" can only be exerted by another, more powerful drive, or a small complex ("aristocracy") of them—for, while we often feel introspectively that "we" control our drives, we saw there that Nietzsche explains the "self" that seems to be the subject of conscious thinking and willing as "merely a relation of these drives to each other" (BGE 36). He makes the point about the kind of "control" that characterizes a strong community of drives quite clearly in the following note from 1888:

> *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 drives [*Antriebe*] and the lack of any systematic order among them result in a "weak will"; their coordination under a single predominant drive results in a "strong will": in the first case it is oscillation and lack of gravity; in the latter, precision and clarity of direction. [WP 46]

Regarding the type of human being that has a relatively high multiplicity of drives, that "has inherited in its blood diverse standards and values," Nietzsche writes that "what becomes sickest and degenerates most in such hybrids is the *will*: they no longer know independence of decisions and the intrepid sense of pleasure in willing—they doubt the 'freedom of the will' even in their

dreams" (BGE 208). In this context, "freedom of the will" refers not to any metaphysical doctrine, but merely to the experience of making decisions and acting on them without much internal conflict or inhibition:

> A man who *wills* commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience. […] 'Freedom of the will'—that is the expression for the complex state of delight of the person exercising volition, who commands and at the same time identifies himself with the executor of the order—who, as such, enjoys also the triumph over obstacles, but thinks within himself that it was really his will itself that overcame them. In this way the person exercising volition adds the feelings of delight of his successful executive instruments, the useful "under-wills" or under-souls [i.e., drives]—indeed, our body is but a social structure composed of many souls—to his feeling of delight as commander. *L'effet c'est moi:* what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth; namely, the governing class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth. In all willing it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as already said, of a social structure composed of many "souls." [BGE 19]

This is basically a description of a human being who is "strong" in the sense we are concerned with at the moment, namely one whose drives are organized and "commanded" by a dominant drive. The pleasant sensation of "freedom of the will" experienced by such people is really just the feeling of knowing what one wants and being confident that one can act accordingly. Here the dominant drives have a virtual monopoly on consciousness, and can count on being obeyed by the "under-souls" over which they rule, so that such a human being feels "free," as though consciously willing an action were all that were needed for it to be performed. We saw in Chapter 5 that this is an error, both because the performance of the action depends crucially on the obedience of the "under-souls," and because the conscious act of will is not the cause of the action, but only an effect of its being commanded by the dominant drives. But it is, for all that, an error that is symptomatic of a dominance structure that is firmly established: the lesser drives always obey the dominant ones, to such an extent that this is simply taken for granted, and it is

forgotten that they could in principle do otherwise. Those who suffer from "weakness of the will" lack this experience of "freedom": they have no drives that are strong enough to consistently dominate and command the others; the drives that are closest to being dominant frequently change places; and even those drives cannot always count on being obeyed by the others. Instead of "freedom of the will," such people experience an unpleasant sensation of uncertainty, inconstancy, and helplessness in connection with willing: what they want changes too often for any long-range goals to be easily achievable, and they may not even be capable of acting on what they want at the moment—consider the alcoholic who does not want to have a drink today.

It bears emphasizing that, according to the model I am describing, having a firmly established hierarchy among one's drives is not enough on its own to make one "strong." Rather, such a hierarchy is a symptom of strength only insofar as it is composed of a multiplicity of individually strong drives: the more strong drives a person has, the more strength is indicated by the ability to control them—that is, the ability of a few drives to dominate the rest. A thoroughly mediocre human being, one who had relatively few drives, and weak ones at that, would not deserve to be called "strong" simply because those drives stood in a firm hierarchical relation to one another. At best, such human beings could perhaps be described as "solid," though Nietzsche thinks they inevitably "perish when the multiplicity of elements and the tension of opposites, i.e., the preconditions for greatness in man, increases" (WP 881). A human being who does not have the strength to organize very much, and is fortunate enough not to be given very much to organize, is not for that reason strong. Apart from this mediocre type, Nietzsche conceives of another type that Zarathustra calls "inverse cripples": these are "human beings who lack everything, except one thing of which they have too much—human beings who are nothing but a

big eye or a big mouth or a big belly or anything at all that is big" ("On Redemption"). This type, whom the mediocre mistake for "a great one, a genius," seems to be a human being who has a single strong drive that dominates a number of weak ones. This type is indeed a bit stronger than the mediocre one, but only because it has one drive that is individually strong, whereas the mediocre have none; and not because that drive dominates the others, which are individually weak. Where a hierarchy of drives consists of one or more individually strong drives dominating and commanding other drives that are individually strong, this organizational power is a symptom of strength, and the strength of the lesser drives contributes to the richness and complexity of the dominant drives' activity: "Thus a drive as master, its opposite weakened, refined, as the impulse that provides the *stimulus* for the activity of the chief drive" (KSA 11:27[59]). On the other hand, where such a hierarchy consists of one relatively strong drive dominating a bunch of weak ones, this indicates a lesser degree of strength, because there is less organizational power involved: being able to dominate the weak is not proof of a high degree of strength.

Nietzsche writes that a genuine philosopher in his time "would be compelled to find the greatness of man, the concept of 'greatness,' precisely in his range and multiplicity, in his wholeness in manifoldness.

> He would even determine value and rank in accordance with how much and how many things one could bear and take upon himself, how *far* one could extend his responsibility. Today the taste of the time and the virtue of the time weakens and thins down the will; nothing is as timely as weakness of the will. In the philosopher's ideal, therefore, precisely strength of the will, hardness, and the capacity for long-range decisions must belong to the concept of "greatness" […]. And the philosopher will betray something of his own ideal when he posits: "He shall be greatest who can be […] the master of his virtues, he that is overrich in will. Precisely this shall be called *greatness:* being capable of being as manifold as whole, as ample as full." [BGE 212]

This notion of "wholeness in manifoldness" captures pretty well the notion of "strength" I have been outlining, so long as one keeps in mind that the various drives that constitute that manifold must each be powerful in its own right: for the "manifold" is the "multiplicity of drives" I have discussed, while the "wholeness" refers to their integration into a cohesive community under the authority of a small number of dominant drives.

Let this suffice for a sketch of how Nietzsche understands the phenomenon of strength in individual human beings, which is effectively the same way he understands it at lower levels (e.g., organs) and at higher levels (e.g., societies). I have said that this conception is connected with a *symptomatology* that is meant to allow the practitioner of a "proper physio-psychology" to determine an individual's degree of strength based on his actions, broadly understood. While we have just seen how Nietzsche classifies different kinds of communities of drives as stronger or weaker, that analysis had to remain mostly abstract in order to lay the theoretical groundwork for understanding his symptomatology. For Nietzsche identifies many human qualities as symptoms of relative strength or weakness, but it is not enough to define strength and weakness themselves by simply listing those qualities, as some commentators do. Brian Leiter, for example, lists "five distinctive, and closely related, characteristics of the higher [i.e., stronger] type of human being":

> (1) The higher type is solitary and deals with others only instrumentally. […] (2) The higher type seeks burdens and responsibilities, as he is driven towards the completion of a unifying project. […] (3) The higher type is essentially healthy and resilient. […] (4) The higher type affirms life, meaning that he is prepared to will the eternal return of his life. […] (5) The higher man has a distinctive bearing toward others and especially toward himself: he has self-reverence.[108]

108 Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, pp. 92–100.

These are all qualities that Nietzsche attributes to the "highest" or strongest human beings, although I might quibble about Leiter's description of some of them. The main problem I find with this account, however, is that Leiter is content to enumerate these qualities as definitive of Nietzsche's "higher man" without explaining why these qualities, and not some others, are "higher," that is, more valuable. To Richard Schacht's suggestion "that life is will to power, and thus degree of power constitutes the standard of value," Leiter replies that "this involves no gain in precision."[109] Although he does not dwell long on the subject, his reason for thinking this is apparently that "power" for Nietzsche can only mean the "power of *people*"—and, because the "higher men" are the only people Nietzsche is concerned with according to Leiter, "power" can only be defined in relation to them, in which case one may as well just talk about higher men and forget the talk of power.

Obviously I do not share this view, as I have taken pains in Part II to show that Nietzsche's conception of power applies not only to human beings, but to the whole of reality—a view that Leiter regards as "crackpot metaphysics."[110] However that may be, there is a serious problem with defining "strength" simply by appeal to the kinds of persons Nietzsche is wont to praise as "strong" or "higher," namely that the term ends up meaning nothing more than "something Nietzsche likes." On Leiter's account, "Nietzsche admired creative individuals the most," and his criticism of European Christian morality was simply that it is bad for such individuals.[111] Had Nietzsche held some other type of person in higher esteem—for example, the modest, peaceable, compassionate type—he apparently would have seen nothing wrong with the

109 Ibid., p. 101.
110 Ibid., p. 260.
111 Ibid., p. 99.

morality of Christian Europe. Nietzsche actually admits this in a sense: “One seeks a picture of the world in that philosophy in which we feel freest; i.e., in which our most powerful drive feels free to function. This will also be the case with me!” (WP 418). But as we saw in Chapter 7, Nietzsche considers some drives more powerful than others in virtue of their basic character, and we shall see that he regards the kind of drive that would prompt one to prefer the great and creative to the modest and humble as a more powerful drive than its opposite. Therefore, if Nietzsche had not been Nietzsche, but instead a typical European Christian who preferred the humble to the great, he would still have been a weaker human being according to the standard put forward by the actual Nietzsche. To attempt to define that standard based solely on the praise and blame Nietzsche directs toward different human qualities implies that his personal preferences, rather than any deeper philosophical considerations, are decisive for the definition of “strength.” I am attempting to show, to the contrary, that any preference (“valuation”) held by a human being is to be analyzed as a *symptom* of relative strength or weakness, and not as the ground of that distinction. Of course, the symptomatology on which such an analysis is based will itself be symptomatic of a certain degree of strength on Nietzsche’s view, namely a high one. If this seems circular, I repeat that I do not consider that circularity to be vicious: it is simply a result of the fact that a human being can only judge human perspectives *from* a human perspective, and that some kinds of perspectives are better equipped to do this than others. As I suggested in Chapter 4, Nietzsche thinks that stronger human beings are better able to apprehend the truth about reality —“truth” from the perspective of human cognitive interests—because *truthfulness*, that is, the discipline of denying oneself pleasant delusions, requires a high degree of strength. This idea will be considered in more detail below.

Having defined "strength," at its ideal limits, as the greatest possible multiplicity of the most powerful drives, organized into a hierarchical structure of dominance, let us now turn to the question of how Nietzsche thinks it is possible to *recognize* strength when one sees it. The Preface to TI contains a pregnant statement that encapsulates his thinking on this matter: "Excess of strength [*Kraft*] alone is the proof of strength." While this is perhaps a bit misleading—for reality itself is pervaded with *Kraft* on Nietzsche's account, whether in excessive or meagre amounts—I take him to mean that a superlatively strong human being of the kind he calls "higher" can be positively identified only by the fact that the activity of such a person manifests significantly *more* strength than would be required for self-preservation. Another way of putting this point is to say that such a human being is attracted by struggle and danger, at least of certain characteristic kinds, and seeks them out even when it might seem easier and more prudent to avoid them. A Caesar or Napoleon, for example, could have lived much more safely and comfortably had their apparently boundless ambition not driven them to be world conquerors. Nietzsche thinks that the strongest human beings have a *need* to struggle and overcome oppositions, because every such human being simply *is* an immense "quantum of dammed-up force [*Kraft*] that is waiting to be used up somehow" (GS 360): "To demand of strength that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome, a desire to throw down, a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs, is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength" (GM I:13). This is effectively a description of the will to power, which Nietzsche understands as the basic character of all life and reality. But that is precisely why *strength* is a matter of degrees: the "weak" manifest the will to power only in a meagre, impoverished way, whereas the "strong" manifest it

abundantly. Nietzsche thinks that, if one is careful, one can learn to distinguish stronger human beings from weaker ones by looking for this excessive attraction to struggle and overcoming. Where such excess is lacking, the human being in question cannot be said to manifest a high degree of strength.

Nietzsche's most programmatic expression of the basic distinction that underlies his symptomatology of strength appears in Book V of GS. Two years later, he included a revised version of this text in *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, in which he refines and clarifies his presentation of that distinction:

> Every art, every philosophy, may be considered a remedy and aid in the service of either growing or declining life: it always presupposes suffering and sufferers. But there are two kinds of sufferers: first, those who suffer from the *overfullness* of life [*Überfülle des Lebens*] and want a Dionysian art as well as a tragic insight and outlook on life—and then those who suffer from the *impoverishment* of life [*Verarmung des Lebens*] and demand of art and philosophy, calm, stillness, smooth seas, or, on the other hand, frenzy, convulsion, and anesthesia. Revenge against life itself—the most voluptuous kind of frenzy for those so impoverished! […] He that is richest in the fullness of life, the Dionysian god and man, can afford not only the *sight* of the terrible and the questionable, but even the terrible deed and any luxury of destruction, decomposition, and negation: in his case, what is evil, senseless, and ugly seems, as it were, permissible, as it seems permissible in nature, because of an excess of procreating, restoring powers which can yet turn every desert into luxurious farmland. Conversely, those who suffer most and are poorest in life would need mildness, peacefulness, and goodness most—what is today called humaneness—in thought as well as in deed, and, if possible, a god who would be truly a god for the sick, a healer and "saviour"; also logic, the conceptual understanding of existence even for idiots—the typical "free spirits," like the "idealists" and "beautiful souls," are all décadents—in short, a certain warm, fear-repulsing narrowness and enclosure within optimistic horizons which permit *hebetation* [*Verdummung*]. […] If there is anything in which I am ahead of all psychologists, it is that my eye is sharper for that most difficult and captious kind of *backward inference* in which the most mistakes are made: the backward inference from the work to the maker, from the deed to the doer, from the ideal to him who *needs* it, from every way of thinking and valuing to the *want* behind it that prompts it. Regarding artists of all kinds, I now avail myself of this main distinction: is it the *hatred* against life or the *excess* of life that has here become creative? [NCW "We Antipodes"; cf. GS 370]

Although Nietzsche here focuses on artistic and philosophical activities as symptoms of either "abundant" or "impoverished" life—which makes sense considering that the context of the original passage in GS is his relation to Schopenhauer and Wagner, while NCW focuses on the latter relationship more particularly—he clearly applies this "main distinction" to all types of human activity. His discussion here of "the backward inference […] from every way of thinking and valuing to the *want* behind it that prompts it" confirms the idea, introduced in Chapter 7, that Nietzsche attempts to infer a human being's degree of strength based on a holistic picture of that person's activity, including writings and utterances that expose a characteristic "way of thinking and valuing." With this text, we can begin to understand how he actually approaches that project, namely by asking whether a person's activity is symptomatic of abundant, "growing" life that seeks out resistances in order to overcome them and increase in power, or of impoverished, "declining" life that avoids such struggle and seeks peace and repose. "Every individual," Nietzsche writes, "may be scrutinized to see whether he represents the ascending or the descending line of life" (TI VIII:33). This formulation has perhaps less potential to mislead than the distinction between abundance and impoverishment, which might be taken to differ in kind rather than by degrees. Although this should already be clear in light of Nietzsche's commitment to historical philosophy, it bears emphasizing that he says "we have learned better than to think of healthy and sick [i.e., abundant and impoverished] as of an antithesis: it is a question of degrees" (WP 812). One may be more or less abundant, more or less impoverished—these terms simply refer to the high and low ends of the scale that I am calling "degrees of strength."

From the text above, we can see that Nietzsche looks at two basic kinds of symptoms in order to determine whether a human being is an example of abundant or of impoverished life:

first, whether that person seeks out struggle or peace; and second, whether that person's "way of thinking and valuing" expresses an affirmative or negative attitude toward life. These are the same in a sense, namely insofar as Nietzsche understands struggle ("will to power") as the basic character of life, so that one who wants to negate struggle wants *eo ipso* to negate life. Conversely, one who has a negative attitude toward life cannot see the point in struggling for anything, except perhaps an ultimate deliverance from struggle. Because life, understood as will to power, is simply what a human being is, the desire to negate this basic character can only indicate that there is something defective about the form of life that holds it:

> A condemnation of life by the living remains in the end a mere symptom of a certain kind of life: the question whether it is justified or unjustified is not even raised thereby. […] When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with the way of looking at things, which is part of life: life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values. From this it follows that even that anti-natural morality which conceives of God as the counter-concept and condemnation of life is only a value judgment of life—but of what life? of what kind of life? I have already given the answer: of declining, weakened, weary, condemned life. [TI V:5]

Nietzsche's rejection of absolute opposites requires him to interpret life-negating attitudes in this way, because it prevents him from entertaining the possibility that, alongside the basic tendency of life to grow and increase in power, there is another, equally fundamental tendency toward decrease and dissolution of power. Freud suggests something like this in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, apparently careless of the dualistic implications of such an idea. Ivan Soll does not understand how Nietzsche can "simply reject Freud's hypothesis as being incoherent" and write that "'life *against* life' is, physiologically considered and not merely psychologically, a simple absurdity" (GM III:13), because he does not see that Nietzsche's philosophical methodology

forces him to draw that conclusion.[112] Nietzsche writes that the “ascetic ideal,” which he takes to be a paradigm of life-negation, “*springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life* which tries by all means to sustain itself and fight for its existence; it indicates a partial physiological obstruction and exhaustion against which the deepest instincts of life, which have remained intact, continually struggle with new expedients and devices. The ascetic ideal is such an expedient […] an artifice for the *preservation* of life” (GM III:13). We will return to this idea shortly. I mention it here only in order to emphasize that life-negating attitudes arise from the instincts of life no less than life-affirming ones, so that both are best understood as *symptoms* of different kinds of life, namely weaker and stronger kinds. This is not an arbitrary assertion on Nietzsche’s part, as Soll takes it to be, but a necessary consequence of his methodological commitments.

Let us recall that Nietzsche frames his discussion of these two kinds of symptoms—seeking struggle versus seeking peace, and affirming life versus negating it—in terms of *suffering*: “there are two kinds of sufferers: first, those who suffer from the *overfullness* of life […] and then those who suffer from the *impoverishment* of life” (NCW “We Antipodes”). The first type, as we have seen, seeks struggle and affirms life, while the latter seeks peace and negates it. Nietzsche identifies two distinct types of “displeasure” that characterize these two types of sufferers, along with two types of “pleasure” that result from the attainment of their respective goals. He thinks, however, that psychologists have so far overlooked this distinction between two types of pleasure and displeasure, and have tended to equate pleasure with

112 Ivan Soll, “Nietzsche on Cruelty, Asceticism, and the Failure of Hedonism” in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Schacht, p. 183.

relaxation and reduction of tension ("peace"), and displeasure with stimulation and increase of tension ("struggle"):

> One has confused displeasure with one *kind* of displeasure, with exhaustion: the latter does indeed represent a profound diminution and reduction of the will to power, a measurable loss of force. That is to say: there exists displeasure as a means of stimulating the increase of power, and displeasure following an overexpenditure of power; in the first case a stimulus, in the second a result of excessive stimulation… Inability to resist is characteristic of the latter kind of displeasure: a challenge to that which resists belongs to the former… The only pleasure still felt in the condition of exhaustion is falling asleep; victory is the pleasure in the other case…
>
> The great confusion on the part of psychologists consisted in not distinguishing between these two *kinds of pleasure*, that of *falling asleep* and that of *victory*
>
> the exhausted want rest, relaxation, peace, calm—
>
> that is the *happiness* of the nihilistic religions and philosophies
>
> the rich and living want victory, opponents overcome, the overflow of the feeling of power across wider domains than hitherto [KSA 13:14[174]]

"Displeasure" here seems to simply mean stimulation, in the sense of tension and resistance, whether internal or external—for Nietzsche understands all stimulation, and indeed all "events," as resulting from a tension between opposing forces. He thus uses the term in the sense he attributes to previous psychologists, but denies that displeasure in this sense is something that an organism ordinarily avoids—indeed, it is only the exhausted, impoverished type that avoids it, whereas the abundant type seeks it out in order to contend with it and overcome it: "all expansion, incorporation, growth means striving against something that resists; motion is essentially tied up with states of displeasure; that which is here the driving force must in any event desire something else if it desires displeasure in this way and continually looks for it" (WP 704).

> Man does *not* seek pleasure and does *not* avoid displeasure […]. Pleasure and displeasure are mere consequences, mere epiphenomena—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 in every organic event; man does not avoid it, he is rather in continual need of it: every victory, every feeling of pleasure, every event presupposes a resistance overcome. […]
> Displeasure thus does not merely have to result in a *diminution of our feeling of power*, but in the average case it actually stimulates this feeling of power—the obstacle is the *stimulus* of this will to power. [KSA 13:14[174]]

This should not be taken to imply that average human beings are examples of abundant life simply because, physiologically speaking, they continually seek out resistance and overcoming. This activity is characteristic of all life on Nietzsche's view, and its cessation would mean death. Rather, the abundant type is the one that seeks resistance to an excessive degree, while the average does so roughly to the extent necessary for self-preservation, and is therefore relatively impoverished.

There are thus two senses of pleasure and displeasure in play, which correspond to the abundant and the impoverished type respectively. Where pleasure is concerned, Nietzsche distinguishes the two types quite clearly in the note just cited: the abundant type experiences pleasure when it overcomes an obstacle ("victory"), while the impoverished type does so when it can relax in the absence of obstacles ("falling asleep"). However, when it comes to displeasure, Nietzsche really only explains one type in this text, namely the displeasure experienced by the impoverished type when it is unable to escape the necessity of contending with obstacles. But what about the type of displeasure experienced by the abundant human being? In what sense can such a human being be said to "suffer" from abundance? Although Nietzsche does not make it clear here, I think the answer is that abundant human beings often suffer precisely from the *lack* of a worthy obstacle to contend with, that is, a goal that is difficult enough to challenge their strength: "The strength of those who attack can be measured in a way by the opposition they

require: every growth is indicated by the search for a mighty opponent—or problem […]. The task is *not* simply to master what happens to resist, but what requires us to stake all our strength, suppleness, and fighting skill—opponents that are our *equals*" (EH I:7). Where such an opponent or problem is lacking, strong human beings suffer from the lack of opportunity to exercise their strength. Whereas displeasure for the weaker type consists in exhaustion and the desire for rest, for the stronger type it consists in something akin to boredom and the desire for a challenge. What is pleasurable and beneficial for the strong is therefore displeasurable and harmful for the weak: "What serves the higher type of men as nourishment or delectation must almost be poison for a very different and inferior type" (BGE 30). Nietzsche writes that "the identical discipline that makes a strong nature stronger and capable of great undertakings, shatters and withers the mediocre" (WP 904). In other words, the conditions of existence for the abundant and impoverished types are different, and the fact that they experience pleasure and displeasure under basically opposite circumstances is simply a reflection of this.

However, Nietzsche thinks there is a sense in which the impoverished type sometimes desires stimulation as well: for we saw him say above that weakness leads one to desire *either* "calm, stillness, smooth seas, or, on the other hand, frenzy, convulsion, and anesthesia" (NCW "We Antipodes"). The element of "anesthesia" is the same in both cases, but the means of achieving it are different: in the former case, one simply wants to get away from all stimulation, and ideally to become unconscious; in the latter, by contrast, one wants to *overstimulate* oneself to the point of complete exhaustion, and only thereby achieve unconsciousness. Nietzsche describes this latter condition in the following terms: "Deep down: not knowing whither. *Emptiness*. Attempt to get over it by intoxication" (WP 29). This desire for intoxication basically

amounts to a *need for stimulation*, not out of abundance, but out of exhaustion: one wants to stimulate one's drives as much as possible, so that they discharge their remaining force and finally permit one to slip into unconsciousness. Nietzsche writes that "the venting of his affects [i.e., drives] represents the greatest attempt on the part of the suffering to win relief, *anesthesia*—the narcotic he cannot help desiring to deaden pain of any kind" (GM III:15). He even suggests that this "constitutes the actual physiological cause of *ressentiment*, vengefulness, and the like: a desire to *deaden pain by means of affects*." The "pain" he refers to is the suffering that goes along with impoverishment, as a result of which merely being alive is experienced as overwhelming and unpleasant. At the same time, the arousal of strong affects gives such sufferers a temporary feeling of power that is pleasurable, although it ultimately increases their exhaustion. Nietzsche thinks that Wagner's music is particularly calculated to produce this effect: "He has guessed that it [i.e., music] is a means to excite weary nerves—and with that he has made music sick. His inventiveness is not inconsiderable in the art of goading again those who are weariest, calling back into life those who are half dead" (CW 5). So, although Nietzsche thinks certain types of weak people desire stimulation, they do not desire a *challenge*, as the strong do, but merely a temporary excitation of feeling that gives pleasure and leads to oblivion.

There is another respect in which the strong and the weak differ in their relation to stimulation and resistance, and this helps to explain why the former welcome it and the latter avoid it. I said at the beginning of this chapter that an essential component of strength is internal integrity and cohesion among one's drives, or what we have seen Nietzsche call "strength of will." This means that strong human beings are not overwhelmed by stimuli, whether internal or external, but are capable of modulating their response to them, or not responding at all. A painful

thought need not ruin their day, nor a rude word send them into a rage; and the higher one's degree of strength, the more intense will be the stimuli one is capable of resisting. The weak, however, who lack a firm hierarchy among their drives, suffer from what Nietzsche calls "weakness of the will—or, to speak more definitely, the inability *not* to respond to a stimulus" (TI V:2). This is "a certain incapacity associated physiologically with the degenerating type: […] insecure and even multiple 'personality,' inability to resist reacting to a stimulus and 'control' oneself, constraint before every kind of suggestion from the will of another" (WP 334). We saw above that Nietzsche associates the lack of stable organization among the drives with the psychological experience of "unfreedom of the will," and that is precisely what he has in mind here: weak human beings are incapable of maintaining self-control in the face of internal and external stimuli, because their drives do not constitute a firm command structure that can withstand such pressures. This causes their thoughts, desires, and actions to be erratic and inconstant, and they often act in ways that are harmful to themselves: "the distinctive sign of décadence [is] feeling attracted to what is harmful, being unable to find any longer what profits one" (EH IV:8; cf. A 6). Nietzsche says that "[t]o sense that what is harmful is harmful, to be *able* to forbid oneself something harmful, is a sign of youth and vitality [i.e., strength]. The exhausted are *attracted* by what is harmful" (CW 5). In a note from 1888 he writes:

> A strong nature manifests itself by waiting and postponing any reaction: it is as much characterized by a certain *adiaphoria* as weakness is by an involuntary countermovement and the suddenness and inevitability of "action"…
>
> The will is weak: and the prescription to avoid stupidities would be to have a strong will and to do *nothing*…
>
> Contradictio…
>
> A kind of self-destruction, the instinct of preservation is compromised… *The weak harm themselves*… that is the type of décadence. (WP 45)

Whether a weak individual tries to avoid stimulation altogether, or seeks out certain kinds of stimulation in order to bring on exhaustion and oblivion, the cause is the same: the weak cannot control themselves, and are too easily "carried away" by stimulation. This is the origin of their basic aversion to it. The strong, by contrast, seek out strong stimulation—not to achieve exhaustion and oblivion, but to challenge themselves, to attempt to overcome a powerful resistance and grow stronger in doing so. Nietzsche writes that "every great danger challenges our curiosity about the measure of our strength [*Maaß unsrer Kraft*]" (KSA 13:11[44]), which nicely summarizes the strong human being's orientation toward stimulation, that is, struggle and resistance.

Having considered these relatively straightforward physio-psychological symptoms of strength and weakness, we are now in a better position to examine the more "difficult and captious" element of Nietzsche's symptomatology, namely the "backward inference" he makes from "every way of thinking and valuing" to the degree of strength that prompts it (NCW "We Antipodes"). While the inclinations to seek out struggle or to avoid it are observable as symptoms, and thus helpful in determining a human being's degree of strength, their status as symptoms of strength and weakness follows directly from Nietzsche's definition of life as of will to power, and from his definition of strength, so that in themselves they do not tell us much that we couldn't have figured out already. These basic symptoms may be understood as a kind of bridge between Nietzsche's abstract definition of strength and his symptomatology proper, which proceeds by taking up concrete "ways of thinking and valuing" (e.g., European Christian morality) and asking whether they manifest a desire for struggle and growth or for peace and relaxation, and to what extent—and the answer to this question is effectively the answer to the

question what degree of strength they manifest. A “way of thinking and valuing” is basically what was discussed in Chapter 7 as a “morality,” that is, a system of positive and negative evaluations of various drives and their activities. Every philosophy, even the most abstract, is, or at least presupposes, such a morality according to Nietzsche (BGE 5); likewise every sufficiently developed aesthetic worldview. Nietzsche says that a morality is “merely a *sign language of the affects*” (BGE 187), that is, a symptom of the type of human being who creates or adheres to it:

> Moral judgments, like religious ones, belong to a stage of ignorance at which the very concept of the real and the distinction between what is real and imaginary, are still lacking; thus “truth”, at this stage, designates all sorts of things which we today call “imaginings.” Moral judgments are therefore never to be taken literally: so understood, they always contain mere absurdity. Semiotically, however, they remain invaluable: they reveal, at least for those who know, the most valuable realities of cultures and inwardnesses which did not know enough to “understand” themselves. Morality is mere sign language, mere symptomatology: one must know what it is all about to be able to profit from it. [TI VII:1]

As we saw in Chapter 7, Nietzsche’s main concern is with the *strongest* drives, which are the most indispensable for increasing the power of humanity, and the positive or negative valuations placed on these drives by different moralities. Recall that these drives are the “strongest” in the sense that they manifest the basic character of life as will to power most fully, so that it is not out of place if Nietzsche sometimes equates valuations of these drives with valuations of “life” as such—although “life” also refers to basic conditions of life like change and struggle, which, strictly speaking, are not “drives.” In this connection he writes that “judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in the end, never be true: they have value only as symptoms, they are worthy of consideration only as symptoms” (TI II:2). According to Nietzsche, those moralities that evaluate the strongest drives most positively are symptomatic of strength, while those that evaluate them negatively are symptomatic of weakness.

Let us begin by examining one of Nietzsche's more programmatic texts on the subject of symptomatology, written in 1886. Although he writes here about philosophies, everything he says is equally applicable to moralities, which I have said are not strictly distinguishable from philosophies for him:

> [N]ow one knows whither the sick *body* and its needs unconsciously urge, push, and lure the spirit—toward the sun, stillness, mildness, patience, medicine, balm in some sense. Every philosophy that ranks peace above war, every ethic with a negative definition of happiness, every metaphysics and physics that knows some *finale*, some final state of some sort, every predominantly aesthetic or religious craving for some Apart, Beyond, Outside, Above, permits the question whether it was not sickness that inspired the philosopher. The unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective, ideal, purely spiritual goes to frightening lengths—and often I have asked myself whether, taking a large view, philosophy has not been merely an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding* of the body. Behind the highest value judgments that have hitherto guided the history of thought, there are concealed misunderstandings of the physical constitution—of individuals or classes or even whole races. All these bold insanities of metaphysics, especially answers to the question about the *value* of existence, may always be considered first of all as the symptoms of certain bodies. And if such world affirmations or world negations *tout court* lack any grain of significance when measured scientifically, they are the more valuable for the historian and psychologist as hints or symptoms of the body, of its success or failure, its plenitude, power, and autocracy in history, or of its frustration, weariness, impoverishment, its premonitions of the end, its will to the end. [GS P:2]

Apart from giving a more comprehensive statement of the project we are considering, Nietzsche here gives a partial list of the kinds of valuations that are symptomatic of weakness, the opposite of which are symptomatic of strength. The first of these will be familiar from what was said above, namely that to value peace more highly than "war" (i.e., struggle) is a symptom of impoverishment. The second is to define happiness negatively, that is, as the *absence* of suffering, as Schopenhauer famously did: for such a definition exposes the fact that the one who holds it finds no pleasure in life, understood as struggle, but only in its negation, in relaxation and oblivion. The third is to interpret the world as having an end at some point in the future, whether

metaphysically (e.g., the Day of Judgment) or physically (e.g., the heat death of the universe). Nietzsche thinks that such world-interpretations evince a desire for life, and indeed reality as we know it, to come to an end: even if this will not happen in our lifetime, simply to believe that "this too shall pass" is a comfort. The final valuation he discusses will be familiar from Chapter 1, namely the desire for another, absolutely opposite kind of reality into which one could enter, in which struggle and suffering would be absent. It should be clear that all of these valuations involve a dissatisfaction with life, understood as will to power, and an instinctive desire to escape from it or negate it. We have seen that, according to Nietzsche's way of thinking, such dissatisfaction cannot be rationally justified, but can only be a symptom of an impoverished form of life.

"Dissatisfaction," however, is probably too mild a word. Nietzsche uses the term *ressentiment*, which applies to the valuations just described, as well as a number of others. We have already seen him say that the impoverished type desires "[r]evenge against life itself" (NCW "We Antipodes"), and while this desire can be expressed in a variety of ways—some milder, some more extreme—it underlies all of the valuations of the weak. We have seen that weak human beings experience the normal conditions of life as displeasurable, that they suffer merely from being alive, and feel happier the more absent those conditions are. Small wonder, then, that they should view life itself, or some more concrete representative of life, as the most hateful of enemies, and desire to take revenge against it, whether practically or symbolically: "For every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an agent; still more specifically, a *guilty* agent who is susceptible to suffering—in short, some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects, actually or in effigy" (GM III:15). The

claim that the world will come to an end and be forever annihilated, or that there exists another, absolutely opposite world in which all value is located, are clear examples of taking revenge against life directly: "To invent fables about a world 'other' than this one has no meaning at all, unless an instinct of slander, detraction, and suspicion against life has gained the upper hand in us: in that case we avenge ourselves against life with a phantasmagoria of 'another,' a 'better' life. […] Any distinction between a 'true' and an 'apparent' world […] is only a suggestion of décadence, a symptom of the *decline of life*" (TI III:6). The morality of "good and evil," on the other hand, is perhaps the clearest example of taking revenge against life "in effigy": here it is the powerful human beings, that is, those in whom the strongest drives predominate, against whom the weak want to revenge themselves. Although this desire for revenge can be found in the majority of human beings according to Nietzsche, he thinks it is the ascetic priest who acts on it most successfully, by creating a morality that favours the weak over the strong. As we saw in Chapter 7, the Jews, for example, "were ultimately satisfied with nothing less than a radical revaluation of their enemies' values, that is to say, an act of the *most spiritual revenge*" (GM I:7). Nietzsche writes that "the priests are the *most evil enemies*—but why? Because they are the most impotent. It is because of their impotence that in them hatred grows to monstrous and uncanny proportions, to the most spiritual and poisonous kind of hatred" (GM I:7). That the priests are "impotent" does not mean simply that they hold less power in society than the aristocrats, but that they are physio-psychologically weaker, even if they still manifest a higher degree of strength than the "herds" they lead (GM III:15). It is this weakness and impoverishment that leads to their hatred of life—and, by extension, of the strong and abundant type of human being.

There is, however, another way that this rancour against life and reality can express itself. While the metaphysical and moral expressions just mentioned are most clearly represented by the ascetic priest, Nietzsche identifies an alternative mode of expression in what he calls the "psychological type of the redeemer" (A 29). The two figures with which he associates this type most closely are Jesus of Nazareth and Epicurus. Nietzsche diagnoses Jesus with an "*instinctive hatred of reality*," which he describes as "a consequence of an extreme capacity for suffering and excitement which no longer wants any contact at all because it feels every contact too deeply" (A 30). This should be familiar from the discussion above, since it is basically another way of saying that Jesus avoided struggle and stimulation because he was overwhelmed by them. The majority of people in this condition adopt valuations that are hostile toward the fundamental character of life, as we have seen. However, this still presupposes that one is not completely exhausted, that one could still be weaker: for hostility against life, whether it is expressed in metaphysical or religious writings or in scheming against the powerful, still involves a *struggle*. Nietzsche writes that the ascetic priest "wants to become master not over something in life but over life itself, over its most profound, powerful, and basic conditions; here an attempt is made to employ force to block up the wells of force" (GM III:11). Based on this description, it is evident that the ascetic priest does not do everything possible to avoid struggle, but even seeks it out, which is a symptom of relative strength—the fact that he struggles *against* the basic conditions of life instead of affirming them, however, indicates that there is something impoverished in his nature. In short, the ascetic priest plainly still acts in accordance with those conditions even as he opposes them, because the ascetic ideal is still a manifestation of life, that is, will to power (GM III:13).

While this is no less true of the "redeemer" than of the ascetic priest, in the former case it is not nearly so obvious. Although an "instinctive hatred of reality" is the presupposition for both types, their responses to that condition differ, owing to a difference in their degrees of strength. Unlike the priest, the redeemer type Nietzsche describes is too weak to engage in a struggle against the basic conditions of life, whether practically or theoretically. For this type of person, to escape from struggle and stimulation is absolutely necessary, and no half-measures are possible. Nietzsche describes the measures that are taken by some individuals of this kind, with particular reference to Jesus:

> *The instinctive exclusion of any antipathy, any hostility, any boundaries or divisions in man's feelings:* the consequence of an extreme capacity for suffering and excitement which experiences any resistance, even any compulsion to resist, as unendurable *displeasure* (that is, as *harmful*, as something against which the instinct of self-preservation warns us); and finds blessedness (pleasure) only in no longer offering any resistance to anybody, neither to evil nor to him who is evil—love as the only, as the *last* possible, way of life.
>
> These are the two *physiological realities* on which, out of which, the doctrine of redemption grew. I call this a sublime further development of hedonism on a thoroughly morbid basis. Most closely related to it, although with a generous admixture of Greek vitality and nervous energy, is Epicureanism, the pagan doctrine of redemption. Epicurus a *typical décadent*—first recognized as such by me. The fear of pain, even of infinitely minute pain—that can end in no other way than in a *religion of love*. [A 30]

While this is not the place to consider the matter in detail, it bears emphasizing that Nietzsche draws a sharp distinction between the teachings of Jesus and those of Christianity, to the extent that the association between the two appears as little more than an accident of history (A 31–42). The ascetic priests who had Jesus put to death accomplished something that Jesus himself would probably not have been able even to contemplate on Nietzsche's interpretation—his nerves could not have withstood such an idea. The physio-psychological type that Jesus represents for Nietzsche is perhaps the weakest type of human being whose existence is at all viable. The price

of that existence is the renunciation of struggle to the greatest extent possible for a living being: "the incapacity for resistance becomes morality here ('resist not evil'—the most profound word of the Gospels, their key in a certain sense), blessedness in peace, in gentleness, in not *being able* to be an enemy" (A 29). Unlike the ascetic priest, who devalues the world in comparison with an imaginary, "true" world, for Jesus "[t]he Kingdom of Heaven is a state of the heart—not something that is to come 'above the earth' or 'after death'" (A 34). Jesus "never had any reason to negate 'the world'; the ecclesiastical concept 'world' never occurred to him. To negate is the very thing that is impossible for him" (A 32). Rather, his teachings arose from "[t]he deep instinct for how one must *live*, in order to feel oneself 'in heaven,' to feel 'eternal,' while in all other behaviour one decidedly does *not* feel oneself 'in heaven'—this alone is the psychological reality of 'redemption.' A new way of life, not a new faith" (A 33).

This helps to explain why Nietzsche credits Jesus with the "further development of hedonism," and associates him with Epicurus (A 30): "The Epicurean selects the situation, the persons, and even the events that suit his extremely irritable, intellectual constitution; he gives up all others, which means almost everything, because they would be too strong and heavy for him to digest" (GS 306). "Whatever I hear or read of him [i.e., Epicurus]," Nietzsche writes, "I enjoy the happiness of the afternoon of antiquity. I see his eyes gaze upon a wide, white sea, across rocks at the shore that are bathed in sunlight, while large and small animals are playing in this light, as secure and calm as the light in his eyes. Such happiness could be invented only by a man who was suffering continually. It is the happiness of eyes that have seen the sea of existence become calm" (GS 45). Nietzsche clearly thinks that Jesus was in a similar position, namely that of an extreme sufferer who has finally found a way of living in which he no longer suffers. He

also thinks that, like Epicurus, Jesus tried to "redeem" his followers from the fear of God, and of punishment after death: "In the whole psychology of the 'evangel' the concept of guilt and punishment is lacking; also the concept of reward. 'Sin'—any distance separating God and man —is abolished: *precisely this is the 'glad tidings'*" (A 33). Nietzsche writes that "[o]ne should read Lucretius to comprehend *what* Epicurus fought: *not* paganism but 'Christianity,' by which I mean the corruption of souls by the concepts of guilt, punishment, and immortality. He fought the *subterranean* cults which were exactly like a latent form of Christianity: to deny immortality was then nothing less than a real *redemption*" (A 58). I mention this not only to show the similarity that Nietzsche sees between Jesus and Epicurus, but also to emphasize that neither of them, despite being extremely impoverished human beings, feels any inclination to slander or negate life and the world. This, as I have said, is actually *because* of their impoverishment: they are too weak to endure such a negative outlook, whereas the ascetic priest is still strong enough to do so. Both Jesus and Epicurus suffered from life to an extent that is probably unimaginable for most people, and both found ways of living that afforded them pleasure most of the time. Epicurus' prescriptions for the happy life are well known, and may be summed up in the word "moderation." According to Nietzsche's interpretation, Jesus' prescription can be summed up in the word "love": "He does not resist, he does not defend his right, he takes no step which might ward off the worst; on the contrary, he *provokes* it. And he begs, he suffers, he loves *with* those, *in* those, who do him evil. *Not* to resist, *not* to be angry, *not* to hold responsible—but to resist not even the evil one—to *love* him" (A 35).

Sympathetic as Nietzsche's discussion of these figures sometimes sounds, his view of them is ultimately very critical, contrary to what some commentators suggest.[113] We have seen him attribute an "instinctive hatred of reality" to Jesus, and, by extension, to Epicurus, whom he calls a "typical décadent" (A 30). I have suggested that he sees such people as so impoverished that it is just barely possible for them to remain alive, and then only on the basis of a "morbid," hedonistic self-therapy: in the case of Jesus, "love as the only, as the *last* possible, way of life" (A 30). I think that his evident sympathy for these figures arises from the fact that, impoverished as they are, they do not spread life-negating valuations. Instead, they simply find a way of living according to which they can feel happy, and teach it to others who are in need of a similar therapy —who will, it goes without saying, be quite rare. Thus Jesus, according to Nietzsche's interpretation, was misunderstood by most of his followers, who could not have comprehended the condition that prompted his teachings. That condition, as we have seen, is an extreme state of weakness in which the struggle and suffering involved in life are unendurable, and the "one thing needful" is peace and relaxation ("pleasure"). But for Nietzsche it is "a sign of a *lack of will*, if the value of pleasure and displeasure step into the foreground" (WP 790):

> Whether it is hedonism or pessimism, utilitarianism or eudaemonism—all these ways of thinking that measure the value of things in accordance with *pleasure* and *pain*, which are mere epiphenomena and wholly secondary, are ways of thinking that stay in the foreground and naïvetés on which everyone conscious of *creative* powers and an artistic conscience will look down not without derision, nor without compassion. [...] You want, if possible—and there is no more insane "if possible"—*to abolish suffering*. And we? It really seems that *we* would rather have it higher and worse than ever. Well-being as you understand it—that is no goal, that seems to us an *end*, a state that soon makes man ridiculous and contemptible—that makes his destruction *desirable*. The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering—do you not know that only *this* discipline has created all enhancements of man so far? That tension of the soul in unhappiness which cultivates its strength, its shudders face to face with great ruin, its

113 See, for example, Bruce E. Benson, *Pious Nietzsche* (Bloomington, IN: Indianapolis University Press, 2008), p. 160.

> inventiveness and courage in enduring, persevering, interpreting, and exploiting suffering, and whatever has been granted to it of profundity, secret, mask, spirit, cunning, greatness—was it not granted to it through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering? In man *creature* and *creator* are united: in man there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in man there is also creator, form-giver, hammer hardness, spectator divinity, and seventh day: do you understand this contrast? And that *your* compassion is for the "creature in man," for what must be formed, broken, forged, torn, burnt, made incandescent, and purified—that which *necessarily* must and *should* suffer? And *our* compassion—do you not comprehend for whom our *converse* compassion is when it resists your compassion as the worst of all pamperings and weaknesses? Thus it is compassion *versus* compassion. But to say it once more: there are higher problems than all problems of pleasure, pain, and compassion: and every philosophy that stops with them is a naïveté. [BGE 225]

Although the teachings of Jesus and Epicurus appeal to a much rarer type of person than does, for example, utilitarianism, Nietzsche's point still applies to them: it is naïve to equate pleasure with value, and displeasure with disvalue. From the point of view of life, understood as will to power, the opposite is the case: because suffering is a necessary condition for growth and expansion of power, it is really more valuable than pleasure. The fact that the "redeemers" are not able to see suffering in this light is merely a symptom of their impoverished condition. Even the ascetic priest instinctively comprehends the value of suffering, whatever he says against it (GM III:11).

While the weak instinctively hate life because of the struggle it involves, and want to negate it, we have just seen Nietzsche suggest that the strong even want to *intensify* that basic character of life. One way that they accomplish this is through what Nietzsche calls "*severe* self-love," which he says is "most profoundly necessary for growth" (EH IV:7). While the weakest practice self-love in the sense of self-indulgence and have compassion for the "creature in man," the self-love of the strong amounts to *self-mastery*, and aligns with the "converse compassion" that Nietzsche suggests has the "creator in man" for its object. While the Third Essay of GM might give the impression that Nietzsche considers asceticism as such to be a symptom of

impoverishment, this is not borne out by what he actually says. Even the ascetic priest, who "must be sick himself" if he is to lead the "sick herd" effectively, "must also be strong, master of himself even more than of others, with his will to power intact" (GM III:15). Asceticism in this case is a symptom of relative strength, as well as a means for conserving and increasing that strength. What is sick about ascetic priests is not their asceticism, but the fact that they erect asceticism as an *ideal* in comparison with which "health, well-constitutedness, pride, and the sense of power" are devalued (GM III:14), and teach that the pursuit of this ideal makes it possible to access a reality absolutely opposite to that of life. Stronger human beings, by contrast, practise asceticism for the sake of life, that is, for the sake of conserving and increasing their strength, without needing to dress up this practice as life-denial and pursuit of a "higher" life. "I want to make asceticism natural again," Nietzsche writes: "in place of the aim of denial, the aim of strengthening" (WP 915). The aim of this "naturalized" asceticism is to promote "strength of will," that is, a stable structure of command and obedience among one's drives. Nietzsche writes that one of the "*means by which a stronger type maintains itself*" is "[t]o create control and certainty in regard to one's strength of will through asceticism of every kind" (WP 921). This involves a great deal of suffering and self-denial, since one's subordinate drives must be forced to accept their status as such, meaning that they have to get used to striving for what *they* want only when doing so contributes to the attainment of what the dominant drives want. On the other hand, in strong human beings whose dominant drives are capable of this kind of mastery, the suffering just described is outweighed by a *feeling of power* resulting from that mastery, and even contributes to it. In such human beings it is the "creator" that determines value, and it does so not in accordance with pleasure and displeasure, but with the feeling of power.

I said in Chapter 4 that Nietzsche thinks strong human beings are more able to apprehend the truth about reality than weak ones, for whom self-deception in one degree or another is a condition of existence. Recall that "truth" in this sense does not mean the truth about "things-in-themselves," which Nietzsche rejects as an incoherent notion, but rather the most accurate picture of the world that can be formed on the basis of shared human cognitive capacities and interests. From a "purely cognitive" perspective, most truths of this kind are not hard to know: one need not be especially intelligent or gifted to know what the world we experience is like. The difficulty lies rather in what I have called "truthfulness." Because the truth about reality is "terrible" on Nietzsche's view, most human beings are unable to acknowledge it fully, since they would not be able to endure life if they did so. Instead, they lie to themselves about the way reality is, where lying means "wishing *not* to see something that one does see; wishing not to see something *as* one sees it" (A 55). For this reason, we saw Nietzsche suggest that "the strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the 'truth' one could still barely endure—or to put it more clearly, to what degree one would *require* it to be thinned down, shrouded, sweetened, blunted, falsified" (BGE 39). Strong human beings require "a tragic insight and outlook on life" that recognizes and affirms the terrible truth, while the weak need "a certain warm, fear-repulsing narrowness and enclosure within optimistic horizons which permit *hebetation*," that is, willful blindness to the truth (NCW "We Antipodes"). However, as we saw in Chapter 1 with particular reference to metaphysical philosophers, the weak persist in calling the comforting falsehoods in which they believe "truths." This is what metaphysical philosophers do when they posit a "true" world of being with qualities absolutely opposite to those of the "apparent" world of becoming (WP 585); it is what Christians do when they assert that human beings have free will, that the

world is morally ordered, and that "sinfulness" is a real phenomenon that has dire consequences in the afterlife (A 38); and it is what the morally "good" do when they insist that mildness, peaceableness, and benevolence are the most valuable human qualities (EH IV:4). Nietzsche thinks that, if one is disposed to look at the world truthfully—if one is *strong* enough to look at it truthfully—it is pretty obvious that there are no good reasons for believing any of these things. He therefore has to explain how it happens that so many people *do* believe them, and his answer is that most people willfully deceive themselves: "Error (faith in the ideal) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*" (EH P:3).

"Who alone has good reason to lie his way out of reality?" Nietzsche asks. "He who suffers from it. But to suffer from reality is to be a piece of reality that has come to grief. The preponderance of feelings of displeasure over feelings of pleasure is the cause of this fictitious morality and religion; but such a preponderance provides the very formula for décadence" (A 15). Impoverished human beings, as we have seen, associate reality with suffering, and tend to hold a negative definition of pleasure according to which it consists in the negation of the basic character of reality, namely will to power. Not that they are usually so straightforward about this as Schopenhauer was when he erected "negation of the will to life" as the highest ideal—instead, most weak people focus on an apparently positive conception like God, which belies the fact that what they are really after is a "counter-concept and condemnation of life" (TI V:5). Nietzsche, for his part, sees no reason to believe that something opposite to life exists, and I argued in Part I that his methodological commitment to historical philosophy, with its rejection of absolute opposites, is based largely on the insight that the belief in absolute opposites is consoling for those who suffer from life, and is therefore likely to be a piece of self-deception:

> Unless I have heard wrong, it seems that among Christians there is a kind of criterion of truth that is called the "proof of strength" [*Beweis der Kraft*]. "Faith makes blessed: *hence* it is true." […] But […] would blessedness—or more technically speaking, *pleasure*—ever be a proof of truth? This is so far from the case that it almost furnishes a counter-proof: in any event, the greatest suspicion of a "truth" should arise when feelings of pleasure enter the discussion of the question "What is true?" The proof of "pleasure" [*Beweis der „Lust"*] is a proof *of* "pleasure"—nothing else: how in all the world could it be established that true judgments should give greater delight than false ones and, according to a pre-established harmony, should necessarily be followed by agreeable feelings? The experience of all severe, of all profoundly inclined, spirits teaches the *opposite*. At every step one has to wrestle for truth: one has to surrender for it almost everything to which the heart, to which our love, our trust in life, cling otherwise. That requires greatness of soul: the service of truth is the hardest service. What does it mean, after all, to have *integrity* in matters of the spirit? That one is severe against one's heart, that one despises "beautiful sentiments," that one makes of every Yes and No a matter of conscience. Faith makes blessed: *consequently* it lies. [A 50]

Although the self-discipline involved in "the service of truth," which I argued in Chapter 2 is an ascetic discipline for Nietzsche, must afford some pleasure for the strong human being who enlists in it, that pleasure comes at the cost of all the pleasant and comforting delusions in which one might otherwise believe. Most people are not capable of making this sacrifice: "faith" for them "means not *wanting* to know what is true" (A 52). "How much one needs a *faith* in order to flourish," Nietzsche writes, "how much that is 'firm' and that one does not wish to be shaken because one *clings* to it, that is a measure of the degree of one's strength (or, to put the point more clearly, of one's weakness)" (GS 347). The stronger one is, the more able one will be to live and flourish without such "crutches"; the weaker one is, the more one will depend on them.

However, the weak need "faith," or what Nietzsche calls "conviction" (A 55), not only to protect them against specific truths that are too terrible for them to bear, but also because the complexity of reality is too much for them to bear. This is what Nietzsche has in mind when he suggests that "it might be a basic characteristic of existence that those who would know it completely would perish, in which case the strength of a spirit should be measured according to

how much of the 'truth' one could still barely endure" (BGE 39). "Truth" here means not only the terrible truths outlined in Chapter 4, but also the sheer number of different perspectives on reality that might be possible for human beings. We saw in that chapter that Nietzsche thinks our cognitive interests and capacities are limited by our needs as a species, and that during our evolution those needs were usually better met by quick, superficial judgments about the world than by careful, thorough ones (GS 110–11). Now no human being could live without adopting a simplified view of reality—but apart from that minimum of simplification that is necessary for human life as such, human beings vary widely in the degree of simplification they need, and this variety corresponds to the degrees of strength: the weak need to "overlook or repulse" more of the complexity of reality than the strong do, because they have less "power to appropriate the foreign" (BGE 230). The weaker one is, the more necessary it will be to overlook aspects of reality that stronger human beings are capable of recognizing:

> If one considers how necessary most people find something regulatory, which will bind them from without and tie them down; how compulsion, *slavery* in a higher sense, is the sole and ultimate condition under which the more weak-willed human being […] can prosper—then one will also understand conviction, "faith." The man of conviction has his backbone in it. *Not* to see many things, to be impartial at no point, to be party through and through, to have a strict and necessary perspective in all questions of value—this alone makes it possible for this kind of human being to exist at all. But with this they are the opposite, the antagonists, of what is truthful—of truth. The believer is not free to have any conscience at all for questions of "true" and "untrue": to have integrity on *this* point would at once destroy him. [A 54]

To look carefully and thoroughly at reality as it can be known from the human perspective becomes less practicable the weaker one is: not only would one risk running into truths that are too terrible to endure, but one would become mired in the sheer complexity of things, because one lacks the power to assimilate that complexity to a dominant perspective from which one could "make sense" of it.

Nietzsche describes the condition of those who have tried to "digest" the truth about reality without being strong enough to do so when he discusses the distinction between scholars and genuine philosophers. In doing so, he distinguishes between two types of "skepticism," which arise from weakness and strength respectively. Not only does this help us understand the relationship between strength and truthfulness, it also emphasizes the subtlety of Nietzsche's symptomatology, according to which symptoms that appear superficially similar can actually indicate very different things (cf. GS 370). In this case, the symptom in question is "skepticism":

> "Aren't our ears filled with wicked noises as it is?" asks the skeptic as a friend of quiet, and almost as a kind of security police; "this subterranean No is terrible. Be still at last, you pessimistic moles!" For the skeptic, being a delicate creature, is frightened all too easily; his conscience is trained to quiver at every No, indeed even at a Yes that is decisive and hard, and to feel as if it had been bitten. Yes and No—that goes against his morality; conversely, he likes to treat his virtue to a feast of noble abstinence, say, by repeating Montaigne's "What do I know?" or Socrates' "I know that I know nothing." […] Thus a skeptic consoles himself; and it is true that he stands in need of some consolation. For skepticism is the most spiritual expression of a certain complex physiological condition that in ordinary language is called nervous exhaustion and sickliness […]. Paralysis of the will: where today does one not find this cripple sitting? And often in such finery! How seductive the finery looks! This disease enjoys the most beautiful pomp- and lie-costumes; and most of what today displays itself in the showcases, for example, as "objectivity," "being scientific," "*l'art pour l'art*," "pure knowledge, free of will," is merely dressed-up skepticism and paralysis of the will: for this diagnosis of the European sickness I vouch. [BGE 208]

Skeptics of this kind, whom Nietzsche associates with scholars, have exhausted themselves in their attempts to be "objective," that is, to look at the world truthfully, and have wound up unable to take a positive stance on any question of importance, since to do so would require them to *interpret* reality, a task for which they lack the strength. We saw in Chapter 4 that Nietzsche thinks scholars *qua* scholars are at their best when they simply "mirror" reality, that is, describe it as it appears from the human perspective, without their individual affects and interests coming into play. This is possible because the scholar is, "for the most part, a man without substance and

content, a 'selfless' man" who is not personally invested in the picture of the world he produces (BGE 207). In other words, scholars are precisely the kind of people for whom "convictions" would be salutary, since they lack the strength to assimilate the complexity of reality and interpret it for themselves, as the philosopher does—but having foresworn convictions in the name of "being scientific," they are left in a state of exhaustion and skepticism.

The other type of skepticism Nietzsche discusses here, which is symptomatic of strength, is not a result of exhaustion in the face of the complexity of reality, but rather an expression of the way in which a strong human being assimilates and organizes that complexity. He describes this as "the skepticism of audacious manliness which is most closely related to the genius for war and conquest […]. This skepticism despises and nevertheless seizes; it undermines and takes possession; it does not believe, but does not lose itself in the process; it gives the spirit dangerous freedom, but it is severe on the heart" (BGE 209). If this description is less than clear, Nietzsche discusses this type of skepticism in more detail a few years later:

> A spirit who wants great things, who also wants the means to them, is necessarily a skeptic. Freedom from all kinds of convictions, to be able to see freely, is part of strength. Great passion, the ground and power of his existence […] employs his whole intellect; […] under certain circumstances it does not begrudge him convictions. Conviction as a *means:* many things are attained only by means of a conviction. Great passion uses and uses up convictions, it does not succumb to them—it knows itself sovereign. Conversely: the need for faith, for some kind of unconditional Yes and No, […] is a need born of *weakness*. [A 54; cf. WP 963]

For both the strong and the weak, convictions are relatively narrow and rigid perspectives on the way the world is, what is valuable and disvaluable, and so on. The significance of such perspectives, however, differs depending on one's degree of strength: the weak cling to them in order to have something stable on which they can depend, while the strong adopt them temporarily for the sake of "digesting" some aspect of reality, and discard them again when this

has been achieved. The process by which the strong adopt and discard convictions can be understood as belonging to the economics of interpretation, insofar as anything complex cannot be put in order all at once, but must be organized piece by piece into smaller "blocks," which can then be modified and integrated with one another to form a larger whole. Nietzsche's favourite metaphor for this, which I have just invoked several times, is digestion. After explaining that the "basic will of the spirit" is "to incorporate new 'experiences,' to file new things in old files—growth, in a word," he observes that

> [a]n apparently opposite drive serves this same will: a suddenly erupting decision in favour of ignorance, of deliberate exclusion, a shutting of one's windows, an internal No to this or that thing, a refusal to let things approach, a kind of state of defense against much that is knowable, a satisfaction with the dark, with the limiting horizon, a Yea and Amen to ignorance—all of which is necessary in proportion to a spirit's power to appropriate, its "digestive capacity," to speak metaphorically—and actually "the spirit" is relatively most similar to a stomach. [BGE 230]

The idea is that, having taken in as much as one is able to interpret ("digest"), it becomes necessary to stop taking in new things while one completes that process of interpretation, however inclined one might be to incorporate those things under different circumstances—just as, having eaten a large meal, one refuses to eat more, however flavourful or nutritious the fare might be. It seems to me that this physiological metaphor is easily transferred to other areas of life, whether spiritual or practical. If one has spent months or years developing a particular interpretation of Plato's theory of Ideas, only to be informed that there is a significant and formidable strain of scholarship according to which Plato did not mean that theory seriously, one is unlikely to be interested in delving into those arguments. "For my purposes," one might say, "it will be assumed that Plato's presentation of the theory of Ideas was meant seriously"—a rigid, narrow-minded conviction if one is aware that other perspectives on the matter are possible. On

the "practical" side of things, consider a general who has been long absorbed in planning an attack on the eastern front, who ignores reliable intelligence that the enemy is massing in the west, replying obstinately that the war will be won or lost in the east. If these examples seem to imply that the convictions in question must ultimately frustrate the goals of the people who hold them, I might suggest that this impression arises from the fact that most of us appreciate the value of narrow-mindedness less than Nietzsche does: "many things are attained only by means of a conviction" (A 54). Even if Plato may not have meant the theory of Ideas seriously, ignoring that possibility might make it possible for the philosopher in question to produce a truly penetrating interpretation of that theory, while ignoring the danger in the west may allow our general to carry out a masterful attack in the east and win the war. Even the strongest human beings have their limits, and if they are to accomplish anything at all, it will sometimes be necessary for them to narrow their perspective and hold to a conviction for a time. What distinguishes them from weak human beings is that, once the task in which they are absorbed is completed, they can discard such convictions as means that have outlived their usefulness—the philosopher can admit that his interpretation relied on questionable presuppositions, the general that he took a great risk by ignoring the western front, and both can modify their respective views by incorporating these different perspectives, which would have undermined their activity had they tried to do so earlier. Another good example of this is furnished by Nietzsche's philosophical development: for I argued in Chapter 2 that his conviction that nothing is more valuable than truth led to his commitment to historical philosophy, which he considered more truthful than metaphysical philosophy, and which ultimately led him to question the value of truth and relinquish that conviction.

I commented briefly in Chapter 4 on a short but pregnant text to which I said I would return in the present chapter: "'I want this and that'; 'I wish that this and that were so'; 'I know that this and that is so.'—the degrees of strength: the man of *will*, the man of *desire*, the man of *faith*" (KSA 12:9[104]). The first and last of these correspond to the strong and weak types we have just been considering; the "man of desire," who will be examined shortly, represents a kind of mean between these two extremes. Nietzsche contrasts the "man of faith" and the "man of will" in the following terms: on the one hand, "[t]o know that something *is* thus and thus"; on the other, "[t]o act so that something *becomes* thus and thus" (WP 585). He describes this as an "[a]ntagonism in the degree of strength [*Kraft-Graden*] in different natures." He here associates the "man of faith" with the believer in a "true world" of unchanging being that is absolutely opposite to the actual world of change and becoming, and in which all value is located. While we have seen that this is not the only type of "faith" or "conviction" that Nietzsche criticizes, it is an instructive example insofar as the dishonesty involved in it is particularly obvious, at least if one broadly shares Nietzsche's views about what can be considered real and what merely imaginary:

> Belief in what has being is only a consequence: the real *primum mobile* is disbelief in becoming, mistrust of becoming, the low valuation of all that becomes [i.e., of reality].
>
> What kind of man reflects in this way? An unproductive, suffering kind, a kind weary of life. If we imagine the opposite kind of man, he would not need to believe in what has being; more, he would despise it as dead, tedious, indifferent…
>
> The belief that the world as it ought to be *is*, really exists, is a belief of the unproductive who do *not desire to create a world* as it ought to be. They posit it as already available, they seek ways and means of reaching it. "Will to truth"—*as the impotence of the will to create*. […]
>
> "Will to truth" at this stage is essentially an *art of interpretation*: which at least requires the strength to interpret. […]
>
> Whoever is incapable of laying his will into things, lacking will and strength, at least lays some *meaning* into them, i.e., the faith that there is a will in them already. [cf. TI I:18]

> It is a measure of the degree of *strength of will* [*Gradmesser von* Willenskraft] to what extent one can do without meaning in things, to what extent one can endure to live in a meaningless world *because one organizes a small portion of it oneself*. [WP 585]

For both the strong and the weak, as we have seen, the "will to truth" is an "art of interpretation"—but the weak interpret the world *falsely*, in accordance with their needs, whereas the strong have no need to falsify reality. If the strong are dissatisfied with the way things are, their response is to try to change them; while the weak, who lack the strength for great tasks, convince themselves that things already *are* as they would like them to be, contrary to all appearances. This applies not only to the invention of a "true world," but also to the belief that this world is morally ordered, that those qualities approved as "good" by the morality of "good and evil" are the source of every elevation of humanity, and so on. Of course, no human being would be capable of *making* these things true, since to do so would require one to change the basic character of reality. It is precisely because this is impossible that the weak need to deceive themselves about that character. The strong, to the contrary, recognize and affirm reality as it is, so that the impossibility of changing its basic character does not present an obstacle for them: a strong human being "would not need to believe in what has being," for example. The strong want to achieve particular goals within reality as it is, not to fundamentally alter reality—indeed, the character of reality as will to power is the presupposition of their activity.

Let us now turn to the "man of desire," whom Nietzsche suggests is located between the "man of will" and the "man of faith" in terms of his degree of strength: weaker than the latter, stronger than the former. Here again, as in the case of skepticism, we will see that there is a certain ambiguity, insofar as the basic outlook of the "man of desire" can be a symptom of different degrees of strength, and can sometimes indicate *more* strength than the outlook of the

"man of faith," sometimes less. Whereas the "man of will" sees that things are not to his liking and strives to change them, and the "man of faith" deceives himself that things ultimately *are* the way he would like them to be, the "man of desire" sees that things are not as he would like, and despairs of being able to change them. Nietzsche sometimes suggests that this represents a further degeneration of the "man of faith," whose falsification of reality "at least requires the strength to interpret":

> This same species of man, grown one stage poorer, *no longer possessing the strength* to interpret, to create fictions, produces *nihilists*. A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist. According to this view, our existence (action, suffering, willing, feeling) has no meaning: the pathos of "in vain" is the nihilist's pathos […]. [WP 585]

Despair makes a certain amount of sense in the kind of case Nietzsche describes here—for we are again dealing with a desire for reality to be fundamentally other than what it is, which could not be satisfied by action of any kind. If one cannot affirm reality, as the strong do, nor deceive oneself about it, as the "man of faith" does, what alternative is left but despair? Even in other cases, in which action could in principle bring about the changes one would like to see, despair or self-deception seem to be the only possible responses if one lacks the strength to carry out that action. The question, then, is whether self-deception or despair in the face of an incurable dissatisfaction with reality indicates a higher degree of strength. In the passage just quoted, Nietzsche suggests that despair ("nihilism") is a weaker response to such a condition, because it speaks to an inability even to *falsify* reality in accordance with one's needs: "the strength to interpret, to create fictions" is lacking. The "man of faith" is unable to interpret reality *honestly*, as the "man of will" does, but he is still capable of creating a fiction that allows him to live, and

even to prosper to a certain extent—whereas the "man of desire" literally cannot create such a fiction to save his life.

On the other hand, we might think that the "man of desire" is stronger than the "man of faith," insofar as he is capable of distinguishing the way the world actually is from the way he would like it to be: whereas the latter mendaciously says "I know that this and that is so," the former says only "I wish that this and that were so." Nietzsche says explicitly that the weak "are not free to know: the décadents *need* the lie—it is one of the conditions of their preservation" (EH BT:2). Yet the "man of desire" can apparently survive without such lies, unless we are to suppose that his despair inevitably leads him to perish, which does not seem to be the case—he may not survive happily or productively, but in most cases he probably does survive, which implies that dishonesty is not a basic condition of his preservation. Nietzsche does believe that nihilism can be a symptom of both declining and increasing strength, and we may take nihilism as an extreme manifestation of the kind of despair that pertains to the "man of desire." In the same note just cited, in which he identifies nihilism as a symptom that the strength needed to create a falsified image of reality is lacking, he goes on to say the following:

> Nihilism […] can be a symptom of increasing *strength* or of increasing *weakness*.
> partly because the strength to *create*, to *will*, has so increased that it no longer requires these total interpretations and introductions of *meaning* […]
> partly because even the creative strength to create *meaning* has declined and disappointment becomes the dominant condition. The incapacity to *believe* in a "meaning," "unbelief" [WP 585]

The following note, written around the same time, makes effectively the same point:

> Nihilism […] can be a sign of *strength* [*Stärke*]: the strength [*Kraft*] of the spirit may have grown to such an extent that *previous* goals ("convictions," articles of faith) are inappropriate
> — a faith generally expresses the constraint of *conditions of existence*, submission to the authority of circumstances under which a being *flourishes, grows, gains power*…

> On the other hand a sign of *insufficient* strength [*Stärke*] to productively *posit* for oneself a goal, a why? a faith. [KSA 13: 9[35]]

Taking the nihilist as a paradigm of the "man of desire," it seems that there are several different ways of assessing his degree of strength, and that the correct determination in a particular case can be made only by carefully examining the individual in question. For, on the one hand, the "man of desire" can represent an intermediate stage between the "man of faith" and the "man of will," either as a strengthened version of the former or a weakened version of the latter. In the first case, this would be a "man of faith" who has grown strong enough that he no longer needs to cling to convictions, but still not strong enough to "lay his will into things" (TI I:18); in the second, a "man of will" who has become too weak to do so, but still not weak enough that he needs to cling to a faith. That the "man of desire" represents a mean between these two types is implied by the fact that Nietzsche places him between them in his sketch of "the degrees of strength" (KSA 12:9[104]). On the other hand, we have also seen him suggest that the "man of desire" represents a weakened form of the "man of faith" who has lost the strength to hold fast to a conviction.

In whichever of these ways he is understood, the "man of desire" corresponds in essentials to the type that Nietzsche calls the *romantic pessimist*. Indeed, Nietzsche had framed the original version of the "We Antipodes" text from NCW, in which he first outlines his symptomatology, in relation to the question "*What is romanticism?*" (GS 370). Here he contrasts romantic pessimism, which he sees as a symptom of weakness, with "tragic" or "Dionysian" pessimism, which is a symptom of strength. This distinction is central to Nietzsche's mature thought, and a careful analysis of it is necessary in order to complete our investigation into the different perspectives on

life that he thinks pertain to strength and weakness. I quote this text at some length, omitting most of the passages that I have already quoted from the NCW text:

> *What is romanticism?*— It may perhaps be recalled, at least among my friends, that initially I approached the modern world with a few crude errors and overestimations and, in any case, hopefully. Who knows on the basis of what personal experiences, I understood the philosophical pessimism of the nineteenth century as if it were a symptom of a superior force of thought, of more audacious courage, and of more triumphant *fullness* of life than had characterized the eighteenth century, the age of Hume, Kant, Condillac, and the sensualists. Thus tragic insight appeared to me as the distinctive *luxury* of our culture, as its most precious, noblest, and most dangerous squandering, but in view of its over-richness, as a *permissible* luxury. In the same way, I reinterpreted German music for myself as if it signified a Dionysian power of the German soul: I believed that I heard in it the earthquake through which some primeval force that had been dammed up for ages finally liberated itself—indifferent whether everything else that one calls culture might begin to tremble. You see, what I failed to recognize at the time both in philosophical pessimism and in German music was what is really their distinctive character—their *romanticism*. […] Thus I gradually learned to understand Epicurus, the opposite of a Dionysian pessimist; also the "Christian," who is actually only a kind of Epicurean—both are essentially romantics […]. Regarding all aesthetic values I now avail myself of this main distinction: I ask in every instance, "is it hunger or superabundance that has here become creative?" At first glance, another distinction may seem preferable—it is far more obvious—namely the question whether the desire to fix, to immortalize, the desire for *being* prompted creation, or the desire for destruction, for change, for future, for *becoming*. But both of these kinds of desire are seen to be ambiguous when one considers them more closely; they can be interpreted in accordance with the first scheme that is, as it seems to me, preferable. The desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming can be an expression of an overflowing force that is pregnant with future (my term for this is, as is known, "Dionysian"); but it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, disinherited, and underprivileged, who destroy, *must* destroy, because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes them. To understand this feeling, consider our anarchists closely. The will to *immortalize* also requires a dual interpretation. It can be prompted, first, by gratitude and love; art with this origin will always be an art of apotheoses, perhaps dithyrambic like Rubens, or blissfully mocking like Hafiz, or bright and gracious like Goethe, spreading a Homeric light and glory over all things. But it can also be the tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tormented, and would like to turn what is most personal, singular, and narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, into a binding law and compulsion—one who, as it were, revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them, branding them with it. This last version is *romantic pessimism* in its most expressive form, whether it be Schopenhauer's philosophy of will or Wagner's music—romantic pessimism, the last *great* event in the fate of our culture. (That there still *could* be an altogether different kind of pessimism, a classical type—this premonition and vision belongs to me as inseparable from me, as my *proprium* and

> *ipsissimum*; only the word "classical" offends my ears, it is far too trite and has become round and indistinct. I call this pessimism of the future—for it comes! I see it coming!—*Dionysian* pessimism.) [GS 370]

While some "men of desire" probably express themselves destructively, like the type that Nietzsche here associates with anarchism, I will focus on those that express themselves by means of romantic pessimism, as this destructive inclination has been adequately treated already in our discussion of *ressentiment*. It bears emphasizing, however, that such a "man of desire" is still distinct from the "man of will": for while we will see that willing necessarily involves destruction, this is only a consequence of a more basic drive to *create*, whereas the destructiveness born of *ressentiment* is not "willing" in the full sense, but a mere reactivity, a tendency to lash out because one suffers.

We have just seen that, psychologically speaking, romantic pessimism is also a way of "lashing out" at reality, this time by eternalizing an image of the contradiction between the way things are and the way one would like them to be, whether by means of art or philosophy. According to Nietzsche, Wagner was preoccupied with "[t]he problem of redemption," which is at the core of almost all of his operas (CW 3)—and a preoccupation with redemption clearly evinces that things are not as they should be in the eyes of the one who holds it. Schopenhauer posits this explicitly: because life contains more pain and evil than pleasure and goodness, as he defines these things, it would be better if the world did not exist. Logically speaking, romantic pessimism seems to fit the definition of "nihilism" introduced above: "A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist" (WP 585). Although Nietzsche sometimes talks about pessimism as though it were distinct from nihilism (e.g., WP 9, 11), at other times he suggests that they are basically the same

thing (e.g., WP 38, 853), and that is good enough for our purposes here. The distinctive trait of *romantic* pessimism seems to be its obsession with ideals that are recognized as being unattainable, but which would have justified life and reality if they were: in short, one still condemns reality by comparison to ideals in which one no longer believes (cf. WP 8). Schopenhauer, for example, idealizes the disinterested, will-less subject who feels compassion for all that suffers, and suggests that the best life for a human being is to come as close as possible to embodying that ideal—this after having taken great pains to establish blind, insatiable willing as the very essence of reality, a state of affairs to which there should be no exceptions according to his own principles. The truth about reality is terrible, and romantic pessimists do not deceive themselves about this, as the "man of faith" does. Instead, they pine after a reality that is not terrible, while at the same time believing that such a reality does not exist. If they have the strength to be creative, their creations embody the suffering involved in living with such a contradiction; if they do not, they will probably be enthusiasts about creations like Schopenhauer's philosophy and Wagner's music.

Dionysian pessimism, to the contrary, judges that the world that exists *is* "the world as it ought to be," and thus involves no contradiction between the real world and the world that it would be possible to affirm. This type of pessimism affirms reality as it is. Both in the everyday sense and in the usual philosophical sense, it might seem strange to call such an attitude "pessimism," since this is ordinarily taken to entail a negative evaluation of existence, or at least of human life. However, I suggest that the common element that makes both the romantic and Dionysian dispositions instances of pessimism is their recognition that the truth about life is terrible. Although it may seem somewhat counterintuitive, the fact that the truth is "terrible" in

this sense does not necessarily mean that life is *bad*, or that one would like it to be different: the truth is *furchtbar*, that is, dreadful, fearsome, frightening (cf. EH IV:4). How one responds to this state of affairs, however, depends on one's degree of strength: those who are weaker are drawn to romantic pessimism because they experience the terribleness of life as oppressive, and desire "rest, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves through art and knowledge, or intoxication, convulsions, anaesthesia, and madness" (GS 370). The strong, to the contrary, do not feel overwhelmed by the terrible character of life, but even identify with it and find it stimulating: "He that is richest in the fullness of life, the Dionysian god and man, cannot only afford the sight of the terrible [*Fürchterlichen*] and questionable but even the terrible deed and any luxury of destruction, decomposition, and negation" (GS 370). This latter attitude is Dionysian pessimism, in which the terrible character of reality is actually experienced as good, and even as beautiful:

> [t]he feeling of plenitude, of *dammed-up strength* (which permits one to meet with courage and good humour much that makes the weakling *shudder*)—the feeling of *power* applies the judgment "beautiful" to things and conditions that the instinct of impotence could only find *hateful* and "ugly." […]
>
> From this it appears that, broadly speaking, a *preference for questionable and terrifying things* is a symptom of *strength*; while a taste for the *pretty and dainty* belongs to the weak and delicate. *Pleasure* in tragedy characterizes *strong* ages and natures […]. It is the heroic spirits who say Yes to themselves in tragic cruelty: they are hard enough to experience suffering as a *pleasure*. […]
>
> This type of *artists' pessimism* [i.e., Dionysian pessimism] is precisely the *opposite of that religio-moral pessimism* [i.e., romantic pessimism] that suffers from the "corruption" of man and the riddle of existence—and by all means craves a solution, or at least a hope for a solution. The suffering, desperate, self-mistrustful, in a word the sick, have at all times had need of entrancing *visions* to endure life (*this* is the origin of the concept "blessedness"). […]
>
> The *profundity of the tragic* [i.e., Dionysian] *artist* lies in this, that his aesthetic instinct surveys the more remote consequences, that he does not halt shortsightedly at what is closest to hand, that he affirms the *large-scale economy* which justifies the *terrifying*, the *evil*, the *questionable*—and more than merely justifies them. [WP 852]

The following note from 1888 expresses this antithesis between romantic and Dionysian pessimism in quite explicit terms. Although the romantic pessimist is here styled as "the Christian," I do not think that this refers to any self-deceptive "faith" or "conviction," but simply to the pessimistic psychology that underlies Christianity, and that prompts so many to adopt such a faith as a solution to "the riddle of existence":

> *The two types: Dionysus and the Crucified.*— To determine: whether the typical *religious* man is a form of décadence (the great innovators are one and all morbid and epileptic); but are we not here omitting one type of religious man, the *pagan*? Is the pagan cult not a form of thanksgiving and affirmation of life? Must its highest representative not be an apology for and deification of life? The type of a well-constituted and ecstatically overflowing spirit? The type of a spirit that takes into itself and *redeems* the contradictions and questionable aspects of existence!
>
> It is here I set the *Dionysus* of the Greeks: the religious affirmation of life, life whole and not denied or in part; (typical—that the sexual act arouses profundity, mystery, reverence).
>
> Dionysus versus the "Crucified": there you have the antithesis. It is *not* a difference in regard to their martyrdom—it is a difference in the meaning of it. Life itself, its eternal fruitfulness and recurrence, creates torment, destruction, the will to annihilation. In the other case, suffering—the "Crucified as the innocent one"—counts as an objection to life, a formula for its condemnation.— One will see that the problem is that of the meaning of suffering: whether a Christian meaning or a tragic meaning. In the former case, it is supposed to be the path to a holy existence; in the latter case, being is counted as *holy enough* to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering. The tragic [i.e., Dionysian] man affirms even the harshest suffering: he is sufficiently strong, rich, and capable of deifying to do so. The Christian denies even the happiest lot on earth: he is sufficiently weak, poor, disinherited to suffer from life in whatever form he meets it. The god on the cross is a curse on life, a signpost to seek redemption from life; Dionysus cut to pieces is a *promise* of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction. [WP 1052]

At the end of this text, Nietzsche is clearly alluding to his famous conception of the eternal recurrence of the same (*die ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen*), which he describes as the "highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable" (EH Z:1). He recognizes the germ of this idea in the Dionysian cult of ancient Greece, which he believes centred on "the eternal return of life; the future promised and hallowed in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond all death and

change; *true* life as the over-all continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality" (TI X:4). "I know of no higher symbolism than this *Greek* symbolism of the Dionysian festivals," Nietzsche writes. "Here the most profound instinct of life, that directed toward the future of life, the eternity of life, is experienced religiously" (TI X:4). Nietzsche associates this instinct with a tragic outlook on life, which we just saw is a symptom of strength according to him:

> The psychology of the orgiastic as an overflowing feeling of life and strength, where even pain still has the effect of a stimulus, gave me the key to the concept of *tragic* feeling, which has been misunderstood both by Aristotle and, quite especially, by our modern pessimists. Tragedy is so far from proving anything about the pessimism of the Hellenes, in Schopenhauer's [romantic] sense, that it may, to the contrary, be considered its decisive repudiation and counter-instance. Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems, the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types—*that* is what I called Dionysian, *that* is what I guessed to be the bridge to the psychology of the *tragic* poet. *Not* in order to be liberated from terror and pity, not in order to purge oneself of a dangerous affect by means of its vehement discharge—Aristotle understood it that way—but in order to be *oneself* the eternal joy of becoming, beyond all terror and pity—that joy which included even joy in destroying. And herewith I touch that point from which I once went forth: *The Birth of Tragedy* was my first transvaluation of all values [*Umwerthung aller Werthe*]. Herewith I again stand on the soil out of which my intention, my *ability* grows—I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the teacher of the eternal recurrence. [TI X:5]

The basic orientation that Nietzsche identifies in the Dionysian cult, and that he attempts to introduce in the modern world by means of the teaching of eternal recurrence, is one according to which it is possible to feel oneself eternal in the face of ceaseless coming to be and passing away. For the Greeks, this was achieved by means of the "temporary identification with the principle of life" that occurs in the Dionysian festivals (WP 417), in which one identifies much less with one's own mortality than with the *immortality* of life in general. This is not a piece of self-deception, as is the belief in an immortal soul, but an expression of a high degree of strength that

makes it possible to attain to a higher perspective on life than the ordinary one in which one's individual existence counts for so much. Nietzsche describes this tragic outlook as follows: "Joy in the destruction of the most noble and at the sight of its progressive ruin: in reality joy in what is coming and lies in the future, which triumphs over existing things, however good" (WP 417).

This conception appears in some ways quite different from that of eternal recurrence, although I think that the difference between the two conceptions is largely superficial. For the teaching of eternal recurrence appears to focus precisely on one's individual existence, which will be repeated infinitely many times without the slightest change, and not on the eternity of the phenomenon of life itself. This is not the place to consider such questions in detail; I will say only that a careful reading of the ending of *Zarathustra*, and especially "The Drunken Song," suggests that the affirmation of the eternal recurrence of one's own life depends crucially on one's ability to take a higher perspective than that of one's individual existence. Here I want to focus instead on the idea that the ability to affirm the eternal recurrence of one's own life—and, by extension, of the entire past and future (cf. Z, "On Redemption")—is a symptom of strength, while the inability to do so is a symptom of weakness. When Nietzsche first introduces the teaching of eternal recurrence in Book IV of GS, he describes it as "the greatest weight" (*das grösste Schwergewicht*), that is, the teaching that would be most difficult to endure:

> *The greatest weight.*— What if, some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you live it now and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!" Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered

> him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine." If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing: "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? [GS 341]

The two types of response to the demon's teaching that Nietzsche describes here correspond to strength and weakness: while the very strongest will joyfully embrace such a world-order, those who are weaker "will experience the belief in the eternal recurrence as a curse" (WP 55). Someone like Schopenhauer, for whom it may be said that the best thing about life is that it comes to an end, would be unable to bear the idea of "existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness" (WP 55).

It must be emphasized, however, that merely answering "yes" to the question whether one would like to live the same life again eternally is not a proof of strength. Indeed, it is not hard to imagine a great many people preferring such a fate to definitive death. In my experience—for I have posed this dilemma to a number of people over the years—their answers are based on a hedonistic calculus: those who feel that their lives have been more pleasurable than painful choose eternal recurrence over definitive death, while those who feel the opposite prefer to live their lives only once. But we have seen that, on Nietzsche's view, the value of life is not to be determined in accordance with pleasure and displeasure, and that to evaluate in this way is a symptom of weakness. The eternal recurrence is not hard to affirm if one's life has been mainly pleasant, and if one is given a hypothetical choice between this and definitive death—but things stand differently if one's life has involved tremendous suffering, or if one were allowed to opt for Heaven as a third alternative. The ability to affirm the eternal recurrence is a proof of strength

only for those, like Nietzsche, who have suffered immensely, and who deny themselves comforting delusions like the belief in a blissful afterlife: the test for such people is whether they love life enough to desire the eternal recurrence of their own suffering, or whether they would prefer the oblivion of death. Zarathustra calls the eternal recurrence of all things his "most abysmal thought," which he likens to a snake that crawled down his throat and tried to suffocate him—his animals, on the other hand, sing the praises of this thought as though it were plainly a happy thing to relive the same life eternally ("The Convalescent"). For those who feel as the animals do, the ability to affirm this thought says very little about their degree of strength, except that they are capable of a certain narrow happiness and contentment with life, which some are not. Nietzsche himself was unable to consistently affirm it. In a note from 1882, when he was working on *Zarathustra*, he writes: "I do not want life *again*. How did I endure it? Creating. What makes me stand the sight of it? The vision of the *Übermensch* who *affirms* life. I have tried to affirm it *myself*—alas!" (KSA 10:4[81]).

I should note in passing that, unlike a number of commentators, I do not understand affirmation of life as Nietzsche's "ethical ideal," or even as his ultimate standard of value.[114] While it is true that he places great importance on an affirmative attitude toward life, he does so because such an attitude is a *symptom* of strong and healthy life. I know of no one who is able to explain *why* affirmation of life is so important to Nietzsche in and of itself. We have seen that the truth about life is terrible, and that "judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in

114 See, for example, Tom Stern, "Nietzsche's Ethics of Affirmation" in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Tom Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 351–73; Béatrice Han-Pile, "Nietzsche and the Affirmation of Life" in *The Nietzschean Mind*, ed. Paul Katsafanas (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 448–68; and Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

the end, never be true" (TI II:2). Nietzsche is not concerned with life affirmation because he thinks life *is* good and thus *ought* to be affirmed, with taking sides on "the question […] whether pessimism or optimism is right, as if there must be answers to that" (WP 38). We know that Nietzsche considers himself a pessimist, albeit of a different kind than the one he dismisses here, so it does not make sense to read him as saying that life is good and for that reason ought to be affirmed. Rather, given the pessimistic insight into the terrible truth, still to affirm life is a symptom of an abundance of strength. It is also a challenge for one who wants to test the degree of his strength, to see whether he *can* affirm life in the face of the terrible truth. I believe that Nietzsche also approached the problem in this way, with mixed results.

An illuminating study could be written on Nietzsche's understanding of the way in which his own periods of sickness and health, which he identifies as periods of relative weakness and strength, shaped his philosophy, and his conception of the degrees of strength themselves. His story about this can be found in the prefaces he added to HA, D, and GS in the second editions of 1886, as well as in EH, and the interested reader will find a wealth of information in these texts about how Nietzsche came to his conclusions about strength and weakness. When we saw him speak above about "the relation of health and philosophy" (GS P:2), he was speaking from his own experience about which kinds of philosophical perspectives appeal to a weak human being, and which to a strong one. He makes this point particularly clearly in EH:

> The good fortune of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality: I am, to express it in the form of a riddle, already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and becoming old. This dual descent, as it were, from both the highest and the lowest rung on the ladder of life, at the same time a *décadent* and a *beginning*—this, if anything, explains that neutrality, that freedom from all partiality in relation to the total problem of life, that perhaps distinguishes me. I have a subtler sense of smell for the signs of ascent and decline than any other human being before me; I am the teacher *par excellence* for this—I know both, I am

> both. […] Need I say after all this that in questions of décadence I am *experienced*? I have spelled them forward and backward. […] Looking from the perspective of the sick toward *healthier* concepts and values and, conversely, looking again from the fullness and self-assurance of a *rich* life down into the secret work of the instinct of décadence—in this I have had the longest training, my truest experience; if in anything, I became master in *this*. Now I know how, have the know-how, to *reverse perspectives*: the first reason why a "transvaluation of all values" is perhaps possible for me alone. [EH I:1]

Nietzsche thinks that he knows about strength and weakness "from the inside," so to speak, from his own intimate experience with varying degrees of these states over a prolonged period of his life. He evidently thinks that his degree of strength had fluctuated to a very uncommon degree, and that it was this—in combination with a few other rare gifts he believes himself to possess—that allowed him to grasp the complexity of states of strength and weakness. "I am of the opinion," he writes, "that only *experience* […] can entitle us to participate in the discussion of such higher questions of rank, lest we talk like blind men about colours" (BGE 204). At any rate, if Nietzsche's theory of degrees of strength is correct, it would indeed follow that only those who had experienced a wide variety of such degrees, and who had the acuity to reflect deeply on their experiences, would be capable of understanding the phenomenon of strength with anything approaching "objectivity" (cf. GM III:12).

In this chapter I have argued that Nietzsche understands the phenomenon of strength in terms of the *number* of drives a human being has, the *individual power* of those drives, and their *organization* into a hierarchical dominance structure. The more powerful drives one has, and the better they are organized into such a structure, the stronger one is. It is true that he does not always give a detailed analysis in these terms when discussing the strength or weakness of particular types of human beings, so that some guesswork is often required on our part. However, considering what was said in Chapter 5 about the limitations on our knowledge of drives—

whether our own or those of others—this state of affairs is not so surprising. The above definition of strength is an attempt to state abstractly the kinds of considerations that come into play for Nietzsche in judging strength and weakness, a task that I have argued he approaches by means of a *symptomatology*, according to which a person's degree of strength is to be inferred from his "activity," including the valuations he holds. I have argued that the main kinds of symptoms he looks for are (1) whether a person seeks struggle and increase of tension, or peace and relaxation of tension; and (2) whether a person's "way of thinking and valuing" affirms or negates life. Where (1) is concerned, I have attempted to sketch the physio-psychology of abundant and impoverished life, focusing on the phenomena of growth and exhaustion respectively. Where (2) is concerned, I have focused broadly on the distinction between romantic pessimism and Dionysian pessimism, which Nietzsche thinks corresponds to the distinction between weakness and strength. I have also said quite a bit about the relation of strength and weakness to *truthfulness*, which Nietzsche considers a symptom of strength, and the need to believe in lies ("faith"), which he considers a symptom of weakness. It now remains to see how Nietzsche applies the standard of degrees of strength to the "problem of value."

Chapter 9: The Great Economy

In the last chapter, we saw in a fair amount of detail how Nietzsche understands "strength," and and how he determines the degree of a human being's strength on the basis of his symptomatology. It has been the main aim of this study to explicate the concept of "degrees of strength," and that has now been done. However, I said in Chapter 7 that this concept provides Nietzsche's key for solving what I called the "problem of value," and it remains to explain how this is so. For although he writes that "[t]here is nothing to life that has value, except the degree of power " (WP 55), this does not tell us anything very concrete. It is clear that Nietzsche thinks stronger human beings are more valuable for enhancing the power of humanity, because they manifest the strongest drives of life with the greatest intensity—but it is not immediately clear what follows from this. Based solely on the principle that stronger human beings are more valuable, it might seem reasonable simply to eliminate those who manifest a low, or even an average degree of strength, and retain only those who are relatively strongest, to the end of increasing the strength of humanity on average. However, while Nietzsche does sometimes suggest that the very weakest and most sickly should be encouraged to perish (A 2), or at least that they should not be actively preserved (EH IV:8), his approach to the problem of value is much subtler than the mere elimination of weak human beings. Rather, he conceives of an *order of rank* based on degrees of strength, according to which all but the very weakest have their place within "the great economy of the whole" (EH IV:4). Nietzsche writes of "the need for an order of rank—that the first problem is the *order of rank of different kinds of life*" (WP 592): "I distinguish between a type of ascending life and another type of decay, disintegration, weakness. Is it credible that the question of the relative rank of these two types still needs to be posed?" (WP

857). While Nietzsche does not think that this question needs to be seriously entertained—for we have already seen him say in no uncertain terms that power is good and weakness is bad (A 2)—the question of what *role* the weak have to play in the project of enhancing the power of humanity does still need to be posed. Their existence is not a threat to that project in itself—indeed, they appear to be indispensable for it. What is a threat, as we shall see, is when the interests of the weak carry more weight than those of the strong, that is, when the natural order of rank is inverted.

Robert Guay denies that Nietzsche posits a substantive order of rank. He emphasizes the fact that Nietzsche sometimes speaks of order of rank as a "problem" (e.g., GM I:17), and argues that "the problem is not identifying the correct classifications, but explaining the very possibility of rank distinction and what such distinctions amount to. The problem that Nietzsche confronts, that is, is about the normative: how there can be normative authority at all, such that some things are better (or 'higher') than others."[115] Certainly Nietzsche was not insensible of this problem: much of the present study has been devoted to explaining the methodology and general worldview according to which the concept of degrees of strength can be understood as having "normative authority"—in a nutshell, this is because will to power is the only reality accessible to human beings, leaving power as the only viable standard of value. Guay contrasts this normative understanding of the "problem" of order of rank with what he calls the "natural aristocracy" reading, according to which "the problem is determining the correct or suitable classification. There are natural, categorical differences among persons, and thus philosophers must identify both these categories and their relative rankings. Once this identification is accomplished, there

115 Robert Guay, "Order of Rank" in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Gemes and Richardson, p. 487.

could then be tasks of implementation."[116] I believe I have shown quite clearly in the previous chapter that Nietzsche does believe he has identified the "natural, categorical differences among persons" that are relevant for establishing an order of rank, namely the degrees of strength—a concept that Guay does not discuss. His main reason for rejecting the natural aristocracy interpretation seems to be that it offers "a version of order of rank that is incompatible with there being a genuine 'problem' of the sort that Nietzsche suggested."[117] In other words, according to that interpretation, order of rank *itself* is not a problem; the only problems "are epistemic ones, such as how to accurately discern the natural kinds, or are practical ones peculiar to particular ranks, such as harms sustained by the higher ranks in a rank-averse society."[118] Because Guay is convinced that Nietzsche sees a problem in the very notion of order of rank, he does not think the natural aristocracy interpretation does justice to Nietzsche's thinking, because it treats that notion as essentially unproblematic.

For my part, at least in his mature writings, I do not find Nietzsche claiming that order of rank is problematic in itself. Rather, as should be evident by now, I believe that the natural aristocracy reading is basically correct, although I am not entirely satisfied with Guay's statement of it, and that the basic problems with which Nietzsche is concerned are those of identifying stronger and weaker human beings, and finding a way of having this natural order of rank recognized. The main text in which Guay believes Nietzsche identifies order of rank as problematic in itself is this one, which will also be central to our discussion moving forward:

> Indeed, every table of values, every "thou shalt" known to history or ethnography, requires first a *physiological* investigation and interpretation, rather than a psychological one; and

116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.

> every one of them needs a critique on the part of medical science. The question: what is the *value* of this or that table of values and "morals"? should be viewed from the most diverse perspectives; for the problem "value for what?" cannot be examined too subtly. Something, for example, that possessed obvious value in relation to the longest possible survival of a race (or to the enhancement of its power of adaptation to a particular climate or to the preservation of the greatest number) would by no means possess the same value if it were a question, for instance, of producing a stronger type. The well-being of the majority and the well-being of the few are opposite viewpoints of value: to consider the former *a priori* of higher value may be left to the naïveté of English biologists.— *All* the sciences have from now on to prepare the way for the future task of the philosophers: this task understood as the solution of the *problem of value*, the determination of the *order of rank among values*. [GM I:17]

I find nothing in this text to suggest that Nietzsche considers order of rank problematic in itself. He points out that different valuations and moralities have value for different ends, but he does not seem confused about which ends are *worth* pursuing, and he had already told us in the preface to the same book that he is concerned with enhancing the power of humanity, or "producing a stronger type" (cf. GM P:6). Guay, however, calls attention to Nietzsche's claim that the role of the sciences in solving the problem of value is only preparatory, which he does not think should be the case if order of rank is unproblematic in itself: "Since, on this [natural aristocracy] interpretation, rankings apply to categories that are, as natural, themselves unproblematic, science would presumably have a role in identifying the categories. This role, indeed, would be the whole research program: beyond that identification, there would be little else to accomplish in addressing order of rank."[119] Guay's idea seems to be that, unless there is a normative component to the problem of order of rank that can only be solved by philosophy, the sciences can solve that problem all on their own, which is not how Nietzsche presents the matter.

I think this is correct in a sense. In this text, Nietzsche assigns the sciences the task of inquiring into different valuations and moralities in order to determine what ends they serve, and

119 Ibid., p. 488.

for what types of people; his reference to "medical science" also implies that the relation of these valuations to physiological health and sickness should be considered, which should not be surprising given that he broadly equates health with strength and sickness with weakness. If the sciences could determine, for example, that European Christian morality has value for sickly people, and that adherence to that morality is a symptom of sickness, it might seem that this would answer the question of where that morality stands in the order of rank—and that once such an analysis had been completed for every morality, the order of rank would have been established. Guay is right that this would leave out the normative component of the problem of value which it is the proper task of philosophy to address, but I think he is mistaken about what that normative component amounts to. It is not a broad question about how normativity is possible at all, but is rather exactly what Nietzsche says it is: "the determination of the *order of rank among values*" (GM I:17). While the sciences might be able to give a great deal of insight into different valuations and moralities, and might even be able to tell us things like that one morality has value for weak and sickly people, while another has value for strong and healthy people, this does nothing to establish an order of rank unless one presupposes that strength is good and weakness is bad, and that what has value for the strong is better than what has value for the weak. Even "health" and "sickness" themselves are normative concepts, and, beyond a broad basis of agreement arising from the shared perspective of the human species, are defined in different ways by different people. So, although the categories used to determine rank are "natural"—that is, not mere human inventions, but real distinctions in nature—the sciences can at best identify those distinctions, but cannot rank them. I pointed out in Chapter 4 that genuine philosophers, for Nietzsche, "*are commanders and legislators:* they say, '*thus* it *shall* be!' They

first determine the Whither and For What of man, and in so doing they have at their disposal the preliminary labour of all philosophical labourers [including scientists]" (BGE 211). Thus there is a normative component to the solution of the problem of value that goes beyond what the sciences can accomplish—but it is not the dubious task of continually wondering how an order of rank could be possible, as Guay suggests. Rather, it is the task of *legislating* an order of rank, which for Nietzsche is a task for genuine philosophers, not scientists. This is because only a genuine philosopher is capable of producing a *world-interpretation* according to which values can be ranked, while scientists as such can merely observe and describe different values, their relation to various physiological states, and so on.

Nietzsche's concept of the "value of values" presupposes an objective standard of value on the basis of which different valuations and moralities can themselves be evaluated. The singular "value" in this phrase refers to an assessment of value in accordance with that standard, while the plural "values" refers to what I have been calling "valuations," that is, approbative or disapprobative attitudes toward various drives and their activities. To assess the "value of values" therefore means to weigh such attitudes against an objective standard that determines which have more value for life, and which less—for, as we saw in Chapter 4, "objectivity" for Nietzsche can mean nothing but the most comprehensive view possible from the perspective of the human species. In this connection, he speaks of the "need for an *'objective'* positing of values" (WP 707). "What is the objective measure of value?" he asks. "Solely the quantum of enhanced and organized power" (WP 674). Valuations that are symptomatic of a high degree of organized power, and that promote the enhancement and organization of power, have value for life, while those that are symptomatic of a low degree of power and discourage such enhancement and

organization are disvaluable for life. The question here, as we saw toward the end of Chapter 7, is basically whether a valuation or morality expresses and promotes the strongest drives of life, which are indispensable for enhancing of the power of humanity, or whether it is an expression of weaker, milder drives and promotes the taming and weakening of the strongest drives. We saw in Chapter 8 that a morality is "merely a *sign language of the affects*" (BGE 187), that is, of human physio-psychology, whether strongly or weakly constituted. In other words, moralities are not really "about" what they claim to be about, but are instead reflections of the physio-psychology of their creators and adherents. For this reason, Nietzsche writes that

> [t]he attempt should be made to see whether a scientific order of values could be constructed simply on a numerical and mensural scale of force— All other 'values' are prejudices, naïveties, misunderstandings.— They are everywhere *reducible* to this numerical and mensural scale of force. The ascent on this scale represents every rise in value; the descent on this scale represents diminution in value.
>
> Here one has appearance and prejudice against one. (For moral values are only apparent values compared with physiological values.) [WP 710]

In Chapter 8 we saw how Nietzsche conceives of this "scale" in terms of degrees of strength. In what little time remains, my goal will be to indicate how he applies this ranking in determining the value of different valuations and moralities for humanity as a whole.

We have just seen Nietzsche speak of "ascent" and "descent" on the scale of force, and in the previous chapter I quoted his statement that "[e]very individual may be scrutinized to see whether he represents the ascending or the descending line of life" (TI VIII:33). Now, while it is possible for an individual to become stronger or weaker over time, and the degree of strength of most human beings probably fluctuates throughout their lives, and even day by day, the "lines of life" of which he speaks here are greater than individuals, and have far greater potential to

increase or decrease in strength than individuals do. An individual is merely a representative of a "line of life" that grows or declines over generations:

> If he represents the ascending line, then his worth is indeed extraordinary—and for the sake of life as a whole, which takes a step farther through him, the care for his preservation and for the creation of the best conditions for him may even be extreme. The single one, the "individual," as hitherto understood by the people and the philosophers alike, is an error after all: he is nothing by himself, no atom, no "link in the chain," nothing merely inherited from former times; he is the whole single line of humanity up to himself. If he represents the descending development, decay, chronic degeneration, and sickness (sicknesses are, in general, the consequences of decay, not its causes), then he has small worth, and the minimum of decency requires that he take away as little as possible from those who have turned out well. He is merely their parasite. [TI VIII:33]

There are a couple of points here that need to be clarified. First, Nietzsche has a thesis about heredity that he expresses several times in his later writings, but which is a bit difficult to understand. I might have touched on this subject in Chapter 6, but it seems more relevant here. In the text just quoted, he denies the independence of individuals from their hereditary "line," which he appears to trace back to the first human beings, and which could reasonably be extended further to include the animal species from which we evolved, and even to the material world, which he understands as a "*pre-form* of life" (BGE 36). The best sense I can make of his claims about heredity is that he opposes a view that says something like the following: "The traits I have, I got from my ancestors, who had them before me." Nietzsche's view, to the contrary, is that "[o]ne's forebears have paid the price for what one is":

> In general, every thing is *worth as much as one has paid for it*. This does not hold, to be sure, if one takes the individual in isolation; the great capabilities of the individual are utterly out of proportion to what he himself has done, sacrificed, and suffered for them. But if one considers his family history, one discovers the history of a tremendous storing up and capital accumulation of strength through all kinds of renunciation, struggle, work, and prevailing. It is because the great man has *cost* so much, and *not* because he appears as a miracle and gift of heaven and "chance," that he has become great: "heredity" a false concept. One's forebears have paid the price for what one is. [WP 969]

While this implies something along the lines of Lamarckism, I will not enter into a discussion of that question, except to point out that recent work in epigenetics makes this way of thinking appear less implausible than it would have a few decades ago. Nietzsche's idea seems to be that individuals do not simply "inherit" traits from their ancestors, recombined with each generation but essentially the same in themselves; rather, the traits an individual has were present in his ancestors in a less developed form, and were enhanced over many generations before they could express themselves as they do in him—assuming he belongs to the ascending line of life, in which at least certain traits are being enhanced rather than degenerating, and overall strength is increasing. In the ascending line of life, particular drives are strengthened with each successive generation, becoming more capable of commanding the others, which results in a general trend toward producing human beings who are stronger in the full sense outlined in Chapter 8. In the descending line of life, to the contrary, the dominant drives are becoming weaker and their organization as a dominance structure is breaking down with each passing generation.

This leads us to the second point, which concerns the significance of the notion of ascending and declining lines of life for the concepts of strength and weakness. For, if we are concerned not only with individuals, as we were in the previous chapter, but with the lines of life to which they belong, understood as long processes of increasing or decreasing strength, the way in which we conceive of strength and weakness as the standard of value requires revision. We can thank Nietzsche for making this qualification explicitly, although he does so only once:

> The concept "stronger and weaker man" reduces itself to the idea that in the first case a great deal of force is inherited—he is a summation—in the second, as yet little— (inadequate inheritance, splintering of what is inherited). Weakness can be an inaugural phenomenon: "as yet little"; or a terminal phenomenon: "no more."

> The starting point is where great force is, where force is to be discharged. [WP 863]

The "starting point" Nietzsche refers to here is apparently the starting point for *action* of any kind, and especially for great action. Recall his claim that the primary cause of an action is "a quantum of dammed-up force that is waiting to be used up somehow, for something" (GS 360). Well, the origin of that force ultimately lies in one's ancestors, in the "line of life" of which one is, for a little while, the representative. To be strong means that one has inherited a large amount of force, along with the ability to organize it—to be weak, on the other hand, can mean one of two things. First, it can mean that one represents the declining line of life: one's ancestors were stronger, but that strength has been dissipated over generations, so that there is no longer much to inherit. But it can also mean that one represents the ascending line of life: one's ancestors were *weaker*, and one is part of the process of accumulating force and growing stronger over generations. An individual may be weak, but if one could survey the line of life to which he belongs on a large scale, it might be found that his is a case of "as yet little" strength, rather than "no more" strength. Insofar as Nietzsche thinks that all strength is acquired in this way, the weak human being who belongs to the ascending line of life is in fact highly valuable for life, despite being weak. For the production of superlatively strong individuals, which Nietzsche identifies with the enhancement of the power of humanity, requires a great deal of preparatory labour on the part of those who are relatively weak:

> How do men attain great strength and a great task? All the virtues and efficiency of body and soul are acquired laboriously and little by little, through much industry, self-constraint, limitation, through much obstinate, faithful repetition of the same labours, the same renunciations; but there are men who are the heirs and masters of the slowly-acquired manifold treasure of virtue and efficiency—because, through fortunate and reasonable marriages, and also through fortunate accidents, the acquired and stored-up forces of many generations have not been squandered and dispersed but linked together by a firm ring and

> will. In the end there appears a man, a monster of force, who demands a monster of a task. For it is our force that disposes of us; and the wretched spiritual game of goals and intentions and motives is only a foreground—even though weak eyes may take it for the matter itself. [WP 995]

To be sure, those who are "weak" in this sense, and who prepare the way for the emergence of strength over many generations, are not those that Nietzsche calls decadent, degenerate, sick, and so on. This latter type corresponds to those whom he describes as having "no more" strength, who are exhausted with life and rancorous against it. The weak human being who belongs to the ascending line of life is mediocre and unremarkable in terms of strength, but is not particularly perverse or disordered, as the "décadent" is.

There is also another sense in which Nietzsche thinks that the weak have value for enhancing the power of humanity, namely insofar as they serve "as a broad base upon which a higher species performs its *own* tasks—upon which alone it *can stand*" (KSA 13:9[44]). Superlatively strong human beings require very specific conditions if they are to develop to their full potential, and most of the ordinary tasks and cares of human life must be taken care of by others if this is to occur. This does not mean that the strongest human beings should live in pampered luxury—to the contrary, Nietzsche thinks that they would live according to a much stricter discipline than the average person does, as a consequence of their strength and the great tasks to which it prompts them. If this discipline should sometimes also allow them a dangerous degree of freedom, Nietzsche does not think this is something the average person should envy:

> [T]he conditions under which the *strong* and *noble* species maintains itself (in regard to spiritual discipline), are the reverse of those under which the "industrial masses," the shopkeepers à la Spencer stand.
>
> That which is open only to the *strongest* and *most fertile* natures, to make possible *their* existence—leisure, adventure, disbelief, overindulgence itself—that would—if it were open to middling natures, necessarily destroy them—and indeed it does. Here industriousness,

> regularity, moderation, firm "conviction" are in place—in short, the herd-virtues: under them this middling type of man becomes perfect. [KSA 13:9[44]]

The strongest human beings "find their happiness where others would find their destruction: in the labyrinth, in hardness against themselves and others, in experiments; their joy is self-conquest; asceticism becomes in them nature, need, and instinct. Difficult tasks are a privilege to them; to play with burdens that crush others, a recreation" (A 57). On the other hand, "[t]o be a public utility, a wheel, a function […] is the only kind of *happiness* of which the great majority are capable […]. For the mediocre, to be mediocre is their happiness; mastery of one thing, specialization—a natural instinct" (A 57).

Although Nietzsche thinks that the production of superlatively strong human beings requires "slavery" (cf. BGE 257), it does not seem to require slavery of a particularly harsh kind —indeed, he thinks that mediocre human beings experience such slavery as happiness. Nor does it entail that the strong abuse their "slaves" or hold them in utter contempt: "It would be completely unworthy of a more profound spirit to consider mediocrity as such an objection. In fact, it is the very *first* necessity if there are to be exceptions: a high culture depends on it. When the exceptional human being treats the mediocre more tenderly than himself, this is not mere politeness of the heart—it is his *duty*" (A 57). It is also worth pointing out here that Nietzsche does not envision the exceptionally strong human beings he refers to as a political ruling class: they would be "[n]ot merely a master race whose sole task is to rule, but a race with its own sphere of life" apart from political affairs (WP 898). Beneath them, there would be another "caste," stronger than the mediocre but not superlatively strong, which he describes as "the guardians of the law, those who see to order and security, the noble warriors, and above all the

king as the highest formula of warrior, judge, and upholder of the law" (A 57). The highest human beings, therefore, are not kings, but even stand above kings: "The highest men live beyond the rulers, freed from all bonds; and in the rulers they have their instruments" (WP 998; cf. Z, "Conversation with the Kings"). Nietzsche considers such a social arrangement to be a reflection of the natural order of rank, and a symptom of the overall health and strength of a people: "In all this […] there is nothing arbitrary, nothing contrived; whatever is *different* is contrived—contrived for the ruin of nature. The order of castes, the *order of rank*, merely formulates the highest law of life; the separation of the three types [i.e., the mediocre, the rulers, and the highest] is necessary for the preservation of society, and to make possible the higher and the highest types" (A 57). Although he understands such a social order as reflective of the basic character of reality, it bears repeating that this character cannot be established by the sciences alone, as in Guay's objection, thus eliminating the need for philosophers to engage with questions of rank. For this order reflects the basic character of reality *according to Nietzsche's interpretation*—that he considers his interpretation the deepest one possible from a human perspective does not change the fact that it is an interpretation, and that a philosophical interpretation is needed to solve the problem of the rank order of values.

I have shown that the weak who belong to the ascending line of life, that is, the mediocre, have value for enhancing the power of humanity—but what about the weak who belong to the *descending* line of life, the sick and decadent? Most of our analysis of weakness in Chapter 8 centred on this type, both because they are more interesting than the mediocre, and because Nietzsche has more to say about them. When it comes to the enhancement of the power of humanity, he says quite explicitly that they represent the greatest danger:

> The sick represent the greatest danger for the healthy; it is *not* the strongest but the weakest who spell disaster for the strong. […] The *sick* are man's greatest danger; *not* the evil, *not* the "beasts of prey." Those who are failures from the start, downtrodden, crushed—it is they, the *weakest*, who must undermine life among men, who call into question and poison most dangerously our trust in life, in man, and in ourselves. […] [H]ere the web of the most malicious of all conspiracies is constantly being spun—the conspiracy of the suffering against the well-constituted and victorious […]. What do they really want? At least to *represent* justice, love, wisdom, superiority—that is the ambition of the "lowest," the sick. […] They monopolize virtue, these weak, hopelessly sick people, there is no doubt of it: "we alone are the good and the just," they say, "we alone are *homines bonae voluntatis*." They walk among us as embodied reproaches, as warnings to us—as if health, well-constitutedness, strength, pride, and the sense of power were in themselves necessarily vicious things for which one must pay someday, and pay bitterly: how ready they themselves are at bottom to *make* one pay; how they crave to be *hangmen*. […] The will of the weak to represent *some* form of superiority, their instinct for devious paths to tyranny over the healthy—where can it not be discovered, this will to power of the weakest! […] They are all men of *ressentiment*, physiologically unfortunate and worm-eaten, a whole tremulous realm of subterranean revenge, inexhaustible and insatiable in outbursts against the fortunate and happy and in masquerades of revenge and pretexts for revenge: when would they achieve the ultimate, subtlest, sublimest triumph of revenge? Undoubtedly if they succeeded in *poisoning the consciences* of the fortunate with their own misery, so that one day the fortunate began to be ashamed of their good fortune and perhaps said to one another: "it is disgraceful to be fortunate: *there is too much misery!*" But no greater or more calamitous misunderstanding is possible than for the happy, well-constituted, powerful in soul and body, to begin to doubt their *right to happiness* in this fashion. […] That the sick should *not* make the healthy sick […] should surely be our supreme concern on earth; but this requires above all that the healthy be *segregated* from the sick, guarded even from the sight of the sick, that they might not confound themselves with them. Or is it their task, perhaps, to be nurses or physicians? But no worse misunderstanding and denial of *their* task can be imagined: the higher *ought* not to degrade itself to the status of an instrument of the lower, the pathos of distance *ought* to keep their tasks eternally separate! Their right to exist, the privilege of the full-toned bell over the false and cracked, is a thousand times greater: they alone are our *warranty* for the future, they alone are *liable* for the future of man. The sick can never have the ability or obligation to do what *they* can do, what *they* ought to do: but if they are to be able to do what *they* alone ought to do, how can they at the same time be physicians, consolers, and "saviours" of the sick? [GM III:14]

Nietzsche sees the ultimate expression of this "conspiracy of the suffering against the well-constituted" in the morality of "good and evil" described in Chapter 7. By means of this type of morality, of which the morality of Christian Europe is the most prodigal expression, he thinks the

weak have succeeded in "poisoning the consciences" of the strong and persuading them to regard their own instincts as "evil." Such a morality, which diabolizes the strongest drives and valourizes the weakest, is not merely a *symptom* of weakness, but actually *promotes* weakness. I suggested in Chapter 8 that Nietzsche's sympathy for the "redeemers" arises from the fact that, although their teachings are symptomatic of weakness, they do not *spread* weakness in this way. The morality of Christian Europe, to the contrary, teaches that to be weak is *good*, while to be strong is to be *evil*. However, it is important to recognize that Christianity itself is only a contingent expression of this type of morality—today, Nietzsche would probably have focused on other such expressions, considering how much the power of Christianity has declined since his time. In a note from 1887 he writes of his "recognition and extraction of the ideal that has been *handed down* to us, the Christian ideal, even where the dogmatic form of Christianity has been run down completely. The *danger posed by the Christian ideal* lies in its feelings of value, in what can do without conceptual expression: my struggle against *latent Christianity* (e.g., in music, in socialism)" (KSA 13:10[2]).

Another way of putting this point is to say that European Christian morality is one expression of what Nietzsche sometimes calls the *psychology of the good*. When he speaks this way, he means by the "good" those adherents of the morality of "good and evil" who understand themselves to be "the good and the just"—in other words, the weak, or those whom master morality calls "bad." In a note written in late 1888, Nietzsche describes the physio-psychology of this type quite independently of Christianity:

> The *décadence instinct* in the good:
> 1) *Inertia:* he no longer wants to change, to learn, he sits as a "beautiful soul" in himself…
> 2) *Inability to resist:* e.g. in *pity*—he gives in ("indulgent," "tolerant"… "he understands

everything”). “Peace and the people of good will.”
3) He is *enticed* by all sufferers and simply responds—he “helps” gladly; he is instinctively a
conspiracy against the strong.
4) He needs the great *narcotics*—like “the ideal,” the “great man,” the “hero,” he *enthuses*…
5) *Weakness*, which expresses itself in fear of affects, strong wills, Yes and No: he is *amiable*, so
as not to have to have enemies—so as not to have to take sides—
6) *Weakness*, which betrays itself in not *wanting* to see wherever resistance might perchance be
necessary (“humanity”).
7) [He] is seduced by all the great décadents: “the cross,” “love,” “the saints,” *purity*: fundamentally very noisy, mortally dangerous concepts and persons.
—Also the great *falsification* in ideals.
8) Intellectual *vice*:
—Hatred of the truth, because it does not bring “beautiful feelings.”
—Hatred of the truthful — — —
The *self-preservation instinct of the good*, which sacrifices the future of humanity: he is fundamentally reluctant already. […]
He *denies* goals, tasks, in which he does not come into consideration first.
He is *brash* and *immodest* as “highest” type and wants not only to have a say about everything,
but *to pass judgment*. [KSA 13:23[4]]

Nietzsche had first begun to develop this critique of the “good” human being in Z, which contains several important sections on “the good and the just.” He famously compares the “good” human being to a tarantula, that is, a poisoner of life: “Revenge sits in your soul,” Zarathustra says to the tarantulas: “wherever you bite, black scabs grow; your poison makes the soul whirl with revenge” (“On the Tarantulas”). “‘What justice means to us is precisely that the world be filled with the storms of our revenge’ —thus they speak to each other. ‘We shall wreak vengeance and abuse on all whose equals we are not’ —thus do the tarantula-hearts vow. ‘And “will to equality” shall henceforth be the name for virtue; and against all that has power we want to raise our clamour!’” Zarathustra explicitly identifies the “good” human beings with “preachers of *equality*,” which

means they attack the order of rank that we have just seen is indispensable for enhancing the power of humanity. "The source of wrong," Nietzsche writes, "is never unequal rights but the claim of 'equal' rights" (A 57). The low-point on the scale of force hates the high-point, *because* it is high; the descending line of life hates the ascending line, *because* it is ascending. Nietzsche says in EH that the morality of "the good and the just" amounts to "the fact, 'I am declining,' transposed into the imperative, 'all of you ought to decline'" (EH IV:7). The deepest desire of the weak is that the strong should become weak as well—but they call this "improvement," and say that they want the "evil" to become "good" (cf. TI VII:2).

Zarathustra also teaches that the "good" human being is a coward. In "On Human Prudence" he addresses himself thus to the good and the just: "I do not permit the sight of the evil to be spoiled for me by your timidity. I am delighted to see the wonders hatched by a hot sun: tigers and palms and rattlesnakes. Among men too a hot sun hatches a beautiful breed. And there are many wonderful things in those who are evil. [...] Verily, there is yet a future for evil too." We saw in Chapter 5 that Nietzsche identifies "the affects of hatred, envy, covetousness, and the lust to rule as conditions of life, as factors which, fundamentally and essentially, must be present in the general economy of life (and must, therefore, be further enhanced if life is to be further enhanced)" (BGE 23). Nietzsche writes that the "good" human being lacks this insight, and to that extent suffers from the "hemiplegia of virtue":

> For every strong and natural species of man, love and hate, gratitude and revenge, good nature and anger, affirmative acts and negative acts, belong together. One is good on condition one also knows how to be evil [...]. Whence, then, comes the sickness and ideological unnaturalness that rejects this doubleness—that teaches that it is a higher thing to be efficient only one one side? Whence comes the hemiplegia of virtue, the invention of the good man?—
>
> The demand is that man should castrate himself of those instincts with which he can be an enemy, can cause harm, can be angry, can demand revenge— […]

> Such a manner of valuing believes itself to be "idealistic"; it does not doubt that, in the conception of "the good," it has posited a supreme desideratum. At its peak, it imagines a state in which all that is evil is annulled and in which only good creatures actually remain. It does not even consider it settled that this antithesis of good and evil is conditional on the existence of both; on the contrary, the latter should vanish and the former remain, one the has a right to exist, the other ought not to be there at all— […]
>
> Perhaps there has never before been a more dangerous ideology, a greater mischief in psychologicis, than this will to good: one has reared the most repellent type, the unfree man, the bigot; one has taught that only as a bigot is one on the right path to godhood, only the bigot's way is God's way. [WP 351]

Nietzsche considers this type of morality essentially life-negating. Not only is it impossible to eliminate "evil," but the closer one came to doing so, the more harm one would do to humanity, in the sense of decreasing its power. In Chapter 7 we saw him say that "the most powerful affects [i.e., drives] are the most valuable, in as much as there are no greater sources of strength" (WP 931)—but the most powerful drives are precisely those that the "good" human being calls "evil" and wants to extirpate. "In the great economy of the whole," Nietzsche writes, "the terrible aspects of reality (in affects, in desires, in the will to power) are to an incalculable degree more necessary than that form of petty happiness which people call 'goodness'; one actually has to be quite lenient to accord the latter any place at all, considering that it presupposes an instinctive mendaciousness" (EH IV:4). Nietzsche's most striking formula for what is needed to enhance the power of humanity is intentionally paradoxical from the perspective of the "good" human being: "Man must become better and more evil [*besser und böser*]" (Z, "On the Higher Man," 5). This conception is best illustrated by the following note, written in 1888:

> [T]he highest man, if such a concept be allowed, would be the man who represented the antithetical character of existence most strongly, as its glory and justification— Commonplace men can represent only a tiny nook and corner of this natural character: they perish when the multiplicity of elements and the tension of opposites, i.e., the preconditions for greatness in man, increases. That man must grow better *and* more evil is my formula for this inevitability —

> Most men represent pieces and fragments of man: one has to add them up for a complete man to appear. Whole ages, whole peoples are in this sense somewhat fragmentary; it is perhaps part of the economy of human evolution that man should evolve piece by piece. But that should not make one forget for a moment that the real issue is the production of the synthetic man; that lower men, the tremendous majority, are merely preludes and rehearsals out of whose medley the whole man appears here and there, the milestone man who indicates how far humanity has advanced so far. It does *not* advance in a single straight line; often a type once achieved is lost again […]. One must have a standard: I distinguish the grand style; I distinguish activity and reactivity [i.e., strength and weakness]; I distinguish the excessive, the squandering from the *suffering* who are passionate (— the idealists) [WP 881]

With this, we are in a position understand what Nietzsche means by "the great economy of the whole" (EH IV:4). Although he does not use the term in this passage, we have seen enough by now to know that this is an economy of *drives*. He is concerned, as he had been at least since the time he wrote UM III, with the production of "the individual higher exemplar, the more uncommon, more powerful, more complex, more fruitful" human being (UM III:6), or what he here calls the "synthetic man." This "complexity" refers to a great multiplicity of drives, and it is this multiplicity that is to be "synthesized" in the strongest human beings. In the previous chapter we saw how Nietzsche understands the dynamics of strength, and that the strongest human being would have the greatest multiplicity of powerful drives that could possibly be organized into a hierarchical dominance structure. The enhancement of the power of humanity involves the attempt to create the conditions under which such human beings can develop. While such conditions have come about in the past mainly by accident (A 4), Nietzsche thinks that "the conditions for the production of a stronger type, we are now able to comprehend and consciously *will*: we are able to create the conditions under which such an elevation is possible" (WP 898). Perhaps the most important of these conditions is that the rank order of values established by the "good," according to which the strongest drives are considered disvaluable, be abolished for

stronger types, and replaced with one in which the value of those drives is recognized and commended. Nietzsche thinks that this would make it possible for stronger, more multiplicitous and interesting human beings to arise, freed from the oppression of social attitudes that diabolize strong drives and the bad conscience that often develops as a result of such attitudes. Yet here we can see the subtlety of Nietzsche's conception of the "great economy"—for in spite of all his criticism of the morality of "good and evil," he does not want to see it abolished entirely, but merely relegated to its appropriate sphere: "My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank: not at an individualistic morality. The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd—but not reach out beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions, as do the independent, or the 'beasts of prey,' etc" (WP 287). Similarly: "I have declared war on the anemic Christian ideal (together with what is related to it), not with the aim of destroying it but only of putting an end to its tyranny and clearing the way for new ideals, for *more robust* ideals" (WP 361).

"*'The world is perfect'*—thus says the instinct of the most spiritual, the Yes-saying instinct; 'imperfection, whatever is beneath us, distance—even the chandala [i.e., the weakest] still belongs to this perfection'" (A 57). Ultimately, the conception of the great economy is necessary from the perspective of life-affirmation: Nietzsche can establish an order of rank, but he cannot insist that certain aspects of reality should not exist at all, as we saw that the "good" do, without negating life. He treats it as a basic assumption that to want one thing to be different entails that one wants everything to be different, since all things are so causally connected that to change one would mean to change them all: "The single human being is a piece of *fatum* from the front and from the rear, one law more, one necessity more for all that is yet to come and to be. To

say to him 'Change yourself!' is to demand that everything be changed, even retroactively" (TI V:6). To affirm life therefore requires one to affirm it in all its parts, and not to want anything to be different, including the entire past. Now we have seen that Nietzsche had difficulty doing this, and that with Zarathustra he attempted to conceive of a human being who could do this—who could desire the eternal recurrence of all things more than anything else. One of the most important reasons that Zarathustra is able to do this is that he learns to see the value for the *future* in things that he could not desire eternally for their own sake. The "small man" is one of these things, as it is for Nietzsche when he conceives of the great economy within which even the mediocre have their place: "The great disgust with man—*this* choked me and crawled into my throat […]. 'Eternally recurs the man of whom you are weary, the small man'—thus yawned my sadness and dragged its feet and could not go to sleep. […] [T]he eternal recurrence of the smallest—that was my disgust with all existence" (Z, "The Convalescent"). How is Zarathustra able to affirm the eternal recurrence even of the smallest? How is he able to affirm the profusion of "fragmentary" human beings, along with the near-absence of "complete" ones? By interpreting all of these things as necessary for fulfilling his ultimate wish, as building blocks to be employed in the great work that he envisages: the production of a higher kind of human being.

> "But this is what matters least to me since I have been among men: to see that this one lacks an eye and that one an ear and a third a leg, while there are others who have lost their tongues or their noses or their heads. I see, and have seen, what is worse, and many things so vile that I do not want to speak of everything; and concerning some things I do not even like to be silent: for there are human beings who lack everything, except one thing of which they have too much—human beings who are nothing but a big eye or a big mouth or a big belly or anything at all that is big. Inverse cripples I call them.
>
> "And when I came out of my solitude and crossed over this bridge for the first time I did not trust my eyes and looked and looked again, and said at last, 'An ear! An ear as big as a man!' I looked still more closely—and indeed, underneath the ear something was moving, something pitifully small and wretched and slender. And, no doubt of it, the tremendous ear

> was attached to a small, thin stalk—but this stalk was a human being! If one used a magnifying glass one could even recognize a tiny envious face; also, that a bloated little soul was dangling from the stalk. The people, however, told me that this great ear was not only a human being, but a great one, a genius. But I never believed the people when they spoke of great men; and I maintained my belief that it was an inverse cripple who had too little of everything and too much of one thing."
>
> When Zarathustra had spoken thus […] he turned to his disciples in profound dismay and said: "Verily, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field. And when my eyes flee from the now to the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings.
>
> "The now and the past on earth—alas, my friends, that is what *I* find most unendurable; and I should not know how to live if I were not also a seer of that which must come. A seer, a willer, a creator, a future himself and a bridge to the future—and alas, also, as it were, a cripple at this bridge: all this is Zarathustra. […]
>
> "I walk among men as among the fragments of the future—that future which I envisage. And this is all my creating and striving, that I create and carry into One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident. And how could I bear to be a man if man were not also a creator and guesser of riddles and redeemer of accidents?
>
> "To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all 'it was' into a 'thus I willed it'—that alone should I call redemption. Will—that is the name of the liberator and joy-bringer; thus I taught you, my friends. But now learn this too: the will itself is still a prisoner. Willing liberates; but what is it that puts even the liberator himself in fetters? 'It was'—that is the name of the will's gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy. […]
>
> "All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says it it, 'But thus I willed it.' Until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.'" [Z, "On Redemption"]

How does Nietzsche establish a standard of value and an order of rank without wishing to negate what is disvaluable and of a low rank? By looking at life as a great economy in which everything has value for the future, in which every human being who ever lived, every drive that ever strove for something, is a piece of raw material stored up in the great line of life that encompasses both ascent and decline, for which the common term is "man." Nietzsche attempts to affirm all that is and has been for the sake of the higher human beings to which that line can still give birth one

day. “God is a conjecture,” says Zarathustra; “but I desire that your conjectures should not reach beyond your creative will. Could you *create* a god? Then do not speak to me of any gods. But you could well create the *Übermensch*. Perhaps not you yourselves, my brothers. But into fathers and forefathers of the *Übermensch* you could re-create yourselves: and let this be your best creation” (Z, “Upon the Blessed Isles”).

Conclusion

In this study I have been concerned to explicate Nietzsche's methodology, the worldview he derives from it, and ultimately the standard of value he derives from that worldview, which I have argued is best understood in terms of the concept of "degrees of strength." One question that I have not considered is whether Nietzsche is *right* about any of the claims he makes. It seems obvious that in order to approach this question at all, one must be clear about precisely *what* claims Nietzsche makes, and what reasons he offers to justify them. Many commentators neglect this interpretive task in one degree or another, being apparently more concerned with uncovering flaws in Nietzsche's reasoning than with trying to read him in such a way that his claims make sense. We saw Tom Stern, for example, insist that no sense can be made of Nietzsche's claims about drives—and, while he does pose some difficult interpretive questions, he does not try very hard to answer them, ostensibly because they cannot be answered. I have done my best to show that this is false. The most difficult challenge he poses is probably how Nietzsche can claim to know something about the drives of others despite his claim that we cannot know anything for certain even about our own drives, which I have answered by appeal to his concept of physio-psychological symptomatology. Such an answer, however, requires that one look beyond Nietzsche's explicit statements about drives, and try to see how the difficulty can be resolved within the broader scope of his thought. Every attempt should be made to resolve interpretive problems in this way, since the alternative is to dismiss many of Nietzsche's more difficult ideas as incoherent, making the question whether they are correct a superfluous one. Apart from being the title of a book by Adrian Del Caro, "Nietzsche contra Nietzsche" is a phrase that summarizes a great deal of Nietzsche scholarship, both now and in the past. Nietzsche's putative self-contra-

dictions are a perennial topic. I have, to the contrary, made it a guiding assumption that Nietzsche does not contradict himself in his mature writings, and have attempted to see how far I could get in interpreting them on the basis of that assumption, to the end of producing a coherent account of his thought that sets out his claims and his reasons for making them. The reader may judge to what extent I have succeeded. But even if he should judge my work an utter failure, it will still remain for someone to supply such an account before the question whether Nietzsche's claims are correct can be properly addressed.

Many of these claims are of course disturbing. Much of what I discussed in Part III cuts against modern moral sensibilities, and particularly those relating to human equality. Nietzsche, as almost everyone admits, was an illiberal philosopher: an opponent of democracy (though not a nobleman), of women's emancipation, and in general of what are now called "human rights." He explicitly places higher value on the strong, "evil" human being than on the so-called "good" human being, and would like to see that disparity in value recognized and reflected in worldly affairs. As I said in my introduction, these are not mere "opinions" that one may simply discard because one does not agree with them. Rather, Nietzsche undertakes a thorough *critique* of the notion of human equality, and anyone who wants to refute his thinking on that matter must first understand that critique, and then show why it is wrong. One problem that is likely to arise in such an attempt is that Nietzsche's presuppositions differ so widely from those of the modern interpreter that no real basis of agreement can be established on which the disagreement can be adjudicated—for we have seen that one cannot appeal to notions like intrinsic human dignity and the need to alleviate suffering in a debate with Nietzsche. I discussed disagreements of this kind in Chapter 4, and argued that Nietzsche attributes them to differing affective interests that lead to

different conclusions about the way the world is, and about what is desirable. I also argued that this way of looking at such disagreements is not relativism of the “anything goes” variety, because some affective interests are symptoms of health and strength for Nietzsche, while others are symptoms of weakness. Moreover, he thinks that those with strong “affects” (i.e., drives) are better equipped to apprehend the way the world is, including what is desirable and undesirable for humanity, because they are relatively free from self-deception. Is Nietzsche right or wrong about this? If he is right, we might have to consider the possibility that a commitment to the notion of human equality is a sign of weakness, and that it involves self-deception—which is precisely his claim.

On the other hand, one could attempt to show that Nietzsche’s own perspective is pathological in some way. Some attempts have been made in that direction, though I am not aware of any very convincing ones. Part of the problem is that one would need to have a viable alternative to his worldview, which is based on will to power—for if the world is indeed will to power, it is hard to see what would be pathological about Nietzsche’s view on a subject like human equality. It will not do to adopt a “naturalist” outlook according to which what is pathological is simply what is defined as such by psychiatry, unless one can answer Nietzsche’s objections to such an outlook, one of which is the problem that it does no more than describe reality without touching on the causal power that connects different events. Nietzsche’s attempt to solve this problem is rather novel and interesting, and it would take a good deal of work either to show that causality can be understood without appeal to human psychology, or that there is a way of understanding it on a psychological basis that is cognitively superior to his concept of will to power. This again recalls what I said in the introduction about the organic relationship among Nietzsche’s ideas: for

if one wanted to refute the idea, for example, that human beings are not equal and should not be treated as equal, one would probably have to refute the interpretation of the world as will to power, and perhaps a number of the other positions explained in Parts I and II of this study. This would have to be done carefully and fairly, based on a thorough comprehension of Nietzsche's claims, and a sympathetic understanding of his reasons for making them. "Will there be many who desire to pursue such researches?" (HA 1). I am inclined to doubt it. For my part, I have attempted to give an account of Nietzsche's philosophy that is coherent and relatively comprehensive, without touching the further question of its correctness.

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