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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Humanities

**NIETZSCHE AND THE SCEPTICS: TOWARDS A HEALTHY LIFE**

by

**Cynthia Victoria Fox**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**ABSTRACT**

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The aim of this thesis is to offer a critique of Nietzsche's project for the revaluation of values interpreted as a philosophy for a way of living aimed at achieving 'great health'. I argue that, in this respect, it is illuminating and aids the interpretation of Nietzsche's views on sickness and the achievement of health to compare his philosophy with that of the Pyrrhonian Sceptics whom I argue share similar philosophical objectives.

This thesis also critiques and builds on Jessica Berry's comparative study of Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics regarding health in which she argues for a similarity between the Pyrrhonian sceptic's notion of health and Nietzsche's great health. I highlight difficulties in her arguments. Instead I offer my own comparative study on health which highlights alternative similarities between Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics, principally their rejection of orthodox philosophical principles in favour of a new way of doing philosophy. I argue that both philosophies identify a psychological sickness which they associate with adherence to conventional values – the cure for which is achieved through a comparable methodology, specifically involving the attack on dogmatism and the adoption of scepticism, doubt and suspension. I also show that both consider that philosophical deliberation should be directed towards the Socratic question 'how should I live a good life?'



# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Declaration Of Authorship .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 2 A Philosophy for Health.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 3 Nietzsche's Value System: An Ethical System for Living.....</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	25
3.2 Is Nietzsche an Immoralist? .....	26
3.3 Herd/Slave Morality: the Pathology of <i>Ressentiment</i> .....	28
3.4 Higher Moralities: A New Ethical Framework.....	30
3.5 Higher Types: Problems with Conventional Morality .....	39
3.6 Conclusion .....	43
<b>Chapter 4 Pity and Compassion: An Unhealthy Response .....</b>	<b>47</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	47
4.2 <i>Mitleid</i> as a Response to Suffering.....	47
4.3 Nietzsche's Rejection of Schopenhauer's Morality of <i>Mitleid</i> .....	48
4.4 <i>Mitleid</i> : A Danger to Health and Human Excellence .....	51
4.5 Distinguishing Pity from Compassion.....	52
4.6 Contempt, Shame and Humiliation in Pity .....	53
4.7 Distinguishing Nietzsche's Pity from Schopenhauer's Compassion.....	55
4.8 Great Compassion, Nihilism and the Threat to Great Health .....	55
4.9 Von Tevenar and Cartwright: A Summary.....	58
4.10 Conclusion .....	60
<b>Chapter 5 The Sickness of Nihilism .....</b>	<b>63</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	63
5.2 Background to Nihilism .....	63

## Table of Contents

5.3 Nihilism: A Transitional Stage to Overcoming Sickness .....	72
5.4 Conclusion.....	75
<b>Chapter 6 Health: Suffering and the Will to power .....</b>	<b>77</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	77
6.2 Schopenhauer and Suffering.....	78
6.3 Happiness and a Re-evaluation of Ethical Theories.....	80
6.4 Reginster and Hussain: Interpretations of Will to Power .....	83
6.5 Conclusion.....	89
<b>Chapter 7 Dogmatism within the Nietzsche Canon: Emerging Viewpoints.....</b>	<b>93</b>
7.1 Introduction .....	93
7.2 Other Authors: Jessica Berry, Alexander Nehamas, Maudemarie Clark .....	94
7.3 What does Nietzsche mean by Dogmatism? .....	98
7.4 The Attack on Unqualified Truth and the Criterion of Truth .....	99
7.5 <i>Human All Too Human</i> : Science and the Attack on Metaphysical Philosophy.....	102
7.6 <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> : An Attack on Dogmatism .....	103
7.7 A Disavowal of Dogmatism .....	106
7.8 Responding to Dogmatism.....	114
7.9 Conclusion.....	115
<b>Chapter 8 Pyrrhonian scepticism: A Philosophy for a Way of Life.....</b>	<b>117</b>
8.1 Introduction .....	117
8.2 Background to Pyrrhonian scepticism .....	118
8.3 The Attack on Dogmatism and ‘the Hope of Becoming Tranquil’ .....	119
8.4 The Search for Truth and the Rejection of a Criterion of Truth .....	121
8.5 Suspension of Judgement ( <i>epochē</i> ) and Mental Well-Being.....	124
8.6 A Sceptical Ability ( <i>Dunamis Antithetikē</i> ) .....	125
8.7 Living by Appearances and the Intuitions.....	128
8.8 The Sceptic Rejection of <i>Eudaimonia</i> as the Goal of Life .....	133
8.9 Pyrrhonian scepticism: A Medical Background .....	139
8.10 The Sceptic as Physician: Dogmatism as a Disease.....	140
8.11 Issues Regarding a ‘Life without Belief’ .....	142
8.12 Conclusion.....	150

<b>Chapter 9 Jessica Berry and a Review of Other Authors .....</b>	<b>153</b>
9.1 Introduction.....	153
9.2 Other Authors: Parush, Mitcheson and Bett.....	153
9.3 Jessica Berry on Health and Cheerfulness.....	160
9.4 Berry: A Conclusion .....	176
<b>Chapter 10 Conclusion: Parallels in Two Philosophies for Health .....</b>	<b>179</b>
10.1 Introduction.....	179
10.2 Principal Parallels .....	179
10.3 Principal Divergences .....	191
10.4 Conclusion .....	194
<b>Appendix A Similarity and Influence.....</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>201</b>



## Declaration Of Authorship

I, Cynthia Victoria Fox

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

### NIETZSCHE AND THE SCEPTICS: TOWARDS A HEALTHY LIFE

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission
8. Signed: .....

Date: .....



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And last but not least my love and gratitude go to my husband Alan for his love and encouragement throughout these four years, his endless re-reading of my numerous drafts and for his interest in my thesis throughout.



# Abbreviations

## Works by Nietzsche

**AC:** *The Anti-Christ* (1888), in Norman, J. and Ridley, A. (eds.), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Trans. Norman, J.

**BGE:** *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1886), Horstmann, R.P. and Norman, J. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Trans. Norman, J.

**BT:** *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) in Guess, R. and Spiers, R. (eds.), *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Trans. Spiers, R.

**D:** *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (1881), Clark, M and Leiter, B. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Trans. Hollingdale, R.J.

**EH:** *Ecce Homo* (1888), in Norman, J. and Ridley, A. (eds.), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Trans. Norman, J.

**GM:** *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998). Trans. Clark, M. and Swensen A.J.

**GS:** *The Gay Science* (1882; Part 5: 1887), Williams, B (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001. Trans. Del Caro, A. and Nauckhoff, J.

**HH:** *Human All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (1878) in *Human All Too Human*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Trans. Hollingdale, R.J.

**TI:** *Twilight of the Idols* (1889), in Norman, J. and Ridley, A. (eds.), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Trans. Norman, J.

**UM:** *Untimely Meditations* (1873-6), Breazeale, D. (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Trans. Hollingdale, R.J.

**WLN:** *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, Rüdiger Bittner (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Trans. Sturge, K.

**WP:** *The Will to Power*, Kaufmann, W (ed.). New York: Vintage, 1968. Trans. Hollingdale, R.J. and Kaufmann, W.

## Abbreviations

**WS:** *The Wanderer and his Shadow* (1880), in *Human All Too Human*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Trans. Hollingdale, R.J.

**Z:** *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (1883-5), Del Caro, A. and Pippin, R. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Trans. Del Caro, A.

## Works by other authors

**DL:** Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Vol. 2, USA: Witch Books, 2011. Trans. Hicks, R.D.

**M XI:** Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Ethicists: Book XI of Against The Mathematicians*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Trans. Bett, R.

**OBM:** Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*. Indianapolis Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995. Trans. Payne, E.F.J.

**PH:** Sextus Empiricus *Outlines of Scepticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Trans. Annas, J and Barnes, J.

**WWR:** Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vols. I and II. New York: Dover Publications, 1969. Trans. Payne, E.F.J.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to offer a critique of Nietzsche's project for the revaluation of values interpreted as a philosophy for a way of living aimed at achieving 'great health'. I argue that, in this respect, it is illuminating and aids the interpretation of Nietzsche's views on sickness and the achievement of health to compare his philosophy with that of the Pyrrhonian Sceptics whom I argue share similar philosophical objectives.

This thesis also critiques and builds on Jessica Berry's comparative study of Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics regarding health in which she argues for a similarity between the Pyrrhonian sceptic's notion of health and Nietzsche's great health. I highlight difficulties in her arguments.

Instead I offer my own comparative study on health which highlights alternative similarities between Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics, principally their rejection of orthodox philosophical principles in favour of a new way of doing philosophy. I argue that both philosophies identify a psychological sickness which they associate with adherence to conventional values – the cure for which is achieved through a comparable methodology, specifically involving the attack on dogmatism and the adoption of scepticism, doubt and suspension. I also show that both consider that philosophical deliberation should be directed towards the Socratic question 'how should I live a good life?'

Commentators on Nietzsche's works say that his ideas were groundbreaking.<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche's project centres, I suggest, on the idea that psychological well-being calls for a re-evaluation of ethical/moral theory. Likewise the Pyrrhonian sceptics proposed a revision of contemporary ethical theory by which they came to advance health (*ataraxia*, tranquillity or freedom from mental distress) as the principal aim of their philosophy. I show that a comparative study of Nietzsche's philosophy with that of Pyrrhonian

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<sup>1</sup> Philippa Foot (2002: 81): '[Nietzsche] had come to a view of life which was quite unlike that of any of his contemporaries, and which brought him to challenge ways of thought and behaviour centuries old.' Peter Berkowitz (1995: ix): 'Nietzsche has been embraced...as a ground-breaking critic of the underlying moral and metaphysical assumptions of the Western tradition...there is hardly a thinker in the history of philosophy who is more celebrated precisely because it is claimed, he points the way to a fundamental break with the past'.

## Chapter 1

scepticism illuminates and helps us to better understand the groundbreaking nature of his claims.

Chapters 2 to 7 discuss the claim that the identification of a pathology and the cure of psychological sickness are the principal factors which motivate Nietzsche's project of revaluation. In these chapters I discuss Nietzsche's approach to health and I show that his methodology is a philosophy for a way of life with therapeutic objectives. Writers on Nietzsche have typically focussed on his somewhat iconoclastic attitude towards philosophy. Indeed Nietzsche's philosophy has been criticized for lacking any methodology, theory or philosophical system. Thus Bernard Williams (1995: 66) writes of Nietzsche's works: '...the resistance to the continuation of philosophy by ordinary means is built into the text, which is booby-trapped not only against recovering theory from it, but, in many cases, against any systematic exegesis that assimilates it to theory'. But Nietzsche's project for the revaluation of values is, I suggest, not an exercise in iconoclasm nor is it simply a matter of theoretical exegesis. Rather, Nietzsche's philosophical project is directed towards the objective of 'great health', a state of empowerment and reinvigoration of the individual. The account of sickness and disease which permeates Nietzsche's work and his reference to *decadence* (a condition of mental degeneration and decline) pave the way for a philosophy which takes the affirmation of life as the cure. I show that his project for the critique of moral values and the revaluation of values can usefully be interpreted as a philosophy for a way of life which prioritises the mental health and well-being of the individual over the values of conventional society.

**Chapter 2** shows that health is the principal factor that underpins Nietzsche's project. I discuss the personal factors that contribute to Nietzsche's concerns with health. I show that Nietzsche associates health and psychological well-being with the way in which the individual responds positively to sickness and suffering and the ability of the individual to overcome these.

**Chapter 3** discusses Nietzsche's view that psychological ill-health is directly linked to belief in the traditional moral values of contemporary society. I show that Nietzsche's discussion of morality articulates his rejection of contemporary morality as an unhealthy and life-negating system of values. I show that his rejection of contemporary morality suggests a way of life postulating a healthier ethical ideal. I discuss the problems of psychological sickness which Nietzsche associates with the current system of morality

(herd/slave morality) and I discuss his proposal for a new ethics that he sees as enhancing life and transforming the life of the individual from a state of nihilistic sickness to health and well-being. I show that Nietzsche's project identifies a way of living philosophically to create values which are affirmative of life. I discuss the plausibility of Nietzsche's project as an ethical system and the accusations of immorality levelled against it. In subsequent chapters I highlight the comparable accusations of immorality made against Pyrrhonian scepticism. I argue that Nietzsche's project fails to fulfil the criteria for an ethical system co-ordinating and regulating the behaviour of individuals within society. I discuss Bernard Williams' definition of what an ethical system should comprise to show that Nietzsche's project does not satisfy Williams' criteria. I discuss the contrasting views of Simon Robertson (2012), Maudemarie Clark (1994, 2015) and Philippa Foot (1994).

**Chapter 4** shows that Nietzsche's attack on morality highlights the damage to health as the principal reason for his rejection of a certain kind of morality of which *Mitleid* (pity or compassion) is the essence. I show that, for Nietzsche, 'the problem of the *value* of *Mitleid* and of the morality of *Mitleid*' (GM Preface 6) is that nothing else is 'more unhealthy' (AC7). Nietzsche believes that *Mitleid* is a danger not only to the pitied but more importantly to the one who pities (GS 338). In establishing the serious problem for health that Nietzsche believes *Mitleid* poses (especially to higher types) I start with a discussion of Schopenhauer's morality of compassion to show its influence in Nietzsche's rejection of *Mitleid*. I show that the harm to health is at the forefront of Nietzsche's objection to Schopenhauer's view of *Mitleid*. To this end I discuss the relevance of Schopenhauer's view of compassion: Schopenhauer takes *Mitleid* to be the response to the suffering of another and of suffering as something to be abhorred and eliminated. I discuss Nietzsche's contrary view that the elimination of suffering amounts to a negation of life and is harmful to well-being. I discuss the German use of *Mitleid*, in particular that it can be translated as both 'pity' and 'compassion' in order to consider whether Nietzsche's objections can be ascribed to one rather than the other. I discuss David Cartwright's (1982) argument that *Mitleid* interpreted as pity is exclusively the emotion to which Nietzsche specifically objects and that Schopenhauer's notion of compassion does not fall within the scope of Nietzsche's objections. I consider Gudrun von Tevenar's (2007) argument that Nietzsche's objection is not confined exclusively to pity. I discuss Von Tevenar's interpretation of Nietzsche's account that pity is harmful to the pitied but that

## Chapter 1

Nietzsche also entertains a notion of the 'great compassion' (GM III 14) which he sees as harmful to the strong and the healthy. I argue that von Tevenar's account is the more persuasive of the two. However, I suggest that Nietzsche sees *Mitleid*, whether it is pity or compassion or both as harmful to health.

**Chapter 5** discusses Nietzsche's account of the values of a Christian morality in order to show that, for Nietzsche, Christianity compels the adoption of unhealthy values for the sake of a better life in a world other than this one. I discuss Nietzsche's opposition to the ascetic ideal with its negative evaluation of life. I show that the loss of the belief in God and the subsequent collapse in values has relevance for man's mental state in that it provokes nihilistic sickness. I discuss Nietzsche's identification of European nihilism and the loss of normative authority for those values conferred by the ascetic ideal. I show that this account of nihilism is integral to Nietzsche's account of the overcoming of suffering and the achievement of health. I discuss what it is that Nietzsche means by nihilism and comment on the views of Arthur Danto, Walter Kaufmann, Richard Schacht and Bernard Reginster. I show that, ultimately, nihilism is, for Nietzsche, a transitional stage which he views as a positive force which is necessary for the achievement of health. I show that Nietzsche's nihilism is the motivation which he believes is necessary for the overcoming of suffering through the rejection of the old values and the creation of life-affirming values.

**Chapter 6** discusses Nietzsche's account of will to power: that health, for Nietzsche is the will to power and that will to power is the value for life through which the individual comes to affirm life. I discuss Schopenhauer's account of the nature of the will in order to show the influence that this account has on Nietzsche's view of health and to show that it provides the motivation for Nietzsche's account of will to power as health. I discuss Nietzsche's views on the values of Judaeo-Christianity which, for him, are in opposition to man's natural instincts (TI: 'Morality as Anti-Nature', 4). I show that Nietzsche's will to power doctrine is consistent with a naturalist account of the fundamental instincts that promote health and well-being. I discuss Nietzsche's rejection of ethical theories of happiness. I show that happiness is not, for Nietzsche, the goal of life but occurs as a by-product of the will to power. I discuss Bernard Reginster's and Nadeem Hussain's contrasting interpretations of the will to power. I argue that Hussain's account of will to power as those fundamental tendencies which are essential to life and health is the more

persuasive of the two interpretations. Hussain's interpretation is, I suggest, consistent with Nietzsche's view of human beings as being part of the natural world and it is also a more apt reflection of Nietzsche's view of the harm that is caused by what he sees as the anti-naturalism of Christian morality.

**Chapter 7** shows that Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism links the dogmatism of traditional philosophy to psychological sickness. I show in the final chapter that Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism has parallels with Pyrrhonian scepticism's attack on dogmatism. I discuss Jessica Berry's, Alexander Nehamas' and Maudemarie Clark's contrasting views of Nietzsche's attack. I show that their interpretations fail to take adequate account of the relationship between dogmatism in philosophical thinking and the consequence for health which I argue is the principal motivation for Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism. I show that Nietzsche's attack exposes the philosopher's lack of understanding of truth (the philosopher's belief in unqualified truths) as ultimately life-negating. I discuss Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism in *Human All Too Human* to show that his objective is to contrast metaphysics unfavourably with the truths of science which he believes to be more competent in making claims about truth. I argue, however, that the more serious exposition of Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism is to be found in his mature work, more specifically *Beyond Good and Evil*. I argue that here we come to understand Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism as an attack on a way of thinking about truth which he sees as an impoverishment of life and detrimental to health. I show that, for Nietzsche, the philosopher's dogmatism manifests as a belief in unqualified truth and the belief in a 'criterion of truth' both of which Nietzsche rejects. Nietzsche's attack is, I suggest, not a denial of the existence of unqualified truth. Rather Nietzsche questions the possibility that we can ever know what unqualified or absolute truth is. I show that the point, for Nietzsche, is that we can never be sure that the world is how it appears to us. I discuss Nietzsche's view that the adoption of a healthier approach towards truth requires acknowledging that no one position on truth exists; that the most psychologically healthy way to live is the one that accepts that the closest we come to objectivity in truth is by adopting as many perspectives as possible. I discuss Nietzsche's attack on the dogmatic belief in opposite values and suggest that his position here is not merely a theoretical problem of metaphysics. I show that by attacking the belief in opposite values, Nietzsche highlights the prejudices on which the metaphysician's belief in values is predicated. I

argue that, for Nietzsche, the faith in opposite values gives credence to the ascetic ideal and thus endorses a way of life which is harmful to mental well-being. I discuss Nietzsche's adoption of scepticism, doubt and suspension (*ephēxis*) to show that they are, for him, a new way of doing philosophy and an antidote to the 'disease'<sup>2</sup> of dogmatism.

**Chapter 8** discusses Pyrrhonian scepticism to highlight the parallels with Nietzsche's philosophy. I rely principally on the writings of Sextus Empiricus. I show that Pyrrhonian scepticism is a philosophy for a way of life which focuses on the achievement of individual mental well-being using a methodology which prioritizes praxis over abstract theory. I show that the Sceptic's attack on Dogmatism is an attack on the Dogmatist's valorisation of the search for truth and the Dogmatist's positing of a univocal criterion of truth for distinguishing truth from falsity.<sup>3</sup> I discuss the Sceptic's particular brand of polemical inquiry, the setting up of opposing arguments designed to establish equipollence (*isostheneia*) and suspension of judgement (*epochē*) – these, I argue, demonstrate the practical nature of Pyrrhonian scepticism as a philosophy by which to live. I show that their philosophy is a methodology which is solely for the purpose of achieving tranquillity (*ataraxia*). I discuss the ethical life of the Pyrrhonian sceptics and their rejection of the idea that there is anything which is by nature good or bad. I argue that the Sceptics reject Epicurean and Stoic conceptions of *eudaimonia* as the goal of life; instead I show that their aim is tranquillity (*ataraxia*). I show that the practical nature of Pyrrhonian scepticism reflects the medical background of the later Sceptics and in particular that of Sextus Empiricus. I show that as both philosopher and physician Sextus sees dogmatic belief as a disease and that, for him, the practice of Pyrrhonian scepticism is the means by which to dislodge belief and is thus the cure. I show that the Sceptic uses argument as a purgative drug to destroy belief and to induce a cathartic bringing about of tranquillity. I discuss the plausibility of the Sceptic's claim that they are able to live a life without belief; I discuss objections that suspending judgement on values does not confer tranquillity but is more likely to result in anxiety; I discuss the objection that without belief the Sceptic's life will be one of inactivity (*apraxia*); I discuss the accusation that the practice of

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<sup>2</sup> BGE Preface

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this thesis, I capitalize 'Sceptic' and 'Sceptical' when referring specifically to the Pyrrhonian sceptics and the practice of Pyrrhonian scepticism and similarly with 'Dogmatist' and 'Dogmatism' when referring to those whom the Sceptics attack.

Pyrrhonian scepticism leads to immorality and in chapter 10, I suggest that Nietzsche's project raises comparable problems regarding immorality.

**Chapter 9** comments on the views of Adi Parush, Katrina Mitcheson, Richard Bett and Jessica Berry in order to highlight their claims for similarities between Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics. The principal aim of this chapter is to discuss the claims on health made by Jessica Berry in her seminal work *Nietzsche and the Ancient Sceptical Tradition* (2011). I argue that Berry's claim for similarity between the Sceptics' view of health which they describe as *ataraxia* (tranquillity) and Nietzsche's notion of 'great health' is questionable. I discuss Berry's argument that Nietzsche's notion of great health may be defined as 'stability' which she takes to be a core component of cheerfulness. I go on to discuss Berry's claim that through a notion of cheerfulness (*euthumia*) derived from Democritus the Sceptic's *ataraxia* can be interpreted as cheerfulness and that when construed in this way *ataraxia* bears a similarity to Nietzsche's notion of cheerfulness and thus great health. I show that her claim for similarity based on these grounds poses difficulties.

**Chapter 10** summarises parallels drawn from the preceding accounts of Nietzsche and the Sceptics on health and also discusses the divergences. I show that the parallels suggest a shared emphasis on philosophy as a way of life rather than the practice of traditional philosophy as a theoretical exercise associated with the search for an unqualified or objective truth. I discuss the significance of the philosopher physician in Pyrrhonian scepticism to show the analogies with medicine that are also, I suggest, evident in Nietzsche's writings. I discuss both Nietzsche's and the Pyrrhonian sceptic's rejection of moral/ethical obligation. I show that this leaves both Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics open to accusations of immorality. I show that there are parallels between Nietzsche and the Sceptics in their discussion of appearance and reality. I show that the attack on dogmatism is a methodology shared by both Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics. I summarise the themes of scepticism, doubt and suspension (*ephexis*) which I argue both Nietzsche and the Sceptics share. I discuss Nietzsche's rejection of contemporary theories of happiness and the introduction of the will to power as the new value for life. I argue that the Pyrrhonian sceptics reject the contemporary Dogmatists' theory of *eudaimonia* as the goal of life and suggest that they intend *ataraxia* as its replacement. Thus I argue that both Nietzsche and the Sceptics reject ethical

## Chapter 1

theories of happiness as the essence of health and well-being. I show that both Nietzsche and the Sceptics espouse a philosophy which is linked to the natural human intuitions. I discuss the divergences between the two philosophies. Specifically I show that Nietzsche's great health is not comparable to Sceptic *ataraxia* and that the scope of the values under attack differs between the two philosophies. I also argue that Nietzsche advances the creation of values whilst Sceptic practice aims towards suspension of judgement on values.

**The Appendix** discusses the question of influence, taking as a starting point Berry's view that Nietzsche's writings show evidence of Pyrrhonian sceptic influence. I argue that the evidence for influence is slight and that the divergences make influence a questionable proposition. I also show that the evidence of Nietzsche's reading of Pyrrhonian sceptic literature is of some relevance but not conclusive in adducing influence. In conclusion I argue that Pyrrhonian scepticism should be seen as a helpful interpretive device in understanding Nietzsche's project as motivated by a need to define the pathology which permeates contemporary European society and the need that Nietzsche sees to devise a methodology for its cure.

## Chapter 2 A Philosophy for Health

In this chapter I introduce Nietzsche's core themes, namely that mankind's sickness and suffering are an inevitable part of life and that the overcoming of suffering is the route to health and well-being.

My analysis of Nietzsche's philosophy for health, for the most part, makes use of his published works but I will resort to his unpublished works where they offer further support and clarification. In analysing Nietzsche's position on health I discuss the writings from his middle period (*Human All Too Human*, *Daybreak* and *The Gay Science*) but for the most part I rely on his mature works *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

Section 52 of *Daybreak* introduces the idea of the philosopher physician: 'Where are the new physicians of the soul?' The old 'physicians of the soul' have failed to deal with the current maladies of European society. In response to what he sees as the life-negating values of Christianity, Nietzsche writes of a new type of philosopher physician who advances 'new ways of life as the stimulus to creative growth and self-maintenance' (Podolsky and Tauber 1999: 302). The new philosopher is no longer merely a theoretician or academic; he will be someone who takes on the more practical role of philosopher physician. We see in *The Gay Science* the development of Nietzsche's concern with the relationship between health and philosophy and the role of the philosopher physician in cementing this relationship:

For a psychologist there are few questions that are as attractive as that concerning the *relation of health and philosophy* (my emphasis).....I am still awaiting for a *philosophical physician* (my emphasis) in the exceptional sense of the word – one who has to pursue the problem of the total health of a people, time, race or of humanity...what was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all 'truth' but something else – let us say, health, future, growth, power, life (GS Preface 2).

Nietzsche's philosophy for health derives from his own personal issues with ill-health which means that in the course of his 'long period of sickness', Nietzsche comes to recognize certain facts about what it is to be '*basically healthy*': 'I took myself in hand, I

## Chapter 2

made myself healthy again...I discovered life anew [and] created my philosophy from out of my will to health, to *life...*' (EH: 'Why I Am So Wise', 2). Nietzsche has personal experience of suffering; he sees himself as an exemplar of this principle and remarks on those such as Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon who excel despite personal hardship. Nietzsche advances the idea that we need to have suffering in life in order to motivate the desire for health. Thus his project centres on the development of a philosophy for health and a way of life which takes account of the realities of the harshness of life as he experiences it.

Despite chronic illness Nietzsche describes his condition as one of supreme good health, yet he is not in denial about his physical illnesses. Health and well-being, for Nietzsche, is an attitude of mind and the strength of character to accept that life and suffering go hand in hand. Health is not about giving into one's illnesses but involves resilience and cheerfulness in the face of sickness and adversity. When Nietzsche talks about one who is 'typically healthy', he does not mean freedom from physical sickness. Health is not the eradication of sickness, even if, as Nietzsche doubts, it is even possible to do so. Health is taking a positive attitude to life: 'I stopped being a pessimist: the instinct for self-restoration prohibited any philosophy of poverty or discouragement' (EH: 'Why I Am So Wise', 2). Health is the openness to challenge, the desire to flourish, achieve health and live the best life possible. Nietzsche sees 'sickness... [as] an energetic *stimulus* to life, to being more alive', whereby the healthy individual 'works out how to repair damages, [and] uses mishaps to his advantage' (EH: 'Why I Am So Wise', 2).

Central to Nietzsche's project of revaluation is the fact that suffering and sickness are unavoidable conditions. Nietzsche commonly talks about suffering and sickness and appears to conflate two aspects of man's distress with life. Physical illnesses, personal misfortune, loss of job, divorce and so on, are some of the problems that individuals may have to suffer throughout a lifetime. But we may also distinguish from the foregoing a class of sickness which Nietzsche associates more specifically with Christianity, the loss of belief in God, the collapse in values and the consequent nihilism which I discuss in chapter 5.

The Christian perspective takes suffering as something to be endured in this life for the sake of a better life in a future world but Nietzsche sees suffering differently. He promotes the idea that to live is to suffer; the experience of suffering is what provides the

impetus for growth. He believes that it is only by seeking out resistances and overcoming them that excellence and greatness are achieved. The maxim: 'What doesn't kill me makes me stronger' (TI: 'Arrows and Epigrams', 8) exemplifies Nietzsche's philosophy for life and health. Sickness, suffering and the struggle are, according to Nietzsche, to be valued. Resistance and the overcoming of resistance give strength to character in that the individual develops resilience in rising continually to life's challenges.

As seen from the autobiographical passage in *Ecce Homo*: 'Why I Am So Wise', 2 discussed above Nietzsche draws attention to the role of suffering as a way of life and more importantly as the means to health; thus he presents sickness as, more or less, a gift. Sickness is not an impediment to living well, on the contrary, 'the discipline of suffering, of great suffering... *this discipline* has been the sole cause of every enhancement in humanity so far' (BGE 225). Thus Nietzsche challenges the notion that suffering is intrinsically bad. Addressing sickness and suffering means embracing suffering as a fact of life and making use of it to affirm life. In referring to the 'overcoming' of suffering, the emphasis is on the diurnal and continual struggle of life.

Suffering can of course be disastrous for the sufferer but, for Nietzsche, it is the driving force in the emergence of Nietzsche's central principle for health - the will to power which I discuss in chapter 6. But the problem for psychological health, as Nietzsche sees it, is that the values human beings espouse, the Christian values of compassion and selflessness are life-negating and are in tension with the natural order of life (TI: 'Morality As Anti-Nature', 5).

Nietzsche's engagement with health is principally taken up with the objective of flourishing and individual excellence. I shall argue in chapter 6 that Nietzsche identifies flourishing not with any traditional philosophical notion of happiness but more specifically with willing power and the qualities associated with power. Suffering thus has the potential to be a life-enhancing and life-affirming aspect of existence out of which Nietzsche formulates his vision of 'great health':

We who are new, nameless, hard to understand; we premature births of an as yet unproved future - for a new end, we also need a new means, namely, a new health that is stronger, craftier, tougher, bolder, and more cheerful than any previous health. Anyone whose soul thirsts to experience the whole range of

previous values and aspirations, to sail around all the coasts of this 'inland sea' (*Mittelmeer*) of ideals, anyone who wants to know from the adventures of his own experience how it feels to be the discoverer or conqueror of an ideal, or to be an artist, a saint, a lawmaker, a sage, a pious man, a soothsayer, an old-style divine loner – any such person needs one thing above all - *the great health* (GS 382).

Nietzsche does not envisage a once and for all cure for sickness and thus he does not envisage it as something to be eliminated once and for all. The adversity entailed by sickness and suffering is a necessary pre-condition for health and flourishing; it affords the necessary conditions for the overcoming of obstacles which is what creates strength and well-being. It is the determination to bounce back from the misfortunes of life which, as Nietzsche sees it, is an inevitable part of being human.

Sickness, for Nietzsche, has wider import than the physical sense. The sickness to which he refers might well include serious and life-threatening illnesses which might be susceptible to a medical remedy but it also embraces other life challenges such as those which pose a threat to mental health. But whatever the nature of the sickness or suffering, the cure Nietzsche suggests is that to be healthy is to affirm life. Referring once more to section 382 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes of the 'great health' that it is, 'a health that one doesn't only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up!' Here, Nietzsche's point is, I suggest, that one needs to be put to the test again and again in order to prove one's mettle and to exercise the psychological muscle of resilience. Nietzsche's point concerning resilience is, I suggest, evident from the following passage in *Twilight of the Idols* where he uses the analogy of nations which have repeatedly overcome hostility to become powerful:

The peoples with any value at all *became* valuable, and not through liberal institutions: *great danger* made them into something deserving of respect...the danger that *forces* us to be strong...*First principle*: you must need to be strong, or else you will never become it' (TI: 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', 38).

By analogy, health is the ability to do what nation states do in withstanding aggression – it is the ability to confront situations where strength, courage and resilience are required. The health which Nietzsche advances is not an end state; health, as in a state of

flourishing, requires continual striving. But significantly, and as I discuss in chapter 3, the health that Nietzsche contemplates is an objective that he sees as achievable by only a few people.



## Chapter 3      Nietzsche's Value System: An Ethical System for Living

### 3.1      Introduction

This thesis examines Nietzsche's project, for 'the revaluation of values' from the following perspective: (a) a recognition that human beings suffer sickness; (b) a rejection of a particular set of values associated with this sickness; and (c) the adoption of a new way of living to cure this sickness, one that promotes individual flourishing by means of an anti-dogmatic approach to beliefs about values.

This chapter focuses on (b) and to that end I discuss Nietzsche's views on values and show that his 'immoralism' is not a rejection of all values but only certain kinds of values. I discuss Nietzsche's analysis of 'herd/slave morality' (the morality he attacks), the new 'higher morality' of which he is in favour and his project for a new ethics predicated on the 'creation of values'.

I discuss the feasibility of Nietzsche's project and its overall relevance as an ethical framework. I discuss Bernard Williams' (2011) distinction between 'ethics' and 'morality' in order to show that as a system of ethics Nietzsche's project is limited and it does no more than advance a set of values for individual health and flourishing. To this end, I discuss Maudemarie Clark's (1994, 2015) contrasting view that Nietzsche's project does more than this and that it advances an ethical code of behaviour. I discuss the opposing views of Simon Robertson (2012) and Alexander Nehamas (1985) who argue rightly, I suggest, that Nietzsche's project fails as an ethical system for regulating behaviour within society. I discuss the charge of immorality associated with Nietzsche's project, and in particular Philippa Foot's (1994) argument that Nietzsche's project lacks essential societal rules and obligations (in particular a system of justice) and thus allows for acts of atrocity. I suggest that Foot's accusations have some validity. Finally I review the principal difficulties which Nietzsche believes conventional morality poses for higher types.

### 3.2 Is Nietzsche an Immoralist?

An immoralist at its most literal interpretation describes one who is opposed to all morality. The immoralist rejects all moral values and is completely lacking in any moral compass. Nietzsche describes himself as an immoralist<sup>4</sup> which suggests that he does reject all moral values but his position on morality is, I suggest, somewhat ambiguous. With Nietzsche, we are always confronted with the difficulty of explaining what he means by 'morality' and precisely what values he attacks. He holds the view that all propositions of morality are false (WP 15, 530) but, in contrast, there are some things he calls moralities of which he is in favour (BGE 202). Thus his writings ostensibly suggest that his animus cannot straightforwardly be said to be directed towards all morality. More often than not when Nietzsche uses the term morality he means to criticize a particular set of values which he associates with Christianity. Nietzsche writes in the *Anti-Christ*:

You should not beautify Christianity or try to dress it up: it has waged a *war to the death* against this *higher* type of person, it has banned all the basic instincts of this type, it has distilled 'evil' and 'the Evil One' out of these instincts – the strong human being as reprehensible, as 'depraved'. Christianity has taken the side of everything weak, base, failed, it has made an ideal out of whatever *contradicts* the preservation instincts of a strong life; it has corrupted the reason of even the most spiritual natures by teaching people to see the highest spiritual values as sinful, as deceptive, as *temptations* (AC 5).

Nietzsche is clearly critical of the values of a Judaeo-Christian morality, centred on: compassion, selflessness, the stigmatizing of egoism, the attack on the values of the powerful as evil and worthy of blame, the acceptance of unconditional and universally binding obligations, its antagonism towards 'higher types' and its commitment to the values of good and evil. But is this all that Nietzsche means when he calls himself an immoralist? Kaufmann, Schacht and Clark share the view that Nietzsche's attack is essentially directed at the traditional values of a Judaeo-Christian morality.

Walter Kaufmann (1974) suggests that Nietzsche's attack is not against morality in general; that what he is opposed to is the traditional morality that prevails in modern

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<sup>4</sup> BGE 32, Daybreak Pref. 4, HH Preface 1, GS 381.

European society. Kaufmann comments that although Nietzsche calls himself an immoralist he does not intend to commend immoral deeds (Kaufmann 1974: 322). Kaufmann suggests that Nietzsche's attack on morality targets the following: contemporary morality and not morality in general, the 'poisonously immoral' nature of our traditional values, 'Christian love as the mimicry of impotent hatred' and the valorisation of selflessness which Kaufmann believes Nietzsche sees as 'a particularly vicious form of selfishness'. Moreover Kaufmann sees Nietzsche's attack on morality as motivated by the fact that '*resentiment* is at the core of our morality system' (1974: 113). Richard Schacht (1983:417) acknowledges that Nietzsche's description of himself as an immoralist is misleading and more complex than the ascription would suggest. On the one hand, Schacht observes that a prominent feature of Nietzsche's project is his unremitting attack on traditional moral values, the morality which dominates European society and which Nietzsche generally refers to as herd/slave morality. But Schacht (1983: 418) also warns against simplistically interpreting Nietzsche's attack as 'referring to conventional morality of the sort he takes to predominate in the modern Western world'. Schacht rightly, I suggest, surmises that Nietzsche has something more in mind and Maudemarie Clark, as discussed below, expounds on what this might be.

Clark accepts Nietzsche's critique as an attack on Judaeo-Christian morality but she also rightly, I suggest, sees Nietzsche's attack as making a wider point. Clark interprets Nietzsche as attacking a "morality" which has been monopolized for a particular form of ethical life in such a way that we fail to recognize the possibility of other forms' (Clark 2015: 44). Clark suggests that Nietzsche's attack on morality is an attack on the belief that regards traditional moral values as the entirety of what we consider to be morality and thus as the only kind of values that can govern the conduct of ethical or moral life. She takes Nietzsche to be arguing that traditional moral values do not exhaust the whole sphere of ethics or morality. Traditionally, the conventional moral values of society have always been taken to be unassailable because they are thought to comprise the whole and only system of ethics – one which is a *sine qua non* for regulating the conduct of behaviour and the interaction of individuals in society. However, and as discussed above, Nietzsche's attack on morality claims to be accepting of other forms of 'morality' (BGE 202); these are the values that Nietzsche sees as restoring human beings to psychological health. If we accept Clark's argument and I suggest that her argument is plausible, then

we should, I suggest, interpret Nietzsche as attacking the conventions by which modern European society has come to accept the traditional values of a Judaeo-Christian morality as the only possible source of morality and consequently the only possible way in which ethical life can be lived (BGE 202).

### **3.3 Herd/Slave Morality: the Pathology of *Ressentiment***

Nietzsche writes that the 'morality' which currently prevails in Europe is 'herd-animal morality' (BGE 202). This conception of morality is problematic for Nietzsche because he deems herd/slave morality to be unhealthy. Herd/ slave morality and the values of pity/compassion and selflessness have their historical origins in *ressentiment* which Brian Leiter (2002: 204) describes as 'Nietzsche's term of art for a special kind of festering, hatred and vengefulness, one motivated by impotence in the face of unpleasant external stimuli'. The *ressentiment* of herd/slave morality is a pathology; it is the feeling of revenge and hatred that the weak feel against those who have power. *Ressentiment* inspires a morality born from fear, weakness and timidity and these turn to jealousy, resentment and other negative qualities that Nietzsche associates with *ressentiment*. Nietzsche shows how, historically, the values of herd/ slave morality are created from *ressentiment*: 'The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values' (GM I 10). The 'cohesive system of values' (Richardson 1996: 60) that constitutes slave morality is the reaction of the slaves to the feelings of revenge and hatred which they harbour against the 'noble' classes. The values of a herd/slave morality manifest as compassion, humility, selflessness, kindness, altruism; historically they are, according to Nietzsche, the creation of a negative reaction to the outside world (GM I 10). Slave morality takes and subverts the values of those against whom the 'herd' have feelings of antagonism to create a contrary moral order whereby the values of the noble class are reversed and deprived of the worth they used to have.

Nietzsche's attack on morality, according to Clark, interprets morality as an ascetic ideal (1994: 31). The resentment and envy of the priests towards the noble classes meant that the priests ensured that those values which were associated with the nobility became those values which were denigrated and replaced with the values of the lower orders. Goodness prior to the slave revolt was associated with nobility but consequent to that event, good becomes those values associated with those who were enslaved. More

specifically the good is equated with the values of compassion/pity and selflessness to which Nietzsche objects and which he associates, negatively, with life-negating qualities. The priest exploits feelings of 'guilt', 'sin', 'sinfulness', 'corruption' and 'damnation', 'to give a backward direction to *ressentiment*' (GM III 16), to turn suffering back on oneself. Man understands through the ministrations of the ascetic priest that 'he is to seek [the cause of his suffering] in *himself*, in a *guilt*, in a piece of the past, he is to understand his suffering itself as a *state of punishment...*' (GM III 20). In turning his *ressentiment* back on himself, psychological use is made of man's feelings of guilt and sinfulness and in this way the ascetic priest brings about 'the *alleviation* of suffering' (GM III 17). But this, according to Nietzsche, 'absolutely cannot be a matter of a true *healing* of the sick in the physiological sense...' (GM III 16). Nietzsche notes as the 'most fundamental objection' to the cure which the ascetic ideal purports to offer the fact that it 'combats only suffering itself, the listlessness of the one suffering, *not* its cause, *not* the actual state of sickness' (GM III 17). When it comes to the acutely sick types in particular, the ascetic ideal 'makes the sick patient more sick in every case, even if it makes him better' and *ressentiment* turned back on itself manifests as a 'shattered nervous system' (GM III 21). Slave morality offers values which shore up the feelings of powerlessness felt by the poor and thus provides a cure for the suffering and meaninglessness of life, but what was offered as a cure ultimately becomes the cause of further suffering. *Ressentiment* is a 'most natural tendency' (EH: 'Why I Am So Wise', 6) in human beings but the moral values of 'the human being of *ressentiment*' (GM I 10) are grounded in the hatred of others. The human being of *ressentiment* is 'festering with poisonous and hostile feelings' (GM I 10) and psychologically this cannot, I suggest, be a healthy state in which to live. Nietzsche acknowledges the psychologically damaging effect of *ressentiment* but the effect, as he sees it, is more perniciously evidenced in the lower types:

Nothing burns you up more quickly than the affects of *ressentiment*. Annoyance, abnormal vulnerability, inability to take revenge, every type of poisoning – these are definitely the most harmful ways for exhausted people to react (EH: 'Why I Am So Wise', 6).

The 'noble' human being, as Nietzsche describes him, is also capable of *ressentiment* but 'it does not poison' him in the same way as the 'herd' type for: 'when [ressentiment]

appears in [the noble type] it runs its course and exhausts itself in immediate action' (GM I 10).

However, despite his attack on herd/slave morality Nietzsche believes that 'slave morality is essentially a morality of utility' (BGE 260). Moreover Nietzsche suggests there are reasons why 'herd morality should be held sacred unconditionally' (WP 132). Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Conversely, qualities that serve to alleviate existence for suffering people are pulled out and flooded with light: pity, the obliging, helpful hand, the warm heart, patience, industriousness, humility, and friendliness receive full honours here -, since these are the most useful qualities and practically the only way of holding up under the pressure of existence (BGE 260).

Nietzsche does not deny that herd morality is suitable for some, possibly even the majority. The foregoing passages suggest that Nietzsche sees merit in the values of herd/slave morality but it is the spread of these values beyond the 'herd' that he believes to be psychologically harmful to health:

The ideals of the herd will rule in the herd – but not reach out beyond it: the leaders 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).

Nietzsche's attack on the values of herd/slave morality derives from the fact that they are harmful when adopted by higher types. His antagonism towards herd/slave morality is 'not with the aim of destroying it but only of putting an end to its tyranny over the higher types and clearing the way for new ideals, for more robust ideals' (WP 361) which are more suited to them.

### **3.4 Higher Moralities: A New Ethical Framework**

A '*Higher Morality which ought to be possible*'

Nietzsche, in rejecting the values of a herd/slave morality, refers to a 'higher morality which ought to be possible' (BGE 202) and a 'noble morality' (GM I 10) of which he is in favour. Clark (1994: 17) suggests that the distinction Nietzsche makes between

'herd/animal morality' and 'higher moralities' reflects his view of a broader system of morality, indicated by the latter. In attacking herd/slave morality, Nietzsche advances a broader framework of ethics consisting of values which articulate the highest ideals of human excellence. This broader system is what Clark suggests we might now describe as 'ethics' but ethics is not a term that Nietzsche uses. As discussed above, the thrust of Clark's argument is that Nietzsche's attack is weighted against herd/slave morality which he believes to be a narrow and exclusive conception of morality damaging to the health of higher types (BGE 32). Nietzsche seeks to widen the discourse on how one should live so that it becomes, according to Clark, one about ethics or morality in the broader sense. Thus when Nietzsche talks about '*moral* in a narrow sense' (BGE 32) as well as '*higher moralities*' (BGE 202) we might, I suggest, interpret him as making a distinction between society's conventional and narrow delineation of morality (morality in the narrow sense) and a broad ethical system of values (higher moralities).

### *Nietzsche's Ethics: A Non-Regulatory System*

What constitutes an ethical framework? And does Nietzsche have a system of ethics? Here I show that Nietzsche's discussion of ethics sets him apart from the kind of ethical system generally endorsed by conventional society; it also highlights Nietzsche's lack of concern in advancing an ethics which is ostensibly detrimental to the majority. Nietzsche is only concerned that the ethics he promotes works towards the health and flourishing of an elite class of persons. An ethical framework is, I suggest, characterised by the recognition of a distinction between right and wrong, has universally applicable values and acknowledges principles of justice and mutually binding obligations as regulating inter-personal relations between members of a social group. Nietzsche, as discussed above, never uses the term 'ethics' but, as Berkowitz suggests, what Nietzsche is in effect articulating is 'an ethics of creativity' (Berkowitz 1995: 3-4). Nietzsche's ethics encourages individuals to create values and gives priority on how to live a life of flourishing and excellence. Nietzsche's concern with the health of those with the potential to achieve excellence is, I suggest, understandable. However, the problem his ethics poses is, I suggest, his lack of clarity on how an ethics which is merely concerned with the flourishing of individual excellence is supposed to interact, if at all, with those values necessary for the regulation of the conduct of individuals within a society.

## Chapter 3

Philosophy lacks, in general, hard and fast rules for distinguishing between ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’ and the two terms are at times used interchangeably. I take Bernard Williams’ (2011) discussion of morality to be pertinent to Nietzsche’s discussion of different moralities. Williams distinguishes between morality and a wider ethical system; he takes morality to be one version of that which the whole of ethics comprises (Williams 2011:193). Williams’ recognition of the distinction between ‘ethics’ and ‘morality’ is helpful, I suggest, in understanding the distinction Nietzsche wants to make when he refers to different kinds of moralities, higher moralities and narrow moralities. Williams (2011: 193) separates out the arguments between ethics and morality by interpreting morality as a particular form or instance of an ‘ethical outlook’. Williams’ antagonism to ‘morality’ reflects a similar antagonism on Nietzsche’s part. What, according to Williams, distinguishes morality from other ethical outlooks is its regulatory function in co-ordinating relations between members of a society, the sanctions it imposes and the fact that it is characterized by a system of categorical obligations (Williams 2011: 198).

Williams argues that morality should be rejected in favour of ethics: his account of the ethical life seeks to show that man is not well served by contemporary notions of what society takes morality to be. Williams proposes what he believes to be a better alternative to the present morality system. He suggests that the present system of morality is too concerned with Christian and Kantian notions of obligation, blame and universality. He proposes that ethics should be less concerned with the notion of moral obligation and more focussed on the life of the individual and how one should live well. I suggest that in this regard there are parallels with Nietzsche’s position.

The basis for a system of ethics is, as Williams (1995: 241) observes, ‘any scheme for regulating the relations between individuals that works through informal sanctions and internalized dispositions’. Within such a scheme ‘obligation’ is, according to Williams, ‘only one among other ethical ways’ of regulating inter-personal relations (2011: 208). Simon Robertson (2012: 86) suggests that there are two sets of conditions needed to fulfil Williams’ definition for a regulatory system of ethics. Firstly, there has to be the social dimension of any ethical scheme in regulating the relations between members of a society; and secondly regulation should take place by means of ‘informal sanctions and internalized dispositions which serve to regulate ethical relations by, for instance, generating expectations and dispositions to live up to them and by checking violations

through penal emotions'. If this, as Williams suggests, is what an ethical framework looks like: can Nietzsche's project be said to fulfil the criteria for a system of ethics?

Clark (2015: 43) takes Nietzsche to be suggesting 'morality' (the morality of which he is in favour) in a new and wider sense. She takes Nietzsche's new morality to be analogous to what Williams calls 'ethics'. Clark argues that Nietzsche's immoralism is a rejection of what Williams calls 'morality' and interprets Nietzsche's project as a system which offers much of what morality gives us but by an alternative route. She argues that there is implicit in Nietzsche's critique of morality evidence of the kind of regulatory ethical framework suggested by Williams which is necessary for co-ordinating the rights and obligations of citizens within society. Nietzsche, says Clark, rejects the idea of an explicit social contract by which members acknowledge their obligation to obey community laws but she goes on to suggest that we might interpret Nietzsche as making an assumption concerning the *implicit* (my emphasis) existence of such a 'social contract'. Clark suggests that Nietzsche's view is that from early times the relationship between individual members and the community was implicitly viewed on the model of such a contract. She interprets Nietzsche as suggesting that people implicitly acknowledge that in accepting the advantages of community life they are in effect making a bargain with the community - one in which they agree to acquiesce to rules that make community life possible. Nietzsche, according to Clark, preserves societal rules against murder, stealing and lying on the basis that individuals living within a community have an obligation to the community to obey its rules and that it is understood that if they abrogate this responsibility they then deserved to be punished (Clark 1994: 28).

Simon Robertson rightly, I suggest, rejects Clark's suggestion that Nietzsche's project is a non-moral yet ethical alternative by which members of a society acknowledge community obligation towards one another. Robertson suggests that Nietzsche's alternative ethics is silent 'on how interpersonal relations are to be regulated – let alone regulated uniformly across all people' (Robertson 2012: 101). Furthermore, Robertson comments:

[Nietzsche's ethics] imply not just that different persons can be subject to different evaluative ideals but, moreover, given that Nietzsche nowhere pronounces on how the herd should live, that he is generally *indifferent* to what they do, so long as that doesn't impede the upward trajectory of higher types (Robertson 2012: 102).

## Chapter 3

I agree with Robertson that Nietzsche's project fails to offer a regulatory system that will apply uniformly throughout all society because his stated aim is manifestly the health and flourishing of higher types and the restriction of anything that will impede their psychological well-being. However, where I disagree with Robertson is that Nietzsche's 'indifference' is, I suggest, a problem for the well-being of the 'herd' and the problem is aggravated by Nietzsche's comments on herd/slave morality, as discussed above. It is not, I suggest, the case that Nietzsche says nothing about how the herd should live. Contrary to Robertson's comment above, Nietzsche is not, I suggest, indifferent to the lifestyle of the herd and he does have something to say about how they are expected to live.

Nietzsche expects them to be law-abiding members of society: 'the average person has an innate need to obey' and they look towards someone 'who can issue unconditional demands' (BGE 199). But for the higher types no such constraints are expected. On the basis of Williams' account of what an ethical system would look like, Nietzsche's promotion of values associated with the flourishing of individual excellence is ostensibly antagonistic to a system of ethical values regulating behaviour within society. Traditional moral values provide individuals with a safety net against unrestrained acts of injustice within the herd. However in Nietzsche's new ethics the health and welfare of higher types is paramount and thus the herd will ostensibly have no protection from inimical acts perpetrated by higher types. We might see Nietzsche as addressing this problem (albeit elliptically) when he writes in *Daybreak*:

Many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged - but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto* (D 103).

We might, from this passage surmise that Nietzsche implicitly recognises the pull of the imperatives against killing, lying and stealing; that what he might be suggesting here is that 'morality' is not the only ground on which people will resile from murder, lying or theft. But Nietzsche offers no clues (assuming we do not rely on moral grounds) as to what other grounds there might be for not killing, lying or stealing. Williams' position offers, I suggest, some insight into what Nietzsche's thinking in *Daybreak* 103 might be. Williams' account shows how one might dispense with the notion of moral obligation whilst moving towards 'an account of what obligations are when they are rightly seen as merely one kind of ethical consideration among others' (Williams 2011:202). Williams'

opposition to moral obligation does not mean he is opposed to all notions of obligation and we might, I suggest, see Nietzsche as supportive of this position. Williams' notion of obligation is grounded in:

the basic issue of what people should be able to rely on and that people must rely as far as possible on not being killed or used as a resource, and on having some space and objects and relations with other people they can count as their own. It also serves their interests if, to some extent at least, they can count on not being lied to (Williams 2011: 205).

Williams, in explicating a notion of obligation, comments on how an agent might be compelled to conclude that 'one must do a certain thing and that one cannot do anything else' (Williams 2011:208). Williams (2011: 205) acknowledges that these ends are probably best served 'by some kind of ethical life'. However he suggests that there are grounds other than the ethical, such as, 'reasons of prudence, self-protection, aesthetic or artistic concern, or sheer self-assertion' which might compel an agent to conclude that 'he or she unconditionally must do a certain thing' (Williams 2011: 208-209). Prudential concerns might, for example, motivate an agent to recognise an imperative against killing, lying and stealing in certain (perhaps even most) circumstances; but on the other hand we cannot discount the fact that for the agent there may be no bad consequences if he decides to lie, steal or kill. Moreover there are circumstances in which an agent might be justified in killing, for example, in self-defence or to protect a child.

So, should we (contrary to Robertson and in agreement with Clark) see Nietzsche as offering a system of ethics in Williams' sense? The answer is, I suggest, no. Nietzsche does not, I suggest, see such a regulatory framework as comprising any part of his new ethics and sees no need to mitigate the possible deleterious effect (on the herd) of his single minded focus on the health and well-being of higher types. Section 103 of *Daybreak* is not, I suggest, conclusive evidence that Nietzsche has any commitment towards the idea that within a social organisation there have to be implied obligations which regulate the way that individuals behave towards one another.

Philippa Foot (1994: 6-10) interprets Nietzsche's 'immoralism' as a rejection of all that is necessary for a conventional societal ethical programme and instead sees his project as likely to encourage acts of immorality. Foot avers that Nietzsche's promotion of the

### Chapter 3

higher values of individual excellence undermines a fundamental requirement for justice in any social organisation. The notion of a just society is, according to Foot, one which recognizes justice as an inherent and fundamental aspect of any ethical society. A just society operates on the basis of an implied social contract whereby individuals as members of that society acknowledge an obligation to conduct themselves in a way which has regard to the rights of others. We would expect proposals for an alternative and comparable ethical system to say something about the values that are needed for human beings as members of a community to be able to live with one another. Foot rightly comments that the proper functioning of society requires the existence of obligations that we owe to one another - obligations which would preclude one person from carrying out acts of murder, torture and enslavement against another.

What Nietzsche posits is a system where rules governing the conduct of behaviour vary from one individual to another. Nietzsche's rejection of the idea that moral values should have universal applicability lends weight to Foot's criticisms: it undermines the assumption of a just society with objective standards of goodness that would apply equally to all. So Nietzsche's project is, I suggest, one in which the ethical values regarded as essential for regulating behaviour within society take second place to the health and well-being of the few. In commenting that other moralities and in particular 'higher moralities' ought to be possible, Nietzsche's project constitutes, I suggest, no more than a set of values which are analogous to a code of ethics for an elite. Nietzsche offers no account of how these values are supposed to interact with the values and codes of conduct necessary to maintain justice in any well ordered society. Nehamas ostensibly shares Foot's position and comments rightly, I suggest, that Nietzsche has no interest in offering an ethical code of conduct which would regulate the just behaviour of individuals within society (Nehamas 1985: 224). It is, I suggest, not unreasonable to surmise that Nietzsche's higher types might well see themselves as beyond societal rules of justice but nevertheless for Nietzsche his only concern is that their lives should be one of flourishing and mental well-being.

Nietzsche makes ethical evaluations of good or bad entirely dependent on the character of the agent and certainly this is Foot's view as well. But does this matter? Foot (1994: 4-6) describes Nietzsche as an immoralist because he proposes a system of values whereby the good is consistent with what is 'strong, fine, noble and subtle', qualities which

Nietzsche associates with an overabundance of health and well-being. But the lifestyle and values promoted by the cultivation of these qualities are, I suggest, devoid of ethical content. The promotion of values associated with these qualities raises the question of whether Nietzsche really does believe in values because the question might suppose that a belief in values is a belief in a system of morality. The conduct of individuals within any society is, I suggest, organised around an ethical system which, as discussed above, Williams takes to be a regulatory system (Williams 1995: 241). There is, I suggest, nothing inherently iniquitous about a project which promotes a superabundance of health and well-being for a specific class of persons and which valorizes qualities of independence, egoism, excellence and perfection as Nietzsche's project does. But this must, I suggest, be subject to the proviso that a value ethics of this nature does not have a deleterious effect on society as a whole. However, there is, as Robertson (2012:102) rightly suggests, something worrying about a 'system of ethics' that advances the idea that 'different persons can be subject to different evaluative ideals'. Personal objectives for individual excellence when weighed against the overall needs of society, do not, I suggest, constitute an ethical/moral framework. Nietzsche offers no further proposals for an ethical system which instantiates notions of rightness and wrongness and facilitates cooperation between individuals. When viewed in this way Nietzsche's aims clash, I suggest, with the needs of a just society. Ostensibly, what Nietzsche proposes lacks the basis for any kind of ethical system regulating the conduct of behaviour within society, even if his project does assure the health and well-being of higher types. On this basis Foot (1994: 4-7) believes that Nietzsche would have to be saying that 'not even the most flagrant acts of injustice can be called evil in themselves'. We might accuse Foot of hyperbole but her concerns are, I suggest, justified. Nietzsche's concern for the psychological well-being and flourishing of higher types is, I suggest, also valid. But surely, it must be the case that Foot's objections can only be negated if Nietzsche's project for flourishing and health can be shown to be part of a regulatory framework by which higher types are also bound. Nietzsche does not, as I have argued above, conceive of his project in this way.

#### *'Good and Bad' not 'Good and Evil'*

Nietzsche's attack on morality is an attack on the good/evil system of evaluation. The good/evil evaluation represents a specific kind of morality, characteristic of slave morality

## Chapter 3

which Nietzsche rejects. Nietzsche writes in *The Genealogy*: “*Beyond Good and Evil*”...At the very least this does not mean “*Beyond Good and Bad*” (GM I 17). Here Nietzsche distinguishes between two kinds of evaluations – the good/evil and the good/bad. His intention is to deny Christianity’s presupposition of the unconditionality of good and evil whilst affirming recognition of a distinction between evaluations of good and bad. In Nietzsche’s new ethics good and bad are not absolutes; evil, by contrast, signifies that which is absolutely and unconditionally to be condemned and this is the concept that Nietzsche rejects. Nietzsche’s attack on the good/evil evaluation is not a rejection of all values nor is he concerned with denying normative judgments. Nietzsche recognizes the good/ bad distinction as an evaluation which is free of moral significance and which can thus be accommodated within his new ethics. The exhortation in *The Genealogy* (GM I 17) repeated in other passages<sup>5</sup> to go ‘beyond good and evil’ is not, I suggest, a deliberate call to immorality. Slave morality subverted the morality of good and bad when bad became ‘evil’ and thus the judgement of good and evil has become part and parcel of the moral framework of modern European society: ‘the sum of commanding value judgements that have become part of our flesh and blood’(GS 380). This morality perpetuates and enforces the values of a herd morality into a harmonised set of values which are taken to be unconditional and universally applicable. This is of concern to Nietzsche because he takes the internalisation of such values by higher types to be deleterious to their well-being. Nietzsche suggests that the good/evil distinction, which is at the heart of conventional morality, protects the interests of the herd majority to the detriment of those who wish to express their individuality: ‘Everything that raises the individual over the herd and frightens the neighbour will henceforth be called evil’ (BGE 201). Thus for Nietzsche the good/evil distinction is what lies at the heart of the traditional moral values espoused by modern European society. Nietzsche’s discussion on the good/evil, good/bad distinction is, I suggest, integral to his philosophy for health. His objective is, I suggest, to show how the internalisation of the good/evil distinction is psychologically unhealthy specifically for those whom Nietzsche’s project seeks to protect from the oppressive effects of Christian morality. The point is, I suggest, aptly made by Robertson:

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<sup>5</sup> BGE 44: ‘And as to the dangerous formula “beyond good and evil”’; GS 380: “Thoughts about prejudices”...presuppose a position outside *morality*, some point beyond good and evil, a freedom from everything “European...”.

Most of us may be unable to achieve genuine excellence; but someone who is, if he has also internalized moral norms...will devalue and hence avoid conditions necessary for great achievement. Thus morality is harmful because, in reality, it will have the effect of leading potentially excellent persons to value what is in fact not conducive to their flourishing and devalue what is, in fact, essential to it (Robertson 2012:98).

### 3.5 Higher Types: Problems with Conventional Morality

Nietzsche's objections to conventional morality are characterized by the following features which he believes make them detrimental to psychological well-being and thus to the flourishing of individual excellence.

#### *The Disvalue of Self-interest and Egoism*

Nietzsche finds problematic for his higher types the way in which society confers 'absolute value on the absence of egoism' whilst treating 'egoism with hostility' (EH: 'Why I Write Such Good Books', D 2). He embraces a form of ethical egoism in which the value of egoism takes precedence over 'an "altruistic" morality, a morality in which selfishness *fades away*' because this for Nietzsche 'is always a bad sign' (TI: 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', 35). Nietzsche's position on the positive value of selfishness affirms Ralph Waldo Emerson's dictum that 'sensible people are selfish' (Emerson 1860:110). There need not, and as Emerson seems to be saying, be anything necessarily pejorative about the idea that people should be selfish and this, I suggest, is what Nietzsche means to convey when he encourages selfishness. Thus we might see selfishness in the sense expressed by Emerson as simply wanting to be the best that one possibly can. Paying unquestioning obeisance to moral values which are imposed and derive from sources external to our being is, for Nietzsche, contrary to nature and thus against one's self-interest. The morality of modern European society has become inextricably associated with the values of selflessness: 'the unegoistic', 'the instincts of compassion', 'self-denial', 'self-sacrifice' are all seen as valuable and as qualities which conventional society, in general, believes should be cultivated and lived (GM Preface 5). But '*rigorous selfishness*', writes Nietzsche, 'is the very thing you need the most if you are going to thrive' (EH: 'Why I Am a Destiny', 7). Leiter (2002: 134-135) rightly, I suggest, makes the point that

## Chapter 3

'Nietzsche's defence of the value of self-love over altruism is not a defence of mere indulgence or greed or the gratification of immediate desires'. Selfishness to the detriment of others is not Nietzsche's aim; rather Nietzsche's advocacy of self-interest or selfishness 'has as its aim the cultivation or flourishing of the self' (Leiter 2002:135). Selfishness as described by Leiter and Emerson is, I suggest, stripped of the negative connotations to be found in Christian morality. Nietzsche's selfishness conveys, I suggest, the psychologically healthy state of self-affirmation which is conducive to flourishing and creativity.

### *Moral Values 'imposed not only universally but also unconditionally'*

Alexander Nehamas (1985: 223-4) observes and rightly, I suggest, that Nietzsche's objection to moral values is to the notion inherent in moral valuation that they be imposed not only universally but also unconditionally. Nietzsche comments: '[moral values] are all baroque in form and unreasonable (because they are directed at "everyone", because they generalize what should not be generalized); they all speak unconditionally, consider themselves unconditional' (BGE 198).

Integral to any ethical framework is the expectation that its values will be universally applicable but, in contrast, Nietzsche writes:

[T]hat what is right for someone absolutely *cannot* be right for someone else; that the requirement that there be a single morality for everyone is harmful precisely to the higher men... (BGE 228).

Higher types unthinkingly believe that the extant moral values which define the lives of all are those with which they have to comply. Nietzsche objects to the fact that moral values are expected to apply not just to those for whom they are suited but to everyone else as well. As discussed above these values may be beneficial for the herd but the point Nietzsche seeks to make is that values which are universally applicable may not be those that are in the interests of higher types.

Philosophers make claims about moral evaluations which have come to be accepted as givens and as universally applicable. However Nietzsche suggests that such claims are not to be taken at face value: 'In every philosophy there is a point where the philosopher's "conviction" steps onto the stage...' (BGE 8). The positions which philosophers take on

moral values and their presentation of these positions as unconditional truths cannot, according to Nietzsche, be separated from, and must ultimately depend on, the prejudices of the philosopher asserting those views. Nietzsche suggests that what passes for moral good derives its authority from the value we place on truth. Both the authority with which we invest the moral good and the force of the obligation are justified by the belief in a divine and infallible God which lends weight to the idea of the moral good as having the characteristic of unconditional truth. But Nietzsche wants to undermine belief in this way of thinking when he writes: 'Indeed, humans gave themselves all of their good and evil. Indeed, they did not take it, they did not find it, it did not fall to them as a voice from heaven' (Z I: 'On a Thousand and One Goals'). When we rely on God for validation of our moral values, we abandon responsibility for the conduct of our lives; we surrender independence and individuality in giving way to pressure from society, in allowing the presuppositions of morality to direct ethical behaviour and the values which govern our lives. It allows us to say that 'we have to believe what we believe about moral values because those values cannot be other than unconditionally true' (Gemes 1992: 50). One cannot, according to Nietzsche, be independent, free thinking and autonomous while paying obeisance to the values of an external authority: 'Autonomous' and 'moral' are mutually exclusive (GM II 2). Thus Nietzsche sees in human beings too much of a willingness to accept the values of the herd – values which are inimical to flourishing and well-being simply because we are assured of the unconditionality of their truth. Nietzsche seeks to reverse this trend in addressing 'the man who does not wish to belong to the mass'; such a man is encouraged to 'follow his conscience, which calls to him: "Be your Self! [because] all that you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself"' (UM III 1, p127). Human beings who hold on to the thought that we must 'become who we are' are those 'human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves!' (GS 335). And this, I suggest, encapsulates the ideal of psychological health and well-being to which Nietzsche expects higher types to aspire.

### *Transcendent Metaphysics*

Nietzsche expects that new philosophers will not only surrender belief in a transcendent divine authority but that they will also no longer rely on the transcendent claims of philosophers such as Kant. Nietzsche interprets Kant's moral philosophy as a secularized version of Christianity; one which imitates Christian metaphysics in its appeal to

transcendent principles which are independent of what we can know through experience. In common with the Christian moral viewpoint, Kantian theory is grounded in an account of a world beyond this one (the *noumenal* world) – a world which is inaccessible, defies empirical observation and is beyond what we can know. Kant's philosophy, according to Nietzsche, reflects the 'fantasies and manifestations of decline, of the final exhaustion of life' (AC 11).

### *Higher Types and the Creation of Values*

Nietzsche accords high worth to values associated with individual excellence and ideals of human perfection and he associates these values with those he identifies as 'higher types'. Nietzsche offers no precise definition of the higher type but throughout his works he offers examples of the species.<sup>6</sup> Brian Leiter (2002: 115-125) suggests that Nietzsche is drawn to creative types such as Beethoven and Goethe and Nietzsche includes himself within this category; he also speaks favourably of military types such as Napoleon (BGE 199) and Julius Caesar (TI: 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', 38).

The creation of one's own personal values is central to Nietzsche's philosophy of health. This, I suggest, is more in the nature of self-determination – of deciding which values best promote one's well-being rather than the thinking up of new ad hoc values. Nietzsche writes:

The noble type of person feels that he determines his own value, he does not need anyone's approval, he judges that 'what is harmful to me is harmful in itself,' he knows that he is the one who gives honour to things in the first place, he *creates values* (BGE 260).

Nietzsche's project envisages the kind of individuals who will be 'commanders and legislators' (BGE 211) and whose task will be 'to create values' (BGE 211) of the life-affirming sort. He proposes a system of evaluation associated with personal qualities of excellence. The values that one creates will, for Nietzsche, derive from a 'feeling of fullness of power', 'faith' and 'pride' in oneself (BGE 260). 'Genuine honesty', according to Nietzsche, is characteristic of 'free spirits'. To be genuinely honest requires that the agent

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<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche includes amongst his higher types: 'A new breed of philosophers' (BGE 42); 'free spirits' (BGE 44); 'new philosophers' (BGE 2, 203,); 'future philosophers' (BGE 210).

'stay *harsh*' when they would rather things were 'better, easier, gentler' and Nietzsche associates this kind of honesty with 'the most spiritual will to power' (BGE 227). Nietzsche's ethics valorises qualities associated with power and they will be those of: independence(WS 9); excess of strength (WP 899); 'seeing difficult tasks as a privilege'(AC 57); 'taking pleasure in self-overcoming'(AC 57) 'playing with burdens that would crush other people'(AC 57); 'great health' and the resilience that goes with it (GS 382). There are other qualities such as solitariness and a high intellect to which Nietzsche refers but, for the most part, Nietzsche's writings manifest, I suggest, an understandable vagueness about the precise nature of the values that are created – understandable, because Nietzsche expects higher types to be the authors of their own values and their values will be those which benefit them most. The values which Nietzsche contemplates for higher types will not, I suggest, necessarily be new values. They will however be a rejection of the Christianised values of life-negation and more importantly they will be the kind of values that Nietzsche associates with an overwhelming feeling of great health.

### 3.6 Conclusion

It is, I suggest, practically a given that to raise doubts about the authority of Christian moral values is in itself regarded as immoral and Nietzsche ostensibly agrees with this sentiment: 'Because they dissect morality, moralists must now be content to be upbraided as immoralists' (WS 19). However, I suggest that Nietzsche is not an immoralist in the way the term is conventionally understood. His project is not a total rejection of all values, rather his description of himself as an immoralist reflects his attack on values which he considers to be unhealthy because having those values depresses the natural drive for power and the motivation to excel, qualities which one would expect to find in higher types.

It is beyond doubt that Nietzsche rejects traditional moral values. These are a particular set of values which focus on Christianity and the post-Christian tradition and, most importantly, valorise compassion and selflessness and posit universally binding obligations. I discuss separately in chapter 4 Nietzsche's attack on *Mitleid* (compassion or pity) which he sees as the essence of Christianity. I agree with Clark who points out that Nietzsche's further objection to contemporary morality is that it has come to be seen as the one and only true and universal form of ethical life. Nietzsche's attack on morality is

### Chapter 3

qualified in the sense that he believes that it is only the higher types who should disavow traditional morality whereas he suggests that it has 'utility' for the herd.

However, Nietzsche's project does offer a value ethics of sorts and indeed the creation of individual values is central to his project. He advances an abstract concept of 'higher values' associated with the ideals of excellence and human perfection. I agree with Simon Robertson that Nietzsche's project does not articulate an ethical system for regulating the behaviour of persons within society and which would have to be an ethical system of the kind that Williams describes. Nietzsche's project is not prescriptive; it is concerned with values that will enhance individual health and well-being rather than those which impose rules for the benefit of society as a whole.

Nietzsche's rejection of the idea that moral values should have universal applicability undermines the assumption of a just society with objective standards of goodness that would apply equally to all. In denying the universal applicability of moral values, Nietzsche proposes a system of higher values which would allow individuals of excellence and greatness to operate outside the rules of a just society. The opportunity for acts of injustice by the higher types against the 'herd' is never explicitly addressed by Nietzsche. Thus there is in his project an ambiguity about how the morality which governs the life of the 'herd' is supposed to interact with the values of the higher type. And even with regard to the higher types Nietzsche fails to address the possibility of acts of injustice that one of them might perpetrate against the other. *Daybreak* 103 might suggest that Nietzsche acknowledges societal strictures against killing, lying and stealing but there is no conclusive evidence to this effect.

Ethics is about how one should live but Nietzsche provides no advice as to what would make an action unconditionally good or bad, right or wrong and this matters because, as Foot suggests, the absence of such guidance prejudices the respect for justice and thus the functioning of a just society.

Thus Nietzsche's project defines and advances a way of life which focuses on the health of a particular type of agent. And these are the higher types who reject the moral obligations of society and create their own values:

[T]hey will be free, *very* free spirits, these philosophers of the future – they certainly will not *just* be free spirits, but rather something more, higher, greater,

and fundamentally different, something that does not want to be misunderstood or mistaken for anything else... (BGE 44).

Having abandoned moral obligations, Nietzsche's higher type is no longer subject to slave morality but has become an autonomous, independent and authentic human being.

With his new set of values, the new philosopher's life will be transformed into a life of great health and flourishing. However Nietzsche's project is limited in that the health benefits he discusses are intended just for the few.



# Chapter 4 Pity and Compassion: An Unhealthy Response

## 4.1 Introduction

Nietzsche writes in section 7 of *The Anti-Christ*, ‘*Nothing in our unhealthy modernity is more unhealthy than Christian pity*’. In this chapter I discuss what it is that compels Nietzsche to this view of pity as essentially unhealthy. In German, there is only one word *Mitleid* which translates as pity or compassion. Nietzsche scholars have variously translated *Mitleid* as either pity or compassion. Brian Leiter (2002:57) observes that most translators of Nietzsche render his use of *Mitleid* as ‘pity’ whereas the translation of *Mitleid* as compassion is reserved for Schopenhauer’s use of the word. Gudrun von Tevenar (2007) and David Cartwright (1982) argue for a distinction between pity and compassion which I discuss below. However, and so as not to pre-empt the discussion of whether any distinction exists between pity and compassion I shall, for the most part, in this chapter use *Mitleid*.

## 4.2 *Mitleid* as a Response to Suffering

*Mitleid* is, according to Nietzsche, the essence of Christianity which he describes as ‘the religion of pity’ (AC 7). Christian morality is predicated on the value of *Mitleid* as the good. We ascribe qualities of the good and moral worthiness to those who are compassionate. *Mitleid* has come to be seen as the appropriate moral response to suffering. There is, writes Nietzsche, a ‘real cult of suffering’ to be seen in modern Europe (BGE 293) but he sees this as a tendency that needs to be resisted. The problem with *Mitleid*, writes Nietzsche is that it is:

[A] morbid over-sensitivity and susceptibility to pain, as well as an excessive amount of complaining and an increased tenderness that wants to dress itself up as something higher, using religion as well as bits and pieces of philosophy (BGE 293).

Moreover, Nietzsche writes in *The Anti-Christ*:

Pity is the opposite of the tonic affects that heighten the energy of vital feelings: pity has a depressive effect. You lose strength when you pity. And pity further intensifies and multiplies the loss of strength which in itself brings suffering to life (AC 7).

Nietzsche challenges the valorisation of *Mitleid* in modern European society as a danger to psychological health. He also challenges the ineluctable link that exists between suffering and *Mitleid* and more specifically the negative inferences that tie suffering to *Mitleid*. Nietzsche poses the question: 'Where lie your greatest dangers?' (GS 271) and his response is that man's greatest danger lies 'in compassion' (GS 271). And one of Nietzsche's most significant warnings against *Mitleid* appears in Preface 6 to *The Genealogy* where he writes of the morality of *Mitleid* as 'the danger of dangers' (GM Pref. 6).

Nietzsche questions traditional attitudes towards *Mitleid*, 'is it good for those who suffer if you are compassionate?' (GS 338) in order to challenge the assumption that compassion is conducive to the well-being of the sufferer. He believes that the persistent need that human beings have to assuage the suffering of others through expressions of *Mitleid* is 'offensive' (GS 338). *Mitleid* is not good for the pitied because it robs them of the chance for growth: for those who suffer the expression of *Mitleid* towards them is demeaning: 'our "benefactor's" diminish our worth and our will more than our enemies do' (GS 338).

#### **4.3 Nietzsche's Rejection of Schopenhauer's Morality of *Mitleid***

Nietzsche, as discussed above, rejects *Mitleid* as unhealthy. His project aims for the revaluation of *Mitleid*, the motivation for which derives in part from Schopenhauer's morality of compassion which Schopenhauer takes to be the basis of all morally worthy actions. Nietzsche refers to 'this preferential treatment and overestimation of compassion on the part of modern philosophers' (GM Pref. 5). Nietzsche's *The Genealogy* is a response to and a polemic against Schopenhauer's interpretation of morality as synonymous with *Mitleid*. Nietzsche writes in the Preface to GM:

In particular the issue was the value of the unegoistic, of the instincts of compassion, self-denial, self-sacrifice, precisely the instincts that Schopenhauer

had gilded, deified, and made otherworldly until finally they alone were left for him as the ‘values in themselves,’ on the basis of which he *said ‘no’* to life, also to himself [...] Precisely here I saw the *great* danger to humanity...precisely here I saw the beginning of the end, the standstill, the backward-glancing tiredness, the will turning *against* life, the last sickness gently and melancholically announcing itself: I understood the ever more widely spreading morality of compassion – which seized even the philosophers and made them *sick* (my emphasis) (GM Preface 5).

Nietzsche’s critique of morality is directed at Schopenhaurian and Christian perspectives of the morality of *Mitleid*: the fact that Schopenhauer cannot distance himself from commitment to the central Christian notion of evil. Schopenhauer writes in *The World as Will and Representation*: ‘in the long run, it is quite superfluous to dispute whether there is more good or evil in the world; for the mere existence of evil decides the matter, since evil can never be wiped off’ (WWR II 576). Schopenhauer is committed to the belief in the evil of suffering and suffering as an inescapable part of this life. Schopenhauer’s atheism precludes him from believing in another life, so for Schopenhauer all we are left with is the sheer weight of suffering in this life and the relentless and irredeemable nature of that suffering. In contrast to Schopenhauer, suffering is, for Nietzsche, not an objection to life but a means for affirming life and thus Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer’s position that ‘in fact, nothing else can be stated as the aim of our existence except the knowledge that it would be better for us not to exist’ (WWR II 605).

Schopenhauer claims that ‘only insofar as an action has sprung from compassion does it have moral worth’ (OBM p144). *Mitleid*, according to Schopenhauer, is altruistic in intent; it is the response to the suffering of another and the motivation for the agent to act in order to relieve or eliminate that suffering (Cartwright 1982: 561). When we feel compassion we are, according to Schopenhauer, motivated to desire the well-being of another over our own well-being. But what is it that prompts us to promote the well-being of another? Schopenhauer responds that in feeling compassion for another ‘I suffer directly with him, I feel his woe just as I ordinarily feel only my own; and likewise, I directly desire his [well-being] in the same way I otherwise desire only my own’ (OBM p.143). The agent who feels compassion for another, according to Schopenhauer, experiences the other’s suffering as if it were his own:

[A]t every moment we remain clearly conscious that he is the sufferer, not we; and it is precisely in his person, not in ours, that we feel the suffering...We suffer with him and hence in him; we feel his pain as his, and do not imagine that it is ours (OBM p147).

By maintaining that we experience another's suffering as our own, Schopenhauer believes himself to be explaining how it is that we are moved to treat the suffering of another as if it were our own suffering. So if we interpret Schopenhauer literally he would have to be saying that one can, through compassion, literally experience another's suffering. Cartwright (1999: 278) suggests that this process comes about 'through a form of identification with another that moves a person to treat another's woe like his or her own'.

But we do not or cannot, according to Nietzsche, feel the suffering of others; we can only feel our own suffering just as the sufferer only feels his or her own suffering because:

'[w]hat we most deeply and most personally suffer from is incomprehensible and inaccessible to nearly everyone else; here we are hidden from our nearest...' (GS338). We suffer through the feelings of guilt which Christianity and the belief in God engenders and thus Nietzsche reasons that it is our own suffering we seek to assuage when we express pity or compassion to another. Thus Nietzsche explains how we forge a link between *Mitleid* and suffering and in expressing *Mitleid* for another we can forget our own suffering. The pain of our own suffering becomes displaced and we come to believe that we suffer with and thus can feel the suffering of another and this feeling endows *Mitleid* with the highest degree of moral worth. Reginster explains Nietzsche's opposition to Schopenhauer's account of *Mitleid* and suffering in this way:

[T]o make a virtue out of compassion is in fact to declare that suffering is something that ought to be deplored and eliminated. And so, according to Nietzsche, morality in Schopenhauer's conception of it is itself an expression of the belief that suffering is evil. This is how Nietzsche understands it when he maintains that the prevalent 'morality of compassion' ultimately rests on a wholesale condemnation of suffering. It is by virtue of resting on this condemnation of suffering that the morality of compassion is essentially life-negating and ultimately nihilistic (Reginster 2006: 162).

Thus Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer's appraisal concerning the moral worth of *Mitleid*:

People have dared to call pity a virtue ... people have gone even further, making it into *the* virtue, the foundation and source of all virtues, - but of course you always have to keep in mind that this was the perspective of a nihilistic philosophy that inscribed the *negation of life* on its shield (AC 7).

*Mitleid*'s role in the abolition of suffering is what, for Nietzsche, makes *Mitleid* so pernicious. Suffering is an incontrovertible fact of life; it has a positive role to play in the development and growth of any healthy human being and without it the instinct to overcome hardship is impaired.

#### 4.4 ***Mitleid: A Danger to Health and Human Excellence***

Nietzsche considers *Mitleid* to be 'a parasite to moral health' (WP 368). *Mitleid* is a parasite which adds to the suffering and sickness which the belief in God was intended to cure. Like any parasitic organism, *Mitleid*, according to Nietzsche, feeds upon its host; it grows in humans, it spreads and infects other humans. Nietzsche writes:

Pity makes suffering into something infectious; sometimes it can even cause a total loss of life and of vital energy... this depressive and contagious instinct running counter to the instincts that preserve and enhance the value of life: by *multiplying* misery just as much as by *conserving* everything miserable, pity is one of the main tools used to increase decadence – pity wins people over to *nothingness!* (AC7).

When Nietzsche talks about 'parasites' it is because he sees the sick as being 'the greatest danger to the healthy' (GM III 14). Whenever people notice suffering in others, 'the religion of pity (or "the heart") commands them to help, and they believe that they have helped most when they have helped most quickly' (GS 338). It is a natural and instinctive reaction which arises in human beings when they are in the presence of suffering but the existence and proximity of the sick creates what Nietzsche sees as the danger of engendering *Mitleid* in the healthy. We might think that to feel compassion for those not so fortunate must be a good thing but, for Nietzsche, this is an undesirable situation. Nietzsche believes that the sick and the weakly are those who 'most undermine life amongst human beings; they are those who most dangerously poison and question our

confidence in life and in ourselves' (GM III 14). What Nietzsche suggests here is the danger posed to healthy higher types – a danger which is engendered by the too close proximity of the healthy to the sick. The pity that proximity engenders in healthy higher types for the sick could, Nietzsche imagines, lead to a softening of feelings in the healthy which Nietzsche suggests would be antithetical to the robust and vibrant nature of his notion of great health. The one who pities becomes, for Nietzsche, weakened emotionally and psychologically by a feeling of empathy with the pitied and this is the danger that such feelings pose for the healthy. Nietzsche expresses this emotional and psychological frailty as being characteristic of 'those who do not have themselves sufficiently under their own control and do not know morality as a continual self-command and self-overcoming practised in great things and in the smallest' (WS 45). People wallowing in pity, according to Nietzsche, allow their hearts to rule their minds when 'they involuntarily become glorifiers of the good, pitying, benevolent impulses of that instinctive morality which has no head but seems to consist solely of heart and helping hands' (WS 45).

Nietzsche sees the manifestation of the morality of *Mitleid* as a weakness; it exhibits a distinct lack of control and self-discipline. 'Pity [...] is a weakness, like every losing of oneself through a harmful affect' (D 134). Those who habitually react to suffering by an immediate rush to pity and those who do not have the strength of character to resist this impulse will, ultimately, according to Nietzsche, 'grow sick and melancholic' (D 134). The forward, immediate rush to pity is, for Nietzsche, an indication of weakness of character. Morality, according to Nietzsche, should be more than just a precipitate rush to action, fuelled by emotional necessity.

#### **4.5 Distinguishing Pity from Compassion**

As discussed above the German language translates both pity and compassion as *Mitleid*. Gudrun von Tevenar (2007) and David Cartwright (1982) suggest that pity and compassion cover different emotions. Differing connotations and usage in the English language between pity and compassion justify, according to Cartwright, the decision of those who interpret Nietzsche's *Mitleid* as pity. Cartwright (1982: 557) suggests that it is best to understand Nietzsche's use of *Mitleid* as exclusively pertaining to 'pity' and that in this way we might better understand Nietzsche's reaction to pity as unhealthy. He argues

that the discussion of *Mitleid* in Nietzsche's works needs to be distinguished from Schopenhauer's discussion of *Mitleid*, the translation of which Cartwright believes should more appropriately be rendered as 'compassion'. One can, according to Cartwright (1982: 564), only understand Nietzsche's objections by acknowledging that when Nietzsche refers to *Mitleid* he means to identify a different emotion from Schopenhauer's discussion of *Mitleid*. Von Tevenar (2007: 268) also suggests that Nietzsche's writings evince a distinction between pity and compassion. Von Tevenar comments:

Regarding the question whether Nietzsche truly believed that mere pity is all there is to *Mitleid*, one must concede that much speaks for such a conclusion [...] most of the objections put forward by Nietzsche against *Mitleid* apply to *Mitleid* understood merely as pity and not as compassion (Von Tevenar 2007: 273).

Cartwright and Von Tevenar both acknowledge that the emotions which pity and compassion represent share common characteristics. Cartwright (1982: 558) observes that both 'pity and compassion are always directed specifically towards another who is in some sense judged to be suffering' and where this occurs both pity and compassion motivate the agent to assuage the sufferer's pain. Mindful of this, we might surmise that there is no difference between pity and compassion; Nietzsche scholars have reinforced this view by what, I suggest, is a tendency to overlook a distinction between the two. However both Cartwright and Von Tevenar argue for the importance of respecting a difference between the two if we are properly to apprehend the significance of Nietzsche's view on *Mitleid*.

#### 4.6 Contempt, Shame and Humiliation in Pity

Cartwright and Von Tevenar both acknowledge the emotional differences between compassion and pity. They both agree that although pity and compassion share common features, pity has negative connotations which distinguish it from compassion. They acknowledge from the outset the negative qualities associated with pity. Von Tevenar suggests that most people are aware of a subtle distinction between pity and compassion even if the distinction cannot be readily articulated. The words, 'I pity you' do not necessarily indicate a kind or sympathetic demeanour to the person towards whom these words are uttered. To feel pity for another does not necessarily involve, on the part of the

pitier, an emotional attachment to the pitied or even a feeling of sympathy. More often than not words of this nature are intended to express or indicate contempt as when, for example, a person loses their temper at me for a trivial reason or minor infraction and I retort 'I pity you'. My words are intended to express my contempt for someone who has no control over their emotions. As well as contempt, shame and humiliation attitudes of superiority also figure prominently in the accounts of Cartwright and von Tevenar as issuing from pity. Cartwright agrees with von Tevenar that there is an element of contempt which creeps into expressions of pity as well as an assumption of superiority on the part of the pitier. Pity, says Von Tevenar, conveys condescension and contempt which imbue the bearer of that emotion with feelings of superiority and which, as a consequence, cause the one pitied shame and humiliation. The pitier, in feeling contempt, simply recognises that the pitied is in a psychological and mental place such that the pitier feels able to distance themselves in a superior way from the pitied. But more than this, and as Von Tevenar (2007: 268) suggests, Nietzsche wants to say that pity harms not only the pitied but also the person who feels or offers pity (GS 338).

Zarathustra conveys the degrading effect which pity has on the pitier as well as the pitied: 'For inasmuch as I saw the sufferer suffering, I was ashamed for the sake of his shame; and when I helped him I severely violated his pride' (Z 2: 'On the Pitying'). Nietzsche's view of the psychological harm done to those who pity is a theme to which von Tevenar returns and which I discuss below.

#### Nietzsche's *Mitleid*: A Description of Pity

Von Tevenar (2007:273-4), as alluded to above argues that Nietzsche's attack on *Mitleid* suggests, for the most part, pity rather than compassion. She discusses Nietzsche's claim that pity evokes shame and humiliation in the object and thus causes that person harm. Nietzsche suggests that no human being wants to be the object of pity because of the shame and humiliation involved: '*Being pitied*. – To savages the idea of being pitied evokes a moral shudder: it divests one of all virtue. To offer pity is as good as to offer contempt' (D 135). Furthermore, Nietzsche writes: 'there is something degrading in suffering and something elevating and productive of superiority in pitying...' (D 138). The attitude of superiority which tends to characterize the one who pities and the corresponding shame felt by the pitied in response to the suffering which induces *Mitleid* are factors which Von Tevenar argues are distinctive of pity as opposed to compassion.

Von Tevenar is, perhaps, right to suggest that Nietzsche does, for the most part, mean to refer to pity rather than compassion; this might explain why Nietzsche scholars, as Leiter suggests, tend to translate Nietzsche's *Mitleid* as pity rather than compassion. Von Tevenar believes however that this has lulled writers such as Cartwright into believing that pity is all that Nietzsche has in mind in objecting to *Mitleid*.

#### 4.7 Distinguishing Nietzsche's Pity from Schopenhauer's Compassion

Cartwright (1982: 561) interprets Nietzsche's account of *Mitleid* as one which exclusively describes the emotion of pity and from which compassion is entirely absent. In support of this claim, Cartwright argues that Schopenhauer's *Mitleid*, more consistently describes the notion of compassion. It is, I suggest, the case that compassion, in common with pity, is directed towards another's suffering. However, in contrast to pity, compassion has characteristics that we more commonly find in Schopenhauer's philosophy – those to do with caring for the well-being of others. Moreover, compassion, in contrast to pity, is, according to Cartwright, free from the connotations of contempt which, as discussed earlier, is a distinguishing characteristic of pity. Cartwright suggests that we praise those who are compassionate and we are disturbed by those who are lacking in compassion. Moreover compassion, according to Cartwright, has as its ultimate end another's well-being and it embraces the virtues of altruism and concern for the suffering of others.

Cartwright draws attention to Nietzsche's view that actions that motivate *Mitleid* reflect pretensions to selflessness when we are in fact more concerned with relieving our feelings of guilt: 'But it is only this suffering of our own which we get rid of when we perform deeds of pity' (D 133). Cartwright argues that compassion expresses an entirely different emotion from pity but more than that he believes that pity and compassion are 'morally significantly different'. Thus he suggests that Schopenhauer's discussion of *Mitleid* expresses an entirely different ethical concept from the one Nietzsche advances (Cartwright 1982: 562).

#### 4.8 Great Compassion, Nihilism and the Threat to Great Health

Although von Tevenar believes that there is much in Nietzsche's remonstrations against *Mitleid* that suggests pity, she rejects Cartwright's conclusions that Nietzsche's discussion

## Chapter 4

of *Mitleid* is concerned exclusively with pity and I suggest that she is right. Von Tevenar argues that, in addition to pity, Nietzsche's writings acknowledge the existence of an emotion which he refers to as the 'great *compassion*'. Nietzsche writes in *The Genealogy*:

What is to be feared, what has a doomful effect such as no other doom, would not be the great fear but rather the great disgust at man; likewise the *great compassion* for man (GM III 14).

Von Tevenar (2007: 273-274) interprets Nietzsche as distinguishing pity from a notion of great compassion. Great compassion is, for Nietzsche, insidious and more of a threat to the strong than pity because of its far-reaching and more permanent consequences for the health and psychological well-being of the individual. What, according to von Tevenar, makes pity less of a threat for Nietzsche is that one can feel pity in response to a particular situation but once the moment is passed, pity disappears along with it; equilibrium is restored and the parties are back to where they were before the episode which triggered the pity. Pity is, for Nietzsche, still bad but it is short-lived; it has greater impact on the weak than on those for whom Nietzsche is most concerned, that is to say, the strong and healthy. Moreover, it remains possible to feel pity towards another whilst still distancing oneself mentally and psychologically from the object of one's pity.

In contrast 'great *compassion*', which Von Tevenar treats as what we generally understand as compassion, has the capacity to endure with lasting and damaging effect and in contrast to pity, it is the healthy who are most at risk. Nietzsche writes: 'The sick are the greatest danger to the healthy; it is *not* from the strongest that harm comes to the strong, but rather from the weakest' (GM III 14). The strong are not cowed by their own suffering, as Nietzsche suggests in recounting the biographical details of his own illness and by his characterization of himself as one of the strong. However, what, according to Nietzsche, the strong fear most is, as referred to above, 'the great disgust at man; likewise the great compassion for man' (GM III 14). The natural instinct of the strong is to feel compassion for the 'the failed, downcast, broken' but these individuals, according to Nietzsche, constitute the weakest members of society and they 'are the ones who most undermine life among humans, who most dangerously poison and call into question our confidence in life, in man, in ourselves' (GM III 14). So, what Nietzsche means to say is that the suffering of the weak has a sort of magnetic pull over the strong which entices the strong to feel empathy for their situation; hence the strong suffer

because the weak are suffering. The strong find it impossible to escape the 'veiled look' of the weak which fills the strong with 'a deep sadness' (GM III 14). Nietzsche says of the weak:

Undoubtedly, if they should succeed in *shoving* their own misery, all misery generally *into the conscience* of the happy: so that the happy would one day begin to be ashamed of their happiness and perhaps say among themselves: 'it is a disgrace to be happy! *there is too much misery!*'...But there could not be any greater and more doomful misunderstanding than when the happy, the well-formed, the powerful body and soul begin to doubt their *right to happiness* (GM III 14).

Nietzsche suggests that the suffering of the weak impacts on the health of the strong but more seriously the weak use their suffering as an instrument of power over the strong:

[C]onspiracy of the sufferers against the well-formed and victorious ... They walk about among us as bodily reproaches, as warnings to us – as if health, being well-formed, strength, pride, a feeling of power were depraved things in themselves, for which one will someday have to atone ...The will of the sick to represent *any* form of superiority, their instinct for secret paths that lead to a tyranny over the healthy – where might this not be found, this will of precisely the weakest to power!' (GM III 14).

The excessive exposure of the strong to the suffering of the weak is, according to Nietzsche, potentially damaging because it encourages the objective of the weak which is to bring about feelings of guilt in the healthy and the strong. In this way the weak exercise power over the strong. The insidious gestures of the weak remind the strong that they should be ashamed of their own happiness and good fortune.

This is what, for Nietzsche, makes the effect which the weak have on the strong a potently dangerous force. Guilt and shame are amongst those emotions which cause the strong to doubt their entitlement to this degree of happiness. And with this doubt comes a lack of confidence in those qualities which are naturally to be found in the strong and which they are accustomed to take for granted. In distinguishing the great compassion from pity, Von Tevenar (2007:275) observes that Nietzsche finds that what happens with great compassion is that the agent cannot escape the feeling of sharing with the weak a

common bond of human experience and suffering. Von Tevenar (2007:275) observes that acknowledging to oneself a shared experience of pain with the weak, undermines the ability of the strong to pursue the life-style that they would otherwise be destined to lead – a life-style which affirms life and expresses the drives of rude health, strength, courage, power and excellence – qualities which are naturally associated with self-affirmation of one's superiority. Von Tevenar (2007:276) writes: 'It is this very power to tempt the strong to identify with the weak, thus subverting confidence in their own superiority that ... Nietzsche most fears about "great *compassion*" or compassion.' Thus it is, according to Nietzsche, imperative that, 'the healthy remain *separated* from the sick, guarded even against the sight of the sick, that they not confuse themselves with the sick' (GM III 14). Association with the sick represents, for Nietzsche, the gravest danger to the psychological health and well-being of the strong.

Nietzsche, according to Von Tevenar, describes a feeling of disgust that accompanies the compassion which the strong feel for the weak. The strong are overcome by feelings of 'great disgust at man' and the 'great compassion for man' that well up within them. The union of great disgust and great compassion is a deadly combination for the strong because it weakens them psychologically and emotionally and in this state, they surrender to despair, 'the will to nothingness, nihilism' (GM III 14).

#### **4.9 Von Tevenar and Cartwright: A Summary**

What, I suggest, emerges from Von Tevenar's and Cartwright's accounts is that many of Nietzsche's criticisms of *Mitleid* mirror commonly held views about pity. Many of Nietzsche's criticisms only make sense, I suggest, if we take him to be talking about pity rather than compassion. However Cartwright maintains that Nietzsche's *Mitleid* is exclusively concerned with pity. But if the objections that Nietzsche raises are exclusively in relation to pity then what view does Cartwright take Nietzsche to have concerning the kind of other regarding and altruistic compassion described by Schopenhauer and on which Nietzsche comments (GM Preface 5)? Cartwright (1982: 565) surmises that Nietzsche might argue, 'that Schopenhauer's conception of *Mitleid* has no instances or application to human behaviour'. So, we might interpret Cartwright as saying that Nietzsche would deny the existence of the other regarding or altruistic behaviour which is what describes Schopenhauer's compassion. But it is, I suggest, not clear that Cartwright

directly addresses what it is that Nietzsche makes of Schopenhauer's notion of compassion if Nietzsche's objections are, as Cartwright says, merely confined to pity. I suggest, however, that Nietzsche acknowledges compassion but he questions its valorisation and the relationship human beings have with it. In the face of suffering what those whom Nietzsche might describe as bleeding hearts want most is 'to help...the "religion of compassion" (or "the heart") commands them to help, and they believe they have helped best when they have helped most quickly' (GS 338).

Von Tevenar's discussion of GM III 14 in which Nietzsche discusses the notion of great compassion does, I suggest, cast doubt on Cartwright's argument that pity is all there is to Nietzsche's notion of *Mitleid*. Von Tevenar acknowledges that Nietzsche's writings suggest, for the most part, emotions we would normally describe as pity. However she offers an account of Nietzsche's great compassion which suggests that its effect on the healthy is, for Nietzsche, of more serious concern than the pity the strong feel for the weak. Worry over the psychologically harmful effects of moral values on the healthy has always been of major concern to Nietzsche. Nietzsche, as both Von Tevenar's and Cartwright's accounts show, considers pity to be harmful but, be that as it may, great compassion has, for Nietzsche, more serious and deleterious consequences for the healthy and the strong. Von Tevenar's discussion of Nietzsche's account of great compassion reveals that great compassion has all those 'dangerous' and 'decadent' qualities against which Nietzsche warns throughout his works. What Nietzsche has to say about great compassion in GM III 14 is, I suggest, consistent with his warnings in Preface 6 to *The Genealogy* and section 7 of *The Anti-Christ*. In GM III 14 Nietzsche also picks out in particular the common bond which the strong develop with the weak and which undermines the strong's feelings of superiority. Great compassion in the strong is unhealthy because it allows them to be moved by the suffering of those less fortunate than themselves, in a way which is, according to Nietzsche, psychologically harmful and which, as Nietzsche suggests, leads to a crisis of confidence in the strong. The great compassion which *The Genealogy* describes and which Von Tevenar takes to be what we commonly understand as compassion, is not, I suggest, the compassion of Schopenhauer. GM III 14 shows how this kind of compassion is more in the nature of an instrument of power in the hands of the weak ('the sick are the greatest danger to the healthy'). Von

Tevenar's discussion of great compassion in GM III 14 draws out the subtle ways in which the weak use the call for sympathy against the strong so as to undermine their power.

However it is not altogether clear what comparison Von Tevenar intends to draw between pity and compassion other than to affirm the existence of two aspects of *Mitleid* (pity and great compassion). Rather, Von Tevenar's account would suggest that, for Nietzsche, pity and great compassion, each in its own way, is bad but for different reasons. Von Tevenar (2007:279) observes that, for Nietzsche, pity does a disservice to those at whom it is aimed by belittling them in their suffering and even the pitier is not immune from the feeling of shame which accompanies his pitying. Whereas in great compassion it is the healthy who suffer through association with the plight of the weak and an insidious wielding of this plight by the weak against the strong to their own advantage as Nietzsche illustrates in the following passage:

I, too, know with certainty that I need only to expose myself to the sight of real distress and I, too, *am* lost! If a suffering friend said to me, 'Look, I am about to die; please promise to die with me', I would promise it (GS 338).

Von Tevenar's account is, I suggest, helpful because it analyses the wide range of emotions which *Mitleid* conveys and its impact on agents. However her account does not alter the fact that *Mitleid* whether as pity or compassion or both is still, for Nietzsche, an unhealthy response to suffering.

#### 4.10 Conclusion

Von Tevenar's and Cartwright's discussions emphasize the wide ranging nature of *Mitleid* as a response to the suffering of others – responses which cover a spectrum of emotions which we might either describe as pity or as compassion. Cartwright seeks to argue that what is translated as pity by most writers of Nietzsche's works is an entirely different concept from Schopenhauer's notion of compassion. However Von Tevenar's analysis of Nietzsche's notion of great compassion makes Cartwright's argument less tenable. Von Tevenar's arguments serve, I suggest, to offer clarity on the various and unhealthy ways in which Nietzsche believes *Mitleid* impacts on the life of individuals.

Notwithstanding the above discussion it is, I suggest, more likely that Nietzsche regarded the emotions expressed by both pity and compassion as not worthy of distinction: that he

regarded compassion and pity equally as life-denying and unhealthy responses to the suffering of others. Nietzsche's polemic against *Mitleid* operates, I suggest, on two levels.

Firstly, Nietzsche mounts a fierce attack against Christianity's endorsement of *Mitleid* and also against Schopenhauer's philosophy which regards *Mitleid* as the foundation for all morally worthy action. *Mitleid* reinforces, I suggest, Christianity's promotion of the interests of the weak over the strong.

Secondly, a further motivation for Nietzsche's attack on *Mitleid* and what I suggest is distinctive about it, is the suggestion that *Mitleid* has a serious and deleterious impact on the health of the strong. Compassion is, for Nietzsche, an unhealthy response to suffering; it induces a decline in the appetite for life which in turn leads to nihilistic depression and sickness. The strong suffer from 'the tyranny' of the weak through association with their suffering. Proximity to the weak overwhelms the strong and the healthy with feelings of shame because, as Nietzsche suggests, the weak are, in a sly way, good at using their suffering to induce 'the two gravest epidemics' (GM III 14). The 'epidemics' to which Nietzsche refers are the feelings of 'great disgust' and 'great compassion' which when combined bring about the downfall of the strong and healthy who then become subsumed with nihilistic despair: compassion or pity in this sense is, I suggest, the real worry that Nietzsche has. The contagion of compassion has the power to break the health of the strong; thus the healthy must, according to Nietzsche, guard against this contagion by distancing themselves from it.



# Chapter 5 The Sickness of Nihilism

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the factors motivating Nietzsche's account of nihilistic sickness. I discuss Richard Schacht's, Arthur Danto's, Walter Kaufmann's and Bernard Reginster's interpretation of nihilism. I then show that nihilism is for Nietzsche a necessary transitory stage for the achievement of health.

## 5.2 Background to Nihilism

I begin with a discussion of three issues which I suggest are integral to Nietzsche's account of nihilistic sickness and health:

- i. European Nihilism and the Death of God
- ii. The Unconditional Will to Truth and the Ascetic ideal
- iii. God is Dead but his Values still Remain

### *(i) European Nihilism and the Death of God*

Nietzsche writes in section 125 of *The Gay Science*, 'God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!' This is just one of a series of passages in *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche uses the metaphor of the death of God to reflect the demise of Christianity in modern European society.<sup>7</sup> The result of the loss of belief in God is a collapse in values leading to nihilism. Nihilism emerges from the fact that the rationalisation of suffering which Christianity offers now no longer makes sense. Human beings are becoming in general more sceptical about Christianity's ability to make sense of suffering.

Traditional morality started out as something good - as a cure for man's despair. Despair arose because when human beings began to form themselves into societies, communities and collectives they became aware of the need to re-direct their wild, untamed and natural instincts. The ascetic ideal saved human beings from despair; they still suffered but the ascetic ideal gave meaning to their suffering and thus human beings were left to feel there was a purpose to all this suffering. But in doing so the ascetic ideal 'brought

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<sup>7</sup> See GS 108 and 343 for other references to the death of God.

new suffering with it, deeper, more inward, more poisonous, gnawing more at life' (GM III 28). Nietzsche writes in *Daybreak*:

[T]he worst sickness of mankind originated in the way in which they have combated their sicknesses, and what seemed to cure has in the long run produced something worse than that which it was supposed to overcome. The means which worked immediately, anaesthetising and intoxicating, the so-called consolations, were ignorantly supposed to be actual cures; the fact was not even noticed, indeed, that these instantaneous alleviations often had to be paid for with a general and profound worsening of the complaint, that the invalid had to suffer from the after-effect of intoxication, later from the withdrawal of intoxication, and later still from an oppressive general feeling of restlessness, nervous agitation and ill-health. Past a certain degree of sickness one never recovered (D 52).

Here Nietzsche attacks those 'physicians of the soul' (D 52) who purported to offer a cure for psychological sickness but the cure they offered left human beings in a worse state than the sickness it was intended to remedy. The sickness of contemporary European society, as Nietzsche sees it, has its roots in the fictions and the imaginary world of the hereafter which were associated with Christianity – these provided human beings with a sense of purpose and proved to be psychologically and emotionally beneficial.

Christianity offered human beings a new confidence about what they could know. Human beings had faith in the knowledge that their values were absolute and this knowledge gave them confidence that they could place full trust in those values. So, ultimately, what Christianity provided for human beings were values which gave their suffering meaning: '[Christianity] posited that man knows about absolute values thus giving him adequate knowledge precisely of what is most important' (WLN 5[71]:1,p116).

The belief in God offered the badly off consolation when it offered them the hope of a better world to come as well as faith in an absolute set of values: 'For those who have come off badly, morality provided protection from nihilism by conferring on each an infinite value, a metaphysical value' (WLN 5[71]:10, p.119). But ultimately Nietzsche sees Christianity's appeal to absolute or transcendent values, its aversion to instincts, passions and the actual world and its belief in a transcendent world delivering redemption, as harmful to psychological health. The morality of traditional Christian values was intended

as a cure for sickness but it has, according to Nietzsche, failed in this objective.

Nietzsche's project – his critique of moral values and revaluation of values is a response to the failure of contemporary moral values to offer 'an effective medicine for the disease that prompts its use.'<sup>8</sup> The sickness which Nietzsche describes occurs not because our lives have deteriorated to any significant extent; nihilistic sickness, as Nietzsche sees it, occurs because the developments of the modern age make the belief in God and its principal tenets no longer tenable. So the rationalisation of suffering which Christianity offers now no longer makes sense and we are becoming, in general, more sceptical about the answers which Christianity offers - answers which were supposed to make sense of sickness and suffering.

Moral values, according to Nietzsche, were invented as a form of expiation for life in this world but with the inducement that a better and future world existed. Nietzsche's view is that we deny life in this world so that we may enjoy life in the hereafter. We accept the unpleasantness of our existence in this world so that we may aspire to another world free from the problems of this world. However Nietzsche links Christianity and its commitment to a *nirvanic* type fictional world with symptoms of dis-ease, psychological illness and a life-negating weariness with existence. We take solace from a belief in a fictitious world whilst we disassociate ourselves from the reality of the actual world in which we live. This creates the conditions for a life of mental and spiritual impoverishment and for the growth of the pathology which Nietzsche refers to as *decadence*. *Decadence*, for Nietzsche, is a term of art which he uses to describe the pathology he associates with symptoms of apathy, depression, diminished vitality, exhaustion, lethargy, in sum, a sickness inducing weariness with life. Nietzsche's claim 'is that all the values in which humanity has collected its highest desiderata are *values of decadence*' (AC 6). When human beings opt for the values of a Christian morality they choose a life in which '*nihilistic* values, values of decline, have taken control under the aegis of the holiest names' (AC 6).

With the death of God the possibility of such a future and better world disappears. The badly off are those most in need of the consolation which Christian morality offers and they are the ones who experience pessimistic despair as belief in God evaporates: 'if

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<sup>8</sup> Clark (2015: 5-6).

## Chapter 5

belief in this morality fell into ruin, those who come off badly lose their consolation – and would be ruined too' (WLN 5[71]:10, p.119). '[T]he instinct for self-destruction, the will into nothingness' is the result of losing belief in God (WLN 5[71]:11, p119). The will to nothingness – nihilism is a symptom of the badly off having lost all consolation. Nietzsche writes: 'The most unhealthy kind of man in Europe' is drawn towards this kind of nihilism (WLN 5[71]:14, p.120). Nishitani Keiji in his book, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* aptly sums up the health and psychological implications which Christianity poses for modern European society and which Nietzsche articulates in his writings:

For [Nietzsche] the imaginary world of Christianity is an expression of deep dissatisfaction with the real world ...Who needs such a lie? Those who suffer from reality and whose lives are not going as they wish. These lives evoke the fictitious world of the beyond, and mark a fundamental decline of life as such (Keiji 1990: 38).

The focus of Christian teaching has been to encourage belief in a future world. Human beings, in their desire to escape from this world, seek solace in the belief in an afterlife. Christianity, according to Nietzsche, turns away from life, when it constructs a distinction between this world and a transcendent world and thus Christian morality is, for Nietzsche, 'completely out of touch with reality' (AC 15). We are encouraged to believe that the world in which we live is the 'apparent world' and that it is the future or other world that is in fact the real world. But 'this entire fictional world' on which Christianity is predicated 'is rooted in a *hatred* of the natural (- of reality!-) ...it is the expression of a profound sense of unease concerning reality' (AC 15). The disposition of human beings towards the belief in a fictitious world reflects their discontent with the actual world and is also a reflection of the extent to which suffering and psychological sickness compel reliance on the fictional world as a crutch.

### *(ii) The Unconditional Will to Truth and the Unhealthy Outlook of the Ascetic Ideal*

The Christian moral framework which prevails in modern European society is inspired by what Nietzsche describes as the ascetic ideal. Morality has become synonymous with the ideals of asceticism; the ascetic priest 'forces his valuation of existence' (GM III 11). The ascetic ideal is a valuation of life which the ascetic priest presents as one of self-denial – a life which assigns worth to 'poverty, humility, chastity' (GM III 8).

Belief in the ascetic ideal is what compels the unconditional will to truth. To believe in the ascetic ideal is to believe ‘in a value *in itself of truth* as it is established and guaranteed by that ideal alone’ (GM III 24). Human beings have ‘the belief, the conviction: “*Nothing is more* necessary than truth; and in relation to it, everything else has only secondary value”’ (GS 344). Nietzsche argues that the unconditional will to truth is the pursuit of a life that conforms to the dictates of the ascetic ideal; the unconditional will to truth is essentially life-negating and with all the pathological conditions attendant on such a way of life. When one affirms the faith in truth one acknowledges the existence of Platonic and Christian ideals of a world beyond this one. The ascetic ideal promotes the value of truth as synonymous with God: ‘We godless ones...we too still take our fire from that great fire, that was ignited by a thousand-year old belief, that belief of Christians, which was also Plato’s belief , that god is truth, that truth is divine’(GM III 24). Nietzsche’s thought, I suggest, is that the faith in truth and its association with Christian/Platonic ideals of another world amounts to a retreat from this world and condemning ourselves to a life where nothing much matters. Thus Nietzsche is motivated to say of the will to truth that it ‘could be a hidden will to death’ (GS 344).

Nietzsche rejects Christianity’s claim that truth and the true world are constitutive of some other world beyond the actual world. His attack on Christianity’s claims on truth and the existence of a world other than the actual world is not, I suggest, merely theological and philosophical. Nietzsche seeks to understand the estrangement with reality which Christian morality has fostered in human beings. His aim is to identify the implications for psychological health of the division which Christianity creates between a true world and an apparent world. Christianity’s notion of a ‘true world’, says Nietzsche, is no longer justified:

The ‘true world’ – an idea that is of no further use, not even as an obligation, - now an obsolete, superfluous idea, *consequently* a refuted idea: let’s get rid of it... The true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps... But no! *We got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!* (TI: ‘How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable’, 5 and 6).

With the death of God it becomes apparent that Christianity’s true world is no more than a chimera. According to Nietzsche, this realisation is linked to the emergence of the pathology which Nietzsche associates with nihilism. For Europeans can no longer regard

## Chapter 5

the world in which they live, that is to say, the actual world as merely an apparent world: they are confronted with the fact that the actual world is all that there is. Mistrust gives way to nihilism as human beings become increasingly suspicious about the status of the traditional moral values which guide their lives. Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*:

Have we not exposed ourselves to the suspicion of an opposition – an opposition between the world in which until now we were at home with our venerations – and which may have made it possible for us to *endure* life - and another world *that we ourselves are...* (GS 346).

Up until now human beings have been able to state with confidence that traditional moral values ('our venerations') are what have made life endurable. Nietzsche does not deny that the ascetic ideal 'has *improved* man' (GM III 21). The ascetic ideal made it possible for human beings to will something – it was a will to nothingness, to everything which signified an aversion to life and yet it gave meaning to their lives (GM III 28). The ascetic ideal 'has been the only ideal so far because it has not had any competition. Because people would rather will nothingness than *not will*' (EH: 'Why I Write Such Good Books', GM) and this, as Nietzsche sees it, is 'the true calamity' in the history of European health. The ascetic ideal has been disastrous for health and as Nietzsche writes, 'there is hardly anything else I could point out that has pressed so destructively upon *health*... particularly of Europeans, as this [ascetic] ideal' (GM III 21) and even more disastrously, as Nietzsche acknowledges, the ascetic ideal endures and prospers (GM III 21). Nietzsche associates the widespread influence of the ascetic ideal with the pathology that pervades modern European society: 'the ascetic ideal has ruined health and taste' (GM III 23). Loss of belief in God evokes, Nietzsche argues, doubt and uncertainty about the kind of values we can now claim for ourselves. The death of God arouses suspicion and distrust about the world and those values which were intended to assuage despair. Nihilism is the condition which emerges from the uncertainty now surrounding our values. Nietzsche claims that truth and the value of truth become a problem when we no longer believe in God: 'From the moment belief in the god of the ascetic ideal is negated, *there is also a new problem*: that of the *value of truth*' (GM III 24).

Nietzsche might have been expected to see science and its truths as a viable alternative to the ascetic ideal as the scientific developments of the Enlightenment have slowly eroded belief in God and Christianity as a religion:

[Science] has not only fought a long successful battle with this ideal but rather has already become lord over that ideal in all essential matters: our entire modern *science* is said to be witness to this – this modern science, which, as a true philosophy of reality, clearly believes in itself alone...and has so far got along well enough without God, the beyond, and virtues that negate (GM III 23).

But the problem, as Nietzsche sees it, is that although society is moving away from a belief in God, the morality of the Christian value system is still deeply ingrained in the psyche of modern Europeans. Nietzsche's critique of science maintains that scientific endeavour rests on the same moral and therefore life-negating grounds as the ascetic ideal: 'No! Don't give me science as an answer when I look for the natural antagonist of the ascetic ideal...' (GM III 25). Nietzsche does not see science as: 'the opposite of the ascetic ideal but rather *its most recent and noblest form*' (GM III 23). Science no less than the ascetic ideal is predicated 'on the same overestimation of truth' (GM III 25) and has failed to undermine the faith in truth. Nietzsche understands the scientific belief in truth as still grounded in the ascetic ideal: he avers that the axioms of truth on which scientific research and endeavour are formulated 'rest on the same ground as the ascetic ideal' (GM III 25). In common with the ascetic ideal, science retains a belief that truth is unconditionally valuable: 'it is still a metaphysical faith upon which our faith in science rests' (GS 344). Although scientific progress compels human beings towards doubting a belief in God, its truths do not assuage nihilistic sickness; rather science still represents '*a certain impoverishment of life*' (GM III 25) which is no less harmful than the ideals of Christianity which Nietzsche attacks.

### *(iii) God is Dead but his Values still Remain*

Human beings realise the contradiction in their thoughts and behaviour in regard to values which as Simon May (1999: 156) comments 'continue to be ascribed absolute value explicitly or implicitly in people's ethical practices and beliefs even when the theology which originally justified that ascription is no longer believed'. Nietzsche suggests that we have an awareness that Christianity and its tenets are no longer credible but mentally and emotionally we have not adjusted to the implications of still continuing to live in accordance with a Christian morality either at the conscious or subconscious level (GS 125). Nietzsche recognizes nihilism as a problem for those who continue to follow the traditional precepts of a belief in God despite no longer believing in him.

## Chapter 5

The death of God raises questions about the ontology of our values and the weight we attach to these. If we no longer believe in God, are we not compelled to abandon those values for which the belief in God provides normative authority? This might be so if one accepts nihilism as the consequence of believing that life has meaning only if God exists.

Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols*:

Christianity is a system, a carefully considered, *integrated* view of things. If you break off a main tenet, the belief in God, you smash the whole system along with it: you lose your grip on anything necessary (TI: 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', 5).

The passage suggests a notion of Christianity, comprising various elements, of which the belief in God is one: this, together with other aspects of Christianity, goes to make up one complete, cohesive and indivisible whole. If one part fails, such as the notion of a belief in God, then the whole falls apart. To put it another way, we might say that the loss of belief in God entails that the whole framework which Christianity sustains - its values, together with the metaphysical and epistemological concepts associated with it, are no longer credible. We might also, on this basis, wish to surmise that moral values are synonymous with a belief in God and without the belief in God there are no moral values in which we can claim to believe. Those values which were presumed to give life meaning no longer exert any hold over man's moral and ethical needs.

On this extreme reading of the passage from *Twilight of the Idols* the whole European system of moral values disappears with the death of God. Life no longer has value - nothing has value. So, on this interpretation, might we not be tempted to see the death of God as the end of morality, of moral values and of the metaphysical and epistemological concepts of reality and truth on which such values are based? The answer must I suggest be 'no'. As discussed in chapter 3, Nietzsche acknowledges the utility of herd/slave morality for the herd type but such morality will be harmful to higher types. Moreover, even if the belief in God no longer exists, it surely must, I suggest, be the case that people still act in a way that suggests that they still adhere to the moral values that are associated with this belief. There is a dissonance between beliefs and behaviour which is, I suggest, the pathology that Nietzsche identifies. Despite the demise of the belief in God, the moral values associated with this belief still continue to exercise a strong pull over human beings: 'They have got rid of the Christian God, and now think

that they have to hold on to Christian morality more than ever...' (TI: 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', 5). Human behaviour has not caught up with what it means to live in a society where belief is out of step with society's values and this, I suggest, contributes to the pathology to which Nietzsche refers in his discussion of nihilism (WP 13). Despite the death of God moral values are still very much in play but human beings no longer have the consolation which its morality was intended to offer. Instead the loss of belief in God leaves man with a sense of despair.

There is however a more modest claim which we might attribute to Nietzsche and which arguably makes better sense of the anomaly that human beings, despite not believing in God, still continue to act in accordance with the values of a predominantly Christian moral culture. Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols*: 'When you give up Christian faith you pull the rug out from under your right to Christian morality as well' (TI: 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', 5). It does not, I suggest, automatically follow that moral values immediately fall away on the abandonment of belief in God. Simon Robertson (2012: 95) rightly, I suggest, interprets Nietzsche as merely making the weaker claim that human beings have no right to assume, without argument, the normative authoritative nature of moral values or the assumption that moral values have a place in society, if they no longer believe in God.<sup>9</sup> In passages such as Prefaces 3 and 6 of *The Genealogy*, Nietzsche, I suggest, affirms this view when he comments that human beings should start challenging these values rather than accepting them as givens.

Nietzsche's account of the death of God brings into sharp focus, I suggest, the deleterious effect on psychological health and well-being brought on by the collapse in values and the nihilism that follows. The ascetic ideal and the unconditional will to truth are the foundations of European moral values; these now, according to Nietzsche, need to be 'called into question' (GM III 24). If nihilism is to be addressed and we are to be restored back to health we must, says Nietzsche, take an experimental approach to questions of truth. We must determine the value of a judgement on the basis of whether it contributes to individual flourishing and psychological health and well-being.

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<sup>9</sup> This section is based on Simon Robertson's discussion of *Twilight of the Idols*: 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', 5 in (2012: 94-97).

### 5.3 Nihilism: A Transitional Stage to Overcoming Sickness

We have discussed Nietzsche's account of European nihilism, the loss of the belief in God, the collapse in values, and the nihilism which ensues. But what is nihilism? I suggest that nihilism is, for Nietzsche, a positive force. Nihilism represents a transitional stage in the overcoming of sickness; it paves the way for the cure which, for Nietzsche, is the affirmation of life. I discuss Arthur Danto's, Walter Kaufmann's Richard Schacht's and Bernard Reginster's views on Nietzsche's nihilism. Schacht and Reginster rightly, I suggest, see Nietzsche's nihilism as a transitional stage towards overcoming sickness and achieving health and the affirmation of life.

Danto ascribes to Nietzsche an extreme nihilist position: he seeks to commit Nietzsche to the view of a world which is totally devoid of values. Danto locates Nietzsche's nihilism in the tradition of the Russian Nihilists who claimed to believe in nothing and espoused an essentially negative and destructive approach towards the political and religious establishment of the day. Danto avers that Nietzsche's nihilism is a 'thoroughly disillusioned concept of a world which is as hostile to human aspiration as he could imagine it to be' (Danto 2005: 15). But how seriously should we take Danto's position? Is Danto's synopsis a coherent account of Nietzsche's position? Danto's comments on Nietzsche's nihilism confuses and conflates, I suggest, Nietzsche's nihilism with the political anarchism of the Russian Nihilists. Richard Schacht (1973: 65-69) rightly, I suggest, rejects the view that Nietzsche's position on nihilism could be likened to that of the Russian Nihilists. The attack on religious and political institutions, merely for its own sake, does not fit with the overall theme of Nietzsche's project. Nietzsche's attack on the church and religious institutions serves, I suggest, to provide context to his identification of the sickness in modern European society. Schacht (1973: 69) observes that Nietzsche advances a view of the world which is ostensibly valueless because: 'We have measured the value of the world according to categories that refer to a purely fictitious world' (WP 12B) and despair sets in when we realize that the world can no longer be understood in this way. Nietzsche, according to Schacht, wants to say that although the world looks valueless there is still value to be found in it. According to Schacht (1983: 344) Nietzsche's concern with nihilism was not merely a concern with the question of nihilism for its own sake. Schacht (1973:71) rightly, I suggest, advances Nietzsche's view as one of positive nihilism and as wanting to advance a 'nihilism of strength' (WP 23). Nihilism

understood in this way is, I suggest, the next step in Nietzsche's remedial project for curing psychological sickness.

More importantly Schacht, I suggest, seeks to emphasize the positive aspects of the transitional status which Nietzsche accords nihilism. Nietzsche wants, according to Schacht, to convey the thought that 'a period of nihilism is the inevitable consequence of the collapse of our world-view' (1973:69). Moreover, Schacht sees Nietzsche's approach to nihilism as one of transition from a state of nihilism to values which reflect something more affirming of man's life. Schacht believes that, for Nietzsche, nihilism is not the end of the line: it is 'only a transitional stage' (WP7). Nietzsche seeks, according to Schacht, to impugn the credibility of traditional moral values and traditional metaphysics but Schacht believes that Nietzsche is still concerned that there should be something to take the place of those values that he believes to be no longer tenable. The more important concern for Nietzsche, with regard to nihilism, is its overcoming. The overcoming of nihilism means the overcoming of suffering and sickness and the creation of values more suited to a life lived in accordance with the values of great health.

Reginster argues that Nietzsche's nihilism reveals two different strands - the nihilism of disorientation and the nihilism of despair. However the distinction Reginster draws between the two is, I suggest, somewhat opaque and moreover outside the scope of this thesis. More importantly, I suggest that the key message from Reginster's account is that nihilism is a necessary and transitional stage towards overcoming nihilistic sickness (Reginster 2006: 10). In this Reginster, I suggest, makes common ground with Schacht in asserting the transitional nature of nihilism as well as its remedial status. The overcoming of nihilism, on Reginster's interpretation of Nietzsche, makes way for a substantive revaluation of our values, from which the will to power becomes the new criterion of value. This I discuss further in the next chapter, chapter 6. The will to power, according to Reginster's interpretation of Nietzsche, now becomes the substantive evaluative principle for the overcoming of nihilism and the affirmation of life (Reginster 2006: 101). And nihilism is the process by which this comes about as Nietzsche suggests in the following *Notebook* passage:

Actually, every major growth is accompanied by a tremendous crumbling and passing away: suffering, the symptoms of decline *belong* in the times of tremendous advances; every fruitful and powerful movement of humanity has

also created at the same time a nihilistic movement. It could be the sign of a crucial and most essential growth, of the transition to new conditions of existence, that the most extreme form of pessimism, genuine *nihilism*, would come into the world (WP 112).

Nietzsche's nihilism is not, I suggest, the destructive and negative nihilism of the Russian Nihilists portrayed in Danto's observations and as commented on above. Schacht's and Reginster's accounts of nihilism offer a more life-affirming portrayal of what Nietzsche intends, I suggest, to convey. Nihilism has, I suggest, for Nietzsche, genuine therapeutic value: for the remedial importance of nihilism lies in its overcoming. Nietzsche associates nihilism with sickness and yet it is evident from the foregoing passage that he does not see nihilism as a permanent or destructive end state. What emerges from the foregoing passage (WP 112) is an interpretation of nihilism as a transitional stage. The collapse of society's traditional values suggests, according to Nietzsche, a period of nihilism but it also presages the possibility of an end to a period of hopelessness:

[T]hese *social values* were erected over man to strengthen their voice, as if they were commands of God, as 'reality,' as the 'true' world, as a hope and *future* world. Now that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems 'meaningless' – but that is only a *transitional stage* (WP7).

Nihilism which emerges from the collapse of the Christian moral order represents, according to Nietzsche, 'a pathological transitional stage' (WP 13). The pathology which Nietzsche suggests is 'the tremendous generalization' (WP 13) about our values and what happens when these values collapse. Nietzsche 'holds a period of nihilism to be inevitable following the collapse of "the Christian-moral" interpretation of the world' (Schacht 1973: 69). It is also, I suggest, a stage which Nietzsche sees as necessary for human beings to have experienced in order to emerge as psychologically healthy beings: 'Nihilism as a psychological state will have to be reached first, when we have sought a "meaning" in all events that is not there: so the seeker eventually becomes discouraged' (WP 12A).

Why, asks Nietzsche, 'has the advent of nihilism become necessary?' (WP Preface 4)

Nihilism is, for Nietzsche, I suggest, the motivation for the rejection of the old morality and the adoption of an alternative philosophy which affirms life: 'because nihilism

represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals - because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these "values" really had. – We require sometime, *new values'* (WP Pref. 4). Thus, for Nietzsche, I suggest, experiencing nihilism brings with it the motivation for overcoming suffering and for pursuing an alternative. Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*:

One must have liberated oneself from many things that oppress, inhibit, hold down, and make heavy precisely us Europeans today. The human being of such a beyond who wants to catch a glimpse of the highest measures of value of his time must first of all 'overcome' this time in himself – this is the test of his strength – and consequently not only his time but also... his suffering from this time (GS 380).

#### 5.4 Conclusion

Nihilism arose from the collapse in values triggered by the death of God. Nietzsche's account of nihilism describes a state of despair when human beings no longer have the same conviction or certainty about the moral values which were intended to give meaning to the suffering in this world. But Nietzsche's account of nihilism is also one of hope. Nietzsche's texts affirm, I suggest, nihilism as a positive event. What, I suggest, is the most significant aspect of nihilism which Nietzsche offers and which emerges from both Schacht's and Reginster's interpretation is the transformative value of nihilism as an intermediate and necessary step towards psychological health and well-being.



## Chapter 6    Health: Suffering and the Will to power

### 6.1    Introduction

As discussed in chapter 5, nihilism is, for Nietzsche, a transient stage between sickness and his notion of the health which for him manifests as will to power. Will to power is, I suggest, the culmination of Nietzsche's views on health and well-being; it is the philosophical principle that underscores the value that Nietzsche affords suffering as a way of life and as the means to health. Nietzsche writes in the *Late Notebooks*:

Health and sickliness: be careful! The yardstick remains the body's efflorescence, the mind's elasticity, courage, and cheerfulness – but also, of course, *how much sickliness it can take upon itself and overcome* – can *make* healthy. What would destroy more tender men is one of the stimulants of *great* health (WLN 2[97] p.78).

Thus Nietzsche, by equating health with the extent to which one takes on sickness and suffering and one's ability to overcome such adversity, makes I suggest a connection between health and the will to power. The will to power, I argue, re-interprets suffering so that it becomes a positive and life-affirming force which has a direct bearing on health and resilience to sickness. 'The good' for Nietzsche becomes 'everything that enhances people's feeling of power, will to power, power itself' (AC 2).

In this chapter, I begin with Schopenhauer's account of suffering and show how it motivates Nietzsche's will to power principle. I discuss Nietzsche's view of happiness as a by-product of the will to power rather than an ultimate goal in its own right. Finally, I discuss Bernard Reginster's and Nadeem Hussain's contrasting interpretations of will to power. I discuss Reginster's account of the paradoxical nature of the will to power where he presents it not only as the will to overcome resistance but also as the will to want to be opposed. I discuss Hussain's account who, in contrast to Reginster, interprets will to power as the essence of life and the fundamental tendency of living organisms towards power, growth, domination and the overcoming of resistance. I argue that Hussain's interpretation of will to power is more consistent with Nietzsche's attack on morality as

anti-nature. However I conclude that Nietzsche's road to health is only intended for a select few.

## 6.2 Schopenhauer and Suffering

### *Happiness and its Impossibility*

I have in chapter 4 discussed Schopenhauer's view of *Mitleid* as the response to another's suffering and as something that ought to be eliminated. Nietzsche, as we have seen, rejects Schopenhauer's condemnation of suffering. Nietzsche's account of will to power owes much to Schopenhauer's analysis of the nature of the will and inspires, I suggest, much of Nietzsche's analysis on health and suffering. Schopenhauer posits a solution to the problem of suffering which, for Nietzsche, amounts to a negation of life. He advances a pessimistic view of life predicated on the nature of the will and the fact that our nature as willing beings inevitably leads to suffering. Schopenhauer's philosophy becomes, I suggest, one of the principal motivations for Nietzsche's will to power: it is Nietzsche's response to the claim that Schopenhauer makes for the impossibility of happiness and the negative conclusions he draws concerning suffering. Schopenhauer writes in *The World as Will and Representation*:

This great intensity of willing is in and by itself and directly a constant source of suffering, firstly because all willing as such springs from want, and hence from suffering [...] because, through the causal connection of things, most desires must remain unfulfilled, and the will is much more often crossed than satisfied.

Consequently, much intense willing always entails much intense suffering. For all suffering is simply nothing but unfulfilled and thwarted willing (WWR I, p363).

Schopenhauer's philosophy of life-negation rests on the view that it is in the very nature of willing that whatever we want, whatever we desire in life can never be satisfied because 'for the will there is no permanent fulfilment which completely and for ever satisfies its craving' (WWR I, p362). The impossibility of the will ever being permanently satisfied means, according to Schopenhauer, that 'everything in life proclaims that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated, or recognized as an illusion' (WWR, II Ch. XLVI; p573). We set ourselves up for disappointment and worse still suffering if we hope for permanent satisfaction or permanent conditions of happiness in this life. Schopenhauer

argues that it is not possible for human beings to attain happiness if one takes happiness to be a permanent once and for all satisfaction or fulfilment of our desires. Suffering is implicit in the relentless pursuit of happiness, that is to say, in the search for permanent satisfaction of our desires: 'All satisfaction, or what is commonly called happiness, is really and essentially always *negative* only, and never positive' (WWR I, p319). Schopenhauer suggests that happiness 'can never be more than deliverance from a pain, from a want' (WWR I, p319) and that the relentless striving of the will emphasizes the near impossibility of permanent happiness thus making suffering an unhappy fact of existence. Life itself, the very act of living involves inescapable suffering, the solution for which, according to Schopenhauer, lies in the suppression of one's desire. Schopenhauer describes this as 'the complete self-effacement and denial of the will, true will-lessness, which alone stills and silences for ever the craving of the will; which alone gives that contentment that cannot again be disturbed' (WWR I, p362). Schopenhauer's discussion of the will to life is a bringing about of the cessation of the aimless striving of the will through its negation, that is to say, the elimination of suffering through a negation of the will. It is, I suggest, Schopenhauer's negative evaluation of life that Nietzsche considers to be psychologically harmful; for Nietzsche, Schopenhauer elaborates a philosophy for those who have given up on life. Nietzsche makes Schopenhauer's negative evaluation of suffering and his elimination of suffering through a denial of the will a focal point in his revaluation of values. Thus Nietzsche's will to power is, I suggest, a life-affirming and health regenerative principle which, for Nietzsche, operates as a counterpoint to Schopenhauer's philosophy of pessimism.

#### *From Sickness to Health: the Move from Will to Life to Will to Power*

Schopenhauer's elimination of suffering through the denial of the will is, for Nietzsche, a negation of life. Nietzsche, in contrast to Schopenhauer, posits a diametrically opposing, affirmative and muscular view of suffering which emphasizes what he sees as the will's natural tendency towards power. In contrast to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche uses the fact of the existence of suffering to articulate a point of view that shows a person's response to suffering as the key to health. In what follows I show that Nietzsche associates suffering and the overcoming of suffering with a naturalist account of will to power which gives effect to the natural instincts that are necessary for any healthy organism. What

Nietzsche's will to power principle emphasizes is the fundamental tendency of human beings towards growth, power and expansion.

### 6.3 Happiness and a Re-evaluation of Ethical Theories

Nietzsche's thoughts on happiness and its relationship to will to power are integral to his project and yet they are not straightforward. Nietzsche does not deny subjective feelings of happiness and the positive effect that happiness as an emotion has on health and well-being. His willingness to celebrate happiness can be seen from poems that begin and end *The Gay Science* and which include poems entitled 'My Happiness'.<sup>10</sup> These poems are, writes Richard Bett (2005: 49), 'evocative rather than attempting to pin down in any precise fashion what happiness is supposed to consist in...But there is no doubt that both poems portray happiness as something well worth having'. But happiness is not, I argue, for Nietzsche, the principal factor in the attainment of health. Nietzsche dismisses happiness as an end in itself: 'People *don't* strive for happiness, only the English do' (TI: 'Arrows and Epigrams', 12). This, I suggest, is an implicit reference to the utilitarianism of the English philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. The passage exemplifies Nietzsche's various attacks on utilitarianism<sup>11</sup>. Nietzsche also evinces a general distaste for all ethical theories which purport to prescribe universal principles of happiness: 'Hedonism... utilitarianism, *eudamonianism*' - all theories associated with happiness should be 'looked down on with derision' (BGE 225). Nietzsche warns against theses that hold out principles and standards for 'happiness' because '*insofar* as the individual is seeking happiness, one ought not to tender him any prescriptions as to the path to happiness' (D 108). Nietzsche rejects Christian and moral 'imperatives' which suggest that virtuous living in accordance with their tenets is the road to happiness:

The most general formula at the centre of all religions and moralities is: 'do this, don't do that – and then you'll be happy! Otherwise...' Every morality, every religion, is this imperative (TI: 'The Four Great Errors', 2).

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<sup>10</sup> *The Gay Science*: 'My Happiness' section 2 in 'Joke, Cunning and Revenge': *Prelude in German Rhymes* and 'My Happiness' in Appendix: *Songs of Prince Vogelfrei*. The editor's note taken from the Cambridge text edition of *The Gay Science* (2001) refers to the second of these poems as 'an emphatic statement of the kind of happiness (Glück) Nietzsche enjoys.'

<sup>11</sup> See also Nietzsche's attack on Bentham and the utilitarians in BGE 228.

Nietzsche associates man's pursuit of happiness as something pursued by the 'rather weak man' for whom happiness 'corresponds' to a medicinal sedative; Christianity and Epicurean philosophy exemplify, for Nietzsche, this kind of happiness (BGE 200).

Nietzsche sees the pursuit of happiness as indicative of the degeneracy of life: for happiness is pursued by those who have been defeated by the challenges of life and who seek recourse in, 'a notion of happiness as primarily rest [and a] lack of disturbance' (BGE 200). Happiness is not, according to Nietzsche, that for which human beings strive.

Rather, and as Nietzsche argues in the following passage from the *Late Notebooks*, what human beings want is power:

[T]here is considerable enlightenment to be gained by positing power in place of the individual 'happiness' each thing is supposed to be striving for: 'It strives for power, for an augmentation of power' – pleasure is only a symptom of the feeling of power achieved...it doesn't strive for pleasure; rather pleasure occurs when what was striven for has been achieved: pleasure accompanies, it doesn't set in motion (WLN 14[121] p.256).

On this basis Nietzsche seeks, I suggest, to argue that the pursuit of happiness and contemporary theories of happiness should be abandoned and replaced with will to power as the new value for life. Nietzsche believes that the more one strives for happiness the less likely they are to achieve it. The value of an action does not derive from whether or not it makes us happy, rather, happiness should, according to Nietzsche, be seen as 'accidental' (WP 701), as 'a mere consequence or accompanying phenomena' (WLN 14[174] p264). Happiness, Nietzsche suggests, is ultimately experienced as an epiphenomenon and arises as a result of a passionate commitment to something else over and above its achievement (Young 2010: 308).

When Nietzsche, as he does in the *Anti-Christ* (AC 2), asks what happiness is he is also, I suggest, signalling that happiness should no longer be seen as the goal of life and that it is in effect no more than a by-product of the will to power. Rather than the direct pursuit of happiness as the goal of life, Nietzsche now gives shape to a new criterion for life based on power: 'The feeling that power is growing, that some resistance has been overcome. *Not contentedness, but more power...*' (AC2). Nietzsche promotes power as the new good over and above philosophical views of happiness and interpretations which define happiness as pleasure and the ultimate goal of life. When Nietzsche refers to happiness

he refers to something which is merely a ‘symptom of the feeling of power’ (WLN 14[121] p.256); something that ‘accompanies’ (WLN 14[121] p.256) what human beings strive for and which he understands as power. Nietzsche, I suggest, sees willing power as the inspiration for a certain kind of happiness but not as we observed earlier of the kind that he associates with the tranquil repose of the weak. Rather he praises the likes of ‘Alcibiades’, ‘Caesar’ and ‘Leonardo da Vinci’, individuals who embrace ‘conflict and war...as one *more* stimulus and goad to life’ (BGE 200).

The theme of those who respond positively to ‘conflict and war’ is taken up by Nietzsche in his discussion of ‘cheerfulness’. I have more to say about Nietzsche’s view of cheerfulness when I discuss Jessica Berry’s views on health in chapter 9. Cheerfulness is generally taken to be synonymous with happiness but whereas Nietzsche denigrates ethical theories of happiness he actively embraces a notion of ‘staying cheerful’ in the face of adversity. Adversity in the shape of conflict and war, Nietzsche associates with a notion of ‘cheerfulness’ which he discusses in the Preface to *Twilight of the Idols*. Here Nietzsche asks: ‘But what could be more important than cheerfulness?’ Nietzsche suggests that to ‘stay cheerful’ in the face of adversity is in itself an achievement (TI: Preface). Here he uses the vicissitudes of war to articulate, I suggest, a robust and aggressive notion of cheerfulness:

War has always been the most sensible measure for spirits who have become too inward-looking and profound; even wounds have the power to heal. I have had a motto for a long time, *‘increscunt animi, virescit vulnere virtus’*<sup>12</sup> (TI Preface).

Here Nietzsche suggests that the exercise of qualities of the kind needed for engagement in war and conflict can have something of a therapeutic effect and thus his project aims to give value to such qualities. Willing power, I suggest, answers to Nietzsche’s characterisation of daily life as one of suffering and an acknowledgement of the brutal reality of man’s existence: ‘life itself is *essentially* a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, the very least, exploiting’ (BGE 259). Rather than pursuing happiness, willing power is the key to health:

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<sup>12</sup> TI Preface: ‘The spirit soars, valour thrives by wounding’.

[I]f this body is living and not dying, it will have to treat other bodies in just those ways that the individuals it contains *refrain* from treating each other. It will have to be the embodiment of will to power, it will want to grow, spread, grab, win dominance, - not out of any morality or immorality, but because it is *alive*, and because life is precisely will to power (BGE 259).

Expansion and growth are signs of health which are not to be found in a dying, diseased organism and the same can be said of human beings. Nietzsche explains will to power as the most basic expression of man's desire for health and well-being. Life itself is, for Nietzsche, 'an instinct for growth, for endurance, for the accumulation of force, for power' (AC 6). In affirming the will to power we are, says Nietzsche, affirming life but 'when there is no will to power, there is decline' (AC 6). Thus the will to power is, for Nietzsche, the fundamental principle in avoiding the symptoms of *decadence* which prevail in a society taken over by values exercised under 'the aegis of the holiest names' – values which inhibit the will to power (AC 6).

#### 6.4 Reginster and Hussain: Interpretations of Will to Power

In what follows I discuss Bernard Reginster's and Nadeem Hussain's contrasting interpretations of will to power. Reginster introduces will to power as an 'ethics of power' (2006: 13) in which the agent ascribes value to the overcoming of resistance. Hussain, in contrast, assumes a more naturalistic philosophy and interprets will to power as an expression of the fundamental tendencies of life which are to be found in all living organisms. Reginster's account is, I suggest, a plausible one which makes sense of Nietzsche's view on suffering and its overcoming as an approach which tends towards an affirmation of life. I will, however, argue that Hussain's account is a better reflection of the naturalistic tendencies in Nietzsche's philosophy whereby he sees will to power as the essence of life and as such more conducive to psychological health and well-being.

##### *Bernard Reginster's Paradox of the Will to Power*

Reginster (2006: 132-3) makes Nietzsche's will to power dependent on 'the psychological fact that human beings want power.' Reginster (2006: 131-136) presents Nietzsche's account of will to power not only as the will to *overcome* resistance but also the will to *want* to be opposed: 'pursuing this desire requires actually and deliberately seeking

## Chapter 6

resistance to overcome'. On this construal, Reginster conceives of the will to power as actively desiring 'displeasure' or 'suffering'. The hypothesis that human beings actively desire and seek out suffering/resistances whilst simultaneously desiring their 'overcoming' confers the will to power, Reginster suggests, with a paradoxical structure in that 'its satisfaction brings about its own dissatisfaction' (2006:247). Reginster avers that there is, for Nietzsche, an inextricable connection between suffering and the will to power – a connection which confers value on suffering. In the following passage, Reginster offers a succinct account of this paradox and how it is that suffering becomes valuable:

The doctrine of the will to power radically alters our conception of the role and significance of suffering in human existence. If, in particular, we take power – the overcoming of resistance – to be a value, then we can see easily how it can be the principle behind a revaluation of suffering. Indeed, if we value the overcoming of resistance, then we must also value the resistance that is an ingredient of it. Since suffering is defined by resistance, we must also value suffering (Reginster 2006: 177).

The thought here is that without resistance, there is nothing to oppose. Most commentators agree that Nietzsche sees suffering as an inevitable part of existence, but Reginster's thesis takes that thinking a step further: if we value overcoming, we must value the suffering that is synonymous with resistance, and if we value suffering, we should seek it out. A further point is that the satisfaction of the will to power, on Reginster's construction, can never be more than transient as its satisfaction merely serves to fuel an on-going, never ending desire for further resistances to overcome. Reginster (2006:247) suggests that 'this paradoxical structure reveals the most distinctive feature of the will to power as a kind of desire that does not allow for a permanent once-and-for all satisfaction'. Reginster's view is that the principle of suffering that Schopenhauer posits as problematic becomes paradoxically, for Nietzsche, the opportunity to embrace suffering positively and its value in doing so.

Reginster suggests that power for Nietzsche 'is an activity, the activity of confronting and overcoming resistance' (2006: 136). Desiring resistance and its overcoming develops, I suggest, resilience and resilience in life is, I suggest, of fundamental importance to psychological well-being. Reginster's interpretation of will to power as actively seeking

out resistances and overcoming them offers, I suggest, a plausible view of human agency and psychology which emphasizes the restorative and therapeutic effect in the positive approach taken to suffering. However Reginster's view is not, as I discuss below, without its problems.

*Nadeem Hussain: Will to Power as the Essence of Life*

Hussain (2011:167) argues that will to power is the essence of life; it is the fundamental tendency of living organisms to grow, dominate and overcome resistance. I suggest that Hussain's interpretation best encapsulates Nietzsche's philosophy interpreted as a naturalistic one. Christopher Janaway (2007: 34) suggests that many Nietzsche scholars believe that Nietzsche is 'in a broad sense a naturalist in his mature philosophy'. Nietzsche's naturalism is, I suggest, evidenced by his objective 'to translate humanity back into nature' (BGE 230). Thus Hussain argues that will to power must be something more than just the thirst for resistance as Reginster wants to say. Nietzsche's texts are, I suggest, more supportive of Hussain's claim. Nietzsche, writes in section 13 of *Beyond Good and Evil*: 'Above all, a living thing wants to *discharge* its strength - life itself is will to power' and further Nietzsche refers to 'the strongest, most life-affirming drive, even if in the most cautious of doses - the *will to power*' (GM III 18).

But are Reginster's and Hussain's views necessarily mutually exclusive? There is, I suggest, a degree of compatibility between the two claims. Reginster's thesis that the will to power seeks resistance and the overcoming of resistance is not, I argue, excluded by Hussain's broader argument that, for Nietzsche, the will to power is the essence of life. Because, as commented on at the beginning of this section, the overcoming of resistance is a part of those fundamental tendencies that Hussain believes to be the essence of life.

*Hussain: Biology not Psychology*

Hussain questions the suggestion inherent in Reginster's argument that, for Nietzsche, will to power articulates a psychological thesis about human motivation that: 'the only thing people care about or desire is power'. Hussain suggests that the claim relies on 'a motivational psychological state in favour of power' (Hussain 2011: 149). However, Hussain, in refuting the claim, argues that 'power is not always at the bottom of every instance of desiring' (Hussain 2011: 149). Nietzsche himself suggests there may be circumstances 'when there is no will to power' (AC 6) and in other passages he suggests

that the will to power is one amongst other ‘affects’ and ‘desires’<sup>13</sup> (Leiter 2002: 141-142). Given Reginster’s understanding of will to power as that which the agent desires above all else, there is the worry that such a position involves the idea of control and domination over others. Hussain’s position, I suggest, avoids these problems : he advances a broader notion of will to power as the idea that power, expansion, domination, growth and overcoming resistances are all expressions of the ‘fundamental tendencies that define, or are at least essential to life’ (Hussain 2011: 152). Hussain (2011:146) suggests that the notion of power is what unites these ‘tendencies and it is what unifies the various qualities of health, creativity and intelligence.’ Hussain explains the will to power as a claim about what it is to be a living organism and to be alive. In the following passage from the *Late Notebooks*, ‘The will to power as *life*’, Nietzsche affirms the fact of man’s need for resistance not, I suggest, as a psychological state but as the *sine qua non* of every living organism:

[W]hat man wants, what every smallest part of a living organism wants, is an increment of power. Striving for this gives rise to both pleasure and unpleasure; out of that will man seeks resistance, needs something to oppose him.

Unpleasure, as an inhibition of his will to power, is thus a normal fact, the normal ingredient of everything that happens in the organic world, and man does not avoid it but instead has constant need of it: every conquest, every pleasurable feeling, everything that happens presupposes a resistance overcome (WLN 14[174] p264).

The point Nietzsche makes here is, I suggest, about those things that are essential to life. The essential motivation of any living organism including human beings is, as discussed above, a desire for power and an increase in power (BGE 13). Will to power as the seeking out of resistance and the desire to be opposed is, as Nietzsche writes in the foregoing passage from WLN 14[174] p264, a ‘normal fact’. The need for ‘something to oppose him’ is for Nietzsche the fundamental tendency of life which is inextricably linked to the will to power: ‘There is nothing to life that has value, except the degree of power – assuming, precisely, that life itself is the will to power’ (WLN 5[71]10 p119).

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<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche in EH: ‘Why I Am A Destiny’, 4 writes: ‘the horrors of reality (in the affects, in the desires, in the will to power).

Reginster's interpretation imports a psychological dimension involving agency into his interpretation of will to power, that is to say, it conveys the idea of an agent actively willing power. Reginster acknowledges that this interpretation of will to power is problematic because it suggests that to will power is 'to seek to control or dominate' (Reginster 2006: 104). Reginster's agential account is, as discussed, also inconsistent with the naturalistic interpretation which, I suggest, best suits Nietzsche's account of will to power. Reginster's account cannot accommodate the view that will to power is an inherent aspect of all living organisms. It is stating the obvious to say that plants do not have agency and thus Reginster's interpretation of will to power would have to be narrowly circumscribed to the world of human beings. Hussain, in adopting a broader notion of will to power, one which is just as relevant to the natural world as it is to human beings, avoids I suggest the problems encountered in Reginster's account.

### *Values for Health and a New Naturalism*

Nietzsche, as noted earlier, considers life to be characterised by the instinct for growth, endurance and power (AC6) and he refers to growth and power as 'instincts' which are naturally inherent in human beings. Hussain suggests that Nietzsche's view of the essence of life as its will to power is consistent with a 'naturalist morality that accords with life's fundamental tendency' (Hussain 2011: 159). Hussain observes that 'once we really see ourselves as natural creatures and "translate humanity back into nature"(BGE 230) we have to look for a direction from nature' for our ethical evaluations (Hussain 2011: 158-9). Man's natural instinct for power becomes the model for a new system of evaluation according to which worth is ascribed to values of power as those which are essential to life. Nietzsche writes in the *Notebooks*:

Standard by which the value of moral evaluation is to be determined. The fundamental fact that has been overlooked: the contradiction between 'becoming more moral' and the elevation and strengthening of the type man. *Homo natura*. The 'will to power' (WP 391).

Morality, Hussain suggests, comes to have instrumental value and thus the criterion for value has to reflect the extent to which those values benefit the conditions of our existence. Thus the question for Nietzsche and as Hussain (2011:154) articulates the point is, I suggest, 'whether in individuals or cultures there are instincts that are

## Chapter 6

undermining life , turning against it, leading to lives that are less powerful'. Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols*:

The wisest men in every age have reached the same conclusion about life: *it's no good...* Always and everywhere, you hear the same sound from their mouths, - a sound full of doubt, full of melancholy, full of exhaustion with life, full of resistance to life. (TI: 'The Problem of Socrates', 1).

Once again, Nietzsche identifies an all pervading sickness arising from the failure of human beings to adopt values that reflect their heritage as part of the natural world. But instead what we find is that human beings espouse values that are antithetical to a naturalist morality. What Nietzsche describes in the foregoing passage from *Twilight of the Idols* are the conditions which give rise to this dissonance in human beings.

Nietzsche suggests that all aspects of the human condition and human conduct, the values a person holds and thus his health can be explained in relation to the natural world: 'Every naturalism in morality – which is to say: every healthy morality – is governed by an instinct of life' (TI: 'Morality As Anti-Nature', 4). Thus an appreciation of man as part of the natural world reflects the importance Nietzsche ascribes to power as a natural instinct in human beings over and above the prevailing Christian and moral values. Nietzsche, according to Hussain, associates Christianity's anti-naturalism with the emergence of pathology:

I was the first to see the real opposition: - the *degenerate* instinct that turns against life with subterranean vindictiveness (-Christianity, Schopenhauer's philosophy, and in a certain sense even Plato's philosophy, the whole of idealism as typical forms) (EH: 'Why I Write Such Good Books', BT 2).

Here Nietzsche affirms his negative view of moral values which have their roots in Christianity and the philosophy of Schopenhauer. Thus Christian morality is, for Nietzsche, an offence against nature and the natural human instincts. Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols*:

The Church combats the passions by cutting them off in every sense: its technique, its 'cure', is *castration*. It never asks: 'how can a desire be spiritualized, beautified, deified?' – it has always laid the weight of its discipline on eradication (of

sensuality, of pride, of greed, of the thirst to dominate and exact revenge). - But attacking the root of the passions means attacking the root of life: the practices of the Church are *hostile to life*... (TI: 'Morality as Anti-Nature', 1).

Christianity is no good – it suppresses the fundamental tendency towards growth and valorises values that are antithetical to flourishing and well-being: '*anti-natural* morality ... which is to say almost every morality that has been taught, revered, or preached so far, explicitly turns its back on the instincts of life, - it *condemns* these instincts...' (TI: 'Morality As Anti-Nature', 4). The rejection of the fundamental tendencies of life results in decadence and degeneracy. So the fundamental task which Hussain rightly, I suggest, sees Nietzsche as setting for himself is 'to assess evaluative systems according to whether they help the fundamental instincts of life or hinder them' (Hussain 2011: 157).

## 6.5 Conclusion

Schopenhauer sees suffering as an ineluctable burden to be endured. In contrast Nietzsche's project is a revaluation of suffering which inspires a more psychologically healthy approach towards suffering. Nietzsche confers value on suffering by linking it to the will to power.

Nietzsche specifically rejects earlier philosophical views of happiness and also conventional interpretations defining happiness as the ultimate goal of life. Nietzsche does not believe that happiness is intrinsically valuable; he denies that its achievement is appropriate or relevant to questions of psychological well-being or of how best to live. The pursuit of happiness indicates, for Nietzsche, *decadence* and the degeneracy of life. Thus Nietzsche sees the need for human beings to acknowledge power instead of happiness as the new value for life if sickness and suffering are to be addressed effectively.

Reginster interprets Nietzsche as appropriating and re-interpreting Schopenhauer's negative position on suffering to posit a new and positive theory conferring value on suffering. Reginster's interpretation offers, I suggest, a plausible rationale of Nietzsche's view on suffering as valuable and also a plausible account of the connection between suffering and will to power. Reginster's interpretation of will to power as the desire for resistance and overcoming resistance does, as I have suggested, introduce the notion of

## Chapter 6

suffering as having therapeutic value. It is, I suggest, also consistent with Nietzsche's account of health as a process which sees sickness as a challenge to be overcome. However Reginster's interpretation, as discussed above, poses problems which, as I have suggested makes Hussain's account of will to power a more plausible interpretation of will to power as health. Hussain's account does not rely on agency and psychology (on which Reginster's account is dependent). Hussain's argument is free of the problem arising from Reginster's articulation of the view that what all people desire is power and it is also free of the ethical problems arising from an interpretation of the will to power as the unrestrained pursuit of power. Hussain's account accords, I suggest, with Nietzsche's view of will to power as consistent with the rest of the natural world. Thus Hussain's interpretation of will to power, as the fundamental tendencies which define the essence of life, offers an ethical perspective which is, I suggest, psychologically healthy because it is consistent with nature. Hussain's interpretation also recognizes that the fundamental tendencies comprise the overcoming of resistance which is an essential aspect of Reginster's exposition. Thus there is, I suggest, a degree of compatibility between Reginster's and Hussain's interpretations of will to power. However Hussain's interpretation is I suggest preferable to Reginster's. Hussain offers a broader perspective which is inclusive of the notion of the overcoming of resistance and thus takes account of the importance that the notion of overcoming assumes in Nietzsche's project.

Nietzsche's account of will to power, as interpreted by Hussain, draws on the natural world and allows Nietzsche to make a connection with the affinity that he believes all human beings have with the rest of nature. Nietzsche assumes that all living things from plant and animal through to human beings are driven by power and want to exercise power. Nietzsche writes about 'the essence of life, its will to power' (GM II 12) and the fact that 'above all, a living thing wants to discharge its strength [and that] life itself is will to power' (BGE 13). Implicit in these remarks is the thought that every living organism has an inherent and inescapable nature which strives constantly for survival and power. Thus health and psychological well-being are prejudiced when the will to power goes into decline. The suppression of the will to power, as those fundamental tendencies that are essential to life, manifests as symptoms of sickness and disease.

Nietzsche's project understood in this way as a philosophy for health has, I suggest, more traction than an account of the will to power predicated solely on the agent's desire for

suffering as valuable. However we might ask whether suffering and adversity really is the necessary stimulus for recovery from sickness. Does suffering really enhance life? We can, I suggest, see merit in the position for which Nietzsche contends: he illustrates his argument with accounts of the overcoming of adversity by individuals such as Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon. Nietzsche makes similar claims concerning his own resilience in spite of the parlous state of his health – claims which are also intended to support the argument on suffering, its overcoming and resilience. The individuals to whom Nietzsche refers, quite clearly thrive on adversity and have the strength of character (which Nietzsche argues derives from a strong will to power) to overcome adversity. However Nietzsche's project only addresses the suffering of the resilient few - those in whom the will to power is strong. He fails to address how will to power as health works for the majority in overcoming sickness and suffering. This thriving on adversity that Nietzsche proposes is an ideal to which only a select few will subscribe. But this is hardly surprising because, as discussed earlier, Nietzsche's priority has always been the avoidance of detriment to those individuals exhibiting the potential for an ideal of human excellence.

The will to power is Nietzsche's response to psychological sickness and the misfortunes of everyday life as well as the dis-ease which Nietzsche associates with Christian morality and from which he believes nihilism ensues. It is however doubtful that there would be many individuals who would regard chronic ill-health and a zero hour contract as factors that would contribute to the exuberant health and flourishing of that person. However, for the select few whom Nietzsche has in mind, suffering, in whatever form it takes, has the potential to transform life and individual character; it is an essential element in generating the will to power which for him is the way to a life of individual flourishing and psychological health.



# Chapter 7 Dogmatism within the Nietzsche Canon: Emerging Viewpoints

## 7.1 Introduction

Previously, I have examined Nietzsche's position on truth and its relationship to health. In this chapter I discuss Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism because of the link that Nietzsche makes between dogmatism and sickness and also because of the parallels I intend to draw with Pyrrhonian scepticism in chapter 10.

*Beyond Good and Evil* 'is often considered to be one of Nietzsche's greatest books' (Horstmann and Norman 2002: vii). Clark and Dudrick (2012:2) write: 'of Nietzsche's thirteen books, *Beyond Good and Evil* is plausibly considered the most important statement of his philosophy'. Michael Tanner (1973:7) writes that *Beyond Good and Evil* is one of the greatest books by a very great thinker. So, why should a book of such importance within Nietzsche's corpus begin its Preface with a warning against 'the dogmatist's error' and with specific reference to 'Plato's invention of pure spirit and the Good in itself'. Nietzsche suggests that 'as physicians' we should look into dogmatism as 'a disease' which has 'infect[ed]' Plato's philosophy; Plato is the exemplification of a dogmatic philosophy but Nietzsche suggests that all philosophical thought has become infected by the same disease of dogmatism which he interprets as a certain way of thinking about truth. So here we have, I suggest, two ideas which link the attack on dogmatism to health - the notion of dogmatism as a 'disease' and Nietzsche's idea of philosophers 'as physicians'.

The secondary literature on Nietzsche quite rightly emphasizes the significance of Nietzsche's discussion on the search for truth as a negation of life. However, I suggest that Nietzsche's discussion of truth is rarely recognised as being, in part, an attack on a specific notion to which he refers repeatedly in the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* as dogmatism. Although Nietzsche makes explicit references to dogmatism or its cognates throughout his writings<sup>14</sup>, dogmatism, as a discrete topic, rarely gets addressed in the

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<sup>14</sup> References to dogmatism or its cognates are to be found in: BGE: Preface, 43; AC 11; HH 630; WS 16; WP 410, 584.

secondary literature. And references to 'dogmatism' are absent from the indices of many of the major works on Nietzsche. I show, in this chapter, that Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism is more than an aside to his discussion of truth; it serves, I suggest, to highlight the implications for health caused by the philosopher's failure to apprehend the presuppositions underlying their understanding of truth and why it is that philosophy in general ascribes such importance to the attainment of truth.

I start with a review of what other authors say about Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism. I discuss Nietzsche's opening attack on dogmatism in the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*. I then discuss Nietzsche's attack on the philosopher's belief in unqualified truth and their belief in the existence of a criterion of truth. I discuss Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism in *Human All Too Human* and then move on to an examination of *Beyond Good and Evil* where I suggest that Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism takes in the wider implications for morality of the philosopher's belief in the opposition of values. I then discuss Nietzsche's adoption of scepticism, doubt and *ephexis* (suspension) which are, I suggest, Nietzsche's antidote to dogmatism and which advance a methodology and a new way of doing philosophy.

## **7.2 Other Authors: Jessica Berry, Alexander Nehamas, Maudemarie Clark**

Dogmatism is, I suggest, not a term that Nietzsche scholars automatically associate with the Nietzsche canon but here I begin with the views of Jessica Berry, Alexander Nehamas and Maudemarie Clark.

### *Jessica Berry*

Jessica Berry's book *Nietzsche and the Ancient Sceptical Tradition* (2011) is one of the few to address Nietzsche's dogmatism as a subject in its own right; she highlights the importance of dogmatism in Nietzsche's philosophy. Her discussion of Nietzsche's rejection of dogmatism focuses on two of Nietzsche's early works, first his unpublished work *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense* and secondly his published work *Human All Too Human*. Berry's main discussion of dogmatism takes place in the section of her book entitled *The Rejection of Dogmatism in Human All Too Human* (2011: 72-76) where she identifies and focuses on Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism as an attack on

metaphysical philosophy and its epistemic claims. Nietzsche, as Berry avers, takes metaphysical posits to be:

[T]he worst of all methods of acquiring knowledge, not the best at all...When one has disclosed these methods as the foundation of all extant religions and metaphysical systems, one has refuted them...For one could assert nothing at all of the metaphysical world except that it was a being-other, an inaccessible, incomprehensible being-other' (HH 9).

Berry ascribes to Nietzsche the view that the physical sciences offer a greater degree of justification for their truth claims over those of metaphysical philosophy. Nietzsche, as Berry interprets him, takes the claims of metaphysical philosophers to be 'utterly idle epistemically' when compared with the claims of the physical sciences (Berry 2011: 73). I agree with Berry that in attacking metaphysical philosophy, Nietzsche challenges the claims to truth advanced by metaphysics about those things which can be proved neither empirically nor through science (such as Kant's positing of a *noumenal* world). Nietzsche writes:

Insofar, however, as all metaphysics has had principally to do with substance and freedom of will, one may designate it the science that treats of the fundamental errors of mankind – but does so as though they were fundamental truths (HH 18).

Berry suggests that Nietzsche's move away from the ill-founded dogmatic claims of metaphysical philosophy is consistent with his embrace of a naturalist philosophy predicated on scientific methodology. Naturalism has been described as a methodology about how one should do philosophy (Leiter 2002: 3). Berry (2011: 88-89) interprets Nietzsche's naturalism as the view that philosophical practice should be continuous with 'the methods employed successfully in the natural sciences'. Thus she links Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism and his scepticism with a move towards a scientific methodology which predicates a naturalist philosophy. Berry's arguments rely, for the most part, on a reading of *Human All Too Human* which is intended to highlight Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysical philosophy and his more favourable disposition towards the sciences. However Berry's interpretation of Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism does not, I suggest, take account of the later criticisms Nietzsche makes about science (GM III 25) as discussed above in chapter 5. Berry presents Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism as

principally focused on his criticism of metaphysical philosophy in *Human All Too Human* and by comparison the more competent claims which Nietzsche suggests the sciences can offer on truth. Although Berry restricts her analysis of Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism to his criticism of metaphysics in *Human All Too Human*, I argue that there is a broader view of Nietzsche's attack which is to be found in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Here Nietzsche develops his attack on dogmatism as a historical perspective on philosophical and religious beliefs concerning truth and how dogmatism regarding truth leads the philosopher into erroneous presuppositions concerning unconditional truth. Nietzsche's argument is that the philosopher's belief in unconditional truth is ultimately unhealthy and life-negating. This, I suggest, is the central claim of Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism.

*Alexander Nehamas*

Alexander Nehamas (1985: 131) interprets Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism as the view that every interpretation offered by a philosopher 'is inevitably offered in the conviction that it is true and is presented as a view which everyone must accept on account of its being true'. But the problem Nehamas has with this interpretation is that it is not, 'clear how one can argue for a position, as Nietzsche clearly often wants to do, and yet not suggest that this position, is to use the only possible term in this context, true' (Nehamas 1985: 4). Nehamas questions how Nietzsche can argue for the rejection of dogmatism without falling into dogmatism himself; he suggests, however, that Nietzsche does this 'by adopting a variety of literary genres and styles' (Nehamas 1985: 137).

Nietzsche, according to Nehamas, presents his work on the model of a literary text and the characters within such works and thus avoids the assertoric and propositional mode of argument which he believes to be characteristic of dogmatic philosophy (Nehamas 1985: 131-7). Nehamas' argument that Nietzsche avoids dogmatism but still manages to convey his message through use of non-propositional language is, I suggest, compelling and as we shall see in chapter 8 it is a methodology that the Sceptics also use in circumventing dogmatism. Nietzsche confirms his non-dogmatic intent in that he expects his new philosophers to engage with truth 'but they certainly will not be dogmatists' (BGE 43). Rather Nietzsche sees new philosophers as affirming their refutation of dogmatism: 'My judgement is *my judgment*: other people don't have an obvious right to it too' (BGE 43). However, even if we accept that Nietzsche avoids dogmatism in this way, Nehamas' arguments do not address what I suggest is the fundamental question posed by

Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism and that is the relationship that dogmatic beliefs have with health and the injurious effect on health which is the consequence of an erroneous understanding of truth.

*Maudemarie Clark*

Maudemarie Clark (1990: 202) denies that Nietzsche is concerned to reject dogmatism in the way that Nehamas describes. I agree with Clark who comments that Nietzsche does not, as Nehamas suggests, have 'a problem with presenting views as true' (Clark 1990: 202 ff10) because his new philosophers will 'probably' still be 'new friends of "truth"' (BGE 43). However Clark ascribes to Nietzsche a Kantian interpretation of 'dogmatism'. Clark observes that the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* 'portrays the history of philosophy as a story of dogmatism and the struggle against dogmatism' (Clark and Dudrick 2009:148). She highlights the similarities between Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism in the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* and Kant's analogous attack on dogmatism in the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The dogmatism which Kant attacks is the philosopher's presumption that through a priori reasoning one attains knowledge of supra-sensory objects such as the existence of God and the immortality of the Soul. Moreover Clark draws attention to Kant's position on science. In adopting a view that has parallels with Nietzsche's view on science in *Human All Too Human*, Kant acknowledges that science has more of a legitimate claim to dogmatism than metaphysical philosophy: 'This critique is not opposed to the *dogmatic procedure* of reason in its pure knowledge, as science, for that must always be dogmatic, that is yield strict proof from sure principles *a priori*'<sup>15</sup>. To this extent, I suggest that Clark's analogy with Kant is helpful in that, in common with Nietzsche, Kant diagnoses the dogmatism inherent in metaphysical philosophy. Kant also expresses a view of science as an approach which does not share the problems of metaphysical philosophy; Nietzsche's view of science at least in the early years of his work has (as I discuss below) parallels with Kant's. I suggest, however, that Clark's analysis, as with Nehamas', fails to give due weight to what I argue is the real objective of Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism. Nietzsche's attack is, I argue, a methodology for exposing the sickness that underlies the belief in an unconditional truth.

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<sup>15</sup> Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Bxxxv): Norman Kemp Smith translation (1929).

## Summary

Berry acknowledges that, for the Sceptic, 'dogmatism is an obstacle to tranquillity' (2011: 150) but she approaches Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism from the perspective of his attack on metaphysical philosophy without addressing more fully the historical context in which Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism takes place. Berry suggests that Nietzsche's objective in attacking dogmatism is the need to offer a more naturalistic philosophy based on scientific methodology. Berry interprets this naturalism in a way which sees Nietzsche wanting to replace the postulates of metaphysical philosophy with methodological principles along the lines of the sciences:

The standards of evidence and rules of inference used successfully in the natural sciences should serve also as guidelines and models for reasoning in philosophy, and one in which the results of philosophical reasoning should be in accord with those of the sciences (Berry 2011: 69).

However, as I argue below, the focus of Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism undergoes a shift in his mature work where he becomes more critical of scientific truths. But more importantly, the attack on dogmatism is primarily, I suggest, an analysis of the relationship between dogmatic beliefs and sickness.

### 7.3 What does Nietzsche mean by Dogmatism?

In common parlance, a dogmatist is one who asserts that such and such a thing or view is inviolably correct or true and who brooks no argument or discussion on the matter. One could argue that Nietzsche's rejection of dogmatism conveys this sense but he offers no definition of dogmatism or what a dogmatist is.

The attack on dogmatism is, I suggest, the principal theme in the opening sections of *Beyond Good and Evil* and more specifically the Preface to that work. Nietzsche opens the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* with the words: 'Suppose that truth is a woman – and why not? Aren't there reasons for suspecting that all philosophers, to the extent that they have been dogmatists, have not really understood women?' Nietzsche uses the metaphor to make an attack on all philosophers for being dogmatists. He suggests in this passage that the way in which philosophers have gone about their search for truth displays an inadequate understanding of truth. Nietzsche writes: 'That the grotesque

seriousness of their approach towards the truth and the clumsy advances they have made so far are unsuitable ways of pressing their suit with a woman' (BGE Preface). Nietzsche is not only 'deeply mistrustful' (WP 410) of philosophical dogmatism he also considers it to be 'harmful' (WP 410). Nietzsche writes in a *Notebook* passage: 'The whole tendency of values was toward slander of life; one created a confusion of idealist dogmatism and knowledge in general' (WP 584). The Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* describes 'dogmatic philosophy' as a 'monstrous and fear inspiring grotesque'. Nietzsche acknowledges that dogmatism has been the means by which the human intellect has progressed: 'we should not be ungrateful towards dogmatism' (BGE Preface). However Nietzsche's point is that truth needs to be apprehended by means other than the traditional tools and methodology of contemporary philosophy. The Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* is primarily about truth but it is not an attack on the metaphysics of truth and Nietzsche is not here offering a theory of truth. Nietzsche's attack is against the systematizing of philosophy predicated on philosophical assumptions that unconditional truth is discoverable. Nietzsche sees philosophy as being in thrall to unconditional truth but he suggests that perhaps the time is fast approaching 'when we will realize again and again just *what* actually served as the cornerstone of those sublime and *unconditional philosophical edifices* (my emphasis) that the dogmatists used to build'(BGE Preface). Thus Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism highlights, I suggest, the philosopher's lack of understanding of what underlies philosophical belief and the erroneous presuppositions philosophers hold regarding the unconditionality of truth.

#### 7.4 The Attack on Unqualified Truth and the Criterion of Truth

The philosopher's belief in the discoverability of an unqualified truth motivates the desire for truth. Nietzsche suggests that the philosopher's desire for truth permeates the whole of metaphysical philosophy and that this fundamental misconception has infected the whole of philosophical tradition and the practice of philosophy. Nietzsche recognizes that the philosophers' belief in unqualified truth has become an essential part of human existence: 'Not only utility and delight, but also every kind of drive took part in the fight about "truths"...knowledge and striving for the true finally took their place as a need among the other needs' (GS 110). Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism, as alluded to above, aims to expose as life-negating the philosopher's presupposition concerning the existence

## Chapter 7

of unqualified truths. Nietzsche does not deny the existence of unqualified truth but his argument is that we have no means of apprehending it. The dogmatic belief in unqualified truth raises question about what we can know and assumes that truth is discoverable and this motivates the unconditional will to truth which, as discussed in chapter 5, Nietzsche shows to be unhealthy.

### *The Presupposition Concerning the Existence of Unqualified Truths*

According to Nietzsche, philosophers hold the fixed belief:

[T]hat on some particular point of knowledge one is in possession of the unqualified truth. This belief thus presupposes that unqualified truths exist...

Those countless numbers who have sacrificed themselves for their convictions thought they were doing so for unqualified truth. In this they were all wrong (HH 630).

But what is it that Nietzsche means when he talks about unqualified truths? Nietzsche suggests that the philosopher's dogmatism is apparent in the disavowal of 'perspectivism as the fundamental condition of all life' (BGE Preface). He takes the view that there is no one position on unqualified truth to which any individual can be said to have access and that the adoption of a proper approach towards truth requires a commitment to the proposition that no one position on truth exists. Whatever claims an individual makes about truth will always be from that individual's perspective on the world. That perspective will be conditioned by a variety of factors and such truth claims will inevitably be influenced by a range of personal interests, values, life style and up-bringing. The result is that there is no 'fully "objective" view of truth to be had in the sense of a total or an impartial view which every agent with the requisite cognitive capacity would necessarily agree upon' (May 1999: 142). That kind of objective viewpoint would, in Nietzsche's view, be humanly impossible because as Simon May suggests:

[I]t would require an agent to view a given situation from every possible perspective and under every possible interpretation, which is clearly impossible since an agent's perspectives and interpretations are always limited by his individuality, however rich and many-sided it is (May 1999: 142).

Thus Nietzsche concludes that there is nothing which we can say is true by nature, there is nothing that is objectively true or simply true come what may. But, one's understanding of truth may, according to Nietzsche, be enhanced and a position approaching objectivity may be assumed if the individual allows him or herself a number of viewpoints or perspectives. Thus Nietzsche writes in *The Genealogy*:

There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our 'concept' of this matter, our 'objectivity' be (GM III 12).

#### *The Presupposition Concerning the Existence of a Criterion of Truth*

Nietzsche, in *Human All Too Human*, says of philosophers that not only do they believe they are 'in possession of unqualified truth' (HH 630), they also believe 'likewise that perfect methods of attaining to [unqualified truths] have been discovered; finally that everyone who possesses convictions avails himself of these perfect methods' (HH 630). Thus Nietzsche suggests that the philosopher's dogmatism is also expressed by his presupposition of the existence of a unique criterion of truth for apprehending unqualified truth. Nietzsche writes about what in one of his *Notebook* passages he refers to as a *criterion of truth* or a *criterion of reality*. We believe, Nietzsche writes, that we have some objective method by which to assess the absolute nature of truth and reality: 'one believed one possessed a *criterion of reality* (my emphasis) in the forms of reason' (WP 584). Here, Nietzsche's point is, I suggest, the philosopher's misconception that there exists some means by which to determine what unqualified truth is. Nietzsche writes in a *Notebook* passage:

The aberration of philosophy is that, instead of seeing in logic and the categories of reason means toward the adjustment of the world for utilitarian ends (basically towards an expedient *falsification*), one believed one possessed in them the criterion of truth and *reality*. The 'criterion of truth' was in fact merely the biological utility of such a system of systematic falsification; and since a species of animals knows of nothing more important than its own preservation, one might indeed be permitted to speak here of 'truth'. The naivete was to take an

anthropocentric idiosyncrasy as the *measure of things*, as the rule for determining 'real' and 'unreal': in short to make [unqualified] something conditioned (WP 584).

Here Nietzsche emphasizes the principle of a 'criterion of truth' in order to disavow it. Its utility was, I suggest, a psychological one because human beings needed to be able and with certainty to distinguish truth from falsity. Thus they believed in the existence of a criterion of truth which they believed gave them access to what was real. Nietzsche is critical of the naivete of the belief in a criterion of truth: '[Philosophers] have no conception of the basic demands of intellectual integrity...they think that ...conviction is a criterion of truth' (AC 12). Nietzsche writes of man's psychological need for unqualified truth and a criterion of truth: 'In reality one wanted to be in the right because one thought one had to be' (HH 630). The philosopher believes, according to Nietzsche, that he has found, in the criterion of truth, something which gives him certainty and thus finds it comforting to be able to speak about truth and to speak about it with certainty. As regards the belief that we are in possession of unqualified truths and the belief that there is a criterion of truth for discovering such truths Nietzsche writes: 'whole millennia have lived in these childish presuppositions' (HH 630). Nietzsche, I suggest, supposes that the belief in an unqualified truth and the existence of a criterion of truth fulfil no more than a psychological need but the emerging nihilism and sickness now pervading modern European society means that the psychological comfort which the perceived certainty about truth hitherto provided can now no longer be relied upon.

## **7.5     *Human All Too Human*: Science and the Attack on Metaphysical Philosophy**

Berry, as discussed above, addresses Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism in *Human All Too Human* in the context of what she asserts is his naturalistic approach to philosophy. In attacking metaphysical philosophy in *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche, as discussed above, compares it unfavourably with science: 'the man of convictions is not the man of scientific thought ...the *dogmatic* (my emphasis) expression of [his] belief will have been unscientific or half-scientific' (HH 630). Moving on from this, I wish to make some further observations on Nietzsche's view of science as he presents it in *Human All Too Human*. Nietzsche suggests that the philosopher's belief in truth is a dogmatic one that fails to meet the rigorous standards of scientific proof. Science, according to Nietzsche, offers a

more rigorous account of its claims to truth based on empirical observation and scientific proofs over and above those of metaphysical philosophy: 'one cannot *believe* these dogmas of religion and metaphysics if one has in one's heart and head the rigorous methods of acquiring truth' (HH 109). The belief in science reflects, according to Nietzsche:

the mark of a higher culture to value the little unpretentious truths which have been discovered by means of rigorous method more highly than the errors handed down by metaphysical and artistic ages and men, which blind us and make us happy (HH 3).

In *Human All too Human*, Nietzsche contrasts the dogmatic claims of metaphysical philosophy, which he believes fails to offer rational justification for the beliefs it advances, against the well-grounded and proven claims of the physical sciences. However, and as discussed above in chapter 5, Nietzsche, in his mature work, comes to challenge scientific truths: 'we see that science, too, rests on a faith; there is simply no "presuppositionless" science' (GS 344). Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism evolves and can, I suggest, no longer be seen as a defence of scientific truths over the truths of metaphysical philosophy: 'As Germans, we doubt with Kant the ultimate validity of the discoveries of the natural sciences ...' (GS 357).

## 7.6 *Beyond Good and Evil: An Attack on Dogmatism*

*Beyond Good and Evil* is, I suggest, the development of Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism and serves as a challenge to the philosopher's understanding of truth.

### *Dogmatism: Philosophical Prejudice Masquerading as Truth*

Metaphysical philosophy is, according to Nietzsche, constructed on: 'such erroneous articles of faith, which were continually inherited, until they became almost part of the basic endowment of the species' (GS110); amongst these are the beliefs 'that a thing is what it appears to be...that what is good for me is also good in and for itself' (GS 110).

Philosophical dogmatism is, for Nietzsche, the conviction with which philosophers construct philosophical theses which are then taken as unqualified and unassailable truths:

The project for philosophical labourers on the noble model of Kant and Hegel is to establish some large class of given values (which is to say: values that were once *posited* and created but have come to dominate and have been called ‘truths’ for a long time) and press it into formulas, whether in the realm of *logic* or *politics* (morality) or *art* (BGE 211).

Philosophical positions on truth are, according to Nietzsche, rooted in prejudice. The individual prejudices of philosophers are woven into metaphysical theses such as the belief in an immortal soul and the ‘thing- in- itself’ which philosophers advance as truths. These, for Nietzsche, are outside the realm of human experience and thus beyond what we can know. Nietzsche writes about a way of arriving at value judgments which is characteristic of traditional philosophical thinking:

This way of judging typifies the prejudices by which metaphysicians of all ages can be recognized: this type of valuation lies behind all their logical procedures. From these ‘beliefs’ they try to acquire their ‘knowledge,’ to acquire something that will end up being solemnly christened as ‘the truth’ (BGE 2).

Contemporary philosophical ideas such as those to be found in the works of, say, Kant or Spinoza do no more than affirm their personal prejudices: they are, according to Nietzsche, ‘sly spokesmen for prejudices that they christen as “truths”’ (BGE 5). The philosopher’s interpretations, according to Nietzsche, reflect in part their psychological or internal dispositions. Nietzsche writes: ‘I have gradually come to realize what every great philosophy so far has been: a confession of faith on the part of its author, and a type of involuntary and unself - conscious memoir’ (BGE 6). It is, I suggest, Nietzsche’s view that the individual psychology of the philosopher reflects his internalization of what has been passed down through the ages and these comprise ‘the erroneous articles of faith’ to which Nietzsche refers in GS 110. The philosopher does not question these views: what the philosopher takes as unqualified truths are prejudices which become inflated into philosophical theses. Thus a philosophical thesis cannot, according to Nietzsche, be regarded as an account of an ultimate and independent reality or unqualified truth. It can only, according to Nietzsche, be a representation of the philosopher’s psychological make-up.

### *Dogmatism: The Faith in Opposite Values*

Nietzsche writes that: 'The fundamental belief of metaphysicians is the *belief in oppositions of values*' (BGE 2). Nietzsche attacks the philosopher's faith in opposite values. In doing so he challenges the philosopher's dogmatic faith in the polarities existing between truth and untruth, good and bad and suggests that we ought first to 'doubt, whether opposites even exist...' (BGE 2). In attacking philosophical dogmatism Nietzsche questions the 'higher and more fundamental value' that philosophers confer on 'truth, truthfulness and selflessness' over 'appearance, the will to deception and craven self-interest' (BGE 2). He seeks to undermine dogmatic thinking when he suggests that value judgements do not necessarily derive from whether a judgement is true or false. A value judgement can just as well derive its worth from the extent to which it 'promotes and preserves life' (BGE 4). Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism raises uncertainties about the basis of the philosopher's metaphysical belief in opposites but his motive for raising such concerns goes, I suggest, beyond the merely theoretical. His attack on the philosopher's belief in opposite values is an attack on a life-negating ideal which he understands such beliefs as perpetuating. Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*:

Nowadays there is a thoroughly erroneous moral theory which is celebrated especially in England: it claims that judgments of 'good' and 'evil' sum up experiences of what is 'expedient' and 'inexpedient'; that what is called good preserves the species while what is called evil harms it. In truth, however, the evil drives are just as expedient, species-preserving, and indispensable as the good ones – they just have a different function (GS 4).

This attack is, in particular, an attack on the belief in opposing moral values. 'Evil' is the concept central to Christian morality and the one that Nietzsche wants us to call into question and go 'beyond'. The natural disposition of human beings is towards evaluating good more highly than evil; Nietzsche suggests there exists a philosophical assumption that what is labelled good can have no connection with evil. But Nietzsche suggests that we must 'perhaps' consider that 'whatever gives value to those good and honourable things has an incriminating link, bond, or tie to the very things that look like their evil opposites' (BGE 2). Whilst good and evil are in grammatical terms opposites, we ought, says Nietzsche, to be open to the possibility that what has been labelled evil is

conceivably more valuable than that which is called good or 'perhaps they are even essentially the same' (BGE 2) in terms of the value we should ascribe to them.

Nietzsche's attack on the dogmatic belief in opposite values is more than just a question of philosophical or metaphysical theory. His attack on dogmatism, as it evolves in *Beyond Good and Evil*, challenges, I suggest, the metaphysical belief of philosophers in opposite values not just as a mistake of philosophical metaphysical reasoning: *Beyond Good and Evil* offers an exposition of the attack on the belief in opposite values which places it in an historical context and identifies the faith in opposite values as a moral belief which is ultimately inimical to psychological well-being. Nietzsche's rejection of the belief in opposite values as adumbrated in *Beyond Good and Evil* is integral to his condemnation of traditional moral values. Clark aptly sums up this position:

The metaphysicians' belief that there are opposites, that is, their denial that things at opposite ends of the value scale are connected, is no longer an innocent or purely intellectual mistake based on insufficient observation, but an attempt to express, defend, and reinforce certain value judgements (Clark 1990: 176-77).

Clark (1990: 173-174) comments rightly, I suggest, 'that in some sense, all valuation involves the recognition of opposite values and thus a commitment to a particular kind of value or value systems'. I have already discussed in chapter 3 above, the distinction Nietzsche makes between the good/evil and the good/bad systems of evaluation. Nietzsche's attack on the faith in opposite values identifies the way in which the denial of a connection between good and evil affirms a Christian evaluation of morality. Nietzsche, I suggest, sees the good/evil distinction as symbolic of an unhealthy way of life, predicated on the ascetic ideal. Thus Nietzsche's attack on the philosopher's faith in opposite values is, I suggest, a rejection of a life-negating system of morality which preserves the good/evil distinction.

## 7.7 A Disavowal of Dogmatism

### *Avoiding Dogmatism: Scepticism Doubt and Ephexis*

Whilst I will reserve until chapter 10 my main comparison of Nietzsche's perceived scepticism with that of Pyrronian scepticism, I introduce here some of the principal themes of Pyrronian scepticism which I discuss further in chapter 8.

Nietzsche practises a scepticism which, I suggest, complements his attack on dogmatism. Scepticism is, for Nietzsche, the antidote to the disease of dogmatism.<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche's writings encourage scepticism in thought and more generally promote scepticism as descriptive of strength of character and as promoting a beneficial way of life as seen in the following passage in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

The extent to which the new, warlike age that we Europeans have obviously entered into may, perhaps, also be favourable to the development of another, stronger type of scepticism...the scepticism of a bold masculinity, which is most closely related to the genius for war and conquest...This scepticism despises and nevertheless appropriates; it undermines and takes possession; it does not believe but does not die out on this account; it gives the spirit a dangerous freedom, but is severe on the heart...a *new* concept of the German spirit is gradually emerging, and it clearly tends towards a masculine scepticism (BGE 209).

Further passages articulate Nietzsche's sanguine approach towards scepticism: 'I approve of any form of scepticism to which I can reply, "Let's try it!" But I want to hear nothing more about all the things and questions that don't admit of experiment' (GS 51); 'I will make an exception for a couple of the sceptics, the decent types in the history of philosophy; but the rest of them have no conception of the basic demands of intellectual integrity' (AC 12); 'if something in the image of future philosophers makes us suspect that they will, perhaps, be sceptics [in the sense mentioned in BGE 209], then it would only indicate some aspect of them and *not* who they themselves really are...they will certainly be engaged in experiments' (BGE 210); '*The Sceptics*<sup>17</sup> were the only *respectable* types among the philosophical tribes' (EH: 'Why I Am So Clever', 3); 'Make no mistake about it: great spirits are sceptics. Zarathustra is a sceptic. The vigour, the *freedom* that comes from the strength and super-strength of spirit *proves* itself through scepticism' (AC 54).

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<sup>16</sup> In expressing a same sentiment Berry (2011: 88) writes, '...in Human All Too Human scepticism is a necessary antidote to metaphysical dogmatism.'

<sup>17</sup> The Hollingdale and Tanner edition of *Ecce Homo* uses the upper case 'S' for Sceptic which I take to indicate the Pyrrhonian sceptics particularly as his remark follows his reading of Victor Brochard's *Les Sceptiques Grecs*.

The above quotations illustrate what, I suggest, are for the most part Nietzsche's positive attitude towards scepticism. Nietzsche, as we have seen, speaks of the emergence of a 'stronger type of scepticism' (BGE 209) which endows the agent with 'a bold masculinity'. He ascribes to such an agent the qualities of freedom and vigour, great intellect and the inclination to 'experiment' and thus not to accept, as givens, fundamental philosophical positions without testing out the theory. In contrast to this healthy kind of scepticism, Nietzsche, in section 208 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, raises the spectre of a different kind of scepticism that he attacks as degenerate – being the kind of scepticism that he associates with a 'tranquillizer or sedative' or with the opiate qualities of 'the soft, sweet, soothing, poppy flower'. Nietzsche describes this kind of scepticism as characteristic of a weak sort of sceptic, an individual 'all too easily frightened' and to whom Nietzsche ascribes 'a certain complex physiological condition which in layman's terms is called weak nerves or a sickly constitution' (BGE 208). This passage is ostensibly an attack on the Sceptic's stated aim of *ataraxia* (tranquillity) which Nietzsche sees as characterizing a philosophy of weakness. And in a further passage from the same section Nietzsche continues with what is ostensibly an attack on the Pyrrhonian sceptic notion of *epochē* (suspension of judgement):

[The sceptic's] conscience has been trained to jump at every no, or even at a decisive and hardened yes, and to feel it like a bite. Yes! and No! – this is contrary to morality, as far as he is concerned. Conversely, he loves to treat his virtues to a feast of noble abstinence, when, for instance, he says with Montaigne: 'What do I know?'...What good are rash hypotheses? It might very well be good taste not to formulate any hypotheses at all (BGE 208).

It is difficult to know what to make of this passage when one contrasts it with his generally more favourable and positive responses to scepticism. However it is, I suggest, an indication of Nietzsche's opposition to *ataraxia* and *epochē* which I raise in chapter 10. But Nietzsche's many favourable responses to scepticism of the stronger kind suggest that Nietzsche, for the most part, believes that there are compelling reasons to disavow dogmatic philosophy in favour of the sceptic life. Dogmatism, the belief in unconditional truth has, according to Nietzsche, resulted in unconscionable acts on the part of mankind. But if only we had taken a more 'experimental attitude' and paused to question the means by which we arrived at our convictions and the justification for holding on to them,

'how peaceable a picture the history of mankind would present!', writes Nietzsche, and 'we should have been spared all the cruel scenes attending the persecution of heretics of every kind...' (HH 630).

Apart from what I suggest is the one reference in *Ecce Homo*: 'Why I Am So Clever', 3, Nietzsche's discussion of scepticism and the sceptics does not specifically identify the scepticism of the Pyrrhonians. However there are aspects of Nietzsche's project which, I suggest, identify, implicitly, his discussion of scepticism with Pyrrhonian scepticism. Nietzsche's project is, I suggest, characterised by the themes of doubt, scepticism and suspension (*ephexis*) which are central to Pyrrhonian scepticism and which I argue take centre stage in Nietzsche's new ethics. Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil* that 'it has not occurred to even the most cautious of them to start doubting right here at the threshold, where it is actually needed the most – even though they had vowed to themselves "*de omnibus dubitandum*"'<sup>18</sup> (BGE 2). Here, Nietzsche's discussion of 'doubt' calls into question the validity of beliefs accepted as givens. The philosopher's 'fundamental belief' in the opposition of values, as discussed earlier, exemplifies, for Nietzsche, the failure of philosophers to doubt, as part of normal philosophical practice, their most basic assumptions. After all, as Nietzsche writes: 'Granted, we will truth: *why not untruth instead?* And uncertainty? Even ignorance?' (BGE 1). The philosopher has a 'duty to be suspicious these days, to squint as maliciously as possible out of every abyss of mistrust' (BGE34). Thus philosophers should, as Nietzsche sees it, challenge assumptions concerning the most fundamental philosophical beliefs for 'the belief in immediate certainties is a stupidity that does us little credit!'(BGE 34).

Sextus Empiricus, as I will discuss in chapter 8, reports that the Sceptic indicates his scepticism by adverting to the notion of 'perhaps' (PH I 194-5): 'someone who says "Perhaps it is" implicitly posits what is thought to conflict with it, namely "Perhaps it is not", insofar as he does not make an affirmation about its being so' (PH I 195). Nietzsche makes explicit use of the 'Perhaps' in section 2 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. I have in the previous section above adverted to parts of section 2 of BGE. However I set out in full Nietzsche's use of 'perhaps', repeating some of these passages, in order to highlight

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<sup>18</sup> Everything is to be doubted.

Nietzsche's use of an explicit Pyrrhonian sceptic methodology . Nietzsche writes in section 2 of *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Whatever value might be attributed to truth, truthfulness, and selflessness, it could be possible that appearance, the will to deception, and craven self-interest should be accorded a higher and more fundamental value for life. It could even be possible that whatever gives value to those good and honourable things has an incriminating link, bond, or tie to the very things that look like their evil opposites; *perhaps* (my emphasis) they are even essentially the same. *Perhaps!* - But who is willing to take charge of such a dangerous *Perhaps!* For this we must await the arrival of a new breed of philosophers, ones whose taste and inclination are somehow the reverse of those we have seen so far – philosophers of the dangerous *Perhaps* in every sense (BGE 2).

Here Nietzsche, I suggest, wants new philosophers to be mindful of the attitude espoused by the Pyrrhonian sceptics: that *perhaps* things could be one way and *perhaps* they could be the other. Nietzsche uses the notion of 'doubt', and 'perhaps' to challenge the pre-suppositions governing the philosopher's understanding of truth and of truth and falsity as 'intrinsically opposed' (BGE 34). The use of *perhaps* conveys, I suggest, Nietzsche's worry concerning 'the dogmatism that insists that between the poles of truth-falsity, good-bad, and so on, there can be no fruitful connections' (Tanner 1973: 12). Nietzsche's discussion of 'doubt' and 'perhaps' in BGE 2 are, and as I discuss in chapter 10, ways in which Nietzsche, I suggest, sees his new philosophers as buying into the tropes of Pyrrhonian scepticism. In *The Genealogy* Nietzsche writes:

Just list the individual drives and virtues of the philosopher one after the other – his doubting drive, his negating drive, his wait-and-see ('ephlectic') drive, his analytical drive, his exploring, searching, venturing drive, his comparing, balancing drive, his will to neutrality and objectivity, his will to every '*sine ira et studio*'<sup>19</sup> (GM III 9).

Here, Nietzsche signifies, I suggest, not only his awareness of the Sceptic methodology of suspension, equipollence and the process leading to equipollent arguments but he

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<sup>19</sup> *Sine ira et studio*: without anger and partiality

appears to be admiring of these practices. Nietzsche's expectation that his new philosophers will be sceptics (BGE 210) is part of a positive philosophical approach towards doubt which also includes fostering an attitude of suspension (*ephēxis*). *Ephēxis* and *epochē* share the same etymology: *ephēxis*, a Greek term<sup>20</sup> means 'a stopping or checking' and it derives from the verb *epechein* which means 'to hold back, to reserve judgement, to "wait and see"'. Although Nietzsche, as I will argue in chapter 10, is opposed to the Pyrronian notion of *epochē* his writings suggest a generally sympathetic approach towards *ephēxis* as a philosophical attitude and a process of philosophical thought which reinforces the attitude of doubt he seeks to inspire in new philosophers.

Nietzsche writes in *The Anti-Christ*:

Another mark of a theologian is his *incapacity for philology*. Philology should be understood here in a very general sense, as the art of reading well, - to be able to read facts *without* falsifying them through interpretations, *without* letting the desire to understand make you lose caution, patience, subtlety. Philology as *ephēxis* in interpretation: whether it concerns books, newspaper articles, destinies, or facts about the weather, - not to mention 'salvation of the soul' (AC 52).

Nietzsche's promotion of *ephēxis* as a philosophical attitude is spelt out more explicitly in the following: 'the essential thing here is precisely *not* "to will", to be *able* to suspend the decision' (TI: 'What the Germans', Lack, 6). His embrace of *ephēxis* is, I suggest, part of an overall philosophical methodology which embraces scepticism, doubt and 'perhaps'. *Ephēxis*, I suggest, represents, for Nietzsche, the idea that the philosopher should be cautious in accepting as givens the presuppositions underlying our values. This, I suggest, is the thought which is reflected in the following passage in *Twilight of the Idols*. Here Nietzsche writes:

This is the *first* preliminary schooling for spirituality: *not* to react immediately to a stimulus [...] the essential thing here is precisely *not* 'to will', to be *able* to suspend the decision. Every characteristic absence of spirituality, every piece of common vulgarity, is due to an inability to resist a stimulus – you *have* to react, you follow every impulse. In many cases this sort of compulsion is already a pathology, a

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<sup>20</sup> Clark 1998: 154. 'wait-and-see ("ephēctic") drive: GM III 9.

decline, a symptom of exhaustion, - almost everything that is crudely and unphilosophically designated a 'vice' is really just this physiological inability *not* to react (TI: 'What the Germans Lack', 6).

Here Nietzsche suggests that an inability 'to suspend the decision' (*ephēxis*) is a 'pathology'. *Ephēxis*, as I understand Nietzsche's use of it, is not Pyrronian suspension of judgement on values; Nietzsche's response to dogmatism is not suspension of judgement. Rather, *ephēxis* in philosophical practice is, for Nietzsche, the act of checking oneself - of pausing to make space to allow oneself time for reflection before rushing to immediate judgement. Nietzsche's native scepticism is, I suggest, apparent in his challenging of beliefs about morality:

Given a scepticism that is characteristic of me, to which I reluctantly admit – for it is directed towards *morality*, towards everything on earth that has until now been celebrated as morality – a scepticism that first appeared so early in my life (GM Preface 3).

*The Genealogy* (Preface 3) draws attention to Nietzsche's engagement with what I suggest is a form of sceptical inquiry which has parallels with Pyrronian scepticism. Nietzsche poses questions about our moral values pitching opposing arguments against each other. The questions that Nietzsche raises here are, I suggest, those which have not hitherto been the subject matter of normal philosophical inquiry. Nietzsche opens with the question: '*what, in fact, is the origin of our good and evil... under what conditions did man invent those value judgements good and evil? and what value do they themselves have?*'. He asks of our value judgements of good and evil whether they have 'inhibited or furthered human flourishing up until now?' Or whether we ought, on the other hand, to consider valuations of good and evil as 'a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life'. Conversely, might we not interpret good and evil as 'a betray[al] of the fullness, the power, the will of life, its courage, its confidence, its future?' Nietzsche raises these questions in order to challenge orthodox views on good and evil; and, more specifically, we are being asked and possibly for the first time to consider whether our evaluations of good and evil contribute towards the enhancement of life or whether they diminish life. We might, I suggest, see parallels in the Sceptic's practice of the *dunamis antithetikē* (power of opposition) which I discuss in chapter 8. Nietzsche in GM Preface 3 suggests that the questions posed (somewhat in the form of a challenge) raise as many

questions as answers: 'In response I found and ventured a number of answers; I distinguished ages, peoples, degrees of rank among individuals; I divided up my problem; out of the answers came new questions, investigations, conjectures, probabilities...'. Nietzsche's response in Preface 3 to *The Genealogy* suggests that his findings are many, varied and contradictory; that there is no one answer and that each new answer only precipitates a further round of questions. So what is he supposed to believe in? His response to opposing propositions on good and evil is intended to suggest a similar sense of confusion as that produced by the Sceptic's *dunamis antithetikē*. Nietzsche intends, I suggest, to show how the setting up of opposing arguments (GM Preface 3) undermines convictions and the certainty with which human beings hold on to their beliefs about moral values.

#### *Avoiding Dogmatism: Style and Rhetoric*

Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism is, as I have argued, closely related to his concerns on health but Nehamas' arguments (discussed above) undermine Nietzsche's claims. For how can Nietzsche, as Nehamas rightly asks, avoid the charge that his arguments on dogmatism are self-refuting? Nietzsche, I argue, avoids dogmatism in the same way as the Sceptics by the use of language and style: he makes use of rhetoric, polemic and a non-propositional style to convey a message of scepticism. His use of rhetoric and the non-assertoric signifies, I suggest, his avoidance of propositional philosophical or metaphysical dogmatic claims. As discussed in the previous section Nietzsche uses the language of scepticism, doubt, *ephēxis* and the 'perhaps' to convey the substance of his message in a non-dogmatic way. Nietzsche scholars have commented on Nietzsche's use of style as a philosophical methodology. Brian Leiter (2002: xiv) writes: 'it has become fashionable to talk about Nietzsche's style as being separate from his content but I would disagree. His style and tone determine the message of scepticism which he wishes to convey'.<sup>21</sup> Here the point Leiter, I suggest rightly, makes is that if we are, properly, to understand Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism and what he is trying to achieve, the question of style is equally as important as the substance. Ken Gemes writes:

To treat Nietzsche as developing a philosophical account of the notion of truth is to some degree to ignore his expressly rhetorical intent of using his audiences

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<sup>21</sup> See also Janaway (2007: 4).

received notions of truth in order to subvert their wider *Weltanschauung*<sup>22</sup> (1992: 49).

Nietzsche seeks to dislodge well-entrenched philosophical thinking about the value of truth but he has to persuade his reader of his arguments without following in the footsteps of the dogmatic philosopher. The illocutionary force of his attack on dogmatism lies, I suggest, in its effect to shock the reader into questioning long standing, deeply held beliefs predicated on religious faith and convictions.

## 7.8 Responding to Dogmatism

To overcome dogmatism in philosophy, 'we must', writes Nietzsche:

[A]wait the arrival of a new breed of philosophers, ones whose taste and inclination are somehow the reverse of those we have seen so far – philosophers of the dangerous Perhaps in every sense. - And in all seriousness: I see these new philosophers approaching (BGE 2).

Here, I refer once more to Nietzsche's use of the 'Perhaps' which, I suggest, mimics the practice of the Sceptic philosopher. New philosophers, as I have commented on above, 'certainly will not be dogmatists' (BGE 43). They will not commit to unconditional truth as a given:

It would offend their pride, as well as their taste, if their truth were a truth for everyone (which has been the secret wish and hidden meaning of all dogmatic aspirations so far)(BGE 43).

The task of the philosopher has been, amongst other things, to be a 'dogmatist' in order to give an account of 'the range of human values and value feelings' (BGE 211). In rejecting this view, Nietzsche does not intend that philosophical theory and reason should be abandoned but they should be regarded as merely preconditions for what he sees as the philosopher's real task which is 'to create values' (BGE 211). It is, I suggest, Nietzsche's belief that such an undertaking requires philosophers to move away from the practice of dogmatic philosophy and the belief in unconditional truths.

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<sup>22</sup> World view

## 7.9 Conclusion

According to Nietzsche the cornerstone of philosophies has hitherto been the belief that what a philosopher advances as truth derives from principles of logic and reason - principles that are held to be inviolable and which are thus taken to represent reality. But Nietzsche's identification of such beliefs as 'dogmatism' is intended to highlight the philosopher's misguided understanding that unqualified truth is something that can be apprehended. Nietzsche seeks to show that the theories philosophers advance as truths do no more than reflect their individual prejudices. Nietzsche still intends to maintain a discourse on truth but he rejects the dogmatic claim that 'there is a fully objective view of truth to be had' (May 1999: 142). Nietzsche's innovation and his departure from the orthodoxy of philosophical practice suggest that there needs to be a new account of truth, a new way of doing philosophy and a new kind of philosopher. New philosophers will adopt a cautious, suspensive approach towards matters which have hitherto gone unchallenged and they will exercise doubt when it comes to how we think about truth.

Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism is I suggest directly linked to health because it is predicated on a certain way of thinking about truth. Nietzsche's attack on dogmatism challenges the traditional philosopher's engagement with the belief in an unqualified truth. This as Clark rightly, I suggest, argues is associated with a way of life which affirms the ascetic ideal and its life-negating system of moral evaluation.



# Chapter 8 Pyrrhonian scepticism: A Philosophy for a Way of Life

This thesis examines Nietzsche's philosophy as a way of life with a focus on health. I will argue in the final chapter that these Nietzschean ideas have interesting and illuminating parallels in Pyrrhonian scepticism. So in this chapter I turn to examine Pyrrhonian scepticism and its ideas relating to health and a way of life.

## 8.1 Introduction

Pierre Hadot (1995: 28) writes that 'philosophy is an art of living that cures us of our illnesses by teaching us a radically new way of life'. The Pyrrhonian sceptic sees commitment to belief as the cause of human anxiety. Thus Pyrrhonian scepticism is a way of living without belief, offering a radically new lifestyle which, I suggest, embodies Hadot's proposals for a concept of philosophy as 'medicinal'. The Sceptic embraces this lifestyle by a process of argumentative inquiry through which he comes to suspend judgement (*epochē*) on all matters of belief. Pyrrhonian scepticism says that philosophy is not just the study of abstract theories on ethics, metaphysics and epistemology. Although philosophical theory still has utility for the Sceptic, this should, I suggest, be seen as part of a philosophical way of life which is directed towards the question: how can my life be free from mental distress?

I show that beginning with its attack on dogmatic philosophy Pyrrhonian scepticism teaches a way of living without belief which confers peace of mind and freedom from mental distress and anxiety (*ataraxia*). Living in this way, the Pyrrhonian sceptic simply acts in accordance with how things seem to them but without making any commitment that things are as they appear. I discuss the Sceptics' attack on dogmatic philosophy, and their rejection of the Dogmatist philosopher's commitment to a criterion of truth and to the search for truth. I discuss the Sceptics' suspension of judgement (*epochē*) and its role as a way of life. I show that the Sceptic adopts a criterion for living in accordance with appearance and without belief: ('nothing is by nature good or bad'). I discuss the Dogmatists' differing theses on *eudaimonia* to show that *ataraxia* is the Sceptic's final end.

I show that the Sceptic's background as both philosopher and physician has relevance for their approach to dogmatic belief as a disease and the methodology employed for curing this disease. And I show that the philosophical objective for the Sceptic is a therapeutic one and that in common with the physician their practice is directed towards health.

Finally I address four issues within Sceptic philosophy. Firstly, does the Sceptic in fact have any beliefs? Secondly, must the Sceptic's life be one of inactivity (*apraxia*)? Thirdly, does the Sceptic's lifestyle lead to tranquillity (*ataraxia*), the freedom from mental distress and anxiety that Sextus reports? And finally, does the Sceptics' lifestyle leave them open to accusations of immorality?

## 8.2 Background to Pyrrhonian scepticism

Pyrrhonian scepticism was the name given by the Ancient Greeks to a particular style of scepticism, which became associated with its eponymous founder Pyrrho of Elis (c.360-275 B.C.). Pyrrho was said to have declared that everything was indeterminable and accordingly to have suspended judgement about the reality of things and whether anything was by nature good or bad. Ancient philosophical scepticism has, from the time of Pyrrho, been through various stages. Sextus Empiricus (c.160 -210 A.D.) on whose works contemporary scholars of Pyrrhonian scepticism have mainly relied was a philosopher and physician. Sextus' profession as a physician is, as I will show, relevant to the discussion on Sceptic philosophy and health. Pyrrhonian scepticism became known largely through Sextus' extant works: *Outlines of Pyrrhonism (Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes)* and *Against the Mathematicians (Adversus Mathematicos)*. Regarding the latter, I refer exclusively to book XI the final book, known as *Against the Ethicists*. When discussing Pyrrhonian scepticism, I use Sceptic, Pyrrhonists, Pyrrhonian and Pyrrhonian sceptic interchangeably and infer no distinction between any of these uses.<sup>23</sup> Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers (DL)* and Victor Brochard's *Les Sceptiques Grecs* (1887) also offer accounts of Pyrrhonian scepticism to which I shall refer in this chapter. Annas and Barnes (1985: 192) cite Brochard's book as one of the best full-length books on

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<sup>23</sup> All quotations from the writings of Sextus Empiricus come from the Annas and Barnes (2000) translation of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and the Richard Bett (2007) translation of *Against the Ethicists (Book XI of Against the Mathematicians)*. The abbreviation 'PH' refers to Sextus Empiricus', *Outlines of Scepticism (Purrhoneioi Hypotuposeis)* and the abbreviation 'M' refers to *Against the Ethicists* which is book XI, the final book of *Against the Mathematicians*. The number immediately following these abbreviations is the book number and the second number identifies the relevant passage.

ancient scepticism and Jessica Berry (2013: 100) writing slightly later describes Brochard's book as 'until very recently one of the best available works on the history of scepticism'.<sup>24</sup>

As I discuss later when I come to address the parallels between Nietzsche and Pyrrhonian scepticism, the works of both Diogenes and Brochard were well known to Nietzsche.

Nietzsche was also acquainted with the work of the sixteenth century philosopher, Michel de Montaigne whose writings were influenced by the works of Sextus Empiricus. In the following passage Nietzsche expresses his admiration for Montaigne:

I know of only one writer whom I would compare with Schopenhauer, indeed set above him, in respect of honesty: Montaigne. That such a man wrote has truly augmented the joy of living on this earth. Since getting to know this freest and mightiest of souls, I at least have come to feel what he felt about Plutarch: 'as soon as I glance at him I grow a leg or a wing'. If I were set the task, I could endeavour to make myself at home in the world with him (UM III p135).

Montaigne's *An Apology for Raymond Sebond* contains detailed discussion of Sextus' *Outlines of Scepticism* which is helpful in explicating Pyrrhonian scepticism. In this chapter I rely, for the most part, on two contemporary sources, Martha Nussbaum's, *Sceptic Purgatives: Therapeutic Arguments in Ancient Scepticism* (1991) and Annas and Barnes', *The Modes of Scepticism* (1985).

### 8.3 The Attack on Dogmatism and 'the Hope of Becoming Tranquil'

Scepticism, as described by Sextus, is a response to the dogmatic philosophies of the Epicureans, the Stoics and the Academics. The principal concern of the Sceptic is that of health – what it is that is injurious to health and what it is that contributes to psychological well-being. Freedom from mental distress is the Sceptic's sole objective. The aim of scepticism as Sextus writes in the *Outlines*, 'is the hope of becoming tranquil' (PH I 12); Sextus reports that the search for truth (the fundamental aim of dogmatic philosophies) does not achieve the Sceptic goal of tranquillity (*ataraxia*). As I go on to discuss, the Sceptic challenges the Dogmatist's valorisation of the search for truth because he sees the commitment to the search for truth as unhealthy. Thus the attack on

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<sup>24</sup> Brochard's book has only been published in French and thus the quotations from Brochard (1887) are my own translations.

## Chapter 8

dogmatism is central to the Pyrronian sceptic's way of life and overall it is the perspective from which Sextus launches his attack on the Dogmatist philosopher's commitment to the search for truth and the Dogmatist's belief in a criterion of truth. Sextus in the *Outlines* writes: 'Those who are called Dogmatists in the proper sense of the word think that they have discovered the truth' (PH I 3). In saying this Sextus immediately suggests a link between dogmatism in philosophy and truth. The Dogmatists are, according to Sextus, mistaken in believing that truth is intrinsically good and mistaken in ascribing value to the search for truth and in believing in the discoverability of an absolute truth that conforms to what is real. Moreover Sextus rejects the Dogmatist's belief in a univocal criterion by which they assert we can apprehend an absolute truth of universal applicability. Sextus also rejects the position of the Academics whom he identifies as negative dogmatists in that they deny the possibility of ever finding the truth (PH 1 3).

The Greek word 'dogma' means simply 'belief'. What, according to Sextus, distinguishes the philosophy of the Sceptics from the Dogmatists is that the latter posit categorical beliefs they hold to be truths and that one requires in one's life in order to flourish. The Sceptic's attack on dogmatism questions the certainty and confidence with which Dogmatists such as the Epicureans and the Stoics hold beliefs about truth. Sextus writes:

For anyone who holds beliefs on even one subject, or in general prefers one appearance to another in point of convincingness or lack of convincingness, or makes assertions about any unclear matter, thereby has the distinctive character of a Dogmatist (PH I 223).

The Dogmatist is, according to Sextus, one who 'positas real the things they are said to hold beliefs about' (PH I 15). Thus to believe in 'x' is to accept 'x' as 'true' and to assert the real existence of 'x': 'for the true belongs among the things which exist and are real' (M XI 221).

Sextus, as I have already touched upon in the previous chapter, reports that the Sceptic uses language to signify his avoidance of dogmatism. The Sceptic uses phrases such as 'No more this than that' or 'Perhaps', 'Maybe' and 'Possibly', 'I suspend judgement', 'I determine nothing', 'non-assertion', and 'opposed to every account there is an equal account' (PH I 187-208) to make clear the non-dogmatic intent of anything he reports. Sextus writes that such phrases 'manifest a sceptical disposition and our feelings' (PH I

187). The expression ‘No more’, for example, suggests that a claim is no more likely to be true as untrue. In contrast to the assertoric and propositional language of the Dogmatist, the Sceptic’s ‘Sceptical phrases’, as set out in PH I 187-208, indicate that in uttering these phrases ‘[the Sceptic] cannot be said to hold beliefs’ (PH I 15) and thus they cannot be said to be assenting to the truth or falsity of anything.

The Pyrrhonian pursues his attack on dogmatism by means of a scepticism which is more praxis than theory. The Sceptics have no interest in purely epistemological questions on scepticism and their brand of scepticism is unlike that of the Academics whom, as we have seen, claim that we can never have knowledge of anything (PH I 3): the Sceptic makes no such claim. Scepticism, for the Pyrrhonians, is the act of challenging the dogmatic understanding of truth as advanced by contemporary philosophers. In Part I of the *Outlines*, Sextus elaborates on the principles that characterize Pyrrhonian scepticism: in essence the Sceptic is committed to a process of inquiry which they intend will lead only to equipollence in arguments (*isostheneia*), from which they come to suspend judgement (*epochē*) and which then produces the state of tranquillity (*ataraxia*).

#### **8.4 The Search for Truth and the Rejection of a Criterion of Truth**

When, as Sextus describes it, the proto-Sceptic begins his search for truth he is certain that he will be able to distinguish truth from falsity and thus is hoping to be free from anxiety (PH I 25). But, as Sextus writes in the *Outlines* (PH I 26) the search for truth does not end well: *aporia* rather than tranquillity (*ataraxia*) is the end result. As Sextus recounts (PH I 26), when the proto-Sceptic ‘began to do philosophy’ he found himself confounded by the contradictions in opposing arguments as to what is true and he was thus left in a state of *aporia* (PH I 7). The proto-Sceptic confronted with arguments all of which he finds to be equally true has no means by which to distinguish which of the conflicting truths he should accept as the one truth or the absolute truth. The failure of the search for truth (and its resultant distress) thus has two elements: firstly, the search reveals alternate and conflicting answers, and secondly, there is no objective “criterion of truth” by which to judge them. The proto-Sceptic’s equilibrium is restored only when he identifies the search for truth as a futile exercise and as an obstacle to *ataraxia*. It is the failure of the search for truth, as the Sceptic is faced with equipollent arguments, that

'leads to [him] being psychologically constrained to suspend belief in truth' (Bailey 2002: 21) and which in turn leads to freedom from disturbance or calmness of soul (*ataraxia*).

Victor Brochard (1887: 336) observes that central to Sextus' attack on dogmatic beliefs is the rejection of a criterion for distinguishing between truth and falsity. Sextus rejects the Dogmatists' claims for the existence of infallible and universal standards which distinguish truth from falsity (PH I 21). A fundamental feature of the Dogmatist's way of thinking is, according to Sextus, the belief in a criterion of truth, the yardstick by which Dogmatists claim to have 'cognitive access to the real nature of things' (Long and Sedley 1987: 22). But the Sceptic questions what makes the teachings of one school true as opposed to the different teaching of another. The Sceptic's practical experience (when he began to do philosophy and when he began to search for truth) makes him agnostic to any commitment to dogmatic beliefs on truth. Not only is the Sceptic confronted with conflicting opinions which inhibit him from choosing between them but he also finds that he can discern no suitable criterion for determining truth from falsity. The lack of uniformity of the teachings within the different Dogmatic schools strains, I suggest, the notion of what we might consider to be a univocal criterion of truth for determining truth from falsity. Each Dogmatist school offers its own unique and distinctive yardstick by which, say the Sceptics, they each claim independently to have access to the reality of things. Brochard expands on the way in which philosophical versions of the criterion for truth differ between the different schools of philosophy:

That there is no criterion [for truth] in any sense, is shown first by the disagreement of the philosophers. According to Xenophanes, Protagoras, Gorgias, there is no criterion at all. For Anaxagoras, the Pythagoreans, Democritus, Parmenides, and Plato, it is reason alone, to the exclusion of the senses, which can judge the truth...Next Empedocles, there are six criteria; for the Stoics, there is only one, the sense; the academicians deny certainty, and admit no reliability; finally it is to the senses alone that the Cyrenaics and Epicureans give their confidence (Brochard 1887: 337).

These conflicting criteria for truth are in themselves, according to the Sceptics, a source of anxiety and mental perturbation because it is conceivable that a person confronted with a serious and plausible challenge to views that they have never had any reason to doubt, might become anxious and distressed. As Martha Nussbaum recounts, we might take, as

an example, an individual of the Epicurean persuasion who when confronted with an opposing but plausible and appealing view from a Stoic, is thrown off balance by compelling arguments from the Stoic. The scenario that Nussbaum posits is one in which the Stoic attacks and rejects the Epicurean view of life, namely, that pleasure is the only intrinsic good. And rather than being repelled the Epicurean sees the attraction of the Stoic criterion, namely the value of virtue. Nussbaum avers that:

if stoicism is correct, the Epicurean must be living a bad life but she is unable to find a decisive way of resolving the debate. Epicurus in accordance with his criterion of truth asks the confused Epicurean to consult perception whilst the Stoic in accordance with his criterion requires the agent to listen to the voice of reason' (Nussbaum 1991:524-6).

The Epicureans and the Stoics each have a criterion for truth differing from the other and there is, as Myles Burnyeat (1998: 29), comments, 'no intellectually satisfactory criterion we can trust and use'. The problem, as Sextus writes in the following passage from the *Outlines*, is not whether or not a criterion for truth exists but how one determines which one to use:

You must realize that it is not our intention to assert that standards of truth are unreal (that would be dogmatic); rather, since the Dogmatists seem plausibly to have established that there is a standard of truth, we have set up plausible-seeming arguments in opposition to them, affirming neither that they are true nor that they are more plausible than those on the contrary side, but concluding to suspension of judgement because of the apparently equal plausibility of these arguments and those produced by the Dogmatists (PH II 79).

The Sceptic does not deny the existence of a criterion for truth; it is, as Sextus suggests, their practice never to affirm or deny anything, thereby avoiding the dogmatism of which they accuse other philosophies. Sextus raises arguments against a criterion of truth which, as the scenario involving the Epicurean and Stoic was intended to show, reveal its unreliability as the means for determining objective or universal truths. Sextus describes a philosophical practice which transforms life because Sceptics are freed from the mental distress which arises from the quest for truth as they realise the impossibility of

determining a univocal criterion for truth; the search for truth no longer defines philosophical life. Thus Sextus writes in the *Outlines*:

That we attend to what is apparent is clear from what we say about the standard of the Sceptical persuasion. ‘Standard’ has two senses: there are standards adopted to provide conviction about the reality or unreality of something...and there are standards of action attending to which in everyday life we perform some actions and not others – and it is these standards which are our present subject (PH I 21).

Here Sextus writes about the Sceptics’ rejection of the criterion or standard of truth as the value for life and their adoption of a new criterion or standard for living in accordance with appearance. Sceptics will be guided by how things appear (PH I 22-23); truth or falsity have no bearing on how they live their lives. I discuss what it is that ‘living by appearances’ means for the Sceptic in a later section.

## 8.5 Suspension of Judgement (*epochē*) and Mental Well-Being

*Epochē*, the Sceptics’ suspension of judgement, relies on their ability to reach equipollence<sup>25</sup>; *epochē* is central to the Sceptics’ way of life and the health claims which they make for it. *Epochē* is the state in which Sceptics (through the equipollence of their arguments) are constrained from affirming or denying the truth or falsity of anything and as a result peace of mind (*ataraxia*) follows naturally as ‘a shadow follows a body’ (PH I 29). Sextus describes *epochē* as ‘a standstill of the intellect, owing to which we neither reject nor posit anything’ (PH I 10): it is a ‘feeling that comes about in the inquirer after the investigation’ (PH I 7). It is, I suggest, important that suspension of judgement and the process by which it is reached should be recognized as a way of living. Suspension of judgement (*epochē*) is not an intellectual exercise and it is not something that is willed, rather, it is the attainment of a psychological condition by which the agent’s state of mind is transformed from one of belief about matters which are the subject of conflicting and contradictory opinions to one where he suspends judgement concerning belief on such

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<sup>25</sup> Sextus writes in the *Outlines*: ‘By “equipollence” we mean equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts takes precedence over any other as being more convincing’ (PH I 10).

matters. The Sceptic is naturally moved by the force of the equipollence in the opposing arguments to suspend judgement. As Annas and Barnes (1985:49) observe it 'is something that happens to us, not a thing that we are obliged or can rationally choose to adopt'. Alan Bailey (2002: 21) also makes a similar point when he, rightly, observes that suspension of judgement is not a voluntary act – there is no 'act of will' involved:

The Pyrrhonist, of course finds that peace of mind or *ataraxia* happens fortuitously to accompany his *epochē* but he also finds that his inability to discern any reason for preferring a particular claim to its contradictory usually leads to his being psychologically constrained to suspend belief (Bailey 2002: 21).

The tranquillity which comes from suspending judgement is, I suggest, consistent with what in colloquial terms may be described as 'being in touch with one's instincts', 'going-with-the-flow', or doing what comes naturally, without worrying about conventional socially approved morality. Montaigne describes the Sceptic's *ataraxia* (tranquillity) as:

a calm, stable, rule of life, free from all disturbances (caused by the impress of opinions or of such knowledge of reality as we think we have) which give birth to fear, acquisitiveness, envy, immoderate desires, ambition, pride, superstition, love of novelty, rebellion, disobedience, obstinacy and the greater part of our bodily ills (Montaigne 2003: 560-1).

## 8.6 A Sceptical Ability (*Dunamis Antithetikē*)

The philosophical way of life that Sextus proposes is, as I intimated in the Introduction, one in which philosophy is no longer defined exclusively by abstract theories of reason, logic and inference; in Sextan philosophy the search for truth, as discussed above, no longer plays the central role in philosophical life. Rather philosophy, as portrayed by Sextus, is a way of living a better life, free from the disturbance (*tarachē*) which the Sceptics see as plaguing the lives of the Dogmatists and non-Sceptics. To this end, the Sceptic's path to mental health and well-being relies on an 'ability' which, according to Sextus, is what defines Sceptic practice: the ability in question is known as the *dunamis antithetikē*, a power of opposition. R.J. Hankinson (1995:27) describes '*dunamis*' as a 'power, potentiality, capacity, ability' and suggests that Sextus is careful in choosing this word in order to avoid the suggestion that the *dunamis* is a specialized, technical or

professional skill. The *dunamis antithetikē* is, I suggest, what defines Scepticism as more practice than theory. The reaching of equipollent arguments and its bringing about of the psychologically induced state of *epochē* is something that Sextus describes as happening by mere chance on the first occasion; this fortuitous occurrence now becomes a skill which the Sceptic finds to be beneficial to mental health (PH I 25-6). The Sceptic no longer sees argument and inquiry as the pursuit of truth but these he develops as an 'ability' which he can now deploy in the hope of becoming tranquil. The Sceptic engages in a process of inquiry whereby the pros and cons of the argument are articulated and analysed until they are equally weighted. Sextus writes in the *Outlines*:

Scepticism is an ability to set out oppositions among things which appear and are thought of in any way at all, an ability by which because of the equipollence in the opposed objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgement and afterwards to tranquillity. We call it ability not in any fancy sense, but simply in the sense of 'to be able to' (PH I 8-9).

The Sceptic exercises the 'ability' to set up opposing arguments by virtue of which he sets in train a cycle which goes from equipollence through to *epochē* and then on to *ataraxia*. In arriving at equipollence, the Sceptic sets up opposing arguments between conflicting and contradictory accounts until he finds no one account more or less persuasive or convincing than the other (PH I 10). Sextus' account of Sceptic practice describes 'a journey which the Sceptic makes over and over again from an opposition or conflict of opinions through to *epochē* and *ataraxia*' (Burnyeat 1998:29). Nussbaum (1991: 530) comments that, 'the sceptical ability would now seem to be the ability to go about deliberately setting up such opposition in such a way that equipollence, *epochē* and *ataraxia* inevitably follow.' The ability to set up opposing arguments is part of a practical process, a way of life by which the Sceptic hopes to achieve freedom from mental distress (*ataraxia*). Sextus writes in the *Outlines*:

To every account I have scrutinized which purports to establish something in dogmatic fashion, there appears to me opposed another account, purporting to establish something in dogmatic fashion equal to it in convincingness or lack of convincingness (PH I 203).

The *dunamis antithetikē* is the process by which Sceptics aim to loosen the foundations of all convictions and reach a position where they ‘hold nothing as certain [and] vouch for nothing’ (Montaigne 2003: 560). The acknowledgement of the absence of certainty, the establishment of doubt as a way of life and the erosion of the polarities in opposing arguments facilitate, I suggest, the drive towards the equipollence which is the precondition for the health affirming benefits of *epochē* and *ataraxia*.

Jonathan Barnes (1998: 16) comments that ‘the Pyrrhonist’s arguments lie before you: read them and you will find yourself in a state of *epochē*.’ It is not altogether clear what it is that Barnes means to convey here but in any event I suggest that Barnes, in a way which is not entirely justified, makes light of the methodology by which the Sceptic arrives at *epochē*. Barnes’ comment fails, I suggest, to take account of the complexity of the ‘ability’ required to reach equipollence and without which there can be no *epochē* or *ataraxia*. However despite the apparent complexity of the ability, Sextus means, I suggest, to convey that the Sceptic’s ‘ability’ should be seen as part of a way of living and not as a specialized or professional skill. In one sense *epochē* is, as discussed above, something that just happens but in another sense it is not so easily achieved because the exercise of the power of opposition, on which *epochē* relies, suggests a degree of complexity. The idea that Sextus, I suggest, wants to convey is of something that relies on ordinary human faculties of reason and argument. However in adverting to the power of ‘reason’ it is important to note that Sextus intends to avoid the sense that the *dunamis antithetikē* argues towards a philosophical proposition or a ‘self-consciously endorsed methodology’ involving a commitment to the truth or falsity of a proposition (Hankinson 1995:27). However Sextus does go on to say: ‘*Men of talent* (my emphasis), troubled by the anomaly of things’ (PH I 12) were the ones for whom, in their search for peace of mind, value judgements of truth and falsity were troublesome. Here Sextus’ remark suggests a contradiction with the notion that the ‘ability’ requires no special skill. His reference to men of talent might in itself suggest that there is a level of intellect which is required to be able to reach equipollent arguments. We might also note at this stage that Sextus’ ‘men of talent’ calls to mind Nietzsche’s concern for the potential harm to ‘the highest power and splendour of the human type’ (GM Preface 6).

The Ten Modes (PH I 35-179) on which Sextus reports in the *Outlines* offer practical guidance to Sceptics for use against the Dogmatists’ precipitate claims concerning truth,

reality and the unconditional nature of phenomena. Sextus articulates his point by offering examples of opposing arguments: 'that among us adultery is forbidden while among the Massagetae it is accepted by custom as indifferent' (PH I 152) or 'that among us it is forbidden to have sex with your mother, while in Persia it is the custom to favour such marriages' (PH I 152). The Ten Modes are a pattern or mode of argument 'by which the Sceptic infers suspension of judgement' (PH I 35). Sextus makes it clear that the arguments of The Ten Modes are not exhaustive: 'there may be more than those I shall describe' (PH I 35). However through the application of The Ten Modes Sextus illustrates how beliefs arise in the first place and then as Burnyeat aptly encapsulates the Sceptic position:

[Sceptic philosophy] goes on to destroy systematically, the beliefs so acquired by showing that each of these patterns or modes of argument produce conflicting beliefs of equal persuasiveness and are therefore not to be relied upon to put us in touch with the truth (Burnyeat 1998: 32).

Diogenes affirms Sextus' view that when it comes to questions about what is true or what we can take as real, *epochē* is the only option for living life and this involves the idea of a life without belief: 'As to what is true, then, let suspension of judgement be our practice' (DL IX 84).

## 8.7 Living by Appearances and the Intuitions

Sextus proposes philosophy as a way of living by appearances and without belief. When the Sceptic suspends judgment, he lives and acts in accordance with how things appear to him and in doing so he neither implicitly nor explicitly makes any assertion about the reality or the truth of things. *Epochē* becomes the transformative feeling of freedom which Sextus intends for the Sceptics in that they will no longer be saying this is how things really are but will instead commit only to the way something seems to be:

By way of preface let us say that on none of the matters to be discussed do we affirm that things certainly are just as we say they are: rather, we report descriptively on each item according to how it appears to us at the time (PH I 4).

Sextus says that freedom from anxiety follows when the Sceptic neither affirms nor denies that anything is true or asserts the reality of anything. Thus absolved from opining

on the truth or falsity of anything, the Sceptic's life is transformed from one of anxiety to a state of calm. Sextus writes in the *Outlines*:

It is enough, I think, to live by experience and without opinions, in accordance with the common observations and preconceptions, and to suspend judgement about what is said with dogmatic superfluity and far beyond the needs of ordinary life (PH II 246).

Here Sextus, I suggest, emphasizes the Sceptic's positive commitment to the practical side of his philosophy over the practice of philosophy as the academic pursuit of dogmatic theories. Sceptics achieve freedom from mental distress because they only talk in terms of 'what is apparent to themselves and report their own feelings without holding opinions, affirming nothing about external objects' (PH I 15). Sextus' account teaches that living in accordance with appearances instils a mental attitude which is wholly directed towards tranquillity as a way of life. To say how things appear is to talk about how things impress themselves upon us. The significance that Sextus ascribes to appearance lies in the contrast he makes between how things appear or seem with how they really are (Annas and Barnes 1985: 23). The distinction allows Sextus to say of the Sceptics' life that living in this way it is not possible for his impressions to be the subject of investigation (PH I 22). Burnyeat describes the practical implications and the positive benefits, for the Sceptic, of this way of life:

The Sceptic 'reports' that this is how it appears to him; it is a report and not a claim or an assertion: as such his report of how things seem is not susceptible to challenge and he cannot properly be required to give reason, evidence or proof for it. It is only when he ventures a claim about how something really is that he can be asked for the appropriate justification. It follows that the Sceptic who adheres strictly to appearances is withdrawing to the safety of a position not open to challenge or enquiry (Burnyeat 1998: 41).

The impossibility of challenging a position of this kind facilitates the Sceptic's attainment of *ataraxia* because he does not have to justify his position in terms of good or bad, right or wrong. For even in saying that this is how things appear to him the Sceptic 'does not claim knowledge or certainty about how things appear to him' (Burnyeat 1998: 41). This after all, writes Sextus, is the 'conceit and rashness' of which he seeks to cure the

## Chapter 8

Dogmatist (PH III 280). The Sceptic does not have any beliefs about how things appear to him, his assent is simply the acknowledgement of what is happening to him (Burnyeat 1998: 43).

Sextus in the *Outlines* describes guidance which is supposed to aid the Sceptic in living a life, in accordance with ‘what is apparent’ – one which allows the Sceptic ‘to report his own feelings without holding opinions’ (PH I 15). In doing so the Sceptic adverts to no external forces or principles but only to ‘natural inclinations and to the thrusts and constraints of their emotions’ (Montaigne 2003: 563). Sextus writes in the *Outlines*:

Thus, attending to what is apparent, we live in accordance with every day observances, without holding opinions...These everyday observances seem to be fourfold, and to consist in guidance by nature, necessitation by feelings, handing down of laws and customs, and teaching of kinds of expertise (PH I 23).

The Sceptic is naturally guided by the human ability for perception and thought; when he is hungry he will naturally be driven towards food and when thirsty towards drink; his intuitions guide him towards the laws and customs of his community and he engages in the arts or the professions so as to keep himself active. In everyday life the Sceptic will be guided by ‘passive and unwilling feelings’ (PH I 22) free from beliefs and opinions. Julia Annas (1986: 19) suggests that we might more appropriately recognize the Sceptic’s appearances as motivated by ‘intuitions’ which are the result of the laws and customs he was brought up in. The Sceptic’s motivations will, I suggest, be in part the result of natural instincts to which laws and customs have contributed.

Sextus, as we have seen, portrays the lives of the Epicureans and the Stoics as an object lesson in the dangers of a philosophy motivated by the search for truth, that is to say, a dogmatic philosophy. Sceptic philosophy in encouraging a life of appearance in accordance with the agent’s feelings and instincts contrasts with Dogmatist philosophy as one in which instincts and emotions have, arguably, no part to play in moral judgments. Instead the Dogmatist, as Sextus wants to say, holds on to beliefs about right and wrong, true and false – beliefs which the Sceptic experiences as detrimental to his mental well-being. What is troubling for Sextus is not the notion of a criterion of truth but, as discussed above, the fact that the criterion differs from one school to the next – differences which, as commented on above, are likely to contribute to anxiety. Thus

Sextus, I suggest, advances the kind of lifestyle in which thoughts and actions are motivated by natural feelings and intuitions (PH I 22, 15) rather than evaluative judgements. Martha Nussbaum (1991: 523) suggests that the Sceptic might see the Epicurean or Stoic as living a life which is 'set against nature in that it is a lifestyle which is committed to a system of definite beliefs.' The Sceptic, on the other hand, 'feels the impulsions of his senses and the promptings of his spirit' (Montaigne 2003: 564) but the making of judgments is not something that arises naturally within him. The feelings prompted by the Dogmatist's natural instincts and the sort of life that requires him to make a judgment about what is right or wrong, true or false renders him, as we saw above, vulnerable to distress in the event that he has reason to deliberate on the rightness of his actions. The Dogmatists' ethical conduct will reflect what they believe to be true – something which they take to represent reality but as Nussbaum perspicuously comments:

if something happens that is not right according to their view or their particular moral standpoint they will be deeply disturbed because it is for most people important to know that they are right about how things are or to believe in the truth of how things are (Nussbaum 1991: 523).

However Sextus' Ten Modes offer comfort that Sceptics need no longer worry about being right because the Modes offer persuasive authority of the fallibility of belief and reassurance to the Sceptic of their inability to say anything about how things are in reality. Peace of mind relies on going along with feelings, instincts, intuitions and living in accordance with how things appear. The Sceptic finds he is tranquil because his appearances are not truth apt; he no longer has to make judgements about whether anything is good or bad. Where morals are concerned, Sextus perceives all value judgements as antithetical to mental well-being and that to believe that anything is good or bad by nature leads to anxiety and mental distress. Sextus writes in the *Outlines*:

The Sceptics, then seeing such anomaly in objects, suspend judgement as to whether anything is by nature good or bad, or generally to be done, here too refraining from dogmatic rashness; they follow the observances of everyday life without holding opinions... Those who hypothesize that something is good or bad or generally to be done or not done are troubled in a variety of ways [...] Hence we deduce that, if what produces bad is bad and to be avoided, and if confidence

that these things are by nature good and those bad produces troubles, then to hypothesize and be convinced that anything is bad or good in its nature is a bad thing and to be avoided (PH 111 235, 237-8).

The Dogmatists' belief that things are good or bad by nature causes them intensely to pursue the former and intensely to avoid the latter. A life where it matters that certain things are deemed right and certain things are wrong has, according to Sextus, the potential to go awry:

For those who hold the opinion that things are good or bad by nature are perpetually troubled. When they lack what they believe to be good, they take themselves to be persecuted by natural evils and they pursue what (so they think) is good. And when they have acquired these things, they experience more troubles; for they are elated beyond reason and measure, and in fear of change they do anything so as not to lose what they believe to be good (PH I 27).

The person who believes wealth is good and poverty is bad will be disturbed by not having wealth and will worry over acquiring it. Moreover when he acquires wealth he is concerned with retaining it and worries about losing it. Sextus writes in *Against the Ethicists*:

But the person who ranks wealth neither among the things by nature good nor among the things by nature bad, but utters the expression 'not more'<sup>26</sup>, is neither disturbed at the absence of this nor elated at its presence, but in either case remains undisturbed (M XI 147).

Dogmatists, according to Sextus, have convictions about what is good or bad; they believe, for example, that poverty is an evil: if they are poor, they are likely to suffer mental distress in contrast to the Sceptic who entertains no such belief. The Dogmatist will suffer mental distress either because he does not have what he desires or because he has to strive to obtain what he desires. And even if he does obtain all he desires and is no longer poor, he will be anxious about losing what he has (Brochard 1887: 334-5). Even the Stoic's claim that the life of virtue, rather than wealth is what brings contentment and

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<sup>26</sup> Sextus writes in the *Outlines*: 'when we say "No more" we implicitly say "No more this than that"' (PH I 189). The Sceptic means to indicate that it is no more likely that this is true than that is true.

satisfaction Sextus sees as merely replacing one disease with another (M XI 135) because it turns on the intense pursuit of the one as good and the intense avoidance of the other as bad.

## 8.8 The Sceptic Rejection of *Eudaimonia* as the Goal of Life

Ancient philosophy retains the notion of *eudaimonia* as the answer to the Socratic question: How ought I to live my life? *Eudaimonia* is often loosely translated as ‘happiness’ but in ancient ethical philosophy *eudaimonia* is better understood as a broader notion – as something which is more than a subjective feeling of happiness although it does not necessarily exclude this state. We may distinguish *eudaimonia* from subjective feelings of transient happiness because *eudaimonia* is not a feeling or emotion; it is about one’s life as a whole. *Eudaimonia* is thought of as ‘being the final overarching aim’ (Annas 1993: 44) of one’s life and is associated, broadly speaking, with the notion of a life that is going well – a life that is flourishing and a life of health and well-being. Ancient ethical theories share the thought that all human beings aim for some form of *eudaimonia* as our final end (*telos*) and that all action is directed towards this *telos*. Here I argue that the Sceptical project is an attack on the principle of *eudaimonia* and an attack on the *eudaimonist* theses of the Dogmatists. I show that the suggestion in Sextus’ writings is that the *eudaimonist* theses of the Stoics and the Epicureans are not conducive to tranquillity. I also show that *eudaimonia* is not synonymous with tranquillity (*ataraxia*).

The Dogmatist schools of the Stoics and the Epicureans both posit *eudaimonia* as the ultimate goal of human life. They agree that *eudaimonia* is what human beings most want in life but they differ in their interpretations of what constitutes *eudaimonia*. The Stoics interpret *eudaimonia* to mean a life of virtue whereas the Epicureans interpret it to mean a life of pleasure. Each school acknowledges the relevance of tranquillity as contributing towards a *eudaimonist* state but tranquillity is not the goal of either school. Epicurus maintains that *eudaimonia* is pleasure (the absence of pain); he introduces the notion of tranquillity as part of a *eudaimonist* theory. Thus the Epicureans see tranquillity as constitutive of *eudaimonia* but not *eudaimonia* itself (Striker 1990: 99). Likewise for the Stoics, the notion of tranquillity is also relevant in Stoic *eudaimonist* theory. Gisela Striker (1990: 99) writes ‘Stoic arguments about the goal of life lead to the conclusion that it is a life in agreement with nature, or a life of virtue – but they believe that such a life

## Chapter 8

necessarily brings with it the inner state of tranquillity' – and this for the Stoics was their notion of *eudaimonia*. But *eudaimonia* as the Sceptic's goal of life is, I suggest, not the account which Sextus seeks to describe.

The Sceptics see the Dogmatists as having a view of human happiness predicated on circumscribed ethical positions about truth and its relationship to the happy life. But the problem for Sextus is that:

The skill which is deemed to relate to life, and in virtue of which [the Dogmatists] suppose that one is happy, is not one skill but many discordant ones, such as the one according to Epicurus, and the one according to the Stoics... (M XI 173).

The Epicureans and the Stoics each have their own discrete account of the good: 'they each promise to impart a certain skill relating to life' (M XI 168) but they end up asserting contradictory and competing claims for how best to live. Sextus observing the contradictory nature of the Epicurean and Stoic claims writes:

Epicurus said that philosophy is an activity which procures the happy life by arguments and debates, while the Stoics say straight out that practical wisdom, which is the science of things which are good and bad and neither, is a skill relating to life... (M XI 169-170).

Sextus reports on the impossibility of saying which of these two competing claims is true: for the Epicurean and Stoic positions on *eudaimonia* can't both be true and moreover there is no way of determining which of these two conflicting positions is true.

Sextus, as we have seen, writes: 'The causal principle of scepticism is the hope of becoming tranquil' (PH I 12). He adopts the idea of a *telos* which is similar in form to that used by Hellenistic philosophers: 'Now an aim is that for the sake of which everything is done or considered, while it is not itself done or considered for the sake of anything else. Or: an aim is the final object of desire' (PH I 25). However, I argue that, instead of *eudaimonia* which the Stoics and the Epicureans take as their *telos*, Sextus takes the Sceptic's *telos* to be tranquillity (*ataraxia*):

It will be apposite to consider next the aim of the Sceptical persuasion... Up to now we say the aim of the Sceptic is tranquillity in matters of opinion and moderation of feeling in matters forced upon us. For Sceptics began to do

philosophy in order to decide among appearances and to apprehend which are true and which false, so as to become tranquil; but they came upon equipollent dispute, and being unable to decide this they suspended judgement. And when they suspended judgement, tranquillity in matters of opinion followed fortuitously (PH I 25-26).

However Sextus offers a somewhat elliptical notion of *eudaimonia* in *Against the Ethicists* (as discussed below) which might arguably suggest that happiness (*eudaimonia*) and *ataraxia* are synonymous. However the difficulty with this interpretation, as I intend to show, is that all mention of *eudaimonia* is omitted from the *Outlines*. I discuss below the implications of the difference between the two works.

Sextus (M XI 118) writes that 'it is not possible to live happily if one conceives certain things to be good or bad'. Burnyeat (1998: 29-30) suggests that *ataraxia* is 'the Sceptic spelling of happiness (*eudaimonia*) and that the claim that Sceptic *ataraxia* is *eudaimonia* is argued at length in M XI 110-167'. The suggestion that Sextus takes *ataraxia* to be synonymous with *eudaimonia* is made without further explication but I suggest that the claim is questionable. However, Burnyeat's claim is, I suggest, not entirely without foundation for Sextus writes in *Against the Ethicists*:

The Sceptics...teach that for those who suppose that there are good and bad by nature an unhappy life is in store, while for those who make no determination and suspend judgement 'Is the easiest human life' (M XI 111).

And the reason for this, as Sextus explains, is that believing that things are by nature good or bad causes the agent to pursue things obsessively or conversely avoid them obsessively and it is the intensity of these feelings that causes mental disturbance in the agent. Thus one might interpret Sextus as saying that a person can only be happy (in a *eudaimonist* sense) if he is free from disturbance and that he can only be free from disturbance, that is tranquil, through coming to understand that nothing is by nature good or bad (Bett 1997: 138). However the argument, in *Against the Ethicists*, identifying *eudaimonia* with freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*) is not repeated in the *Outlines* and Sextus omits all mention of *eudaimonia* from that work.

But why would Sextus exclude mention of *eudaimonia* from the *Outlines*? Bett and Striker offer views which arguably indicate that Sextus' omission is not accidental. Bett

(1997:145) suggests that the chronology of the two works is relevant and he supports Striker's (1990: 104) claim that the *Outlines* is the later work. Bett suggests that the circumstantial evidence for this is weighty and that if that is the case then one can interpret Sextus' omission of *eudaimonia* from the *Outlines* as correcting an error. Bett opines that one reason for this omission is that '*eudaimonia* is a contentious philosophical notion not always connected with *ataraxia*'. Bett also suggests that Sextus, by the time he came to write the *Outlines*, might have decided that a notion of *eudaimonia* was not wholly consistent with Sceptical teaching (Bett 1997: 144-145). Striker's exposition is, I suggest, consistent with Bett's: 'How could [the Sceptics] have claimed that happiness is the same as tranquillity or that Pyrrhonism is the best way to reach it? The answer is that they did not really maintain this, in the sense of producing arguments for a thesis – they merely implied it' (Striker 1990: 102). Striker (1990: 106) suggests that Sceptic *ataraxia* is significantly different from the notions of *eudaimonia* which Epicurean and Stoic philosophies advance. Striker suggests that:

the state of tranquillity achieved by the Sceptic will lack one important element that was included in both the Epicurean and the Stoic conceptions [of *eudaimonia*] namely contentment or satisfaction, the thought that one has or can easily get all the goods one might need (Striker 1990: 106).

Annas also expresses a similar thought when she articulates a notion of *eudaimonia* as a satisfaction with and positive attitude towards one's life – an attitude which tends to be associated, almost in an unreflecting way, with wealth, honour and in general the results of success (Annas 1993: 46).

Annas and Striker's comments articulate, I suggest, an attitude to life that is missing from the Sceptic's conception of *ataraxia* and which I suggest necessarily excludes *eudaimonia*. The Sceptic sees as undesirable those things which the Dogmatist views as a life of contentment and satisfaction. The absence from the Sceptics' life of such things as wealth, honour and success - things that contribute to a life of flourishing is what for the Sceptic confers freedom from anxiety and mental distress. It is also, I suggest, a reason that the philosophy of the Sceptics cannot be construed as *eudaimonistic*.

Richard Bett (2005: 67) suggests 'when Sextus, in the *Outlines* (PH I 25-30), speaks of the Sceptic's *telos* he carefully avoids speaking of it as something that all of us should, or

naturally, aim towards and that by the same token, Sextus, at least when he is being careful, avoids the term *eudaimonia* altogether'. Sextus, I suggest, rejects the *eudaimonia* of the Dogmatists as being the ultimate goal of human life because Dogmatist principles presuppose an ethical theory of happiness that is held out as suitable for all. In suspending judgement, the Sceptics make no dogmatic assertions about *eudaimonia* and in fact oppose all forms of theory (PH I 16). What it means for the Sceptic to be happy is not, for Sextus, I suggest, a matter of theoretical and universal application but can only be dependent on the individual's personal circumstances, nature and character. Sextus (PH III 172) comments that some say that the good is what contributes to happiness and that when we question whether anything is by nature good, we are asking about the kind of things that go towards happiness. But Sextus suggests that there is no one criterion for happiness because: 'none of the so-called good things affects everyone as good...Nothing, therefore, is by nature good' (PH III 179). Sextus suggests that ideas of the good and what contributes towards happiness will vary from person to person. For some it will be 'bodily well-being' for others it will be 'sex' for some it will be 'over-eating' for others 'drunkenness' or even 'gambling' (PH III 179-180).

Burnyeat (1998: 37) in commenting that, 'perfect *ataraxia* is unattainable for a human being, physical creature that he is, and the Sceptic settles for *metriopatheia*', leads us to surmise that there might be a further reason for Sextus' excision of *eudaimonia* from the Sceptic lexicon. Sextus writes:

What help towards happiness, then, say the Dogmatists, do you [the Sceptic] derive from suspension of judgement, if you are bound to be disturbed in any case, and to be unhappy through being disturbed? (M XI 150).

The question is in response to Sextus' need to concede that: 'in the person who is troubled on account of hunger or thirst, it is not possible through the Sceptic's method of reasoning to engender an assurance that he is not troubled' (M XI 149). This, I suggest, is a factor which would compel Sextus' omission of *eudaimonia* from the *Outlines*. The question which the Dogmatist raises calls into doubt the Sceptics' claim for *eudaimonia*. Sextus allows that *epochē* cannot confer complete freedom from mental disturbance:

We do not, however, take Sceptics to be undisturbed in every way – we say that they are disturbed by things which are forced upon them; for we agree that at times they shiver and are thirsty and have other feelings of this kind (PH I 29).

Thus the claim Sextus makes for a happy life is compromised because the Sceptic will never be totally free from disturbance and thus can never be totally happy. As Striker (1990:104) rightly, I suggest, comments: 'Sextus considerably weakens his sanguine conclusions about the Sceptic's happiness' if he has to concede that there are some disturbances which the Sceptic cannot escape. In acknowledging that the Sceptic will be disturbed by such feelings as hunger, thirst and bodily pain, Sextus' replies that the Sceptic will not be free from disturbance but nevertheless he will be far less distressed than the Dogmatist who does not suspend judgement:

But in these cases ordinary people are afflicted by two sets of circumstances: by the feelings themselves, and no less by believing that these circumstances are bad by nature. Sceptics, who shed the additional opinion that each of these things is bad in its nature, come off more moderately even in these cases (PH I 30).

It is not, I suggest, unreasonable to accept this point: Sextus reasons that the Sceptic suffering from cancer will be in pain but he does not judge whether his illness is good or bad and in this way he bears his illness with a greater degree of equanimity than the Dogmatist. One cannot suspend judgement on whether one is hungry or not but Sextus' point is that one can, nevertheless, try to accept the feeling without attributing notions of good or bad to it.

*Ataraxia* and not *eudaimonia* is, I conclude, the Sceptic's goal or *telos*. I agree with Bett and Striker that Sextus' discussion of *eudaimonia* in *Against the Ethicists* is a position which Sextus comes to realise is not tenable. Sextus, I suggest, comes to see its inconsistency with the sceptical and anti-theoretical position of the Pyrrhonians. Moreover, he is forced to admit that the Sceptic will never be completely happy. Striker (1990: 104) suggests that Sextus might have realised the anomaly in the claim he makes in M XI 141 that 'the person is happy who conducts himself without disturbance'. If one accepts the *Outlines* as later than the *Mathematicians* then we might take Sextus' omission of happiness from the *Outlines* as an attempt to correct this anomaly. According to Striker (1990: 104), 'the Sceptic's grandiose promise for a happy life (*eudaimonia*), set

out at considerable length in M XI 110-161, is reduced to a mere half a page in PH III 235-238, where the word *eudaimonia*, happiness, does not even occur'.

## 8.9 Pyrrhonian scepticism: A Medical Background

The medical background of Sextus and the later Sceptics does, I suggest, explain to a large extent their approach to philosophy as a way of life – an approach which aims towards mental well-being. The interest of the Pyrrhonian sceptics with health was part of a medical tradition associated with the Ancient Greek Empirical School of Medicine with which the Sceptics had strong ties. The Empirical School relied exclusively on their own perceptual experience, as well as that of others, for diagnosis, prognosis and therapy. The Empirical School traces its origins back to the third century doctor Herophilus who believed that theory and reasoning should play no part in medical science and that the 'art of medicine' should rest on experience and observation alone. The same approach to philosophy is, I suggest, to be found in the practice of later Sceptics such as Sextus. Annas and Barnes comment that:

scepticism was not merely a hobby with these doctors: it had profound effect upon their medical thought and practice: they managed to combine philosophical scepticism with medical activity (Annas and Barnes 1985:16).

Medical Empiricists focused on an empirically driven practice over theory, inference and the use of reason (Annas and Barnes 2000: xii). This point, as we shall see, has relevance for the philosophical practice of the Sceptics and their concern with psychological well-being. The fusion of philosophical scepticism and empirical medicine was, according to Brochard, first realised under two physicians from the Empirical Medical School, one of whom was Menodotus of Nicomedie who lived in the second century AD. Brochard tells us that Menodotus, a leading doctor of the Empirical School of Medicine is the first Sceptic doctor to have come up with principles of empirical medicine as well as philosophical writings of a sceptical nature. We learn that although Sextus barely mentions Menodotus in his writings, Brochard suggests that Sextus owes much of his thinking to Menodotus (Brochard 1887: 311-325). We also know from Sextus himself, says Brochard, that Sextus was a doctor and the author of at least one and possibly two books on medicine. The surname, Empiricus by which Sextus was

designated by Diogenes, also suggests that Sextus was a doctor of the Empirical School of Medicine (Brochard 1887:316). Nussbaum(1991:521) comments that 'a close study of the use of the medical analogy in a [philosophical] school can show us a great deal about how it sees itself, how it understands the relationship between its characteristic techniques of argument and the goal of human happiness.' Nussbaum's point is, I suggest, that Sextus' writings show him turning away from abstract theoretical reasoning and that this can be traced back to his medical background. The Sceptics combined medical techniques of empiricism with a philosophical practice of observation and experience to create a distinctive form of philosophy which offered guidance for living a tranquil life free from mental distress.

### **8.10 The Sceptic as Physician: Dogmatism as a Disease**

The Sceptic's approach towards philosophical practice was that of the doctor who diagnoses a disease (that of belief) and prescribes a cure for that disease. Sextus' writings suggest that he associates dogmatism with a kind of disease which scepticism hopes to cure by dislodging belief. Sextus gives shape to the therapeutic aspect of Sceptic philosophy: medicine and philosophy come together when Sextus tells us that 'Sceptics are philanthropic and wish to cure by argument, as far as they can, the conceit and rashness of the Dogmatists' (PH III 280). The Sceptic employs the dialectical skills of philosophy not with the aim of distinguishing truth from falsity. Rather, dialectism is a tool in the setting up of opposing arguments – a process that allows the Sceptic to see the contradictions in his arguments and the means by which equipollence and *epochē* ensue. The objective, for the Sceptic, of dialecticism is to encourage doubt concerning values we have felt compelled in everyday life to accept as objective truths. Dogmatic belief is the disease and for the Sceptic the aim of argument is the therapeutic dislodging of belief. PH III 280, referred to above, adumbrates, further, the philanthropic and therapeutic objectives which dictate the form and substance of Pyrrhonian scepticism as seen in the following passage:

Just as doctors for bodily afflictions have remedies which differ in potency, and apply severe remedies to patients who are severely afflicted and milder remedies to those mildly affected, so Sceptics propound arguments which differ in strength – they employ weighty arguments, capable of vigorously rebutting the dogmatic

affliction of conceit, against those who are distressed by a severe rashness, and they employ milder arguments against those who are afflicted by a conceit which is superficial and easily cured and which can be rebutted by a milder degree of plausibility (PH III 280-1).

Here, Sextus describes how the Sceptic practices philosophy in a way that is analogous to that of the physician curing a disease: in curing ‘afflictions’ Sceptics will apply the degree of medication that is appropriate for the ‘disease’. Sceptics see themselves as applying skills which are comparable to those which a medical doctor might use in curing a patient of disease. Annas, Barnes and Nussbaum comment on the influence of medicine on Sceptic philosophy. Annas (1993: 246) opines that ‘the Sceptic has a therapeutic aim: most people are suffering from the disease of dogmatism, and the Sceptic is their doctor’. Jonathan Barnes (1998: 62) in referring to the dogmatic beliefs of philosophy and science describes Pyrrhonism as ‘a therapy, a cure for the mental illnesses induced by scientists, philosophers, and other learned charlatans’. And Martha Nussbaum (1991:527) writes that for the Sceptic, ‘the central human disease is a disease of belief’. Nussbaum observes that the Dogmatists ‘teach the pupil that human health requires having many *definite* (my emphasis) beliefs, including ethical beliefs’. But ‘the Dogmatists are’, says Nussbaum (1991: 523), ‘wrong to feel that the solution lies in doing away with some beliefs and clinging all the more firmly to others’. Philosophical theorizing, as Sextus attempts to show, fails to adduce compelling arguments as to why one set of beliefs should be more valid than the other and thus as Nussbaum (1991: 523) comments, ‘the disease is not one of false belief but belief itself is the illness’. Sextus does not say that the Dogmatists are wrong because that in itself would be dogmatic but he suggests that there is no reason to feel compelled to accept one belief as being objectively true as against another. There are other ways to live which are more conducive to peace of mind.

The Sceptic’s use of the medical analogy of purgation is pertinent to the way in which they see their practice as therapy; the methodology of investigation and argument which Sceptics employ is intended to operate as a catharsis. For the Sceptic’s aim is that of dislodging ‘deeply entrenched habits of believing and valuing’ (Nussbaum 1991: 525) by means of purgative arguments. The belief in truth needs to be dislodged and thus the Sceptic method of argument and enquiry and the setting up of opposing arguments leading to equipollence have instrumental value in achieving this effect. The Sceptics

through the creating of equipollent arguments are able to show that we have no means for distinguishing truth from falsity and that it is specious to speak of what is real.

Nussbaum (1986: 42-46) writes that 'all argument is therapy and that purgation and drugging are not ancillary to philosophy, they are what, given its practical aim, philosophy must become'. Investigative inquiry and equipollence leading to *epochē* are, to use a further medical analogy, 'the medical instruments which the Sceptic sees as having the requisite curative powers' (Nussbaum 1991: 521-22). Alan Bailey offers what I suggest is an accurate overview of the purport of Pyrrhonian scepticism:

The mature Sceptic thinks of his arguments as having a purely therapeutic function. He does not hold that his arguments have any rational force: instead he regards them as instruments for bringing about *epochē*. The beliefs he formerly held about non-evident matters have been expunged as a result of being exposed to various arguments that have undermined his trust in the rationality of his former beliefs. The Sceptic has no inclination to believe that a given argument has true premises and a valid inferential structure (Bailey 2002: 264).

The Sceptic, Brochard (1887:331) comments, needs to justify a philosophy that is ostensibly negative and destructive by turning it into something positive. The positive aspect of Sceptic philosophy is, as commentators have rightly suggested, the therapeutic one. Sextus' account suggests that traditional philosophical practice and beliefs are harmful and Sceptics with their tradition of philosopher physicians are mindful that their principal duty is to heal the sick of the disease of belief. However, the Sceptic's argument that the life without belief confers freedom from anxiety raises issues which I suggest are likely to impact on the claims they make for psychological well-being. These I discuss below.

### **8.11 Issues Regarding a 'Life without Belief'**

The life of appearance that Sextus proposes is, as discussed above, ostensibly a life without belief. But what are the implications of such a life? Firstly, does the Sceptic in fact have any beliefs? Secondly, does the life without belief lead to inactivity (*apraxia*)? Thirdly, does the Sceptic's lifestyle confer tranquillity (*ataraxia*), as Sextus reports? Fourthly, does the life without belief lead to immorality?

*Does the Sceptic have beliefs?*

Hankinson (1995: 273) suggests that the claim that the Sceptic has no beliefs has usually been taken at face value and this is the view that I have presented in this chapter.

However Michael Frede offers a dissenting view and argues that the Sceptic does hold certain beliefs: Frede suggests that this interpretation is consistent with Sextus' comment that the Sceptic assents to nothing that is non-evident (PH I 13). Frede (1998: 8-9) interprets Sextus as describing two ways in which the Sceptic holds belief. He suggests that Sextus distinguishes between a wider and a narrower sense of belief and that only beliefs in the narrower sense count as dogmatic and are those on which the Sceptic suspends judgement. Frede takes this 'narrower sense' to encompass theoretical claims, that is, beliefs held on philosophical or scientific grounds. In the wider sense of belief Frede argues that the Sceptic can have beliefs about ordinary day to day matters and further that there is no reason why the Sceptic should not 'have beliefs about how things appear to him' (1988:8-9). There is, I suggest, something eminently plausible about Frede's thesis. It is, I suggest, an argument which is ostensibly more attractive to those who might consider the life without belief to be implausible. On Frede's account, one might imagine suspending judgement on theoretical claims about 'how things really are' (Frede 1998: 15) without sacrificing one's beliefs about how things seem to us. However, Burnyeat, contra Frede, argues that Sextan texts are more supportive of the view that the Sceptic suspends judgement on all matters of belief and I suggest that Burnyeat is right. I have argued that for the Sceptic 'belief' is the disease that must be dislodged and Sceptic practice and its singular methodology of argument and inquiry is, importantly, directed towards this aim. Apart from 'the feelings forced upon them by appearances' (PH I 13), it does not, I suggest, make sense that the Sceptic would hang on to a certain class of beliefs, if belief is the disease that the Sceptic seeks to dislodge in order to attain *ataraxia*. We might see Frede's argument as more consistent with being able to carry out ordinary day to day activities but Sextus reports that the Sceptic, in suspending judgment and following appearances, is perfectly capable of doing just that. Further, Sextus writes: 'When we say that Sceptics do not hold beliefs we do not take "belief" in the sense in which some say, quite generally, that belief is acquiescing in something' (PH I 13). The

person without belief, as Sextus suggests, follows and assents to his appearances without committing themselves to a belief in those appearances. Sextus writes:

[W]e do not overturn anything which leads us, without our willing it, to assent in accord with a passive appearance – and these things are precisely what is apparent. When we investigate whether existing things are such as they appear, we grant that they appear, and what we investigate is not what is apparent but what is said about what is apparent - and this is different from investigating what is apparent itself (PH I 19).

The Sceptic assents to his appearances but this assent is simply the passive unwilling state of acknowledging that something is happening to him (Burnyeat 1998:43). The Sceptic does not deny that things appear to him as they do but he does suspend judgement as to the reality of things as they appear to him. Sextus reports that we can say of honey that it appears to be sweet and we do not deny that this is how it appears. Hence belief, as Sextus suggests, is not necessary to be able to say how things appear to us. However the Sceptic suspends judgement on whether honey is in reality sweet (PH I 19). Thus Frede's argument, I suggest, has utility only if we fail to realise that the Sceptic suspends judgement on claims about reality but not on things as they strike him.

*Does the life without belief lead to inactivity (apraxia)?*

David Hume's deeply negative and pessimistic view of Pyrrhonian scepticism is evident from the following passage:

[A] Pyrrhonian cannot expect that his philosophy will have any constant influence on the mind [...] On the contrary, he must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything, that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action would immediately cease; and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence (David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, XII, 128 in Burnyeat 1998:25).

Hume's attack on Pyrrhonian scepticism is intended to convey the outright implausibility of such a philosophy. Hume suggests that the effect of Pyrrhonian scepticism is to induce a practical paralysis which would make all human life impossible. Diogenes also reports a

similar objection made by dogmatic philosophers: 'that the Sceptics do away with life itself in that they reject all that life consists of' (DL IX 104). The objection that *epochē* induces inactivity (*apraxia*) or a zombie like state of existence is one which Sextus acknowledges as an objection to the Sceptic's way of life and which he attempts explicitly to address. Richard Bett (1997: 173) observes, and rightly so, that, 'in order for it to be true that the Sceptics enjoy the benefits of mental health that Sextus describes they must not be vulnerable to *apraxia* objections'. Sextus, in *Against the Ethicists*, acknowledges the force of the *apraxia* argument: 'since the whole of life is bound up with choices and avoidances, the person who neither chooses nor avoids anything in effect renounces life and stays fixed like some vegetable' (M XI 163) but he does not concede that *apraxia* is a valid objection to Sceptic practice. Sextus comments that the Sceptic who lives life in accordance with appearances and without commitment to any sort of belief or opinion is nevertheless incapable of being 'utterly inactive' (PH 1 21-23). His response is that those who suspend judgement on values do still 'live acceptably' (M XI 168). *Epochē* does not, as Hume suggests, amount to practical paralysis and it does not inhibit the Sceptic from action. Hume's remarks, I suggest, ostensibly conflate suspension of judgement with suspension of activity and Sextus' point is that they are not the same. Hume, I suggest, misrepresents the Sceptics' position as one of inactivity but *epochē* differs in a significant respect from the position of one 'who stays fixed like some vegetable' (M XI 163). Sextus' point is that Sceptics rely on how things appear to motivate them to action either one way or the other (M XI 166): the Sceptic assents to how things appear 'without admitting that it really is what it appears to be' (DL IX 104). I reiterate here a point which I have made previously that in *epochē* the Sceptics' actions are no longer based on value judgements as to whether their appearances are good or bad right or wrong. Suspension of judgement (*epochē*) is, I suggest, not the 'vegetable' state that the Sceptics' detractors claim: on the contrary, suspending judgement on values is the basis on which the Sceptic's life is transformed from one of mental distress to one of tranquillity.

*Does the Sceptic's lifestyle confer tranquillity (ataraxia)?*

Burnyeat poses the question:

[W]hat then remains for a man who is converted by the Sceptics' arguments to a life without belief, where this means, as always, without belief as to real

existence? This is the question we need to ask, if we want to probe the secret of Sceptic tranquillity (Burnyeat 1998: 37).

Annas and Barnes suggest that the life without belief is not without its problems. They do however suggest that suspension of judgement can imbue the Sceptic with 'an inner detachment of a striking kind'. Suspension of judgement offers a tranquil state of mind whereby the agent no longer worries about what is good or bad, right or wrong but simply gets on with life according to how things strike them (Annas and Barnes 1985:169). Nussbaum (1991: 553) suggests that with the reorientation of his views on values, in allowing himself to have no beliefs on just those sort of matters, the Sceptic is freed from those emotions 'that fuel anger, fear, jealousy, grief and envy'.

But despite their finding of a possible inner detachment, Annas and Barnes (1985: 167) question the plausibility of Sextus' account that tranquillity is the state which naturally follows from suspension of judgement (*epochē*). There are, they suggest, many examples in everyday life that one could produce to show that suspending judgement is more likely to lead to anxiety about ignorance rather than imbue tranquillity. Annas and Barnes suggest that if a person suspends judgement on whether something is good or bad, they are more likely to be weighed down by the burden of their ignorance and that this worry is more likely to cause anxiety rather than invoke tranquillity. However their argument is, I suggest, not entirely tenable; it is questionable that suspension does in fact lead to anxiety about one's state of ignorance. What Annas and Barnes describe as ignorance will, I suggest, be countermaned by a feeling of tranquillity because that is the emotion that suspension is intended to invoke. Sceptics will through exhaustive arguments have persuaded themselves that no one opinion is more convincing in terms of its truth than another and thus the position which they arrives at is, I suggest, one of tranquillity about the state of ignorance suggested by Annas and Barnes. If there is ignorance, it is of the sort that is aware of what it doesn't know and is at peace with that state of affairs.

Montaigne (2003: 560) comments, rightly I suggest that: 'the professed aim of Pyrrhonians is to shake all convictions, to hold nothing as certain, to vouch for nothing'. When the agent suspends judgement, ignorance is not, I suggest, the negative emotion for which Annas and Barnes argue. If the individual continues to worry, arguably, it is because they have not yet reached a state of *epochē*. Rather, suspension confers peace of mind because the Sceptic's process of inquiry will be one from which doubt emerges as

a positive emotion. From this the Sceptic develops awareness that nothing is certain, and that he need no longer worry about what he doesn't know.

*Does the life without belief lead to acts of immorality?*

The model of ethics proposed by Sextus, based as it is on the agent's suspension of judgment on values does, I suggest, invite objections of immorality. Suspension of judgement (*epochē*) might suggest that the Sceptic lives a life which is devoid of all moral/ethical standards. Annas and Barnes (1985: 169), as discussed above, commented on the Sceptic's 'striking inner detachment'; it is, I suggest, this element of detachment that confers the benefits of mental well-being but which at the same time is problematic. When Sceptics suspend judgement on values, they detach themselves from all moral/ethical obligation and it is this detachment which confers tranquillity. Berry, however and rightly, I suggest, sees this detachment as problematic: 'the radically detached attitude of the Sceptic towards morality must lead us to conclude that the Sceptic has no commitment towards any kind of moral code' (Berry 2011: 178). However, despite Berry's comments, Sextus' writings do, I suggest, give a nod to some notion of 'ethics'. Sextus indicates that although the Sceptic suspends judgement on values he subscribes to some form of ethics which he sees as guiding the Sceptic's life. Part III of the *Outlines* offers an account of 'the ethical part of philosophy' (PH III 168) and in book XI of *Against the Ethicists* Sextus also deals extensively with ethics.

But what does ethical life mean for Sextus? Sextus supposes that the commonly held view is that 'ethical enquiry is about the differentiation of good things and bad things' (M XI 2). He writes that the Sceptic makes no evaluative judgement on whether anything is good or bad by nature. However he refers to the ethical part of his philosophy as those matters which include 'customs', 'laws' 'lifestyle' or 'a way of acting practised by one person or by many' (PH I 145). Thus, to exemplify the point, the Sceptic will not be guided by the thought that it is *good* (my emphasis) to care for his own children or that it is bad not to do so, rather, Sextus writes: 'among us it is the custom to provide for our children' (PH I 154). The Sceptic, as discussed above, acts in accordance with internal subjective impressions; Sextus suggests that the Sceptic's laws and customs will have contributed to the way they think and act. Conformity to societal laws and customs does not arise from any belief that it is the right or good thing to do - the Sceptic lives by appearances and not beliefs. The Sceptic follows his community's laws and customs because it appears to him

instinctively to be the thing to do. He experiences 'passive and unwilling feelings' - intuitions which act on him in the same way as hunger compels him to eat (Annas 1986: 20).

Sextus, as commented on above, deals extensively with the ethical part of his philosophy in Part III of the *Outlines* (PH III 168-279). Here he denies that there is anything which is universally and unconditionally good or bad. And in writing that 'there is much anomaly about just and unjust things' (PH III 218) Sextus impugns the notion that there is anything just or unjust by nature. The 'ethics' to which Sextus draws attention are in no way intended to be prescriptive. The Modes as discussed earlier are patterns of arguments that Sextus employs for bringing about suspension of judgement; more specifically, Sextus presents the tenth of these Modes as 'especially bear[ing] on ethics' (PH I 145). Sextus account of ethics in the Tenth mode, as previously discussed, offers numerous examples in order to show why a prescriptive account of ethics is not tenable. The Modes, as previously discussed, repeatedly employ examples and counter-examples to make the point that beliefs cannot reliably be taken to represent reality. Sextus writes: 'We could have taken many other examples for each of these oppositions, but in a brief account this will suffice' (PH I 163). The point of the examples, as far as Sextus is concerned, is to emphasize that suspension of judgement on ethical matters is the only possible way to live; his various examples and counter-examples illustrate that there can be no one account of truth. Sextus writes in the *Outlines*:

Thus, since so much anomaly has been shown in objects by this mode too, we shall not be able to say what each existing object is like in its nature, but only how it appears relative to a given persuasion or law or custom and so on. Because of this mode too, therefore, it is necessary for us to suspend judgment on the nature of external existing objects. In this way, then, by means of the ten modes we end up with suspension of judgement (PH I 163).

Berry comments that in suspending judgement on values:

the Pyrronian sceptics stood apart, distanced themselves from every moral theory as they found it; they were a group of thinkers in the face of whose practice no moral theory could be left standing (Berry 2011: 177).

What I suggest we might take from Berry's comment is that Sextus' claim for Pyrrhonian scepticism as the means to freedom from anxiety and the attainment of peace of mind is compromised by a way of life in which moral obligation is irrelevant. Annas (1986: 19) comments that the Sceptic's lifestyle prompts the following attack from Aristocles<sup>27</sup>:

What evil thing would [the Sceptic] not dare to do seeing that he thinks nothing to be really bad or shameful, just or unjust? It can't be said that Sceptics can still be afraid of laws and penalties – how can they be when they claim to be so unaffected and unanxious (Aristocles ap. Eusebius, Praep. Ev. XIV 75<sup>8c</sup>-76<sup>3d</sup> in Annas 1986:19).

In response Sextus writes in *Against the Ethicists*:

Hence one also needs to look down on those who think that [the Sceptic] is reduced...to inconsistency because if he comes under the power of a tyrant and is compelled to do some unspeakable deed, either he will not endure what has been commanded, but will choose a voluntary death, or to avoid torture he will do what has been ordered, and thus no longer 'Will be empty of avoidance and choice'... but will choose one thing and shrink from the other, which is characteristic of those who have apprehended with confidence that there is something to be avoided and to be chosen (M XI 162-164).

Here Sextus addresses the position of the Sceptic compelled to carry out an act of atrocity but his response, if it is meant to address the question of immorality is at best equivocal. It is not, I suggest, a concern about immorality that Sextus wants to address here but the objection that the Sceptic under pressure to commit an unconscionable act will find himself forced to act inconsistently. In acting inconsistently the Sceptic, according to Sextus, foregoes his commitment to suspend judgement and acts in accordance with dogmatic beliefs. The problem that Sextus poses is that the Sceptic under the power of a tyrant may be forced to judge that one action is good and thus to be performed whilst the other is bad and thus to be avoided. Sextus somewhat elliptically seems to want to reassure the reader that the Sceptic will rightly do what is expected of him without falling into dogmatism. Sextus writes in *Against the Ethicists*:

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<sup>27</sup> Aristocles was a second century A.D. Peripatetic philosopher who wrote a history of philosophy of which there are extant and lengthy extracts quoted by Eusebius (Annas 1993: 458).

And if compelled by a tyrant to perform some forbidden act, [the Sceptic] will choose one thing, perhaps, and avoid the other by the preconception which accords with his ancestral laws and customs; and in fact he will bear the harsh situation more easily compared with the dogmatist, because he does not like the latter, have any further opinion over and above these conditions (M XI 166).

Thus in acting in accord with how things appear, there is no reason to believe that the Sceptic will (even if pressurized by a tyrant) do anything that would be inconsistent with conventional standards of good or bad conduct. Sextus' reference, to 'laws and customs' that have been handed down, ostensibly suggests that the Sceptic will somehow be psychologically constrained to act in a way that will inevitably conform to the norms and standards of his community. Sextus wants, I suggest, to convey the idea that what the Sceptic chooses or avoids will be the result of feelings and instincts which have been shaped by the custom and traditions of his upbringing. However even this assurance is qualified by the word 'perhaps' in M XI 166. So ultimately we must, I suggest, infer from the inclusion of 'perhaps' that Sextus has no intention of offering dogmatic guarantees that the Sceptic in following laws and customs will do what is 'morally or ethically right'. Nussbaum (1991: 554) rightly, I suggest, refers to Sextus' response as 'profoundly ambiguous'. There is, as discussed above, no moral or ethical imperative on the Sceptic to do what is good and thus Sextus, fails, I suggest, to allay the fears which Berry quite rightly raises that the Sceptic is 'some kind of moral monster – unreliable, unprincipled and unpredictable' (2011: 177). Sextus' response (M XI 162-167) is, I suggest, more concerned to show that inconsistency will never be a problem because the avoidance of dogmatism and the achievement of tranquillity is the Sceptic's principal objective. Thus we must, I suggest, infer that questions of immorality, although of some concern to the Sceptic will ultimately take second place to a philosophy whose objective is exclusively mental well-being.

## 8.12 Conclusion

I have argued that, for the Sceptic, the ultimate goal of life is *ataraxia* (tranquillity) and not *eudaimonia*. Sextus, I suggest, shows that the Epicureans' and the Stoics' differing interpretations of *eudaimonia* are antithetical to a state of tranquillity which can only be achieved through suspending judgement.

Sextus' writings show, I suggest, that mental distress can be traced back to the philosopher's exclusive commitment to the search for truth, their valorisation of the search for truth and the belief in a criterion of truth. The Sceptic's attack on dogmatism and their suspension of judgement on values (*epochē*) are, I suggest, consistent with their rejection of a way of doing philosophy which valorizes the search for objective truth. The Sceptic is not concerned with the formal principles of premises and conclusions: the fact that if you believe in 'truth' then one or other of two competing arguments must be the 'correct' answer. The Sceptic's inability to discern any reason for preferring a particular claim to its contradictory is what purges the Sceptic of belief (Bailey 2002:121).

Pyrrhonian scepticism is, as discussed above, infused with medical analogies which, I suggest, have had a strong influence in shaping their philosophy. The medical background of the later Sceptics and Sextus' profession as a physician explains, I suggest, the emphasis which Sceptics place on philosophy as a therapy for health. The therapeutic aspect of Pyrrhonian scepticism is, I suggest, evidenced by Sextus' treatment of argument as a purgative process - a clearing or cleansing out of the disease of dogmatic belief.

The Sceptics show, I suggest, that philosophy need not be exclusively defined by abstract theories of truth, reason and logic. But in saying this, reason and logic are, I suggest, not redundant philosophical skills in Sceptic practice: the Sceptic's expertise in setting up opposing arguments (*dunamis antithetikē*) suggests that theoretical reasoning is still relevant but the objective is a therapeutic one. Dogmatic belief is the disease that the Sceptics seek to cure and they employ a polemical style of argument to dislodge the sickness of belief. The Sceptic's investigative inquiry, Sextus' presentation of the Ten Modes, equipollence and *epochē*, all contribute towards a way of life which offers a cure for mental disturbance and for achieving peace of mind (*ataraxia*). The Sceptic acts in accordance with his feelings, intuitions and natural instincts rather than reacting to externally imposed values. The Sceptic finds he has no need to make judgements about good or bad, right or wrong; he has no opinion on whether things really are as they appear to him. Annas and Barnes suggest that *epochē* is more likely to lead to the anxiety it was meant to cure rather than tranquillity. But suspension is not something that is willed but is more in the nature of an affect; what Sextus describes is something that just happens and thus there would, I suggest be little scope for the kind of emotion (that of anxiety through ignorance) to emerge. We can, I suggest, discount Frede's argument that

## Chapter 8

the Sceptic does have certain kinds of beliefs; the life without belief is not the stumbling block (that of inactivity) that detractors of Scepticism might suggest. And as for the objection of immorality, Sextus' response would, regrettably, suggest a relaxed attitude towards the possibility of immorality: '[the Sceptic] will choose one thing, *perhaps*, (my emphasis) and avoid the other' (M XI 166). Sextus' use of 'perhaps', as discussed above, suggests that he offers no guarantee that the Sceptic will not act immorally. Psychological health and well-being must on Sextus' description of Sceptic practice be the only motivation for Sceptic practice. Thus suspending judgement on values cannot exclude the possibility of immoral acts.

# Chapter 9     Jessica Berry and a Review of Other Authors

## 9.1     Introduction

This chapter discusses the views of four authors who have undertaken comparative studies of the philosophies of Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics: Adi Parush, Katrina Mitcheson, Richard Bett and Jessica Berry. The main author I discuss here is Berry: the greater part of this chapter will be taken up with her comparative study on health which she largely addresses in chapter 5 of her seminal work, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition* (2011). I evaluate Berry's claim that Nietzsche's position on health has parallels with Pyrrhonian scepticism. I argue that Berry's view that there are similarities between Nietzsche's views of what constitutes health and Sceptic *ataraxia* is tendentious and that her arguments are not well supported by the texts. In chapter 10 I discuss, what I argue are more fruitful areas of comparison.

## 9.2     Other Authors: Parush, Mitcheson and Bett

### *Adi Parush (1976): Nietzsche on the Sceptic's Life*

Parush opines and rightly, I suggest, that Nietzsche's various references to scepticism merit comparison with Pyrrhonian scepticism. Parush suggests that a comparison of Nietzsche's scepticism with Pyrrhonian scepticism reveals they have the same objectives. Sextus explicitly describes Pyrrhonian scepticism as a philosophy for a way of life (PH I 23), one which transforms not only the individual's way of life but also his personality. Parush rightly, I suggest, draws attention to Nietzsche's scepticism as similar in approach. Nietzsche's scepticism is, according to Parush, not merely confined to abstract epistemological arguments but we can also interpret his sceptical project as a philosophy for a way of life [523]. Parush comments that Nietzsche's scepticism describes a certain type of individual to whom Nietzsche refers at length in BGE 209 and which I discussed in chapter 7 above. Here Nietzsche has in mind an ideal of excellence embodying the scepticism of a 'bold masculinity' and descriptive of those who have no need for religious faith or certainty (GS 347). Parush interprets Nietzsche's scepticism as descriptive of the agent with the boldness to break free from the standards of traditional morality and to 'live in accordance with the individual manner in which the world appears to him' [540].

## Chapter 9

Parush's account serves, I suggest, to highlight Nietzsche's scepticism as descriptive of an ideal of excellence - the masculine sceptic who embraces danger and 'lives like a dancer on the precipice' [535].

Parush [534-5] suggests that Nietzsche's sympathy with Pyrrho's attack on dogmatism is the reason that Nietzsche praises Pyrrho as the most 'original figure after the pre-Socratics' (WP 437). But having said that, Parush is more concerned with the disparaging comments from this same passage that Nietzsche makes about Pyrrho. Parush draws attention to Nietzsche's description of Pyrrho's lifestyle as 'common', 'lacking in pride', 'honouring and believing what all believe' and a life of 'ultimate indifference' (WP 437). But Parush overlooks Nietzsche's further comments which are not entirely dismissive of Pyrrho. Indeed if anything, Nietzsche's remarks suggest a more sympathetic approach towards Pyrrho's views which, I suggest, Nietzsche identifies with his own views.

Nietzsche writes:

Pyrrho more travelled, experienced, nihilistic – His life was a protest against the great doctrine of identity (happiness=virtue=knowledge). One cannot promote the right way of life through science: wisdom does not make "wise"<sup>28</sup> – The right way of life does not want happiness, turns away from happiness (WP 437).

Here Nietzsche, I suggest, offers a tentative appreciation for aspects of Pyrrho's philosophy with which Nietzsche is in agreement. More important than the few dismissive comments to which Parush draws attention are Nietzsche's identification of aspects of Pyrrhonian scepticism which are, I suggest, consistent with Nietzsche's own philosophy. As we have seen from earlier chapters Nietzsche is critical of science which he believes to be an 'impoverishment of life' (GM III 25) and also as discussed he is dismissive of all theories of happiness.

Parush's analysis of Nietzsche's view on Pyrrho and the passage in Nietzsche's *Notebooks* to which he helpfully draws our attention highlights further aspects of Nietzsche's reading of Brochard and helps us, I suggest, to understand Nietzsche's engagement with Pyrrhonian scepticism. Significantly, Nietzsche's comments on Pyrrho (WP 437 written

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<sup>28</sup> Sextus in the Outlines writes: 'We do not study natural science in order to make assertions with firm convictions about any of the matters on which scientific beliefs are held' (PH I 18).

March-June 1888) follow on almost immediately from his reading of Brochard's *Les Sceptiques Grecs* published in 1887. Nietzsche writes favourably of Brochard:

I have to go back half a year to catch myself with a book in my hand. What was it again? – An excellent study by Victor Brochard, *Les Sceptiques Grecs*, that puts my *Laertiana*<sup>29</sup> to good use as well. The Sceptics, were the only *respectable* types among the philosophical tribes (EH: 'Why I Am So Clever', 3).

Such details as the fact that Pyrrho lived with his sister who was a midwife (which Nietzsche details in WP437) can be found in Brochard's account (1987: 69). And Nietzsche's account of Pyrrho as 'original' (WP 437) would, I suggest, have been inspired by Brochard who writes: 'This extraordinary man inspires in all those who saw him a close unbounded admiration ... However we must be careful not to diminish the *originality* (my emphasis) of Pyrrho and to reduce him to the rank of a mere imitator of Oriental wisdom' (Brochard 1887: 71, 75).<sup>30</sup> These considerations will, I suggest, be relevant when discussing in chapter 10 the parallels to be drawn between Nietzsche and Pyrronian scepticism.

*Katrina Mitcheson (2017): Scepticism and self-transformation in Nietzsche – on the uses and disadvantages of a comparison to Pyrronian scepticism*

Mitcheson [64] disagrees with arguments that Berry presents for 'substantial similarities' between Nietzsche and the Pyrronian sceptics. Mitcheson suggests that there are difficulties in accepting Berry's characterisation 'of Nietzsche's philosophy as Pyrronian in character' and in the rest of her essay she explains that Sceptic *epochē* and *ataraxia* are inconsistent with Nietzsche's project. Before addressing these 'difficulties' I note that Mitcheson [64] acknowledges that Berry's comparison rightly emphasizes 'the importance of the practical dimension' in Nietzsche's project. Mitcheson observes rightly that Nietzsche advances a philosophy which goes beyond theoretical sceptical epistemological

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<sup>29</sup> This is a reference to Nietzsche's study of Diogenes Laertius' writings.

<sup>30</sup> The English is my translation from the original French which is as follows: 'Cet homme extraordinaire inspira tous ceux qui le virent de près une admiration sans bornes...Pourtant il faut se garder de diminuer l'originalité de Pyrrho et de le réduire au rang d'un simple imitateur de la sagesse orientale (Brochard 1887: 71, 75).

inquiry and which should more appropriately be interpreted as a way of life. Pierre Hadot (1995: 272), to whom Mitcheson [64] refers in support of this claim, sees Nietzsche's philosophy 'as an invitation to radically transform our way of life' and thus there are, I suggest, comparisons to be drawn with Sceptic philosophy. Mitcheson observes rightly that the comparison of Nietzsche's work with the Pyrrhonian sceptics highlights his work as a sceptic methodology for identifying the sickness of modern European society and using scepticism to bring about a self transformation and a cure [64]. Moreover Mitcheson [71] acknowledges the therapeutic aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy and compares it with Sextus' claim (which I have previously commented upon) that 'Sceptics are philanthropic and wish to cure by argument' (PH III 280).

I agree with Mitcheson that there are palpable differences between Nietzsche's conception of what it is to be healthy and that of the Sceptics. The aim of Pyrrhonian scepticism is the achievement of tranquillity (*ataraxia*), a calm and imperturbable state. In contrast, Nietzsche's project, as discussed above, identifies the emergence of a certain kind of individual to whom Nietzsche ascribes 'a masculine scepticism' (BGE 209). A sceptic of this kind creates his own values, seeks out danger and everything which affirms life. Although Nietzsche and the Sceptics have differing accounts of what constitutes health and well-being, it is nevertheless the case that the common objective which both share is, I argue, the bringing about of a transformation in the psychological health and well-being of the individual.

However the principal focus of Mitcheson's analysis is to highlight the differences between Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics particularly in the Sceptic's practice of suspension (*epochē*) and Nietzsche's ostensible rejection of it. She addresses the substantive nature of *epochē* and its inconsistency with Nietzsche's project for the revaluation of values. Mitcheson sees *epochē* as antithetical to the notion of creating values – a notion which is at the heart of Nietzsche's revaluation. She argues that Nietzsche would naturally be opposed to the Pyrrhonian sceptic's practice of suspending judgement and their goal of tranquillity [65]. I agree with the substantive differences which Mitcheson outlines: there is, I suggest, a *prima facie* inconsistency between Pyrrhonian *epochē* and Nietzsche's revaluation of values which argues for a creation of values rather than their suspension. Mitcheson rightly acknowledges Nietzsche's philosophy as a sceptical project but argues that *epochē* understood as a life without

belief does not reflect Nietzsche's philosophy. Mitcheson is, I suggest, right to argue that Nietzsche's project is, on the face of it, diametrically opposed to the concept of *epochē*. Mitcheson [72] comments that if suspension of judgment means living without beliefs or values then this cannot be Nietzsche's position because Nietzsche clearly calls for the creation of new values in referring to the role of the new philosopher whom Nietzsche tasks with creating these values (BGE 211).

Mitcheson [63, 77] comments that 'through his advocacy of scepticism Nietzsche welcomes the destruction of existing beliefs and values as a clearing of our current horizons'. I argue that Mitcheson's comment, perhaps unconsciously on her part, sheds light on what I suggest is a common thread running through Nietzschean and Sceptic philosophy. The notion of the destruction of existing beliefs and values is, I argue, a shared theme in both philosophies – one which is closely allied to the notion of purgation and suspension. Nietzsche's notion of suspension (as discussed in chapter 7) is evident in his discussion of *ephēxis* (suspension) which, as discussed, shares the same etymology as *epochē*. Nietzsche, as I have argued, is opposed to the Sceptics' notion of *epochē* but his scepticism is, I suggest, inclusive of a philosophical methodology which seeks to encourage *ephēxis* as an attitude to be adopted in philosophical practice. There is, I suggest, in the Sceptic's discussion of *epochē* and Nietzsche's discussion of *ephēxis* a further area of commonality which Mitcheson's comment illuminates. In Sceptic practice *epochē* is the consequence of the destruction of all belief: Mitcheson's comment highlights the fact that *epochē*, as discussed in the previous chapter, is the end result of a process in which the Sceptic is cleansed or purged of all beliefs. Nietzsche's discussion of *ephēxis* is, I suggest, part of a methodology which brings about the destruction of beliefs which have a connection with the Judaeo-Christian moral tradition. We can, I suggest, accept Nietzsche's rejection of *epochē* whilst acknowledging his commitment to a methodology involving *ephēxis* - a methodology we might associate with the destruction of beliefs. However in Nietzsche's case we are not talking about the destruction of all beliefs but only those beliefs he sees as unhealthy (those beliefs associated with Christian morality). The 'destruction of belief' is not the main point that Mitcheson seeks to make here but I argue that her point is important in highlighting a methodology which Nietzsche and the Sceptics both, I suggest, share. Both see the destruction of belief as integral to the next step in their project: for the Sceptic this is *epochē* which brings about

## Chapter 9

tranquillity and for Nietzsche it is the complete eradication of beliefs associated with Christian morality, the eradication of which makes room for the creation of new, healthier and life-affirming values.

Nietzsche controversially<sup>31</sup> attributes a notion of purgation to Aristotle. However the point to which I wish to draw attention (which arises directly from Mitcheson's comment) is Nietzsche's awareness of purgation as a way of destroying belief— a notion which, I suggest, is comparable with the Sceptic notion of purgation which I discussed in chapter 8. In the *Anti-Christ* Nietzsche discusses Aristotle's conception of purgation when attacking pity. Nietzsche, in insisting on the need to destroy belief in pity, has this to say:

Aristotle famously saw pity as a dangerous pathology that should be purged from the system every once in a while: he thought of tragedy as a purgative. In fact, the instincts of life should lead people to try to find a remedy for the sort of pathological and dangerous accumulation of pity you see in the case of Schopenhauer...to prick it and make it *burst*...To be the doctor *here*, to be merciless *here*, to guide the blade *here* – this is for us to do... (AC7).

The medical analogies of purgation and the reference to the skills of the doctor so characteristic of Sceptic philosophy are in evidence here. Nietzsche writes that Aristotle saw tragedy as a purgative for the eradication of pity but it is not clear that Nietzsche himself was necessarily advancing the Aristotelian view of the cathartic effect of tragedy on pity. However there is, I suggest, a sense in which Nietzsche in this passage sees pity as something noxious, a pathology that needs to be purged and the philosopher is urged to bring skills analogous to that of a 'doctor' in the excision of this kind of belief.

In summary, Mitcheson seeks rightly, I suggest, to emphasize the contradictions between Nietzsche's project for the creation of values and Sceptic *epochē*. I suggest however that any discussion of Nietzsche's antipathy towards *epochē* also needs to take account of the ethos underlying *epochē* which I suggest informs his philosophy. Nietzsche's attitude towards a certain kind of belief as something that should be purged and his predisposition towards *ephēxis* as integral to the philosophical approach have their

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<sup>31</sup> There is some controversy over whether Aristotle's use of *katharsis* in the *Poetics* refers to the purging of pity through tragedy but I do not mean to address this point. Here I am solely concerned with Nietzsche's acknowledgement of the notion of purgation.

origins, I suggest, in Sceptical *epochē*. Mitcheson's comment that Nietzsche's scepticism embraces 'the destruction of beliefs' draws attention to Nietzsche's awareness of the notion of purgation which he mentions in connection with a call for the annihilation of pity. In Pyrrhonian scepticism we see this same approach as part of the purgative process which leads to the Sceptic's *epochē*.

*Richard Bett (2000): Nietzsche on the Sceptics and Nietzsche as Sceptic*

Bett [76] suggests there are 'similarities in the attitudes towards traditional philosophy' expressed by Nietzsche and the Pyrrhonian sceptics and he also regards Nietzsche's 'critique of various forms of philosophical or religious dogmatism as strikingly close' to the Pyrrhonian sceptics. However, in common with Mitcheson, Bett also suggests that Nietzsche's opposition to suspension of judgement is the one significant area where the two philosophies diverge. Bett quite rightly, I suggest, makes the point that, 'the task of creating values requires a psychological attitude that is anything but suspensive' [79]. The suspension of judgement on values is, and as Bett also suggests, antithetical to the independence and strength of character required to create values: for suspension (*epochē*), according to Nietzsche, reflects 'an enfeebled constitution' (BGE 208). Although Bett, as discussed above, agrees there are similarities between Nietzsche and the Sceptics in the presentations of their philosophies, his discussion in this paper rightly, I suggest, emphasizes the difference in opinion that exists between Nietzsche and the Sceptics on the question of *epochē*.

Bett [84] comments further that there is a difference in the 'aims' of Nietzsche and the Sceptics and that their aims are 'by no means the same'. However, I suggest that broadly speaking their aims are the same. Nietzsche's vision is about health as power, vigour and strength whilst the Sceptics see health as a calm detached state. However, in both cases the identification of sickness and a cure for the achievement of psychological health is, I argue, the principal aim. Bett [84] comments that Nietzsche and the Sceptics 'are at one in their sophisticated development of a certain type of voice – a voice which is in a sense philosophical, but which is radically distinct from the voice of traditional philosophizing'. But the development of a different and radical voice is, I suggest, a common factor. I argue that, despite the difference about what it means to be healthy, the combating of sickness and the achievement of psychological health and well-being is still, broadly speaking, a shared aim which motivates a degree of similarity in methodology (more

specifically the attack on dogmatism and the practice of philosophy as a way of life). I shall in the final chapter (chapter 10) return to these comparisons when summing up.

### 9.3 Jessica Berry on Health and Cheerfulness

Berry in her seminal work, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition* (2011) believes that Nietzsche's work is suggestive of Pyrrhonian influence.<sup>32</sup> She claims that Nietzsche's corpus evidences 'a genuine similarity' with Pyrrhonian scepticism which in her view tends towards the conclusion that he would have been influenced by the Pyrrhonian sceptics.<sup>33</sup> Although Berry makes wide ranging claims about the similarities between the two philosophies, here I address more specifically her discussion on health in chapter 5 of her book. Crucially, Berry takes Nietzsche's writings on health, sickness and human flourishing to be informed by a sceptical outlook – specifically the scepticism of the Pyrrhonists. She suggests that Pyrrhonian scepticism not only sheds light on Nietzsche's discussion of health but it crystallizes his thought to provide a 'sort of structure and systematicity' to his philosophy (Berry 2011: 6).

In this section I discuss Berry's views on the Sceptics' notion of health as *ataraxia* and the connection she makes with Nietzsche's philosophy of health. Nietzsche's pursuit of great health is characterized by adherence to values one of which he sees as cheerfulness. Berry sees Nietzsche's discussion of 'cheerfulness' as integral to the parallels she seeks to draw between the health claims of Nietzsche and the Sceptics. In what follows I argue that Nietzsche's cheerfulness takes a specifically different form from that which Berry seeks to associate with the Sceptics. Berry introduces the philosophy of Democritus to show the connection between the Nietzschean and Sceptic claims on health: in this context I examine Berry's discussion of the relevance of the notion of stability as the core

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<sup>32</sup> Berry comments: 'My own view is that Nietzsche can be shown to have been influenced by the Greek sceptics [...] his work makes better sense and we will find his views more consistent on the hypothesis that he was so influenced [...] For all these reasons, I will refer to this relationship in terms of influence' (Berry 2011: 24).

<sup>33</sup> In reaching this conclusion Berry (2011:23-24) adverts to certain criteria recommended by Quentin Skinner as a 'set of necessary conditions under which one author could legitimately be said to have been influenced by another and which would have to include at least the following three: "(a) that there should be a genuine similarity between the doctrines of A and B; (b) that B could not have found the relevant doctrine in any writer other than A; and (c) that the probability of the similarity being random should be very low"'.

aspect in Democritus' notion of cheerfulness and the similarities she makes with Nietzsche's views on health.

### *Health from the Perspective of Nietzsche and the Sceptics*

I begin my argument with an examination of the claim that Berry makes for the importance of cheerfulness to health in both Nietzschean and Pyrrhonian sceptic philosophy and the similarities she seeks to draw as a result. Berry relies on Democritus' notion of *euthumia* as cheerfulness to adduce similarities between the two philosophies. She argues that *ataraxia* can be interpreted as cheerfulness and that when construed in this way it is analogous to Nietzsche's notion of cheerfulness. The principal arguments that Berry raises are, I suggest, as follows:

- a. Nietzsche's philosophy of health shares the same characteristics as those of the Sceptics, that is to say a notion of cheerfulness.
- b. Stability is the chief characteristic of cheerfulness that they both share (2011:165).
- c. Nietzsche's notion of great health may be defined as stability - being a core component of cheerfulness.
- d. The fact that Democritus was a Sceptic.
- e. Democritus' *euthumia* equates to a notion of *ataraxia* as cheerfulness.
- f. Democritus' notion of cheerfulness is predicated on stability as being the core characteristic of cheerfulness.

I argue that Berry's claim for similarity predicated on a notion of cheerfulness shared by Nietzsche and the Sceptics via Democritus' notion of cheerfulness is inconclusive.

### *Ataraxia and Euthumia*

The Sceptics refer to their aim or their goal of life as *ataraxia*, the definition of which is conventionally given as tranquillity. However *ataraxia*, in its use of the prefix 'a', denotes a negative term, *a-taraxia* which signifies freedom from worry and anxiety. Gisela Striker notes ambiguities in the word *ataraxia*. She says 'it may just mean freedom from trouble, unpeturbedness' but suggests it may also have 'the stronger sense of imperturbability, when it seems to designate more than just a state of mind – a character trait, one might perhaps say, which renders the person that has it immune to influences that might interfere with his peace of mind' (Striker 1990: 100). Berry's arguments for similarity rely on Democritus' notion of *euthumia* commonly translated as cheerfulness or good spirits. Berry (2011: 158-9) observes that 'Democritus posits as his conception of the ultimate

good for human beings the concept of *euthumia* which is most often translated as “cheerfulness”. Striker (1990:97) comments that *tranquillitas* is the translation used by Cicero and Seneca for Democritus’ *euthumia*. However the Latin word ‘*tranquillitas*’ represents what, according to Striker (1990:97), is a family of Greek terms which includes both *euthumia* and *ataraxia*. Alongside these two, there are many other terms which fall under the umbrella of *tranquillitas*, such as: *galene* (the calm or stillness of the sea), *hesychia* (quietness), *eustatheia* (stability). Striker attributes the multiplicity of terms to Democritus who uses many different words to cover the same idea. Striker suggests that *ataraxia* came to be used interchangeably with *euthumia* although *ataraxia* became the more popular ‘technical term in early Hellenistic times’ (Striker 1990: 97). So Striker’s exposition offers, I suggest some notion of why anyone might want to assert a connection between *euthumia* and *ataraxia*. However, Striker (1990: 47) draws attention to Seneca’s remark that *euthumia* does not literally translate as *tranquillitas*. *Euthumia* more accurately conveys the notion of cheerfulness or being in good spirits whereas Seneca takes *tranquillitas* to be closer to the notion of *ataraxia* (literally freedom from trouble or anxiety). Striker’s account suggests in the first place a degree of fluidity between the different terms that she surmises are covered by the term *tranquillitas*. We might take this fluidity to be relevant to the connection that Berry seeks to draw in the discussion of *euthumia* and *ataraxia*. The apparent flexibility in the use of the two terms, *euthumia* and *ataraxia* in classical times is ostensibly supportive of Berry’s claim to extend the scope of *ataraxia* to cover a *euthumia* type notion of cheerfulness. Striker’s exposition suggests that the demarcation between tranquillity and cheerfulness – *ataraxia* and *euthumia* is not so well-defined and in ancient classical Greece it seems that there was no clear demarcation. This might justify the thought of an overlap between *ataraxia* and *euthumia* such as to validate an interpretation of *ataraxia* as cheerfulness.

#### *Democritus, Nietzsche and a Univocal Notion of Cheerfulness*

Berry (2011: 141) suggests that ‘*ataraxia* need not be interpreted negatively as the avoidance of suffering, but in a wholly positive way, as a state of psychophysical balance an indication of strength, life, and health – and in fact as a state of cheerfulness.’ Berry defends an interpretation of *ataraxia* which departs from the widely accepted notion of *ataraxia* as tranquillity. She argues that Nietzsche’s great health and the Sceptic *ataraxia* are both essentially about the achievement of a similar state of cheerfulness. I argue

however that there is no shared univocal notion of cheerfulness between Nietzsche and the Sceptics. Nietzsche's idea of cheerfulness, which I touched upon in chapter 6 and which I discuss more fully below, differs, I suggest, significantly from cheerfulness as described by Democritus. Democritus offers a notion of cheerfulness that I will argue focuses on stability associated with the qualities of placidity and contentment. But Nietzsche, I argue, espouses an ideal of great health which, although it incorporates a notion of cheerfulness, is centred on vigour, vitality, courage and strength. But nonetheless Berry believes that *ataraxia* is not so very different from Nietzsche's aims. Berry (2011: 141) acknowledges, and rightly, that *ataraxia* in the conventional sense is suggestive of a passive contentment and she also concedes that the contemporary meaning of *ataraxia* is one of calm or a 'bovine state'. However the Sceptic ideal of *ataraxia* given its nuance of imperturbability, as suggested by Striker above, might be seen as an expression of something more stern than passive. I discuss further the themes of cheerfulness, resistance and stability below.

#### *Nietzsche, Tranquillity and an Epicurean Affinity*

Is there any reason to believe that Nietzsche might have been attracted to a philosophy of tranquillity? Nietzsche in *The Genealogy* makes a reference, albeit, elliptically to the notion of *ataraxia*. He writes:

all science, the natural as well as the *unnatural*...today aims to talk man out of his previous respect for himself...one could even say that science's own pride, its own austere form of stoical *ataraxy* consists in upholding this hard –won self-contempt of man as his last, most serious claim to respect from himself... (GM III 25).

Maudemarie Clark comments on '*ataraxy*' as 'imperturbability, tranquillity of the soul (from Greek *ataraxia*: impassiveness)'. She writes that, '*ataraxia* was a central concept for the sceptics, tied to the ephectic attitude' (1998: 164). Tranquillity (*ataraxia*) follows from the ephectic stance of suspending judgement but, that apart, it is not immediately obvious what we should make of Nietzsche's reference to '*ataraxy*' except for the fact that he was aware of the concept. But supposing we take Nietzsche to be expressing a positive interest in the notion of *ataraxia*, is there not an inherent tension in his ostensible embrace of the laid-back contentment of *ataraxia* alongside his clear avowal of the themes of courage, strength, resilience and the overcoming of resistance? But

some evidence of Nietzsche's avowal of *ataraxia* is, I suggest, to be found in passages where Nietzsche comments favourably on Epicurus.

Julian Young (2010:278) says of Nietzsche that during the period of his writing of the *Wanderer and His Shadow* Nietzsche 'experienced an ever-increasing affection for and sense of affinity with Epicurus.' Epicurean philosophy was, as discussed in chapter 8, principally *eudaimonistic*; the final and ultimate good for Epicurus is pleasure and Epicurus identifies our final end with a static pleasure he calls tranquillity (*ataraxia*). Thus Epicurean *ataraxia* is pleasure which is free from all troubles or anxiety (Bett 2005: 59). Thus these observations would suggest that Nietzsche and Epicurus make strange bedfellows. Bett (2005: 61) suggests that Nietzsche's view of Epicurus might be seen as dismissive as Nietzsche associates Epicurus with the pursuit of happiness which, as discussed previously, Nietzsche sees as the pursuit of the weak. However based on Bett's (2005: 61) discussion here an interpretation of Nietzsche as entirely dismissive of Epicurean philosophy might be misleading. Nietzsche's writings reveal, I suggest, positive attitude towards Epicurus – one which suggests a more emollient approach towards Epicurean philosophy understood as a *eudaimonistic* philosophy tending towards tranquillity. Nietzsche writes of Epicurus:

Yes, I am proud to experience Epicurus' character in a way unlike perhaps anyone else and to enjoy, in everything I hear and read of him, the happiness of the afternoon of antiquity (GS 45).

Nietzsche's idealization of Epicurus here is not an isolated incidence:

And that is how individual men have actually *lived*, that is how they have enduringly *felt* they existed in the world and the world existed in them; and among them was one of the greatest men, the inventor of an heroic-idyllic mode of philosophizing: Epicurus (WS 295).

Here we have, as Bett (2005: 63) comments, Nietzsche's unusual conjunction of the 'idyllic' with the 'heroic'. And in a further passage Nietzsche honours an idyllic life-style which is everything that exemplifies Epicurean philosophy: '*[t]he philosopher of sensual pleasure.* – A little garden, figs, little cheeses and in addition three or four good friends – these were the sensual pleasures of Epicurus' (WS 192). But how does Nietzsche reconcile Epicurus' *ataraxia* – a life of 'idyllic' pleasure and the absence of pain with his philosophy

of suffering, resistance and overcoming? The answer is, I suggest (and as Bett 2005:63 comments), to be found in the close links Nietzsche suggests Epicurean *ataraxia* has with suffering. Having praised the ‘happiness’ of Epicurus in GS 45, to which I referred above, Nietzsche in the same passage writes of Epicurus: ‘only someone who is continually suffering could invent such happiness’. Here, in associating Epicurus with suffering, Nietzsche portrays Epicurean philosophy and its identification with *ataraxia* as having greater psychological depth than previously portrayed (Bett 2005: 63). GS 45 is, I suggest, consistent with Nietzsche’s view of suffering as a positive experience as previously discussed: Epicurus achieves happiness even whilst ‘continually suffering’ or perhaps it is suffering that contributes to his happiness.

I suggest that Nietzsche’s positive attitude towards Epicurus in these passages has very little to do with a favourable disposition towards the concept of *ataraxia* as tranquillity in general. I agree with Bett that Nietzsche’s positive comments reflect something about the specific nature of the happiness that Epicurus espouses. It is, I suggest, a happiness that Nietzsche associates with struggle and adversity and Nietzsche, as discussed in chapter 6, sees this kind of happiness as a by-product of the will to power. Nietzsche’s favourable predisposition towards Epicurus’ form of happiness has, I suggest, everything to do with his conception of Epicurean happiness as emerging from suffering and heroic struggle.<sup>34</sup> And happiness of the kind that Nietzsche describes is, I suggest, linked to the cheerfulness of which Nietzsche writes in section 343 of *The Gay Science*. Here cheerfulness equates with the boldness of spirit of the adventurer - a cheerfulness Nietzsche associates with his free spirits and new philosophers – those whom he sees as ‘the fearless ones’.<sup>35</sup>

However, despite the positive nature of Nietzsche’s comments on Epicurus, it is, I suggest, worth noting that Nietzsche’s writings on Epicurus (discussed above) are taken from the middle part of his writings. Whatever his views on Epicurus and a life-style of *ataraxia*, we can, I suggest, detect in Nietzsche’s mature work a definite shift away from any notion of tranquillity as a desirable life-style. Moreover, as previously discussed, Nietzsche expresses distaste at the notion of *ataraxia* (BGE 208).

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<sup>34</sup> See Bett’s discussion of Nietzsche’s uncharacteristically positive comments on Epicurus (Bett 2005: 66).

<sup>35</sup> Section 343 opens Part V of the *Gay Science* which is entitled: ‘We Fearless Ones’.

### *Was Democritus A Sceptic Anyway?*

I examine the question of whether Democritus was a Sceptic because Berry relies specifically on the association between Democritus' apparent endorsement of Pyrrhonian scepticism to argue that *ataraxia* may be regarded as cheerfulness and that the Democritean notion of cheerfulness with its core characteristic of stability is an essential ingredient in Nietzsche's discussion on health. Diogenes Laertius writes: '[Archilochus and Euripides] find Xenophanes, Zeno of Elea, and Democritus to be sceptics...' (DL IX 72). But surely this in itself cannot be sufficient to give weight to Berry's assertion of Democritus' affiliation to Pyrrhonian scepticism. Berry refers to Sextus' discussion of Democritus in the *Outlines* as one way of explicating what she suggests is Nietzsche's endorsement of Sceptic *ataraxia*. Berry (2011: 167) describes Democritus 'as an important figure in the ancient sceptical tradition' whom she suggests has a certain affinity with the Pyrrhonian sceptics. She discusses the passage from PH I 213-4 of Sextus' *Outlines* which Sextus devotes entirely to Democritus. The section opens with the following: 'The philosophy of Democritus is also said to have something in common with Scepticism since it is thought to make use of the same materials as we do' (PH I 213). What Sextus believes that the two philosophies ostensibly have in common is revealed in the following:

For from the fact that honey appears sweet to some and bitter to others, they say that Democritus deduces that it is neither sweet nor bitter, and for this reason utters the phrase 'No more' which is Sceptical (PH I 213).

The utterance of the phrase 'no more', as discussed previously is significant in terms of Sceptic practice because it indicates one who is of the Sceptic persuasion (PH I 187). However in the section immediately following, Sextus goes on to question Democritus' ostensible commitment to the principle of 'no more':

But the Sceptics and the Democriteans use the phrase 'No more' in different senses. The latter assign it the sense that neither is the case, we the sense that we do not know whether some apparent thing is both or neither. Hence even in this respect we differ (PH I 213).

The difference that Sextus articulates in this passage is Democritus' [dogmatic] assertion that 'honey is neither sweet nor bitter' when a Sceptic would make no such assertion. The Sceptic, in contrast, would have to say that they do not know whether honey is sweet or

bitter for they can only say how it appears. Moreover, despite Democritus' use of the Sceptic phrase 'no more' Sextus writes: 'But the clearest distinction is made when Democritus says: "[in truth] there are atoms and void"' (PH I 214). Sextus suggests that Democritus' assertion of the truth of the existence of atoms and voids reflects an inconsistency with the Sceptic's rejection of an objective discoverable truth. Here in using the phrase 'no more' the Sceptic would, with regard to the existence of atoms and voids, have to be saying that the fact of their existence is just as likely to be true as not true. Thus Democritus' assertion that 'in truth, there are atoms and void' is clearly inconsistent with Pyrrhonian scepticism. Democritus' connection to the Pyrrhonian sceptics and thus the argument that the Sceptics endorsed *ataraxia* as a form of Democritean cheerfulness (*euthumia*) is, I argue, not substantiated by PH I 213-4 of the *Outlines* and is at best inconclusive. Just as damaging to Democritus' credentials as a bona fide Sceptic is Diogenes report of Democritus' rejection of the Sceptics' criterion of appearances in accordance with which they live daily life (PH I 21). Diogenes writes: 'Democritus, however, denied that any apparent fact could be a criterion, indeed he denied the very existence of the apparent' (DL IX 106).

### *Cheerfulness and Stability*

Berry (2011:141) comments that 'for Nietzsche to philosophize out of health and to philosophize out of cheerfulness are one and the same thing'. Is Nietzsche's great health defined by cheerfulness and does it equate to cheerfulness or is cheerfulness merely a by-product or contributory factor in Nietzschean great health? And is the Sceptic *ataraxia* a type of cheerfulness which we might associate with Nietzsche's various references to cheerfulness? These are, I suggest, issues which Berry's comment raise. I reject the idea that Nietzsche's great health might be defined exclusively by a notion of cheerfulness. I argue that Nietzsche's notion of cheerfulness is analogous to his notion of happiness; that it should be seen as a by-product of the will to power. Berry (2012: 159-60) discusses the following fragment from Democritus' work which she suggests will 'illuminate Democritus's conception of well-being and emphasize its common contours with Nietzsche's views':

For men achieve cheerfulness by moderation in pleasure [*terpsios*] and by proportion [*summetria*] in their life; excess and deficiency are apt to fluctuate and cause great changes in the soul. And souls which change over great intervals are

neither stable nor cheerful. So one should set one's mind on what is possible and be content with what one has, taking little account of those who are admired and envied, and not dwelling on them in thought, but one should consider the lives of those who are in distress, thinking of their grievous sufferings, so that what one has and possesses will seem great and enviable, and one will cease to suffer in one's soul through the desire for more... Therefore one should not seek those things [e.g., wealth, fame], but should be cheerful at the thought of the others, comparing one's own life with that of those who are faring worse, and should congratulate oneself when one thinks of what they are suffering, and how much better one is doing and living than they are. For by maintaining that frame of mind one will live more cheerfully and will avert not a few evils in one's life, jealousy and envy and malice.<sup>36</sup>

What are these 'common contours' for which Berry argues? Do Nietzsche and the Sceptics share a univocal and Democritean notion of cheerfulness? Democritus' fragment opens with the thought that cheerfulness comes with 'moderation in pleasure'. He presents cheerfulness as a state of contentment with what one has. Democritus urges cheerfulness in thinking of those who, compared with our own good fortune, are worse off than we are. And he suggests that this kind of approach is conducive to cheerfulness and to the avoidance of 'jealousy, envy and malice' (D55: DK B191 in Berry 2011: 160). But is this the kind of cheerfulness that Nietzsche contemplates? I argue that the notion of cheerfulness that Democritus presents in the foregoing passage is not a very Nietzschean notion. Democritus' cheerfulness emphasizes a notion of stability through moderation and the achievement of balance in one's life. Democritus' focus is on the danger to stability and cheerfulness when we lose sight of the importance of maintaining a balance between the extremes of 'excess' and 'deficiency'. The cheerfulness which Democritus' fragment (B 191) discusses is, I suggest, of a different order from Nietzsche's notion of cheerfulness. Referring to moderation and contentment with one's lot, Democritus expresses sentiments that seem to have little in common with Nietzsche's notion of cheerfulness as I later show in this chapter. Berry does, in part, acknowledge the tensions existing between Democritus' comment in the foregoing passage and Nietzsche's overall aims when she writes:

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<sup>36</sup> D55 (DK B191).

...a consideration of Democritus' moralizing tendencies urges a return to fragment 191...Consider again Democritus' requirement that the cheerful man reduce the overall number of desires he has by comparing his life to those worse off than he. This bit of advice looks as distinctly un-Nietzschean as placid contentment ever did (Berry 2012: 165).

The overall tenor of the qualities presented by Democritus as those necessary for the attainment of cheerfulness are, I submit, the antithesis of Nietzsche's notion of great health and the cheerfulness with which he associates it. Berry (2011: 162) makes, I suggest, the somewhat sweeping statement that 'for both Nietzsche and Democritus, insofar as *balance or stability is the chief feature of health and cheerfulness*, (my emphasis) it is the stalwart and resilient *psuchê* that stands the best chance of maintaining that ideal condition'. I suggest however that the move is too quick; it would require us to accept that, for Nietzsche, health is wholly consistent with cheerfulness construed as balance and stability. We would also need to be wedded to the idea that, for Democritus, stability and cheerfulness embrace a notion of resilience and resistance.

In making the connection between the Nietzschean and Democritean notion of cheerfulness, Berry relies on the weight that Democritus ascribes to the 'stability' of the soul in the attainment of cheerfulness. The soul or *psuchê* (as Berry prefers to describe it), is, Berry suggests, 'constantly assailed by impressions that threaten to change its constitution and disrupt its harmonious state' (2011: 160). For Democritus, as Berry interprets him, cheerfulness and stability sit side by side: cheerfulness occurs when the *psuchê* withstands the excessive fluctuations and changes to which it is naturally subject and thus maintains stability. Thus Berry argues that for Democritus 'the ideally conditioned soul' is that which exercises 'the greatest resilience or shock resistance'. In this way Berry ties in Democritus' comments on 'stability' with Nietzsche's notion of resistance. In advancing this view Berry (2011: 161) refers to what Nietzsche has to say in section 19 of *The Gay Science* about resistance:

Examine the lives of the best and the most fruitful people and peoples and ask yourselves whether a tree which is supposed to grow to a proud height could do without bad weather and storms: whether misfortune and external resistance [...] do not belong to the *favourable* conditions without which any great growth even

of virtue is scarcely possible? The poison from which the weaker nature perishes strengthens the strong man – and he does not call it poison (GS 19).

Here the point Berry, I suggest, intends to make is that the tree that withstands a severe wind storm demonstrates stability by its resistance to the storm but there is no mention of 'stability' in this passage. So, is there, as Berry suggests, a connection which we can make between the resistance of which Nietzsche frequently writes and the stability that Democritus associates with cheerfulness and which assumes such importance in fragment 191? Is this stability synonymous with a Nietzschean notion of resistance? And is stability a quality that Nietzsche associates with his ideal of human excellence?

#### *Does Democritus' Stability Equate with a Nietzschean Sense of Resistance?*

Berry is, I suggest, right in some sense because there is a sense of stability in Nietzsche's account of the ideal human being. Supposing that the notion of stability has some relevance in Nietzsche's ideal of health then how might we reconcile stability with the qualities of resistance and resilience that he most famously seeks to affirm?

Nietzsche's ideal individual 'needs' as we have observed earlier 'one thing above all – *the great health*, a health that one doesn't only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up!' (GS 382). Those to whom Nietzsche attributes *great health* will keep bouncing back time and again from 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'. And this might perhaps suggest the kind of stability or steadfastness associated with resilience and resistance. But is stability the same as the resistance that we have in previous discussions associated with Nietzsche? There is, I suggest, a sense in which the notion of being stable has some connection with the resistance of one who is immoveable and stands firm. But this, I suggest, is not the sense in which Nietzsche thinks of resistance. I argue that there is no commonality between stability and Nietzsche's sense of resistance because there is no notion of stability from which one might derive the idea of resistance in the sense that Nietzsche intends. Section 382 of *The Gay Science* undermines the thought that there might be an inherent and fundamental notion of stability which goes to the heart of Nietzsche's account of great health. Stability is a fairly static condition which we tend to associate with qualities of steadfastness, as in one who is unfaltering, constant and not given to change. In contrast, the overcoming of resistance is essentially the idea of on-going action

that requires strength, courage, resilience and persistence. Those who lack these qualities will, according to Nietzsche, have the kind of stable, steadfast qualities that one associates with passivity and resignation. It is true that there are times in his writing when Nietzsche associates cheerfulness with 'steadfastness'. In the following passage from *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche writes of Schopenhauer:

I am describing nothing but the first, as it were physiological impression Schopenhauer produced upon me, that magical outpouring of the inner strength of one natural creature on to another that follows the first and most fleeting encounter; and when I subsequently analyse that impression I discover it to be compounded of three elements, the elements of his honesty, *his cheerfulness and his steadfastness* (my emphasis). He is honest because he speaks and writes to himself and for himself, cheerful because he has conquered the hardest task by thinking and steadfast because he has to be (UM III, p136).

There is a theme of cheerfulness that runs through Nietzsche's work even evidenced by the title of one of his major works '*The Gay Science*'. Although Nietzsche in the foregoing passage associates cheerfulness with steadfastness (which is commonly used as a synonym for stability) cheerfulness as steadfastness or stability is not, I suggest, a true representation of the overall sense in which Nietzsche refers to cheerfulness. And in any event, it is I suggest, relevant to note here that the view on cheerfulness expressed in *Untimely Meditations* is one of Nietzsche's earliest works and is perhaps not representative of the views on cheerfulness expressed in his mature work, in particular *Twilight of the Idols* which I discuss below. Whatever Nietzsche's ideal state even if we call it cheerfulness, he conceives of it as something that, I suggest, involves activity. Democritus' exhortations towards the stability of contentment and the happy acceptance of what one has, suggests an air of resignation and an abnegation of the striving and overcoming that Nietzsche sees as necessary for the attainment of great health. In contrast to Democritus' notion of cheerfulness, Nietzsche emphasizes qualities of striving and overcoming which act as 'an energetic stimulus to life' (EH: 'Why I Am So Wise', 2).

#### *Stability from Conflict and a Unity of the Drives*

Nietzsche's account of the nature and activity of the drives within the individual human being makes the notion of stability not an entirely irrelevant notion with regard to

## Chapter 9

Nietzsche's discussion of great health. In the following passage Nietzsche shows that the individual of great health is one within whom competing drives cohere to constitute a stable whole. Nietzsche writes in the *Notebooks*:

The human being, in contrast with the animal, has bred to greatness in himself a plenitude of *opposing* drives and impulses: by way of this synthesis he is master of the earth. Moralities are the expression of locally restricted *orders of rank* in this multiple world of drives: so that the human being does not perish from their *contradictions*. Thus one drive as master, its opposing drive weakened, refined, as impulse that yields the *stimulus* for the activity of the chief drive. The highest human being would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, and also in the relatively greatest strength that can still be endured. Indeed: where the plant human being shows itself as strong, one finds instincts driving powerfully *against* one another (e.g. Shakespeare) but bound together (KSA 11, 289 in Janaway 2012: 186).

What is conveyed here is that Nietzsche, in contrast to Democritus, expresses his ideal of excellence and great health as the result of the mixture of conflicting and adversarial drives that exist within each individual human being - a conflict between opposing drives competing and warring with one another to accomplish, ultimately, a stable, balanced and uniform personality. Nietzsche's ideal of great health and the cheerfulness which forms part of it assumes a multiplicity of conflicting and opposing drives which in achieving mastery need somehow to come together as a harmonious whole in order to bring about Nietzsche's ideal. It is in this sense that we might talk about stability. I have in chapter 6 commented on the relationship between war and cheerfulness. The principal qualities that Nietzsche associates with cheerfulness are of someone who has the qualities of a victor in battle. Drives represent a war zone within the individual and the mastery of the conflicting and competing warring drives produces whole and stable individuals of the stature of Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon. Great individuals will be those who not only have a multiplicity of conflicting drives but will be those within whom the drives even in conflict achieve a state of unity (Janaway 2012: 188). Thus Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

[A] person will have the legacy of multiple lineages in his body, which means conflicting (and often not merely conflicting) drives and value standards that fight

with each other and rarely leave each other alone ... But if conflict and war affect such a nature as one *more* stimulus and goad to life - , and if genuine proficiency and finesse in waging war with himself (which is to say: the ability to control and outwit himself) are inherited and cultivated along with his most powerful and irreconcilable drives, then what emerges are those amazing, incomprehensible, and unthinkable ones, those human riddles destined for victory and for seduction; Alcibiades and Caesar are the most exquisite expressions of this type(BGE 200).

In chapter 6 above, I discussed Nietzsche's praise of such individuals as Caesar, Alcibiades, Goethe and Napoleon. These are, for Nietzsche, men of greatness and great health who transcend the conflict within them by harnessing the power of these numerous conflicting drives in order to achieve mastery. Nietzsche has an account of greatness and health that implies an underlying stability but stability is not, for him, the principal constituent of great health. What, I suggest, Nietzsche envisages for his ideal of human excellence is not the kind of stability that comes from moderation and contentment and which Democritus in fragment 191 advances as cheerfulness. It is a stability that issues from what Nietzsche perceives as the unifying effect of struggle and adversity between the drives that make up the wholeness of an individual. Greatness emerges as a result of a balance and state of homeostasis that is achieved between opposing drives and drives of varying strengths and weaknesses. Stability, for Nietzsche, arises as a by-product in harnessing the drives and not from the passive notion of peace and contentment that Democritus describes in his fragment 191.

#### *A Nietzschean Account: Cheerfulness and the Tropes of War*

In contrast to Democritus' account of cheerfulness as contentment and moderation, the notion of war features heavily in Nietzsche's account of cheerfulness and thus gives his cheerfulness a more aggressive slant than the version of cheerfulness that Democritus presents. In *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche distinguishes between two different kinds of cheerfulness:

Schopenhauer has a second quality in common with Montaigne, as well as honesty: a cheerfulness that really cheers. *Aliis laetus, sibi sapiens.*<sup>37</sup> For there are

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<sup>37</sup> *Aliis laetus, sibi sapiens*: cheerful for others, wise for himself

two very different kinds of cheerfulness. The true thinker always cheers and refreshes, whether he is being serious or humorous, expressing his human insight or his divine forbearance; without peevish gesturing, trembling hands, tearfilled eyes, but with certainty and simplicity, courage and strength, perhaps a little harshly and valiantly *but in any case as a victor* (my emphasis): and this it is - to behold the victorious god with all the monsters he has combated – that cheers one most profoundly. The cheerfulness one sometimes encounters in mediocre writers and bluff and abrupt thinkers, on the other hand, makes us feel miserable when we read it: the effect produced upon me, for example, by David Strauss's cheerfulness. One feels downright ashamed to have such cheerful contemporaries, because they compromise our time and the people in it before posterity. This kind of cheerful thinker simply does not see the sufferings and the monsters he purports to see and combat; and his cheerfulness is vexing because he is deceiving us: he wants to make us believe that a victory has been fought and won. For at bottom there is cheerfulness only where there is a victory; and this applies to the works of true thinkers just as much as it does to any work of art (UM III p.135).

Here the theme of cheerfulness as a characteristic of the 'victor' is, I suggest, the only notion of cheerfulness that Nietzsche wants to propose and it is, I suggest, opposed to cheerfulness as balance and stability – a notion which Berry ascribes to Nietzsche. Even if we accept (which I do not) the notion of cheerfulness as central to what Nietzsche considers to be great health, the following passage from *Ecce Homo* lends weight to, what I suggest is, his disavowal of any notion of cheerfulness as one of placid stability, tranquillity, peace or contentment:

You need to never have gone easy on yourself, you need to have *harshness* in your habits, if you are going to be cheerful among harsh truths. When I imagine a perfect reader, I always think of a monster of courage and curiosity who is also supple, cunning, cautious, a born adventurer and discoverer (EH: 'Why I Write Such Good Books', 3).

In Section 382 of *The Gay Science* which I discussed in an earlier chapter, in laying out his criteria for great health Nietzsche refers to 'cheerfulness'. Cheerfulness is, I suggest, only one aspect of Nietzsche's notion of great health. It is part of a 'new health' that requires

the individual to have, 'stronger', 'craftier', 'tougher', 'bolder' and 'more cheerful' qualities 'than any previous health'.

Reginster (2006:196) remarks that the qualities that Nietzsche advances as his ideal are those which involve activity and 'since activity consists in confronting and overcoming resistance, Nietzsche provocatively describes it as "war"...The weak to whom this sort of activity is denied preferring to represent their happiness as rest peace or satiety'. I have previously (in chapter 6) referred to Nietzsche's description in BGE 200 of this weak kind of individual. In the same section Nietzsche makes use of the notion of war to describe further what is lacking in such a weak individual: 'his most basic desire is for an end to the war that he is'(BGE 200). In contrast, Nietzsche associates cheerfulness with power, resilience, the overcoming of resistance, strength and courage and these combine with the kind of qualities that are needed to excel in battle:

I welcome all the signs of a more virile, warlike age approaching that will above all restore honour to bravery ...To this end we now need many preparatory brave human beings ... human beings who know how to be silent, lonely determined, and satisfied and steadfast in invisible activities; human beings profoundly predisposed to look, in all things, for what must be *overcome*; human beings whose *cheerfulness*, (my emphasis) patience, modesty, and contempt for great vanities is just as distinctive as their magnanimity in victory ... human beings ... more endangered, more fruitful, happier human beings! For – believe me - the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – *to live dangerously!* (GS 283)

Here, the lack of passivity in Nietzsche's notion of cheerfulness is, I suggest, once more to the fore—cheerfulness as Nietzsche emphasizes is about 'living dangerously'. Even the more ostensibly restrained qualities to which Nietzsche refers – solitude and steadfastness are associated with a resistance that is directed towards 'what must be overcome'. Thus Nietzsche's reference to 'cheerfulness' signifies, I suggest, an expression of strength. And as discussed in chapter 6, Nietzsche articulates a robust perception of 'cheerfulness' in the Preface to *Twilight of the Idols* – one which he associates with war.

Nothing more exemplifies the nature of suffering than war; suffering such as one might experience in war does not diminish one's power: on the contrary, Nietzsche's view, I

suggest, is that the kind of cheerfulness that withstands suffering also augments one's feeling of power. Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*:

Courage before the enemy is one thing; it does not prevent one from being a coward and indecisive scatterbrain. That is how Napoleon judged 'the most courageous person' he knew: Murat. – Which shows that open enemies are indispensable to some people if they are to rise to their own kind of virtue, manliness and cheerfulness (GS 169).

#### 9.4 Berry: A Conclusion

Berry's (2011: 212) arguments would suggest that the Sceptics' *ataraxia* is not incompatible with Nietzsche's promotion of 'courage, strength and warrior virtues', being those qualities which contribute to great health. She argues that *euthumia* as the more 'cheerful' ancestor of tranquillity leads to a 'peace of soul' that she believes Nietzsche endorses (Berry 2011: 212-3). However I argue that although cheerfulness for Nietzsche is one of the characteristics of great health the suggestion that *ataraxia* even if interpreted as cheerfulness is what Nietzsche intends when he talks about great health is not conclusive.

Berry claims that 'balance or stability' is a central feature of Nietzsche's philosophy of health as cheerfulness, a feature that she argues he shares with the Sceptics. There is, as I have argued, a notion of stability that emerges from Nietzsche's account of the multiplicity of opposing drives of various strengths and weaknesses which, as Nietzsche suggests, unite to produce whole and stable individual human beings like Napoleon, Goethe or Caesar. But stability, I have argued, is not the defining feature of Nietzsche's notion of great health. Nietzsche describes cheerfulness as an important characteristic of such individuals but it is a cheerfulness born not from passive contentment but from activity involving, confronting and overcoming resistance.

It is perhaps interesting and informative to note that reviews on and commentators of Berry's book have also expressed difficulties with her comparison of health qua Nietzsche

and the Sceptics and the connection she seeks to make via Democritus.<sup>38</sup> However Berry offers much thought provoking material on the nature of Nietzsche's notion of cheerfulness as advancing states of well-being and psychological health. Her critique of the Sceptic notion of *ataraxia* and Democritus' notion of cheerfulness helpfully invite a re-assessment of Nietzsche's various remarks on cheerfulness, the notion of stability and how these may be illuminated in the light of the Sceptics' notion of health.

I believe however that Berry's discussion on health do raise issues that have a bearing on Sceptic methodology which we can more usefully explore as illuminating Nietzsche's discussion of his views on sickness and health. To summarise, Berry, I suggest, adopts a somewhat questionable position in seeking to align Sceptic *ataraxia* with Nietzsche's objectives for great health. Ultimately there is an irreconcilable gulf between the active struggle that is a core principle of Nietzsche's philosophy and the zen-like calm of *ataraxia*. In summary, the following are, I suggest, weaknesses in Berry's arguments:

- Nietzsche's cheerfulness can only be linked to the Sceptic notion of *ataraxia* via Democritus' notion of cheerfulness (*euthumia*). It is questionable whether Democritus was a Sceptic anyway.
- The similarities Berry seeks to draw between Nietzsche's and Democritus' version of cheerfulness are not tenable because Nietzsche describes cheerfulness as an active and energetic state whereas for Democritus, cheerfulness is passive.

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<sup>38</sup> Matthew Myer (2010) writes: 'To show that Nietzsche shares the Sceptics' specific vision of psychological health as *ataraxia*, [Berry] defends a broader understanding of *ataraxia* than is commonly recognized, arguing that it can be thought of as a state of cheerfulness and then urges us to understand Nietzsche's conception of health in terms of cheerfulness...Berry can only make the move by linking *ataraxia* to its ancestor *euthumia* in the work of Democritus and then by arguing that Nietzsche's conception of cheerfulness resembles Democritean euthumia. So understood, the link between Nietzschean cheerfulness and *ataraxia* no longer sounds entirely implausible. Nevertheless, it is hard to shake the thought that significant differences remain, especially since Berry has not established a direct lineage, but rather identified a common ancestor in Democritean *euthumia*' ([www.hunter.cuny.edu/jns/reviews/jessica-berry-nietzsche-and-the-ancient-sceptical-tradition](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/jns/reviews/jessica-berry-nietzsche-and-the-ancient-sceptical-tradition)). Beatrix Himmelman (2011) writes: 'A decisive difficulty Berry has to face now is the question of how to relate a Nietzschean account [of 'boldness vigour and strength] to the [tranquillity] of Pyrrhonian scepticism... Is it really tranquillity that Nietzsche wants to promote? Certainly not. And for this reason Berry consults Democritus, the "laughing philosopher", and refers to his treatise *Peri Euthumiēs* (On Cheerfulness) that is mentioned in Diogenes Laertius (IX:46) and that appears to be closer to Nietzsche's approach. Can Democritus be included in the tradition of Pyrrhonian scepticism when there is only one, rather unspecified, supportive remark in Diogenes Laertius' account on Pyrrho (IX:72), and clearly negative statements in regard to this question can be found in Sextus Empiricus (one of which, cf. *Outline* I:213, Berry does not quote properly on p.168)? Additionally, there is another difficulty: Does Democritus' conception of *euthumia* really match Nietzsche's idea of cheerfulness (have a look at what Stobaeus reports; one fragment is quoted in Berry 2011: 159–60))?' ([ndpr.nd.edu/news/Nietzsche-and-the-ancient-sceptical-tradition](http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/Nietzsche-and-the-ancient-sceptical-tradition)).

## Chapter 9

- Democritus' cheerfulness (*euthumia*) emphasizes a notion of stability through moderation and the achievement of balance in one's life but these are qualities which have no affinity with Nietzsche's war like ideal of cheerfulness.
- Nietzsche describes 'cheerfulness' as an important characteristic of 'higher types'; the cheerfulness he describes is associated with the qualities of inviting and overcoming resistance.
- Cheerfulness is only one component of what Nietzsche envisages as great health.

In conclusion there is nothing in Sextus' writings which suggests that he seeks to associate *ataraxia* with cheerfulness. Sextus, as discussed in chapter 8, writes about *ataraxia* and happiness in *Against the Ethicists* but there is no suggestion that this discussion is linked to a notion of cheerfulness.

# Chapter 10 Conclusion: Parallels in Two Philosophies for Health

## 10.1 Introduction

In chapter 9, I analysed in detail Berry's assertion that there are similarities between Nietzsche's great health and Pyrrhonian scepticism's *ataraxia* and I argued that her arguments were at best tendentious. In this chapter I present my own comparative study of the two philosophies and highlight what I consider to be more compelling and significant similarities.

Nietzsche's project for the revaluation of values is, I have argued, directed towards achieving 'great health'. Furthermore, I have argued that the principal focus of his project is the identification of adherence to contemporary values as the cause of psychological sickness and the need for a cure. To this end, I have discussed Nietzsche's challenge to traditional philosophy and his attack on dogmatism. In parallel, I have offered an account of Pyrrhonian scepticism as a philosophy for health and for a new way of living. I argue that this study of Pyrrhonian scepticism illuminates and allows us to better understand the importance Nietzsche assigns to philosophy as a therapy for psychological sickness and the achievement of mental well-being.

In this final chapter I bring together these two philosophies to show that they both describe a practical way of life for the curing of psychological sickness. In what follows I analyse the principal parallels, the principal divergences and offer my overall conclusions. In the Appendix, I discuss the question of the influence of Pyrrhonian scepticism on Nietzsche's work.

## 10.2 Principal Parallels

As discussed above the identification of a sickness and a philosophy directed towards the achievement of psychological health and well-being are, I suggest, common factors shared by both Nietzsche and the Sceptics. However in what follows I identify the following further significant similarities:

- Philosophies for a way of life.
- The philosopher as physician.
- The rejection of moral obligation and immoralism.
- Appearance and reality.
- The attack against dogmatism.
- Scepticism, doubt and suspension.
- A re-evaluation of theories of happiness.
- Naturalist philosophies.

### *Philosophy for a Way of Life: Praxis over Theory*

Sceptic and Nietzschean philosophies both describe, I suggest, an approach for achieving health through living philosophically – an approach which emphasizes philosophy as a way of life. Sextus records that Pyrrhonian scepticism is a philosophy for a way of life (PH I 23-4), the objective of which is to show that contemporary philosophical methods are dogmatic in nature and the cause of psychological sickness. For Sextus, the cure – freedom from mental distress, lies in the adoption of alternative philosophical methods. The core of Nietzsche's philosophy as a way of life revolves around the continual need to struggle against and to overcome resistance, adversity and sickness and this in turn requires a new approach to philosophy. The comparison illuminates, I suggest, Nietzsche's critique of morality and his revaluation of values as advancing the same practical approach towards philosophy as the Sceptics. Nietzsche sees his project as challenging current philosophical methods – he invites an approach which sees philosophical practice as a way of life and which brings with it psychological health and well-being. Nietzsche's criticism of traditional philosophy and his aim is, I suggest, hinted at in the following:

The only critique of a philosophy that is possible and that proves something, namely trying to see whether one can live in accordance with it, has never been taught at universities: all that has ever been taught is a critique of words by means of other words (UM III, p187).

Here, it is evident that even in his early writings Nietzsche saw philosophy as a practical guide for living. I argue that both Nietzsche and the Sceptics share and advance comparable themes of scepticism, doubt, suspension and anti-dogmatism as a methodology for an alternative philosophy which promotes philosophy as a way of life. Furthermore, I argue that in both philosophies their methodology tends towards the diagnosis of a sickness and the offer of a cure by means of a new way of doing philosophy. The study of philosophy should no longer be seen as divorced from day to day life: thus the philosophical way of life which Nietzsche and the Sceptics undertake is no longer exclusively a discourse about theoretical principles of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. Instead their philosophies raise the more practical question: 'What do I need to do to practice philosophy in daily life?' For both, the starting point of ethical philosophy is about how one should live well by living a psychologically healthy life and not about whether one lives a morally or ethically good life in accordance with standards of conventional morality.

### *The Philosopher Physician*

As discussed above, I have argued that both philosophies are directed towards the health and well-being of the individual. Nietzsche and the Sceptics both advert to the idea of the 'philosopher physician' and in doing so acknowledge the parallels between medicine and philosophy as a way of life.

I have referred to Nietzsche's project as therapeutic: to talk about something as having a 'therapeutic' effect is to suggest something that cures, something associated with the healing of disease, something that causes one to be more healthy. Berry (2011: 134-5) comments that it is 'strange' that Nietzsche's philosophy is 'often characterized as fundamentally *therapeutic*' and argues that Nietzsche is not best placed 'to *recommend* a reliable route to health'. Her argument is that Nietzsche's project fails to prescribe a specifically therapeutic programme. I suggest however that the point is that Nietzsche's philosophy is not intended to be prescriptive. I agree with Brian Leiter who argues that Nietzsche's project does have a therapeutic aim: that Nietzsche's books 'are both the expression of the theoretical position and a therapeutic method which, ultimately, enables some individuals to free themselves from morality' (Leiter 2013: 583-4). Nietzsche expects that his new philosopher will assume a role analogous to that of the physician; they will be expected to cure sickness by rooting out a certain kind of belief,

that is to say, a belief in the values of a Christianised morality. The same therapeutic objective is, I argue, to be found in Pyrronian scepticism. Sextus as both philosopher and physician emphasizes the importance of the medical and therapeutic aspect of Sceptic philosophy as evidenced by Sextus' claim that 'Sceptics are philanthropic and wish to cure by argument' (PH III 280). For the Sceptics the disease is belief which causes mental disturbance; Sceptics see their methodology of argumentation and inquiry as a process of purgation which leads to a cleansing out of belief.

I agree with Mitcheson's claim (discussed previously) that there is a therapeutic element in Nietzsche's philosophy. For Nietzsche the disease he seeks to cure is the belief in an asceticised morality the full expression of which is to be found in the morality of pity (*Mitleid*).<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche sees pity as a pathology; he offers an historical exposition of how *Mitleid* arises from *ressentiment* which the powerless feel towards their masters. In his discussion of the remedy for pity, which Nietzsche quite clearly sees as a disease, Nietzsche, as discussed above refers to Aristotle's notion of purgation in AC 7. As discussed, the point to which I wish to draw attention in this passage is Nietzsche's awareness of purgation as a way of destroying a certain kind of belief – a notion which, I suggest, is comparable with the purgative remedy proposed by the Sceptics for the destruction of belief. As commented on above, what for Nietzsche, is needed in curing the pathology of pity is: 'To be the doctor *here*, to be merciless *here*, to guide the blade *here* – this is for *us* to do, this is *our* love for humanity, this is what makes *us* philosophers' (AC 7). Nietzsche's use of the medical analogy in AC 7 is, I argue, comparable with the medical quotations we have encountered in Pyrronian scepticism: Nietzsche uses this analogy to emphasize the need to destroy belief in the values of Christian morality. The 'cure' (the eradication of the disease of belief) is, for both philosophies, achieved through a comparable methodology involving the purgation or destruction of belief whether completely in the Sceptics' case or partially in Nietzsche's case.

#### *A New Ethics for Health: the Rejection of Moral Obligation and Immoralism*

Both philosophies are subject to the accusation that they condone immorality. Nietzsche's project, as discussed above, is, I suggest, informed by a form of ethical egoism

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<sup>39</sup> As discussed in chapter 4 the translation of *Mitleid* is controversial. However for the purposes of this chapter I use the word 'pity' but infer nothing from doing so.

advocating self-interest as the natural state of human beings. As discussed in chapter 3, the unconditionality and universal applicability of herd/slave morality make it antagonistic to the expression and fulfilment of individual excellence. Nietzsche suggests that living in accordance with the herd/slave morality of Christianised values subverts not only the expression of individuality but also the inclination towards honesty and authenticity. Rather than accepting values imposed through external authority Nietzsche's project invites an alternative lifestyle which advocates creating one's own values. He insists that we question the presuppositions by which theological dogma and the secularized philosophical versions of Christian morality come to dictate moral and ethical life. Nietzsche is not, as I have discussed, signalling a rejection of all values. I discuss in chapters 3 and 7 above, the good/evil, good/bad distinction Nietzsche makes. Nietzsche rejects Christianity's values of 'good and evil' with its ascription to unconditionality. He allows that there is a distinction to be made between good and bad (GM I 17) but he does not judge values or actions as being good or bad in themselves. What Nietzsche objects to is that people casually accept without 'the slightest doubt or hesitation' that 'the good' is bound to be of higher value than the "evil" (GM Preface 6) when what is labelled evil could in fact be of higher value for life than that which is called good. What benefits human life should, according to Nietzsche, be measured in terms of the values which 'promote and preserve life' (BGE 4).

Hadot is, I suggest, right to say that Nietzsche's philosophy is 'an invitation to radically transform our way of life' (1995: 272). Self-transformation, as Nietzsche sees it, is possible for those few individuals who are able to apprehend that morality as currently practised in contemporary Europe is not the only form of ethical life. Creating one's own values is for Nietzsche necessary for becoming who you are: the individual no longer subscribes to the values of traditional morality but will be the author of their own values. 'Genuine honesty' (BGE 227) and the authenticity which derive from becoming who you are confer psychological benefits for health and well-being. But the less than positive aspect is that the rejection of moral obligation and transformation in lifestyle bring with it the spectre of immorality.

It is not, I suggest, clear that Nietzsche pays anything more than lip-service to Bernard Williams' dictum that in order to live within society the individual needs to have basic expectations that will include not being killed and not being lied to (Williams 2011: 208-

9). Nietzsche's project falls short of offering any kind of ethical framework centred round a system of punishment and blame which would have the effect of preventing acts of murder, torture and enslavement being carried out by one person upon another (Foot 1994: 7). And thus there is no guarantee that Nietzsche's ethics intends to concern itself with the possibility of acts of immorality. Nietzsche's acknowledgment of a good/bad distinction offers no advice as to what would make an action unconditionally bad. Nietzsche proposes an alternative ethical framework for the select few individuals of excellence but there must, as Robertson (2012:108) suggests, be a clash between the interests of these higher types and the interests of the (herd/slave) majority which Nietzsche ostensibly leaves unresolved.

The Sceptic is expected to lead daily life in a way which is common with Nietzsche's ethics abjures commitment to the values of traditional morality. When the Sceptic acts he does not judge whether his actions are good or bad but simply lives by appearances. However there is an expectation that the Sceptic will live 'in accordance with the normal rules of life'<sup>40</sup>; 'that he makes lifestyle choices according to intuitions which coincide with the laws and customs he was brought up in' (Annas 1986: 19). But as suggested in chapter 8 this expectation is, I suggest, more apparent than real. Berry and Annas both rightly, I have suggested, raise concerns that the Sceptic in suspending judgment on values, is not guaranteed to resile from acts of immorality. Sextus' response to the Dogmatist's accusation that the Sceptic 'would not shrink from killing and eating his own father if ordered to do so' (DL IX 108) is somewhat equivocal and far from a rejection of the accusation. And this can in fact be the only response that Sextus can offer because the Sceptic is psychologically constrained from making judgements about good and bad. Sextus does not guarantee that the Sceptic will necessarily do what is 'morally right'. Both Nietzsche and the Sceptics are committed to a philosophy which has individual health as its principal objective. However the result and where the parallels are evident is, I argue, that both promote a life-style in which the psychological health of the individual takes priority over moral/ethical obligation. Both Nietzsche and the Sceptics advance a way of life in which there can be no assurance that the rejection of moral obligation does not result in immorality.

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<sup>40</sup> Taken from Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines*, translated by the R.G. Bury (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

*'Appearance' and the Nature of Reality*

Both philosophies question man's ability to apprehend objective reality. For the Pyrrhonian sceptic appearances inform everyday life; it is the criterion by which the Sceptic chooses one thing and avoids another without affirming or denying its truth or falsity. Parush, as discussed above, interprets Nietzsche's project as promoting the qualities of the sceptic who 'lives in accordance with the individual manner in which the world appears to him'. It is, according to Nietzsche, a mistake to believe that truth is worth more than appearance (BGE 2). Rather, we ought to consider that the world might be otherwise than how it appears. As discussed in chapter 7, Nietzsche holds that we can have no fully objective view of the world (GM III 12). Thus life needs to be approached 'on the basis of perspectival valuations and appearances' (BGE 34). The only view we can, according to Nietzsche, articulate is one which is a representation of how the world appears to us and not one based on how we believe the world to be in reality. The latter would suggest that human beings are able to apprehend an objective view of the world but, according to Nietzsche, we can never have access to such objectivity. And consequently what is needed is the awareness that one's understanding of truth and reality can only be enhanced and a position approaching objectivity assumed if agents allow themselves a number of viewpoint or perspectives. Nietzsche's distinction between appearances and reality suggests interesting parallels with Sextus' discussion of appearances and his comment that we can say nothing about what is real. Sextus comments that in saying how things are the Dogmatist makes an assertion about reality: 'if you hold beliefs, then you posit as real the things you are said to hold beliefs about' (PH I 14). In contrast, the Sceptic, as discussed above, makes no claim as to the underlying reality of things; he simply assents to how things appear 'without admitting that it really is what it appears to be' (DL IX 104; PH I 15). I argue that the Sceptics, in common with Nietzsche, acknowledge that we, as human beings, can have no apprehension of reality and the only thing we can talk about are appearances.

*The Attack on Dogmatism: Against the Search for Truth*

Both Nietzsche and the Sceptics attack the perceived dogmatism in contemporary philosophy and challenge the traditional philosophical belief that the search for truth has value for life. Both philosophies seek to expose the disvalue of the search for truth, its vulnerability to failure and the fact that it is deleterious to psychological health. The

attack on dogmatism is, as we have seen, central to Sceptic philosophy; Sextus associates dogmatism with those philosophers who ‘think they have discovered the truth’ (PH I 1). The philosophical belief in the search for truth and its injurious impact on psychological health motivate the Sceptic’s attack on dogmatism. Sextus claims that the lack of uniformity between different philosophers goes against the existence of any univocal standard or criterion for truth. The Sceptic rejects the Dogmatist’s belief in the ‘criterion of truth’ as the value for life because as far as he can see there is no universally acceptable criterion which would guarantee an unequivocal decision between competing claims on truth. Sextus emphasizes the Sceptic’s positive commitment to the practical side of philosophy over the practice of philosophy as a theoretical pursuit when he suggests the replacement of the criterion of truth with a criterion for life.<sup>41</sup> The search for truth no longer defines philosophical life; the truth or falsity of their thoughts has no bearing on how Sceptics act in ordinary life.

Nietzsche’s project reveals, I suggest, a similar attack on dogmatism – one which appears as a major theme in the opening sections of *Beyond Good and Evil* and more specifically in the Preface to that work. Nietzsche’s attack on dogmatism is grounded in the philosopher’s belief in an unqualified truth which he sees as dominating philosophical thinking and which he attacks as life-negating and unhealthy. Nietzsche writes of the ‘aberration of philosophers’ in believing that there exists a ‘criterion of truth and reality’ (WP 584): here Nietzsche refers to the philosopher’s erroneous presupposition of a univocal criterion of truth offering a universally objective method by which to determine truth.

Nietzsche attacks the dogmatism manifest in philosophical assumptions about opposites. His attack on the philosopher’s faith in opposite values is a rejection of a system of morality which preserves the good/evil distinction. For Nietzsche, the belief in opposite values ‘expresses, defends and reinforces the morality and value system of the unhealthy and life-negating ascetic ideal’ (Clark 1990: 176-7).

Nietzsche’s new philosophers will ‘certainly not be dogmatists’ (BGE 43) but they will pursue a methodology which I argue has parallels with Pyrrhonian scepticism. The new

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<sup>41</sup> Sextus discusses two standards or criteria: ‘there are standards adopted to provide conviction about the reality or unreality of something and there are standards of action attending to which in everyday life we perform some actions and not others’(PH I 21). The latter is the Sceptic’s criterion or standard for life.

philosopher will, as discussed above, adopt a sceptical, doubting and suspensive approach towards philosophical practice.

Nietzsche and the Sceptics share, I suggest, a comparable sceptical attitude towards truth in science. Nietzsche argues that science is predicated on the ascetic faith in truth and is thus an impoverishment of life. Sextus is equally sceptical about the value of scientific truths: 'We do not study natural science in order to make assertions with firm conviction about any of the matters on which scientific beliefs are held. But we do touch on natural science in order to be able to oppose to every account an equal account and for the sake of tranquillity' (PH I 18). The same process of argumentation and inquiry will be applied to science as the Sceptics apply to philosophical discourse and the aim will be (just as with philosophical discourse) to reach *epochē* and tranquillity. Thus for the Sceptics science in itself cannot provide truths which will free the Sceptic from mental distress.

### *Scepticism, Doubt and Suspension*

Doubt is characteristic of all philosophical inquiry but the Sceptics take doubt to a higher order of magnitude. Doubt is not merely the questioning of theoretical positions but it is used to destroy those positions. The Sceptic's attack on dogmatism proceeds via a process of argumentation and inquiry which, as discussed above, characterize the practical nature of Sceptic philosophy. The Sceptic's aim lies in shaking all convictions and taking nothing as certain. The setting up of opposing arguments (*dunamis antithetikē*) is intended to bring the Sceptic to a position of extreme doubt and hence suspension. When, in suspending judgement, the Sceptic refuses to affirm or deny he adopts a position of doubt with regard to competing claims each of which are equally plausible. Through the exercise of the ability to set up opposing arguments Sceptics see that no one opinion is more convincing in terms of its truth than another and thus the position which they arrive at is one of accepting doubt as something positive. Doubt is the mental state that Sceptics move towards and which is responsible for their peace of mind.

Doubt, scepticism and suspension (*ephēxis*) are tools that are, I suggest, also integral to Nietzsche's new ethics. Scepticism, as discussed above, is for Nietzsche an antidote to philosophical dogmatism. Nietzsche's writings, as I have shown in chapter 7, contain several references to 'the sceptic' and scepticism in general which are, as I have indicated,

for the most part favourable. Apart from what I suggested in chapter 7 is possibly the one reference to the 'Pyrrhonian sceptic' in EH: 'Why I Am So Clever', 3, Nietzsche's discussion of scepticism and the sceptics does not specifically identify Pyrrhonian scepticism as the object of his favourable comments. However, as I have argued, Nietzsche's project is characterised by the themes of doubt, scepticism and suspension (*ephēxis*) which are also central to Pyrrhonian scepticism and which, as I have shown, are of importance in Nietzsche's new ethics. I have shown that Nietzsche's writings demonstrate not only an awareness of the Sceptic methodology of suspension, equipollence and the process leading to equipollent arguments but he also appears to take a sympathetic approach towards these practices (GM III 9). Nietzsche as discussed above also expresses a positive approach to suspension, *ephēxis* (TI: 'What the Germans Lack', 6). I have argued that Nietzsche's discussion in BGE 2 of 'doubt' and the notion of 'Perhaps' suggest an implicit link with the scepticism of the Pyrrhonians and Nietzsche also as I have discussed makes an explicit acknowledgement of his scepticism on matters of morality (GM Preface 3). This manifests itself in a sceptical, argumentative form of inquiry which I have argued has parallels with the Sceptic's practice of the setting up of opposing arguments. Nietzsche, of course, is not striving for equipollence in the same way as the Sceptics but he intends, I suggest, to show that this form of inquiry can be used to undermine and possibly destroy conviction in the certainty of our beliefs and those beliefs taken as givens. The use of a distinctive literary style, which as I have discussed, is apparent in both philosophies, also avoids the self-refuting charge. Nietzsche, as I have suggested, utilizes rhetoric and a non-assertoric style of writing to avoid refuting himself. Sextus' use of the 'Sceptical phrases' to which he refers in PH I 187-204 highlight the use of a comparable methodology by Nietzsche. But in the Sceptic's case the objective is one of neither affirming nor denying and thus avoiding dogmatism.

#### *A Re-evaluation of Ethical Theories of Happiness*

Nietzsche and the Sceptics, I argue, both take an approach to ethical theories on happiness which is a rejection of the orthodox view that what people most want is happiness. However both philosophies engender elliptical views on happiness.

Ancient ethical theories embrace a notion of *eudaimonia* which, as I discussed in chapter 8, is commonly translated as happiness but the notion of a life of flourishing, embracing good health and a life well -lived is a closer approximation of what *eudaimonia* is. Ancient

ethical theories share the thought that all human beings aim for some form of *eudaimonia* as our final end (*telos*), and this I have argued is the theory that the Sceptics reject. The interpretation of Sextus' view on *eudaimonia* is, as I have suggested, controversial: there are those who take Pyrrhonian scepticism to be a *eudaemonist* philosophy whereas, as discussed in chapter 8 above, I have argued that *ataraxia* alone is the Sceptic's goal of life.

Nietzsche, as I have argued in chapter 6, rejects philosophical theories of happiness as the basis of ethical conduct: 'hedonism, pessimism, utilitarianism, eudamonianism', he writes, should all be regarded 'with scorn as well as pity' (BGE 225). Nietzsche combines his rejection of ethical theories of happiness with the development of his will to power principle. Nietzsche refers to happiness as a by-product of the will to power, something which is merely a 'symptom of the feeling of power' (WLN 14[121] p.26). What he suggests humans beings strive for is 'power and an augmentation of power' (WLN 14[121] p.26). Thus Nietzsche promotes power as the new good over and above philosophical views on happiness. Rather than the pursuit of happiness, willing power is the key to life and health: 'Above all, a living thing wants to discharge its strength – life itself is will to power' (BGE 13).

Nietzsche's discussion of cheerfulness is, I have argued, relevant to the comparisons Berry's makes on health when discussing Nietzsche's cheerfulness and a Democritean notion of cheerfulness which she associates with Sceptic *ataraxia*. Berry comments that 'for Nietzsche to philosophize out of health and to philosophize out of cheerfulness are one and the same thing' (2011:141) and suggests that for Nietzsche the notion of health and cheerfulness are related. I have suggested that there is a therapeutic element to Nietzsche's discussion of cheerfulness but I question whether there are similarities to be drawn with the Sceptic's notion of tranquillity (*ataraxia*). Nietzsche does write about cheerfulness but, as I suggested in chapter 6, 'cheerfulness', as Nietzsche describes it, has a more aggressive slant which I argue does not (as discussed in chapter 9) accord with the more passive notion of cheerfulness that Berry ascribes to Nietzsche. Moreover I argue that cheerfulness is only one aspect of what Nietzsche describes as great health (GS 382).

*Naturalist philosophies*

I suggest that Nietzsche and the Sceptics each reject the criterion of truth as the value for life in favour of a criterion for life which gives priority to the natural human intuitions. When Nietzsche attacks Christian moral values he is expressing his opposition to a system of morality which he sees as antithetical to nature and to those fundamental tendencies of expansion, domination, growth, and the overcoming of resistances that are essential to life. Nietzsche advances the will to power as the new value for life. The principle of willing power as that which beings most strive after is, I suggest, consistent with a naturalist account of the fundamental tendencies that are essential to life and without which health and well-being are impossible. The will to power affirms man's natural instinct for power and facilitates the drive towards the creation of values and the flourishing of individual excellence. Nietzsche's account of will to power draws on the natural world and allows him to assert an affinity that he believes all human beings have with the rest of nature. Thus Nietzsche's objective, as discussed in chapter 6, is to develop a philosophy for life which best accords with man's natural instinct for power. Will to power is, I suggest, Nietzsche's response to psychological sickness – one which offers a naturalist account of how to affirm life.

I have suggested that Pyrronian scepticism is also a naturalist philosophy. The new criterion for life which Sextus describes in the *Outlines* is, I suggest, one in which the Sceptics' actions accord with their intuitions. The Sceptic lives in accordance with how things appear or how they strike him so he only needs to follow his intuitions. We might see the Sceptic as motivated by intuitions which have perhaps been coloured by the customs and laws of his upbringing but in disavowing dogmatism the Sceptic will not evaluate or make moral or ethical judgements about any one custom being one that he is ethically or morally obliged to follow. The Sceptic's actions are in harmony with his natural instincts and thus peace of mind derives from the fact that he cannot be right or wrong about how things strike him. As discussed in chapter 8 Nussbaum (1991: 523), describes the way in which the Sceptic might see the life of an Epicurean or a Stoic as a life which is 'set against nature', as perpetuating a way of life which is against man's natural instincts. The point of Nussbaum's illustration, as discussed in Chapter 8, is that

for the Sceptic a juxtaposition of the Dogmatists' natural instincts with their ethical obligations is a potential source of anxiety and mental distress.<sup>42</sup>

### 10.3 Principal Divergences

I set out below the following principal divergences which I suggest exist between the two philosophies:

- Great health versus tranquillity.
- Scope of values under attack.
- The value of suffering in Nietzsche's philosophy.
- The creation of values versus suspension of values.
- Christianity in Nietzsche's philosophy.

#### *Great Health versus Tranquillity (Ataraxia)*

Achieving health is, I have argued, the common factor in both philosophies. However despite Berry's attempt to demonstrate similarity, most commentators agree that there is little commonality between Nietzsche's vision of health which I take to be one of vigour, strength, courage, flourishing and the view which the Sceptic offers of health as the more passive tranquillity (*ataraxia*). In the context of discussing scepticism (BGE 208) Nietzsche can be seen to be denigrating the notion of *ataraxia* and *epochē* which he sees as a weak and degenerate form of scepticism. Nietzsche, as discussed above, speaks of this kind of scepticism as a 'tranquillizer or sedative' or having the opiate qualities of 'the soft, sweet, poppy flower'; and this form of scepticism characterizes those too timid to affirm or deny (BGE 208). Nietzsche's characterisation of this kind of scepticism is strongly suggestive of *ataraxia* and *epochē* even if Nietzsche does not mention them specifically. Nietzsche in BGE 208 describes this kind of scepticism as producing a weak sort of individual who is 'all too easily frightened' and to whom Nietzsche ascribes 'a certain complex physiological condition which in layman's terms is called weak nerves or a sickly constitution' (BGE 208).

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<sup>42</sup> See Nussbaum's discussion of the Epicurean dilemma (1991: 524-6) which I discuss in chapter 8.

### *The Scope of Values under Attack*

The scope of the values under attack differs as between Nietzsche and the Sceptics.

Nietzsche does not, as I have shown, reject all values: rather his attack on values is aimed at traditional moral values as epitomized by the morality of pity (*Mitleid*): *Mitleid* is, according to Nietzsche, a life-negating and unhealthy response to suffering. More specifically, as I have argued, *Mitleid* (in the form of 'great compassion') has the power to break the health of the strong: it induces, in the strong, a decline in the appetite for life which in turn leads to nihilistic depression and sickness (GM III 14). In contrast Sextus teaches that every single ethical judgement is antithetical to mental well-being. Believing that things are by nature good or bad leads to mental distress and anxiety and thus the Sceptic's whole practice is geared towards purging himself of all beliefs about values.

### *The Value of Suffering in Nietzschean philosophy*

*Mitleid* is to be deplored because it seeks the elimination of suffering which Nietzsche sees as integral to health. Nietzsche's portrayal of suffering as valuable has no parallels in Pyrrhonian scepticism. In asserting the principle of will to power, Nietzsche emphasizes the role of suffering as transformative of life: suffering and its overcoming become a positive and life-affirming force which has a direct and positive bearing on psychological well-being. Nietzsche's conception of health involves a level of distress and of course distress is what the Sceptic aims to avoid: health for the Sceptic manifests as freedom from mental disturbance (*ataraxia*). However it should be noted that the notion of suffering or at least some level of distress is not entirely absent from Sextus' account of *ataraxia*. Sextus concedes that bodily pain, hunger or thirst are unavoidable human conditions but through *epochē* the Sceptic manages to mediate the way he feels about such afflictions. He might feel hunger, pain or thirst but he does not judge that they are good or bad. Thus the point that Sextus makes is that the Sceptic will be only moderately affected (*metriopatheia*) by unavoidable human afflictions and will bear those afflictions with greater equanimity than the Dogmatist. However Sextus' account of *metriopatheia* is, I suggest, not on a par with Nietzsche's account of suffering. Any suffering that the Sceptic experiences as hunger, thirst or bodily pain will be unavoidable and unwanted and thus cannot be construed as comparable with Nietzsche's notion of suffering which is, for him, something that is actively sought.

### *Creation of Values versus Suspension of Values (Epochē)*

Nietzsche's project for the revaluation of values retains a conception of values but it is questionable whether it is, as I have discussed in chapter 3, a system of ethics.

Nietzsche's project encourages the creation of values which are associated with the flourishing of individual excellence and an affirmation of life. In contrast the Sceptic suspends judgement on all ethical values (*epochē*). Sceptic practice centres on the more passive suspension of judgement on values - a way of life which Mitcheson and Bett (as discussed above) rightly, I suggest, interpret as at odds with Nietzsche's project for the creation of values. The Sceptics place suspension of judgement at the heart of their philosophy; it is the means by which they achieve freedom from mental distress. Thus it is apparent that the lifestyle which Nietzsche advocates for the creation of life-affirming values is inconsistent with the Sceptic's suspension of judgement on values and the tranquillity which it confers. Having said that, Sextus makes an isolated reference to 'men of talent' as those distressed by the conflict in appearances so it is not clear whether his philosophy is, like Nietzsche's, directed only towards the gifted.

### *The Significance of Christianity in Nietzschean Philosophy*

Sextus writes extensively about what is 'good or bad by nature' in a section that he describes as 'ethics' (PH III: 168-279). Notions of good and bad tend to be associated with systems of morality/ethics and thus we might be tempted to assume that Pyrrhonian scepticism is a philosophy which, in suspending judgement on what is good or bad by nature, eschews all codes of conduct relating to morality. But Pyrrhonian scepticism, in common with other ancient classical systems, had not yet developed into an ethical system of morality as it is now understood in modern day philosophy. In ancient philosophical systems philosophers were preoccupied with questions of virtue (*aretē*) and the Socratic question of how best to live one's life. The Pyrrhonian notions of 'good' and 'bad' would have been understood in a different sense from the moral and ethical concerns of contemporary philosophers. As a philosophical tradition which began with the pre-Christian philosophy of Pyrrho the Sceptics would have had no conception of the notions of good and evil which lie at the heart of Nietzsche's critique of morality. Moreover suffering and pity as the essence of Christianity have no parallels in Pyrrhonian scepticism.

## 10.4 Conclusion

I am not, as my review of other authors indicates, the first to undertake a comparison of Nietzsche's work with Pyrrhonian scepticism and this in itself suggests that there are parallels in both philosophies that are worthy of examination. This thesis more specifically confines itself to theories of health and the importance of health in Nietzsche's philosophy.

Although I have raised concerns regarding Berry's analysis of the similarities between the two philosophies on health, my own analysis reveals, I suggest, more compelling and important parallels between Nietzsche and the Sceptics. In particular there is a shared recognition that philosophy should be practised as a way of life and as a means to cure sickness. There are also parallels in that both Nietzsche and the Sceptics recognize the existence of a sickness which derives from a dogmatic approach to values which both philosophies suggest must be challenged if sickness is to be cured. I have also explored the extent to which both philosophies challenge adherence to traditional moral/ethical systems of their time.

Further, the Sceptic's attack on dogmatism invites a re-consideration of: presuppositions regarding unconditional truth and the value of the search for truth, the extent to which we can talk about a criterion of truth, presuppositions about the universal applicability of moral values and the rejection of traditional theories of happiness as the goal of life. These are themes which Nietzsche also addresses. I have also identified significant divergences between the two philosophies in terms of their understanding of what constitutes psychological health and well-being and the scope of the values under attack. There are I have shown irreconcilable differences between the Sceptic's *ataraxia* and Nietzsche's great health and the Sceptic's *epochē* and Nietzsche's creation of values.

I suggest that this comparison of Nietzsche's views on health with those of Pyrrhonian scepticism usefully illuminates and aids understanding of these themes in Nietzsche's philosophy and in particular his thoughts on dogmatism and philosophy as a way of life.

## Appendix A    Similarity and Influence

The writers whose work I discuss in chapter 9, Berry primarily, but also Parush, Mitcheson and Bett all concur rightly, I suggest, with the claim that there are undoubtedly similarities between the philosophies of Nietzsche and the Pyrronian sceptics which are worthy of investigation. Having, in this thesis, examined these similarities it is, I suggest, interesting to raise the question: 'What significance should we attach to this idea?' I do not suggest that Nietzsche was a Pyrronian sceptic; I do not suggest that he subscribed explicitly to their philosophy; and I do not suggest that Nietzsche knowingly adopted and developed the ideas of the Sceptics. It is, after all, I suggest, in the very nature of philosophical inquiry and research that philosophers will come up with similar ideas and reach similar conclusions completely independently.

Clearly, we could suggest that the parallels identified are pure coincidence, but I argue that the similarities go beyond this – which brings us to the question of 'influence'. We might conclude that Nietzsche was explicitly influenced by Pyrronian scepticism and the writings of Sextus: Berry (2011:24) argues for this approach. But what, if any, evidence do we have to validate the claim of influence? Berry acknowledges that an argument suggesting influence, for it to be compelling, requires more than just similarities. On the basis of Skinner's criteria to which Berry adverts and which I referred to in chapter 9, Berry would (as she does) have to acknowledge that we cannot infer influence solely from the existence of a similarity between two philosophies.

The shared attack on dogmatism is a significant factor which might suggest influence but this, I suggest, is not conclusive. What I suggest is beyond doubt is that Pyrronian scepticism is characterised by its attack on dogmatism and Nietzsche's writings evince the same characteristic opposition towards 'dogmatism'. This opposition to dogmatism is, for Nietzsche, more than just a passing reference: it is, as I have argued, an important philosophical position which has significance for Nietzsche's project for the revaluation of values. The opposition to dogmatism is allied to the opposition to objectivity in morality and the questioning of unconditional truth which appear in both philosophies. Moreover we can recognize in Nietzsche's writings his inclination towards Pyrrhonist language as a philosophical methodology with the objective of encouraging doubt. However even if we are tempted to interpret these as evidence of influence, I think that we may need to

## Appendix A

consider that what we are seeing may be no more than a set of fortuitous coincidences – the idea that Nietzsche's philosophical principles ostensibly align even if in just some approximate way with Pyrrhonian scepticism. Be that as it may, I think it is worth asking the question whether these Pyrrhonian tropes such as the opposition to 'dogmatism' and the use of the explicit language of the Pyrrhonians such as suspension, *ephēxis, ataraxy*<sup>43</sup> and 'perhaps'<sup>44</sup> would have appeared as themes in Nietzsche's works, if it were not for his background in classical philology. We must, I suggest, acknowledge that terms and language of this kind have their origins in Sceptic literature.

Thomas Brobjer's *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context* is a biography of Nietzsche and a comprehensive study of all the books in Nietzsche's library as well as an identification of the books he read. Brobjer (2008: ix) observes that Nietzsche's 'reading was often the starting point for, or counterpoint to, much of his thinking and writing'. In a comparative study of Nietzsche's work with Pyrrhonian scepticism, a discussion of what Nietzsche read and the books in which he showed particular interest might I suggest be taken as giving context to, and suggestive of the inspiration for Nietzsche's work of revaluation and in particular the theme of revaluation as therapy. Brobjer (2008: 111) comments that 'it was not uncommon for the mature Nietzsche to borrow significantly without naming his sources.' Brobjer's (2008: 105) comment that 'many aspects of a philosopher's thinking become much clearer when we see his response to similar (or different) kinds of thinking in someone else's writings' is, I argue, pertinent when discussing the areas of similarity and divergences within the two philosophies.

Nietzsche makes no explicit acknowledgement of Pyrrhonian influence in his works but Brobjer's study indicates that through his readings and the books found in his library it is clear that Nietzsche had some knowledge of Pyrrhonian scepticism. In determining what weight to attach to the absence of any explicit acknowledgement of Pyrrhonian influence it is, I suggest, relevant to consider Nietzsche's approach to the writings of Schopenhauer by whom Nietzsche was quite clearly influenced. Brobjer (2008: 28-32) discusses

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<sup>43</sup> Maudemarie Clark (1998: 164) refers to Nietzsche's use of *ataraxy* in GM III 25 as 'a central concept for the Sceptics, tied to the ephectic attitude'. Clark (1998: 154) also notes Nietzsche's use of *ephectic* in GM III 9. She comments that the word 'stems from the Greek verb *epekhēin*, to hold back, to reserve judgement, to "wait and see". The Greek sceptic philosophers were also referred to as "ephectics" since their scepticism led them to reserve judgement.

<sup>44</sup> I discuss Nietzsche's use of these Sceptic principles in chapter 7.

Schopenhauer as one of six authors he considers to have had a major influence on Nietzsche's work but the literature on Pyrrhonian scepticism does not appear in this part of Brobjer's discussion. Given Nietzsche's acknowledgment of Schopenhauer's influence on his work, albeit in the early years, the absence of any comparable mention of Pyrrhonian scepticism compels us to question the claim for Pyrrhonian influence. Even when Nietzsche ultimately rejects Schopenhauer's philosophy we can I suggest still see Schopenhauer's influence in the philosophy which Nietzsche goes on to develop. Nietzsche's will to power was, as I discussed in chapter 6, a direct consequence of Schopenhauer's analysis of the nature of the will and Nietzsche's rejection of the philosophy which arose from that analysis. Nietzsche's acknowledgement of Schopenhauerian influence when taken with the absence of any explicit acknowledgement of Pyrrhonian influence makes influence, I suggest, a less likely conclusion.

There is no evidence that Nietzsche had read any of Sextus's original works. Brobjer's research fails to identify Sextus' works as amongst those found in Nietzsche's library; and there is nothing in Brobjer's research to indicate that Nietzsche had read any of Sextus' works. But it is, I suggest, fair to say that Nietzsche would certainly through his reading of Diogenes Laertius, Victor Brochard and Michel de Montaigne have been aware of Sextus' work and would have been acquainted with the fundamental principles of Pyrrhonian scepticism.

Diogenes Laertius would have been one of Nietzsche's principal sources for Pyrrhonian scepticism. In his early years (1866- 67) Nietzsche's studies included research on Diogenes for which he won a prize (Brobjer 2008:192-3). Diogenes was a historian of ancient philosophy whose 10 volume *Lives of the Philosophers* includes in Book 9 an account of Pyrrho's life and the principles of the philosophy named after him. Hankinson (1995: 11) compares Diogenes' account with Sextus' work and he considers the latter's work to be, 'clear, for the most part well-organized, and packed with argumentation'. However in contrast to Sextus, Hankinson describes Diogenes account as 'gossipy' and also 'compressed, sometimes unintelligible and a generally unintelligent summary of Pyrrhonian scepticism' (1995: 4, 11). However, Diogenes' account of Pyrrho does provide a limited discussion of the major principles covered in Sextus' *Outlines* and it also includes, according to Hankinson (1995: 155) a 'briefer and less sophisticated account' of

## Appendix A

The Ten Modes (DL IX 78-88). And Vogt (2016: 4) comments that after Sextus, 'the second-most detailed account of Pyrrhonian scepticism is offered by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*'.<sup>45</sup>

I discussed in Chapter 9, Nietzsche's praise of Brochard in *EH*: 'Why I'm So Clever',<sup>3</sup> where he writes: 'an excellent study by Victor Brochard, *Les Sceptiques Grecs*, that puts my Laertiana to good use as well'. Here Nietzsche, as discussed previously, is full of praise for Brochard's *Les Sceptiques Grecs* published in 1887 whose book provides a detailed historical and philosophical account of Pyrrhonian scepticism from its beginnings, starting with Pyrrho its founder right up to the time of Sextus Empiricus. The final sections where Brochard deals with Sextus' works rehearse and discuss many of the important passages from the *Outlines* as well as important passages from *Against the Ethicists*. Annas and Barnes and Berry, as I commented on earlier, consider Brochard's work to be one of the best possible accounts of Pyrrhonian scepticism. Of course Nietzsche would have read Brochard after the publication of much of his major works and towards the end of his writing life and thus Brochard's words would have had no impact on work written before 1888. Brobjer (2008: 236) comments that Nietzsche's reading of Brochard's book can be shown to have influenced a large number of notes and probably some of his published texts. In chapter 9, I commented on Nietzsche's discussion of Pyrrho in a *Notebook* passage (WP 437 March-June 1888).

Montaigne would, I suggest, have been a further source for Nietzsche's study of Pyrrhonian scepticism. M.A. Screech (1987: xxxiv) in his *Introduction to Montaigne's Complete Essays* comments that Sextus' *Outlines* 'dominates parts of the "Apology for Raymond Sebond"'.<sup>46</sup> In 1870 Nietzsche reports having received 'as Christmas gift...a magnificent edition of the complete Montaigne (whom I highly honour)' (Brobjer 2008: 198). Nietzsche's reading of Montaigne's *Essays* began from his early years so Montaigne's *Essays* would have informed his views on Pyrrhonian scepticism throughout the whole of his writing life.

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<sup>45</sup> I suggest however that Brochard's account of Pyrrhonian scepticism is superior to Diogenes; this view also accords with Annas' and Barnes' and Berry's view of Brochard.

<sup>46</sup> The publication in 1562 by Henri Estienne of the first edition of the original Greek text of Sextus' account of Pyrrhonian scepticism gave Montaigne access to Sextus' *Outlines*. See pages 560 to 566 for Montaigne's detailed discussion of Pyrrhonian scepticism. Screech (1987: 563) comments in a footnote that Montaigne's library indicates that he made use of aphorisms from Sextus' *Outlines*.

Nietzsche, as previously mentioned, never explicitly affirms a commitment to Pyrrhonian scepticism so it is impossible to draw any conclusions regarding the extent to which his reading of Sceptic literature influenced his writings. Brobjer's study suggests that Nietzsche's reading of literature on Pyrrhonian scepticism was limited and this I suggest diminishes any claim for influence. We have no evidence that Nietzsche read any of Sextus' works and the most complete account of Sextus' extant works (Brochard) appeared after Nietzsche had written most of his major works. Nietzsche's intricate account of mental health and moral evaluation is certainly more complex than Sextus' less philosophically rigorous and comparable account.

### *Closing Remarks*

All human progress is, I suggest, built on ideas and themes that came before. Even Charles Darwin and Albert Einstein would not deny that they developed their 'innovations' on earlier ideas and writings. It does not, I suggest, detract from Nietzsche's insight in any way to suggest that he too might have benefitted from the wisdom of philosophers from an earlier time.

We can agree that there are significant similarities between the two philosophies: the practice of philosophy as praxis over theory, the focus on health as what one should aim for, the analysis of sickness and the therapeutic aim in finding a remedy, the re-evaluation of ethical or moral values and the attack on dogmatism are themes which both philosophies share. We can also agree that there are two significant divergences: firstly there is the notion of health towards which each philosophy aims which is tranquillity (*ataraxia*) in Pyrrhonian scepticism and Nietzsche's great health, encompassing flourishing, excellence and the affirmation of life and secondly, the Pyrrhonian's *epochē* and Nietzsche's creation of values. These two factors, I suggest, cast doubt on arguments of influence. However, it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions about influence from these similarities and divergences. We might, however, infer that as a result of his classical background and knowledge of Pyrrhonian scepticism those principles which emerge from his philosophy are a development of those initiated by Pyrrhonian scepticism and the writings of Sextus.

Be that as it may, I argue that Pyrrhonian scepticism should be seen as a helpful interpretive device in the understanding of Nietzsche's ideas: the development of his

## Appendix A

ideas on sickness and health, the attack on dogmatism, the attack on philosophy as the exclusive practice of abstract theories and the philosopher's belief in unqualified truth. I suggest that the originality of the principles which the Sceptics employ and their pursuit of health as the principal objective help in understanding the novelty of Nietzsche's approach and may well have inspired him.

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