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The Fifth-Rate Power

Nietzsche on consciousness

Adam Geoffrey Walter Parkins

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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The Fifth-Rate Power

Nietzsche on consciousness

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Department of Philosophy

Doctor of Philosophy

THE FIFTH RATE POWER: NIETZSCHE ON CONSCIOUSNESS

By Adam Geoffrey Walter Parkins

The aim of this thesis is to explain a series of apparent contradictions in Nietzsche's theory of mind relating to his views on consciousness. Nietzsche refers to consciousness as the source of human superiority but also goes on to call it falsifying, damaging, a sickness and a disease. To make matters more confusing, he then appears to claim that consciousness is lacking in efficacy. If an entity lacks efficacy it is difficult to understand how it can be either damaging or beneficial; similarly, having species elevating benefits would seem to be incompatible with being equivalent to a sickness and an ever-growing danger. This represents a significant problem for Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, for his understanding of consciousness features as an explanatory tool throughout all his major works and ideas. To make sense of this problem, two recent attempts at reconciling these apparent conflicts are assessed: both Mattia Riccardi and Paul Katsafanas interpret Nietzsche's attacks on consciousness as resulting, in some sense, from the emergence of falsification through that consciousness; however, an investigation of Nietzsche's attitude towards falsification shows that he is only concerned with whether the consequences of falsification are negative or positive, and is neutral towards falsification itself. An alternative interpretation is proposed in which consciousness is beneficial *because* of its falsifying character, with the resultant distortions of the environment enabling abstraction and planning. However, due to this inherently falsifying nature, as well as the origin of consciousness as a device for the suppression of instincts, the *overestimation* and *overuse* of consciousness leads to its emergence as a distorting interpretive system that unhealthily suppresses the instincts, and distorts the organism's understanding of itself and its environment in deeply harmful and dangerous ways.

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Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

I, ADAM GEOFFREY WALTER PARKINS 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.

The Fifth-Rate Power: Nietzsche on consciousness

I confirm that:

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- 3.Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
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Abbreviations

Works by Nietzsche:

<i>A</i>	<i>The Anti-Christ</i>
<i>BGE</i>	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Daybreak</i>
<i>EH</i>	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
<i>GS</i>	<i>The Gay Science</i>
<i>GM</i>	<i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i>
<i>HC</i>	<i>'Homer's Contest</i>
<i>KSA</i>	<i>Kritische Studienausgabe</i>
<i>TI</i>	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
<i>WP</i>	<i>Will to power</i>
Jung	
<i>A</i>	<i>The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious</i>
Leibniz	
<i>NE</i>	<i>New Essays on Human Understanding</i>

The Fifth-Rate Power

Nietzsche on consciousness

Adam Geoffrey Walter Parkins

Introduction

In many passages of Nietzsche's work, he appears to take a largely conventional view of consciousness. As human-specific, conceptual, related to language, reflective, enabling abstraction and human superiority, it has all the hallmarks of common usage. He also appears to grant it an elevated normative status, in his referring to consciousness as the source of human 'superiority', 'man's highest strength' in his capacity to abstract through 'concepts and numbers'.¹ And yet, Nietzsche is also prone to make the most disparaging kinds of remarks about consciousness. In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche refers to consciousness as a kind of 'fifth-rate' power when compared to the instincts [A39]. In *The Gay Science*, he calls it 'basically superfluous' before also labelling it 'a surface', a world 'debased to its lowest common denominator', 'shallow', 'a herd-mark', and a vast and thorough 'corruption and falsification'[G354].

What makes this situation particularly puzzling is that Nietzsche seems to hold each of these seemingly contradictory views jointly, elaborating on them at length, within the same book or even the same passage. Even more perplexing, the role consciousness has as an explanatory tool is for Nietzsche unparalleled: from *The Gay Science* to *The Anti-Christ*, it is used in a precise and unaltered form to explain nearly every major human development, from the internalisation of the instincts down to guilt-conscience and the development of the first states. Clearly, these apparent conflicts cannot be put down to carelessness, nor can they be easily dismissed given their central role in his writings. Given the centrality of consciousness to his work, it would not be an exaggeration to state that this conflict has the potential to undermine most of Nietzsche's psychological and ethical positions.

What we seem to have here is one of the most important concepts within Nietzschean thought—a central theme, ubiquitous in his writings, unparalleled as a psychological

¹ Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 34[131]= WLN, 10

explanatory tool—that just seems to make absolutely no sense whatsoever—and this should strike us as both odd and incredibly interesting. We are left with two questions. Why did Nietzsche think that two apparently inconsistent attitudes towards consciousness were, in fact, consistent, indeed complementary? What conception of consciousness must lie in the background to unify this seemingly incongruous set of attitudes?

This oddity has been well noted, and some recent groundbreaking work on this topic has been produced by, in particular, Paul Katsafanas and later Mattia Riccardi, who note the strangeness of a consciousness that enables higher thought, but is the lowest type of thought, that is dangerous and damaging, but also superfluous—perhaps even epiphenomenal. These two problems can be summarised as follows:

[P1] How can consciousness be falsifying and distorting, damaging and a disease, while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness (consciousness is 'basically superfluous') if consciousness elevates mankind, while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

Katsafanas and Riccardi both attempt to solve the problem of these two elements of contradiction. Their approaches are in one sense similar, as they both attempt to locate an explanation for the negative and positive elements of consciousness in the very nature of generalisation itself—roughly, their claim is that generalisation through concepts offers a specificity that is at once useful and inaccurate. I follow Katsafanas and Riccardi in the identification of these two elements of conflict, and in this respect, a primary objective of this thesis mirrors their work in finding a solution to this problem in answering [P1] and [P2]. Where I move away from Katsafanas and Riccardi—and, indeed, where Katsafanas and Riccardi move apart from each other—is over precisely the nature and extent of conceptuality's role in this generalisation.

Laying out these positions broadly, for the benefit of having at least something of a roadmap, we might say that Katsafanas paints a Nietzsche who is ambivalent about consciousness generally, for while abstraction brings obvious benefits such as communication and reasoning through conceptualisation, such abstraction leads to overgeneralisation, falsehood and ultimately greater suffering through the manner in which these errors impair unconscious processing. Riccardi, on the other hand, more or less follows Katsafanas' general course but, in introducing a distinction between

conscious conceptual activity and unconscious conceptual activity, is able to limit the negative elements to a generalisation that is specifically conscious and socially mediated—as distinct from *unconscious* perceptual conceptuality, which emerges as innocent.

Building on these foundations and continuing along the same developmental line, if we understand Katsafanas as arguing for an interpretation on which Nietzsche attacks consciousness due to its introducing *conceptual falsification*, and Riccardi as refining this claim to focus on only *socially mediated conceptual* falsification, I will be arguing for an interpretation in which *all* human existence is permeated by falsification, that such falsification can be either negative or positive, and that Nietzsche only objects to the falsification of consciousness when it is overestimated and so overused.

Beyond this interpretation aligning more appropriately with the individual texts, it is also the only interpretation that results in a somewhat natural reading of Nietzsche's work as a whole. By this, I mean that Nietzsche seems to think himself rather adept at socially mediated discourse—exhibit one: *Why I write such good books*—and arguably has as great a command of concepts and language as any human who has lived.² It would, as a result, make sense to arrive at a conclusion which does not condemn most of his active life's work.

But the relevance of this topic goes deeper than offering an interpretive solution to an historical issue—that so central an element of a philosopher so extensively studied has eluded our understanding for so long must be suggestive of something! My proposal is that just below the surface of this debate lies the riddle that led Kant to the synthetic a priori and Jung to the collective unconscious. *What is the contribution to our experience of the world by elements that we either cannot know or cannot control?* And this is the question we return to, again and again, and in ever greater panic, whether in the form of philosophical debate, such as between McDowell and Dreyfus—which seems ultimately to be a disagreement over the best way to explain unconscious rationality—or the conflict emerging between the Sciences and Humanities over the ever-increasing data on the primacy of hereditary factors .

² As a philologist, becoming a professor at 24, with an extensive command of language.

In this context, Nietzsche's answer to this riddle gains a new relevance, not least from his influence on Freud and Jung and the subsequent edifice of psychology that has resulted, as well as in its application to debates in contemporary philosophy, such as that between Dreyfus and McDowell. But even more so in the context of an evolutionary psychology and neuroscience reaching maturity that will unquestionably cause great social convulsions in the coming decades.

Ultimately I will argue for the conclusion that it is neither conceptuality nor language to which Nietzsche objects—he believes generalised falsehood to be present at the level of the categories (and it makes little sense to warn against something we cannot avoid); nor can his target be the 'socially mediated propositional articulation' Riccardi picks out—for again, it makes little sense to warn against something we cannot avoid and that Nietzsche himself seems to have spent most of his life happily engaged in. Instead, I believe Nietzsche warns against a mode of said articulation that is not sufficiently wedded to our culture, history and hereditary concepts. Overreliance and obsession with a language of signs results in a mind that becomes artificially divorced from an unconscious that is the sole tether to social, historical and biological reality, and in such a context gaps such as that between guilt-conscience and bad-conscience become possible. It is thus not consciousness itself—or thinking in words—to which Nietzsche objects, but an overused and overestimated conscious mechanism left cold through a lack of friction with an unconscious that grounds it to life.

1. The Problem of Consciousness in Nietzsche's Philosophy

1.1 *The various statements*

Nietzsche refers to consciousness as man's *highest strength*, but he also calls it a *thorough corruption and falsification*. He warns against the growing consciousness in Europe as a danger and a sickness, but in the same breath speaks of it as 'basically superfluous'—something that we essentially do without most of the time anyway.³ As odd as it is to label this feature of human life a highest strength while also labelling it a sickness and danger, it is even more so to call it these things and then call into question its efficacy. As a result, Nietzsche's statements on consciousness, when taken in combination, might variously be described as perplexing, incoherent or embarrassing—or all three, depending on how charitable one is feeling at the time.

He begins with what we might think of as being a conventional position, citing several benefits of consciousness and making the customary associations with language and conceptuality that result in man's capacity for higher thought and reflective rationality. Indeed, even in his *On the Genealogy of Morality*—his famous polemic against Christianity—he is always careful to note that despite the terrible sufferings in human history that result from the "social contract" and Christianity itself, the resultant developing consciousness leaves mankind 'pregnant with a future'.⁴ Speaking of conceptuality, something he links directly with consciousness through language, he states:

[...]with this invented and rigid world of concepts and numbers, man gains a means of seizing by signs, as it were, huge quantities of facts and inscribing them in his memory.⁵

In the same section, he then adds that this conceptuality is the source of 'man's superiority', his 'highest strength.' All of this seems incredibly conventional and straightforward. Consciousness is the feature of humanity that distinguishes it from other animals; through language and conceptuality we become capable of a reflective rationality and this is our great strength—this would seem to be every bit the

³ GS 354; Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 34[131]= WLN, 10

⁴ GM II, 16

⁵ Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 34[131]= WLN, 10

conventional picture of reflective human rationality we generally associate with the term.

But, as noted, conventional very quickly becomes odd, for in the same passage in which Nietzsche discusses consciousness as arising in a people who have a 'surplus of the power and art of expression'—a passage headed "*On 'the genius of the species' "*", he then goes on to say not only that consciousness is 'basically superfluous' but that 'we could think, feel, will, remember, and also 'act' in every sense of the term, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness'. He follows this up by adding that not only *could* we do without consciousness, but that we, in fact, *do*, for '*still today*, the predominant part of our lives actually unfolds without this mirroring [...]'.⁶

In these statements we have our first direct conflict. We have the claim that consciousness is the source of man's superiority and strength, his capacity for abstraction and number, but we also have the claim that we could go on the same, entirely without it, and that for the most part do so already. It is worth emphasising, the significance of this claim is not that we could go on without consciousness—perhaps controversial enough in its own right—but that we could go on without it *and have nothing change*. This is important. If Nietzsche were claiming the former we might just agree with him that generalisation has negative effects, but that if giving up consciousness means giving up all the good that comes along with it, *we will just stick with consciousness, thank you very much*. Instead, he is claiming that we can continue the same without consciousness, a claim which, while saving him from accusations of the hyperbolic bloating of a reasonably interesting observation, leaves him with a position that just seems obviously absurd.

However, as though this difficulty were not enough, Nietzsche then throws in another confusing element. He argues that far from being a boon for mankind, consciousness is, in fact, harmful, that it is a danger.

[...]the world of which we can become conscious is merely a surface- and sign-world, a world turned into generalities and thereby debased to its lowest common denominator, - that everything which enters consciousness thereby becomes shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, a sign, a herd-mark; that all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization. [GS 354]

⁶ GS 354

Here, Nietzsche seems to be arguing that this abstraction that consciousness affords us is actually a negative faculty. By abstracting we are simplifying, tearing an idea or experience from context, and this lack of context renders the original content unoriginal, standardised and inaccurate. Seemingly contradicting his earlier statement that '[t]he reduction of experiences to signs, and the ever greater quantity of things which can thus be grasped is man's highest strength', he is here stating that this abstraction is falsifying, corrupting, damaging and dangerous.⁷

Bringing these elements together we might say that consciousness for Nietzsche is a largely irrelevant 'fifth-rate power'⁸ that we could go on to live entirely without, behaving without it exactly as we would with it,⁹ that is at the same time also dangerous, damaging, the source of man's superiority, his highest strength, the shallowest, worst type of thinking, the source of slave morality and the guiding thread of two thousand years of human history, while also being essentially superfluous.

Viewed like this these strong and contrasting statements form quite a mess, but we can refine them down to two major conflicts. On the one hand, we have consciousness as enabler of conceptual activity—man's superiority over the animals through a capacity for abstraction,¹⁰ combined with consciousness as the shallowest, worst type of thinking.¹¹ On the other hand, we have consciousness as a strength, danger and sickness that is somehow also 'superfluous' and generally lacking in efficacy.¹²

[P1] How can consciousness be falsifying and distorting, damaging and a disease, while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

Explaining these two central conflicts is the primary goal of this thesis.

⁷ Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 34[131]= WLN, 10

⁸ A39

⁹ Gs354

¹⁰ Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 34[131]= WLN, 10

¹¹ GS 354

¹² GS 354

1.1.1 *Difficulties of Interpretation*

From all this, we can see that Nietzsche's theory of mind is conventional in many respects, such as in its association of human consciousness with linguistic ability and conceptuality, but it quickly moves into more unconventional territory. The difficulty we have is that these more unconventional elements are not easily dismissed, for they repeatedly appear throughout Nietzsche's work and serve as important explanatory tools. These more controversial statements are centred on two core themes of insight:

[CT] Consciousness is in some sense overrated: its significance in reasoning and general life is both overestimated and largely negative.

[UT] Unconscious processes of which we are unaware do much, or all, of what we normally take to be consciousness at work; that this unconscious reasoning is in some way superior.

In terms of [CT], Nietzsche's denigration of conscious thought is frequent and extensive. He speaks often as though consciousness is a mere reflection of unconscious thought, or that it simply mirrors an interplay of the drives. One of his most explicit statements of this comes in the form of the claim that conscious reasoning is not reasoning itself, but merely a becoming conscious of reasoning [GS354]. In terms of [UT], these claims are the flip side of the [CT] claims: that an unknown element is responsible for much of our action and reasoning. This is perhaps best illustrated with his claim that 'what becomes conscious is subject to causal relations that are completely withholden from us.'¹³

In these two claims we find the impetus and realisation of Nietzsche's attempt at a fundamental reorientation of the way we understand human thought and action, in the shifting of rationality from its traditional conscious role to an unconscious one. As such, they cannot simply be dismissed as exaggeration or hyperbole for together they form a consistently presented position in Nietzsche's work and constitute a philosophically well-motivated reorientation that is heavily reflected in modern psychology in its influence on Freud and Jung in the application of unconscious thought to understanding human behaviour—an approach that has proved fruitful in both clinical settings as well as neuroscience and evolutionary biology.

¹³ NL 1887, KSA 12, 11[145]

However, this move, even if we might be somewhat sympathetic to one or more of its elements, has been beset with difficulties—and in this sense, the textual problems in Nietzsche reflect a larger problem of synthesis found between the sciences and humanities. For one, Nietzsche situates these claims within an entirely conventional understanding of human rationality, i.e. one in which linguistic capacity, conceptuality and reflexivity are present. While, on the one hand, this makes Nietzsche's stance more interesting because he is engaging directly with our philosophical tradition as opposed to stepping outside of it, on the other hand, it becomes increasingly difficult to make sense of how Nietzsche can at once maintain the foundational elements of the conventional viewpoint and also deny their consequences. A prime example of this would be the seemingly incomprehensible juxtaposition of his acceptance that 1) consciousness enables abstraction in number and thought through conceptualisation and 2), his conclusion that genuine thought and sophisticated reasoning is unconscious. It is entirely unclear how consciousness can be the source of higher thought and at the same time be inferior to unconscious thought. It is even less clear why he then goes on to call consciousness "basically superfluous".¹⁴ Again, this would seem to reflect a corresponding conflict between the belief that we are free rational beings and the ever-growing, disturbing evidence that a small number of genes can to a high degree of accuracy predict significant outcomes in our lives.

As a result, it is easy to see why this subject has caused so much confusion. Framing this problem as a question: how can a 'superfluous', 'fifth-rate' power, barely efficacious, that we could go on without and for the most part already do, be either damaging and dangerous or a source of strength and superiority—let alone both, together? Put another way, if non-conscious factors seem to predict much of our behaviour and the end-result of much of our lives, what role is left for consciousness to play?

From a purely exegetical standpoint, what makes this particularly problematic is that these various claims aren't statements from different periods of Nietzsche's life. It isn't the case that he changed his mind. These statements can be found within the same book, sometimes even the same paragraph such as *The Gay Science* 354, and continue all the way to *The Anti Christ*'s attack as a 'fifth-rate' power [A39]. As a result, no straightforward means of extrication is immediately apparent and faced with all this

¹⁴ GS 354

apparent contradiction it might be tempting, perhaps even obvious, to concede not only that no coherent theory exists here, but that Nietzsche did not even attempt at one: this is exactly how Tom Stern proceeds, claiming that Nietzsche is only concerned with the best methods for attacking his targets, with only a minimal interest in developing any kind of theory.¹⁵ I have a number of problems with this viewpoint, but in particular, my concern is that even the barest amount of intellectual charity would lead us quickly away from such a conclusion. It is one thing to make different claims, even contradictory ones, across a career or perhaps even in different works; it is quite another to make different claims two or three times within a single topic of a book, or even—as in *The Gay Science*—in the same paragraph.¹⁶ Even more problematic is that each of these claims have themselves a distinct genealogy: they are serious, sustained leitmotifs within Nietzsche's work that play out against each other from *The Gay Science* to *The Anti-Christ*.

Something seems to have gone badly wrong here; but it seems likely the problem is at least in part to do with some fundamental mistake of interpretation rather being solely a result of textual inadequacy—an issue I turn to later in this chapter. Nevertheless, as hopeless as these conflicts might seem, there have been recent attempts to render these various statements into a coherent whole, and while not completely successful, at least some aspects of these apparent conflicts have been explained away—or if not explained away, made at least in some way comprehensible. Paul Katsafanas, in particular, has gone far in this respect.¹⁷ My intention here is to take this a stage further, to build upon this work, making sense of remaining conflicts, and to point a way towards the refinement of a genuinely coherent and plausible theory of mind within Nietzsche's writings.

¹⁵ Tom Stern. (2015)

¹⁶ In GS354, Nietzsche refers to consciousness as a 'power of art and expression', as well as 'superfluous', while also calling it 'falsifying', corrupting, 'damaging' and dangerous.

¹⁷ Katsafanas (2015)

An Attempt at Reconciliation: Katsafanas and Non-Conceptual Awareness

1.2.1 Conceptual and Non-Conceptual Consciousness

Viewed from a height, we might say that we can locate three overlapping orbits of interference in Nietzsche's claims: the damage claim, the benefit claim and the efficacy claim. Each of these claims sits badly with the others. If an entity lacks efficacy it is difficult to understand how it can be either damaging or beneficial; similarly, something that has species elevating benefits would seem to be incompatible with being equivalent to a sickness and an ever-growing danger.¹⁸

However, as unlikely as it may seem, there are a number of options for extricating Nietzsche from the confusion. In addition to drawing attention to this important area of Nietzsche scholarship, Paul Katsafanas offers a striking solution to both of these conflicts. While I will ultimately argue that the interpretation he offers has limitations, it points towards the possibility of a satisfying conclusion and offers an insightful starting point.

The heart of this solution is a subtle tweak to the manner in which we usually use the term consciousness. Katsafanas begins by noting that while we usually associate consciousness with awareness in some sense, Nietzsche appears to move away from this standard usage.¹⁹ This move is a difficult one, for the usage is so ingrained in our manner or speech that the question "are you conscious of x?" might be taken as synonymous for "are you aware of x?"; however, we would seem to be able to make at least some sense of being unconsciously aware in the sense of subliminal messaging. The justification for this move comes in the form of unconscious perceptions.

[...]we will see that Nietzsche believes that there are unconscious perceptions. A perception is a type of awareness of the world, so by countenancing unconscious perceptions Nietzsche allows that we can be unconsciously aware.²⁰

If there are such things as unconscious perceptions, Katsafanas' argument goes—and what can a perception be but in some sense an awareness of a something perceived?—then there must be unconscious awarenesses, and this rules out the conventional

¹⁸ BGE 354

¹⁹ Katsafanas (2005) P3

²⁰ Katsafanas (2005) P3

distinction for Nietzsche. (It is worth noting that I ultimately argue this analysis is in part flawed, but it is well worth carrying this thought process to its conclusion.)

If Nietzsche does not mean awareness to be the distinguishing factor between conscious and unconscious mental states, then what does he mean for it to be? Katsafanas' answer to this question is that a state is said to be conscious or unconscious depending on whether it is conceptually or non-conceptually articulated. This will be discussed at much greater length, but roughly, he seems to be distinguishing between states of awareness that are propositionally articulated and those that are not—a distinction that we might illustrate with *thinking in words* and as opposed to thinking in images or feelings.

But how does Katsafanas reach this conclusion? and is he justified in doing so? The bulk of his argument is extracted from a rather dense and interesting passage towards the end of *The Gay Science*.

Man, like every living being, thinks continually without knowing it; the thinking that rises to consciousness is only the smallest part of all this—the most superficial and worst part—for only this conscious thinking occurs in words, which is to say signs of communication, and this fact uncovers the origin of consciousness. In brief, the development of language and the development of consciousness (not of reason but merely of the way reason enters consciousness) go hand in hand . . . (GS 354)

Ignoring, for a moment, the first line—which does rather suggest a correlation between consciousness and awareness—the important part here for Katsafanas' purposes is Nietzsche's association of consciousness and language. Explicitly, Nietzsche connects consciousness with language, stating, 'only this conscious thinking occurs in words'. For Nietzsche, the development of consciousness and language are intertwined, with a need to communicate and know one's inner states being the impetus for the development of consciousness. It is to this relationship that Nietzsche refers in this passage.

This, in itself, may not be particularly revealing, but Katsafanas adds to this two statements from *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Will to Power*. He notes that for Nietzsche 'words are signs for concepts' [BGE 268] and that 'concepts are possible only when there are words' [WP 506], and he draws out two conclusions from this. The first is that if words are signs for concepts, then there can be no words without concepts—a sign is a symbol that represents one or more objects or events: if there is nothing to

represent then there can be no representation. The second speaks for itself as a straightforward claim—if there aren't any words there cannot be any concepts.

[-CW] There can be no concepts without words.

[-WC] There can be no words without concepts.

Bringing these two claims together with the *Gay Science* extract in which Nietzsche states that consciousness thinking occurs in words, we can see how Katsafanas arrives at his analysis. If we accept that words and concepts go hand in hand—that there can be no words without concepts and no concepts without words—and if consciousness involves words and no other species of activity involves words, then only consciousness can involve conceptuality. Katsafanas thus arrives at the conclusion that the distinction between conscious and unconscious thought can be most sharply demarcated by the presence or absence of conceptuality.

In other words, conscious mental states have conceptually articulated content. Further, since Nietzsche claims that conscious states, and only conscious states, have conceptually articulated content, it follows that unconscious mental states do not have conceptually articulated content; unconscious states must have a type of nonconceptual content. Accordingly, the distinction between conscious and unconscious states is coextensive with the distinction between mental states which have conceptually articulated content and mental states which have nonconceptual content.²¹

Bringing this all together, Katsafanas suggests that this means conscious mental content is conceptually articulated, unconscious mental content is non-conceptually articulated, explaining that for a state to be conceptually articulated just means that that state is composed of concepts, with the obvious consequence that this mental state cannot be entertained without possession of those concepts.²² In contrast, an unconscious state is composed of elements that are not concepts and so does not require concepts in order to be entertained. But what exactly does this mean, and how does this help resolve the apparent conflicts within Nietzsche's theory of mind?

²¹ Katsafanas (2005) P3

²² Katsafanas (2005) P4

2.2 *Thinking in Images*

At this point we can likely already guess at the manner in which Katsafanas will deal with the counterintuitive claim that we could go on without consciousness. His idea is that the tension surrounding consciousness only appears to exist because we have misunderstood the manner in which Nietzsche is using the term; that while removing a standard notion of consciousness would take away from humanity most of what differentiates it from the rest of the animal world, the usage Nietzsche employs would not have these consequences, and he does this by understanding consciousness for Nietzsche as meaning activity relating to conceptual thought, or thinking in words. Putting a little flesh on this picture, Katsafanas is making a distinction between what we might call verbal and non-verbal mental content: verbal content would be something like looking at a gap between two cars and thinking the words "my car will never fit in there", and non-verbal content would be imagining scratched paint and dents at the thought of the attempted manoeuvre.

On this picture thinking consciously would be to think in terms of concepts, while to think unconsciously would be to think "non-conceptually"— by means of non-conceptually articulated images, for instance.²³ By giving consciousness a very acute meaning and role in Nietzsche's theory of mind we bypass the difficulties of the otherwise odd-sounding claim that we could live entirely without consciousness. '[T]houghts, emotions, desires' can all exist conceptually and non-conceptually.²⁴ This may be somewhat difficult to make sense of initially, but Katsafanas offers a helpful example.

We can easily see how a thought, such as a belief, could have conceptually articulated content: the belief that my car is parked on Main Street, for example, seems to be conceptually articulated, for it involves concepts such as CAR, PARKED, and STREET. Indeed, we might have trouble seeing how a belief could possibly be nonconceptually articulated.

Again, Schopenhauer proves helpful. Schopenhauer claims that non-human animals think in nonconceptually articulated ways, by means of mental images. Human beings share this capacity with the other animals: we, too, sometimes think in mental images. For example, suppose that I am looking for my car, and form a mental image of my car parked

²³ Katsafanas (2005) p10

²⁴ Katsafanas (2005) p5

on Main Street. This thought represents my car on Main Street—that is why, after forming the mental image, I head toward Main Street. Thus, it is just another version—a nonconceptually articulated version—of the conceptually articulated thought that my car is parked on Main Street.^{25 26}

For a state to have conceptual content, then, is for that state to have concepts as its constituents, without whose possession the state could not be conceptually entertained, but this is not the same as claiming that a functionally equivalent awareness cannot be entertained. Someone lacking the concepts ball and orange would not be able to form a conceptually articulated belief that the ball is orange, but would, argues Katsafanas, still be able to have the perception of the orange ball, and one with 'definite, structured content'²⁷ or 'phenomenal' content,²⁸ for these perceptions are clearly different to those of a blue ball or a blue square. Similarly, while someone lacking the concepts "car" and "Main Street" could not entertain the belief that his car is parked on Main Street *conceptually*, upon walking out onto a road he might form an image of his car parked on Main Street, with the result that he then proceeds to walk towards Main Street. This would be a non-conceptual, or phenomenally articulated version of that conceptual thought.

What all this is getting at is a way of making sense of Nietzsche's claim that humans are capable of acting perfectly normally without consciousness, doing all the things we normally do— thinking, acting, believing, willing, feeling—and this is why consciousness is superfluous. The resolution we receive from this analysis is that we are now able to understand why Nietzsche might say that consciousness is superfluous in the context of all the positive things he has previously said about it, as well as its central role in the development of man in Nietzsche's genealogy. For Nietzsche, on this reading, awareness and rational engagement is of two types: one type is conscious and the other type is unconscious. As a result of this understanding, we can now interpret Nietzsche's claim, that we could go on to do all of what we do with consciousness without it, in a manner that does not make a madness of his worldview. There are

²⁵ Katsafanas (2005) p10

²⁶ Christopher Janaway has pointed out that this is in some sense a mischaracterisation of Schopenhauer's views on animal cognition. While Schopenhauer believes animals have a kind of intuition that is structured in terms of time, space and causal relations, he stops short of calling this "thought". I will return to this point later.

²⁷ Katsafanas p6 (forth.)

²⁸ Katsafanas (2005) p4

conscious mental states, but without consciousness the unconscious equivalents of these can do their work.

2.3 *Understanding Falsification*

Katsafanas also uses this way of framing Nietzsche's views on consciousness to make sense of the conflict between the negative and positive claims he makes. That consciousness has benefits is easy to make sense of: conceptualisation allows the generalisation of knowledge from a single object or event to many, saving time and aiding survival— it also enables the transfer of this information from person to person, tribe to tribe and, most importantly, to future generations. First, ideas and skills being transferred through words in speech, and second, the invention of syllables as pictorial symbols so that thoughts could be carved in stone, propelled human life forward by such degrees that modern man is like the blink of an eye compared to all other human development. Great leaps of knowledge could no longer be erased by flood, fire, or disease in the one valley where they had been invented.

However, because conscious states are a simplification and generalisation of both unconscious states and the environment, they are going to be inaccurate and are going to misrepresent their objects to some degree. The first role of concepts is to facilitate communication and as such genuine representation will be secondary to usefulness. In a rush, I might shout "take the red one" referring to something only vaguely red simply because the alternative choice is obviously not red—the context making my meaning clear. The evolution of communication would seem to run along similar lines for Nietzsche in that we *make things equal that are not* for convenience, such as standardising feelings to make them expressible, or more commonly, objects. Nietzsche's objection to this seems to be that a general inaccuracy then creeps into all statements about experience, but more than this, that the standardisation of outward signs results in the standardisation of inward feeling, resulting in the standardisation of humanity, a lack of originality, beauty and genuine individuality of thought and being.²⁹ For if words are commonly held—as they must be if communication is to be possible—how can a thought had in words express anything unique to that individual?

²⁹ GS 354

But Katsafanas also notes the manner in which this generalisation makes possible even more complex psychological interactions that can distort human experience of the world, and it is to this kind of behaviour that Katsafanas attributes Nietzsche's more extreme statements of damage and danger. More precisely, Katsafanas reads Nietzsche as stating that conscious states can create new unconscious states, alter existing ones, as well as change relations between existing states so altering the 'mental economy as a whole'.³⁰ Using the example of guilt-conscience, he describes how the "bad conscience" that results from the internalisation of the instincts can come to be transformed into a fully fledged guilt conscience by means of the conscious association of that "bad-conscience-state" with guilt and debt in relation to the human cultural traditions of debt, suffering and ancestor worship.³¹

A full dissection of the guilt/bad-conscience relation could be the subject of a chapter all its own, but Katsafanas' analysis seems spot-on here. In order to enjoy the advantages of society—and in some cases, simply to avoid pain—earlier humans of the earliest "states" (by which Nietzsche means the earliest large grouping together of humans of a different origin under common law) would have had to repress certain of their instincts. Such repression would, in certain instances, have caused profound suffering and Nietzsche called this bad-conscience. This bad-conscience was, in itself, quite unpleasant, but not necessarily terminal for the individual if they managed to find some release. However, Christianity manages to change the perceived origin of this suffering, teaching that we feel bad *because we are bad*—we suffer because we deserve it. This eventually leads us to associate a sense of suffering with the existence of a perpetual guilt—even though that suffering has nothing to do with guilt—with the result that we embrace perpetual guilt as a state of being. A conscious conceptualisation of suffering as guilt has led to the unconscious association of pain and guilt.

This is a particularly important example for it provides evidence for two of Katsafanas' claims. The first is that Nietzsche's dissatisfaction with consciousness goes beyond simply generalising and a lack of precision; there is instead a great deal of danger in events conceptualised badly or in harmful ways—as we have seen with Christianity. This goes far in making sense of Nietzsche's apparently odd claims that consciousness

³⁰ Katsafanas (2005) p19

³¹ Katsafanas (2005) p.19

was damaging and dangerous, rather than merely distorting. This danger is not inconsistent with the presence of the stated advantages.

The second claim this offers support for is Katsafanas' analysis of the efficacy problem, which is that by referring to consciousness as superfluous Nietzsche simply meant to point out that the unconscious mind can perform functionally equivalent tasks as the conscious mind. The claim was not intended to suggest that consciousness lacks efficacy or that humans could really exist *exactly* the same without it. Understanding the development of guilt-conscience as the conscious mind coming to influence the interpretation of events by the unconscious is precisely the kind of example Katsafanas needs to show the efficacy of consciousness, as well as the kind of distortions of mind that cannot occur without the existence of consciousness.

In all this, Katsafanas has provided a relatively coherent picture of Nietzsche's views on consciousness. Referring back to our two problems we can see how Katsafanas' reading goes far in terms of making sense of them.

[P1] How can consciousness be falsifying and distorting, damaging and a disease, while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

[P1-K] Consciousness elevates humanity by enabling abstraction, but abstraction relies upon imprecision which, magnified over time, can enable massive distortions that cause irreparable harm.

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

[P2-K] Nietzsche cannot mean that we can perform *all* actions without consciousness—as bad-conscience shows, consciousness can distort in ways that are unique only to it; but he does believe we are capable of performing many of the same actions we do daily without consciousness.

Before looking to potential issues with this interpretation it is worth pausing for a moment to observe just how far it has taken us. We have moved from a series of seemingly unconnected and contradictory statements and are looking at something approximating a coherent and plausible theory of mind. Based on an understanding of consciousness that is more or less in line with the conventional elements of rationality,

reflection, language and conceptuality, Nietzsche adds to this an appreciation that abstraction comes with the sacrifice of accuracy and that this inaccuracy can under certain circumstances have distorting and incredibly damaging consequences. The final picture we are left with on Katsafanas' view is one in which consciousness has its main role in the development of language and communication—which does indeed advance man beyond other animals and make him capable of great feats through abstraction with number and concept; but with unconscious mental content alone, we are still capable of engaging with our environment and performing everyday tasks—it is in this sense that consciousness is superfluous. However, consciousness does continue to have a significant impact on humanity through its distortion of our experience of our environment as well as the significant effects it has on our unconscious thinking.

In all this, we have a relatively coherent picture of Nietzsche's views on consciousness and much of this feels correct. However, we might be left feeling uneasy with certain elements of this, in particular, that consciousness is responsible for the hold of Christian morality. *"Consciousness is superfluous", says Nietzsche. "It is really very unimportant"*—and yet it can change the entire course of human history through the spread and promotion of slave morality. And while it is clear that humans are capable of performing certain tasks without conceptual awareness, it is still on this account unclear how these could approach anything like the sophistication and delicacy of a conscious engagement with its environment. For these reasons there may be cause for questioning just how satisfied we should be with this interpretation.

1.3 Assessing this Interpretation

Much of Katsafanas' analysis is undoubtedly correct, and there is strong textual support for many of these claims: Nietzsche spoke of the misrepresenting nature of generalisation, and in the development of bad conscience we have a clear example of consciousness' presence resulting in the distortion of unconscious states that are deeply harmful to the possessed. This grants us a clear conception of how consciousness can offer us such positive elements at the same time as opening humanity up to the possibility of serious error and harm. In terms of offering an answer to [P1] then, this reading takes us to a satisfying conclusion in that we can see why Nietzsche would think of consciousness as both advantageous and seriously damaging.

However, while there is certainly more right in this interpretation than there is wrong, there are reasons for taking this as an excellent illustrative model for how to go about reconciling these seemingly disparate elements of Nietzsche's theory of mind, rather than reflecting Nietzsche's strict position itself. One of these reasons is that while the claims found within Nietzsche's theory of mind work together well on this interpretation when abstracted from their context, this reconciliation becomes more strained when we look to the exact phrasing and general intent of these sections. Nietzsche's pronouncements on the nature of consciousness do not so much sound like nuanced points of order but rather outright condemnation and warning. He states that '*everything* which enters consciousness'—my emphasis—becomes 'shallow, thin, relatively stupid', that '*all* becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialisation, and generalization.' [GS354 – again, my emphasis]. And he ends this section stating that this 'growing consciousness is a danger' and the 'the most conscious Europeans even knows it is a sickness'. Each of these statements seems quite explicit and totally lacking in the nuance that Katsafanas urges us to read into Nietzsche's remarks. But while it is easy to see that we must read such nuance to be there if we are to make sense of Nietzsche in the way Katsafanas suggests we do, it is not so clear that we would be right to do so. Katsafanas' general approach suggests that we take Nietzsche at his word and progress seriously trusting that he has a coherent theory in mind—and Katsafanas has so far stuck to this fruitful approach. But here, Nietzsche really does just sound like he is straightforwardly condemning consciousness.

If we take Nietzsche at his word then, instead of assuming hyperbole or incoherence, we are left with a problem, or at least a problem with an aspect of the solution offered to [P1]. The force and absoluteness of Nietzsche's denigrating statements doesn't quite align with Katsafanas' interpretation. [P1-K] relies upon an interpretation that reads Nietzsche as warning against negative elements of consciousness in particularly extreme cases.

[P1-K] Consciousness elevates humanity by enabling abstraction, but abstraction relies upon imprecision which, magnified over time, can enable massive distortions that cause irreparable harm.

The primary texts seem to claim these extreme, damaging effects of consciousness in *all* instances. *All* consciousness is corruption, *all* consciousness is falsification—these statements are clear. So while it remains the case that much of this analysis sounds

correct in terms of the impact of generalisation and the efficacy of consciousness, something still doesn't feel quite right here.

The lack of alignment extends if we introduce [P2] and the issue of the general efficacy of consciousness. Taken at face value, Nietzsche's statements really do seem to suggest that consciousness is superfluous and that we could go on without it—he even adds to this that 'still today, the predominant part of our lives goes on without this mirroring'[GS354]. What makes this particularly disquieting is that this literal reading of [P2] would go perfectly with a literal reading of [P1]: consciousness is bad and damaging, but that's ok because we simply *don't need it*. Accept this, however, and we are back to inconsistency and our inability to make sense of these statements in light of man's superiority being tied up with consciousness.

We might, however, be left feeling uneasy with certain other elements of this interpretation—and this would give us good reason to try revising it rather than to give up on finding any interpretation at all. In particular, [P2-K] evokes a sense that can be best described as Nietzsche being "set free on a technicality"—*Consciousness has unique effects; but these effects are all replicable by the unconscious*.— Are they unique or not? Could Christianity have come about without consciousness? If not, then it would seem that not all conscious states are replicable by unconscious states. If yes, then in what sense is consciousness not genuinely superfluous?

This somewhat odd characterisation—that consciousness is superfluous but at the same time the guiding thread of two thousand years of human history— seems to suggest that something in this analysis remains unanswered. This conflict between the significance of consciousness in Nietzsche's writings and its superfluosity seems to persist, for there are still too many ways in which it remains unclear how humans could go on *exactly* the same without consciousness. Even putting Christianity aside, there is the issue of how man could have developed sufficiently to engage in certain behaviours at all, including unconscious ones, had consciousness not existed *at some point*— and this problem would appear to be even more serious.

Looking to this second concern, the impact that consciousness has on unconscious development has a central role in the most fundamental of Nietzsche's explanations of human nature and while we might rightly say that Nietzsche thinks we could go on to act quite normally in any given moment with the unconscious mind alone, no satisfactory explanation is given of how the unconscious mind can develop to a degree

that would allow it to take control in such a situation without consciousness. Putting this another way, beyond the strangeness of labelling something superfluous which has guided western history and defined so much of our culture through Christianity, we also have the difficulty of explaining how man could come to develop intellectually without consciousness having ever existed. — Man might be able to do complex things unconsciously in any given moment, but that is because he is conscious in other moments.

This unconscious development has been detailed clearly in *On the Genealogy of Morality*. In what is quite possibly the most important developmental impetus in human history, the formation of the state, we find that this advance is hard to conceive of as occurring without some significant element of communication taking place and, of course, Nietzsche associates communication with a conceptual apparatus and language. But the significance of consciousness here goes much deeper than this. Nietzsche characterises the formation of the state as resulting from a warlike tribe conquering neighbouring populations and forcing on them their own alien laws. These constraints prevent the natural release of the instincts with the result that man internalises such instincts, creating a torture chamber for himself within his own body. The relevance of this is that it is this internalisation of the instincts that forces man to lay aside certain of his more basic and brutish elements of character and sublimate these animal instincts in ways that result in him becoming the complex creature he is today. This suffering then leads to a need to explore the causes of suffering further— again as described in [GM II; 16]—which further develops consciousness and leads to art, science, further suffering, sublimation and all the rest that is modern man.

The whole inner world, originally stretched thinly as though between two layers of skin, was expanded and extended itself and gained depth, breadth and height in proportion to the degree that the external discharge of man's instincts was obstructed. [GM: 2, 16]

This great leap in the development of an 'inner world', this consciousness, emerges as a direct result of internalisation and is intimately entwined with all human development and complexity. Reference to consciousness here is explicit:

[...]the poor things were reduced to relying on thinking, inference, calculation, and the connecting of cause and effect, that is, to relying on their 'consciousness', that most impoverished and error-prone organ! [GM 2; 16]

It is clear, then, that in Nietzsche's most sustained treatment of the development of man out of animal, he takes as the most significant moment this internalisation and development of consciousness; that regardless of whether we take consciousness as a necessary factor in the instigation of this process or merely the major consequence, there can be no question of its central role in the most major stage of man's development. As a result, on Katsafanas' reading, it still remains largely unclear how consciousness is in any way superfluous due to its central role in man's development. While it may be possible to go on momentarily without consciousness—and Nietzsche does seem to claim this when he states that most of what man does today takes place without consciousness³²—he makes it repeatedly clear elsewhere that consciousness is responsible for modern man's development. As such, we still lack a comprehensive explanation for how consciousness can be considered superfluous.

Bringing all these concerns together, we might say that this conflict between the significance of consciousness in Nietzsche's writings and its superfluousness seems to persist, for there are still too many ways in which it is still unclear how humans could go on *exactly* the same without consciousness: in particular, that consciousness is responsible for the hold of Christian morality. In this sense at least, we still lack a satisfying explanation as to why Nietzsche would call consciousness superfluous without qualification. For this reason, I want to return to the foundations of Katsafanas' interpretation to see if we can find the root causes of the remaining discrepancies.

At this point it might be difficult to imagine a reading of Nietzsche that completely reconciles all the key points relating to his theory of mind. The position provided by Katsafanas has shown that we can go far in terms of making sense of these claims—the analysis that responds to [P1]—the Damage problem, is undoubtedly mostly accurate; as is much of the analysis for [P2]—The Efficacy problem. But in terms of bringing all these various claims together exactly as they are presented in the primary texts, it may seem like this is an impossible task. In fact, we might think of this response not as a criticism of the accuracy of Katsafanas' reading, but of Nietzsche's position itself: that Katsafanas succeeds in making Nietzsche's position understandable, even moderately plausible, but that Nietzsche's system simply contains too much internal tension to withstand sustained investigation. I think that such a viewpoint is understandable, but

³² GS 354

ultimately wrong. In this section I will offer a number of reasons for thinking that Katsafanas' interpretation, for all its ingenuity and insight, has a few significant errors, using their identification to direct us towards an alternative interpretation.

1.3.1 *Awareness*

One of the first and most important moves Katsafanas makes is to reject the traditional distinction between the conscious and unconscious as, respectively, that of which we are aware and that of which we are unaware. This sets the stage for his location of such a distinction in the presence or absence of conceptual content, i.e. an engaged conceptual articulation comprised of words. His reason for doing so is that Nietzsche acknowledges the existence of unconscious perceptions, and perceptions are things of which we are aware.

A perception is a type of awareness of the world, so by countenancing unconscious perceptions Nietzsche allows that we can be unconsciously aware. Accordingly, the contrast between the conscious and the unconscious cannot be drawn in terms of awareness of the world.³³

At first glance, this argument seems quite straightforward, but further investigation suggests a revised interpretation, both on textual and contextual grounds.

In the first place, Nietzsche seems to state quite straightforwardly that there are mental representations occurring of which we are unaware.

Man, like every living being, thinks continually without knowing it; the thinking that rises to consciousness is only the smallest part of all this[...]34

Here Nietzsche is straightforwardly asserting that there is a significant amount of mental activity of which we are unaware. This, in itself, would seem to undermine Katsafanas' position, but it gets even worse when Nietzsche again straightforwardly describes the becoming aware of our own thoughts as 'rises to consciousness'. This would seem a rather straightforward acknowledgement that we aren't aware of certain thoughts and that becoming aware of these thoughts is what we refer to as *becoming*

³³ Katsafanas (2005) p.3

³⁴ GS 354

conscious, directly contradicting Katsafanas' analysis. From these passage alone it is clear that awareness is at the core of Nietzsche's distinction between conscious and unconscious thought.

How might Katsafanas respond here? Katsafanas might simply accuse us of begging the question. One response he might provide on the terms of his analysis could be that *rising to consciousness* in the quoted section could simply mean becoming conceptualised; the thinking of which we are not aware might be phenomenally articulated awarenesses that we do not think of as thoughts—it is not that we would be unaware of mental content in these instances, but that we do not acknowledge them to be thoughts.

At this point, given Nietzsche's consistent usage in using unconscious to refer to mental states of which we are unaware I would suggest the burden of proof sits with Katsafanas, but I will address three further reasons that confirm we would be very wrong to read Nietzsche in the sense Katsafanas suggests. The first of these is that there is substantial further textual evidence that refers to unconscious activity as being activity of which we are wholly unaware; secondly, that these statements taken together are suggestive of a coherent program attempting to reorient our understanding of mental life; and thirdly, the contextual evidence of other works that Nietzsche read, borrowed from endorsed at the time that consistently use the conscious/unconscious distinction to refer to aware/unaware.

In terms of passages in the primary texts suggesting that Nietzsche viewed the unconscious to be something to which we lack access and of which we are unaware there are many indirect statements which are to some degree reliant upon context, however, there are also some explicit claims that seem to make Nietzsche's view quite plain. One of these comes in section 333 of *The Gay Science*.

For the longest time conscious thought was considered thought itself; only now does the truth dawn on us that by far the greatest part of our mind's activity proceeds unconscious and unfelt[...]

Here Nietzsche is directly addressing the contribution of conscious and unconscious thought to mental life, placing his view in its historical context: while it was previously considered that conscious thought was synonymous with mental activity itself, Nietzsche now asserts that we recognise that *most* of the mind's activity is 'unconscious

and unfelt'. Crucially, Nietzsche unambiguously contrasts conscious thought with unconscious mental activity which he importantly adds is 'unfelt'. This is made even more explicit in the context of the following statement where he notes that 'what becomes conscious is subject to causal relations that are completely withholden from us.'³⁵ This latter statement makes it clear that it is not a matter of some elements of the unconscious being inaccessible to us, but rather that the underlying causal mechanism of the unconscious *is not something of which we have any awareness at all*. The causal relations of the unconscious are 'completely withholden from us.' (my emphasis). At this point there is simply no room left for Katsafanas' picture of unconscious thought. While unconscious thought on Katsafanas' analysis takes place in images or other phenomenally articulated means there is still the requirement that there be some element of sophistication there, some process of analysis that allows one to come to a conclusion, such as with locating a car on Main Street. But if the causal relations are 'completely withholden from us', if we feel nothing of the unconscious, then it is hard to see Katsafanas' reading as bearing any relation to Nietzsche use of the term.

I think these statements provide enough context for understanding at least one of the defining elements of the unconscious to be an absence of awareness for Nietzsche, however, these claims are not without historical context. This argument becomes even stronger when we note that Otto Liebmann, from whom Nietzsche directly paraphrases certain statements on the unconscious from Leibniz's writings, understands the unconscious in the same way. The same is also true of Freud and Jung, whose views on the unconscious are directly influenced by Nietzsche.

1.3.1.1 *Small and Latent Perceptions*

Nietzsche gives away at least part of the genealogy of his position in *The Gay Science* where he praises '*Leibniz's* incomparable insight' that consciousness 'is merely an *accidens* of representation' and not a 'necessary and essential attribute'.³⁶ This reference has been much discussed and its source in Otto Liebmann's *Analysis der Wirklichkeit* has been noted by Mattia Riccardi, Nikolaos Loukidelis and Christopher

³⁵ NL 1887, KSA 12, 11[145]

³⁶ GS 357

Brinkmann.³⁷ Each notes that Nietzsche studied this book avidly and that Nietzsche's description of '*Leibniz's* incomparable insight' is taken directly from Liebmann—Riccardi calls it borrowing, Liebmann and Brinkmann refer to it as a paraphrasing.³⁸ In the relevant section, Liebmann praises Leibniz's 'psychological discovery' which he notes as being that "'to have representations' and 'to be conscious of them' is not at all the same thing" because 'there are in us many latent and unconscious representations.'³⁹ This is exceptionally helpful in confirming that Nietzsche means by unconscious, at least in part, things of which we are unaware; that we can have 'forgotten' representations that we are not conscious of, but lie hidden and concealed in the unconscious.⁴⁰

Looking directly to Leibniz's *New Essays*, it is both clear that Nietzsche's and Liebmann's characterisation of Leibniz's views are accurate and that the philosophical tradition in which Nietzsche worked had an understanding of the unconscious or unconscious perceptions, memories and thoughts as mental entities of which we are unaware or lack access to. In particular Leibniz speaks frequently of *petites (small) perceptions* and latent perceptions and his works are littered with references to 'unnoticeable perceptions' and 'insensible perceptions' which are 'beyond the reach of our senses'⁴¹ In each of these cases Leibniz is referring to thoughts or perceptions of which we are unaware or unable to sense.

In short, insensible perceptions are as important to psychology as insensible corpuscles are to natural science, and in each case it is unreasonable to reject them on the excuse that they are beyond the reach of our senses.⁴²

Again, Leibniz is explicit in referring to perceptions and mental entities that are quite literally 'beyond the reach of our senses.' Referring to a similar, but slightly different type of experience, he also notes that often 'present perceptions slip by unconsidered and even unnoticed' but that if we are alerted to them shortly afterwards we are able to

³⁷ Riccardi (forthcoming); Loukidelis and Brinkmann (2015)

³⁸ Riccardi (forthcoming) p4; Loukidelis and Brinkmann (2015) p105

³⁹ Liebman AR 212. For further discussion of this see Riccardi (20) p4; Loukidelis and Brinkmann (2015) p105 and Loukidelis (2006).

⁴⁰ Liebman AR 212f

⁴¹ Leibniz NE: Preface

⁴² Leibniz NE Preface

take note of these subsequently. We have 'some sense of these', the referred to events, even though we were not aware of them at the time.⁴³

Thus, we weren't aware of these perceptions when they occurred, and we became aware of them only because we were alerted to them a little—perhaps a very little—later.⁴⁴

Here, we have moved directly to discussion of awareness. Interestingly, this is almost identical to examples of unconscious conceptuality John McDowell uses in his explanation of the nature and use of conceptual capacities in instinctive acts. These include catching a Frisbee without being aware of doing so and chess grandmasters making instant, instinctive moves from moment to moment—again, apparently thoughtlessly.⁴⁵ While the master, lost in the flow of the game might not be consciously aware of his reasons for making any particular move, McDowell suggests that if we interrupt him *immediately afterwards* he will likely be able to explain at least some small element of why he did so—I will return to this theme in the following chapter.

The purpose of these examples has been to show both that Nietzsche directly references and endorses a reading of the unconscious which takes such activity to be of a kind of which we are unaware and lack access to—at least in that immediate moment; but also to show a general familiarity with works that take such a view in Nietzsche's intellectual heritage. This, taken together with Nietzsche's explicit published statements on the unconscious as an absence of awareness and being unfelt, makes it very difficult to treat seriously any denial of this connection. However, while the initial Liebmann reference is to Leibniz's *latent perceptions*, some of these examples given relate also to the notion of *petites perceptions*. I am not sure that this distinction is relevant for our purposes here, however, I will address these now directly, though very briefly.

Leibniz introduces the idea of small perceptions and offers as one example their presence in sensory experience as an indiscernible multitude of un-sensed elements that go together to make up a larger experience. He uses his famous example of the roaring noise of the sea to illustrate this experience.

⁴³ Leibniz NE Preface

⁴⁴ Leibniz NE Preface

⁴⁵ McDowell (2013) p.49

To hear this noise as we do, we have to hear its parts, that is the noise of each wave, although each of these little noises makes itself known only when combined confusedly with all the others, and wouldn't be noticed if the wavelet that made it happened all by itself.⁴⁶

In such an experience we hear the roaring crash of water, sand and stone all along the shoreline, but we experience it as one great noise, rather than the individual molecules bounding around. But that we hear only the one great cacophony and are unable to distinguish each individual element that makes up this experience does not mean that the smaller elements do not have an effect on us—if they did not we would not experience the crash of the wave upon the beach. This example serves as an illustration of the way we are often utterly unaware of certain elements of our existence that make up our total experience of the world.

Mattia Riccardi notes a concern about the application of these *petites perceptions* to Nietzsche's claims of unconscious thought and reasoning; in particular, that while it may be easy to see how the example of insensible small perceptions can be applied to our experience of the external world it is not so clear how they could be applied to the unconscious counterparts of our 'beliefs, desires and emotions.'⁴⁷ That these latter mental contents are the subject of the paraphrased Liebmann passage of GS357 is, in fact, the reason Riccardi concludes that Nietzsche is referring to the same latent perceptions or '*connaissance virtuelle*' as Liebmann, rather than *petites perceptions*.

However, I think it is relatively straightforward to see how even these *petites perceptions* can be applied to beliefs, desires and so on. When Nietzsche speaks of unconscious thoughts and the role that these play in our lives without our being aware of them his intent is not to suggest that we are in no way affected by them or that we are permanently unaware of their presence; his point was that we are unaware of the unconscious causal mechanism that leads to these thoughts or actions manifesting themselves in our conscious life.

Man, like every living being, thinks continually without knowing it; the thinking that rises to consciousness is only the smallest part of all this[...]⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Leibniz NE Preface

⁴⁷ Riccardi p3

⁴⁸ GS 354

That they do rise up to consciousness is how we know they are there, in precisely the same way that our hearing the wave in Leibniz's example shows that we must be affected by the smaller sounds. Indeed, the field of psychoanalysis so heavily influenced by Nietzsche—and, apparently, Leibniz too—is predicated on the idea that by investigating the conflicting elements of our unconscious psyche and bringing something of them to consciousness we can come to a healthy—or healthier—resolution.⁴⁹

Indeed, that there are numerous imperceptible elements of our mental life, most of which go entirely unnoticed, but nevertheless have profound effects is quite arguably the resolution and reorientation of human psychology that Nietzsche sought. In this light we can understand Nietzsche's comments that 'consciousness is not the development of 'reason but only how we become conscious of reason' [GS 354] and 'thinking is only a relation between these drives' [BGE 36] as confirmation of the view that drives and unconscious 'thought' drive our actions and that the conscious elements we experience are simply their 'surface'.⁵⁰ As with the wave, a cacophony of drives, memories, experiences leads to a corresponding surface desire to eat, fight, flee or read Leibniz. We can't be certain that they are there—or rather, we can't be certain exactly what is there, but that we act at all shows that there must be *something* there. Returning now to Leibniz, this is quite plausibly what he is arguing himself in the following extract.

It is these tiny perceptions that often determine our behaviour without our thinking of them, and that deceive unsophisticated people into thinking that there is nothing at work in us that tilts us one way or another—as if it made no difference to us, for instance, whether we turned left or right. They cause that disquiet which I shall show [in II.xxi] differs from suffering only as small differs from large, and yet which frequently causes our desire and even our pleasure, to which it gives a dash of spice.⁵¹

This seems to be exactly the same understanding that Nietzsche provides in the opening passage of the second essay of his *Genealogy of Morality*.

Forgetfulness is not just a *vis inertiae*, as superficial people believe, but is rather an active ability to suppress, positive in the strongest sense of the word, to which we owe the fact

⁴⁹ Jung (1968) Vol 12 Psychology and Alchemy p32

⁵⁰ EH *Why I am so Clever* 9

⁵¹ Leibniz NE Preface

that what we simply live through, experience, take in, no more enters our consciousness during digestion (one could call it spiritual ingestion) than does the thousand-fold process which takes place with our physical consumption of food, our so-called ingestion. To shut the doors and windows of consciousness for a while; not to be bothered by the noise and battle with which our underworld of serviceable organs work with and against each other; a little peace, a little tabula rasa of consciousness to make room for something new, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for ruling, predicting, predetermining (our organism runs along oligarchic lines, you see) – that, as I said, is the benefit of active forgetfulness, like a doorkeeper or guardian of mental order, rest and etiquette: from which we can immediately see how there could be no happiness, cheerfulness, hope, pride, immediacy, without forgetfulness.

Nietzsche's point, as with Leibniz, seems to be that while we feel the innumerable effects of unconscious processing of various kinds, we are nevertheless unaware of each of these individual elements—sometimes because they are individually too small to notice, and sometimes because they reach up suddenly and without warning, perhaps having been actively suppressed. As Nietzsche notes in the above passage, we feel barely any of the minute elements of our organism: we do not notice the dehydration of each individual cell, or their requirements of nutrition, but instead feel the massive crash of hunger or thirst much as we hear Leibniz's wave. The point of these examples is not that we are totally unaware or always unaffected by these unconscious elements, but rather the opposite: that we are always affected by them and ultimately feel their consequences in all of our actions and behaviour—only without being aware of the distinct individual elements that make them up. These are the 'causal relations that are completely withheld from us.'⁵²

Before moving on, it is worth briefly returning to Freud and Jung and psychoanalysis in order to offer a more tangible, real-world application of this conception of the unconscious. As noted before, Freud and Jung, for whom there is substantial evidence of Nietzschean influence, also take a view of the unconscious that takes as a defining characteristic an absence of awareness—Jung notes that for Freud, the unconscious is really 'nothing other than the gathering place for repressed and forgotten contents.'⁵³ While this may serve as further corroborating evidence of this reading in Nietzsche—in that not only those who influenced Nietzsche but also those who Nietzsche influenced

⁵² NL 1887, KSA 12, 11[145]

⁵³ Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*: 2

take this approach—seeing this view in a more modern psychological context will hopefully make this position more clear.

For Jung, one major cause of psychological disruption and distress is in the dissociation of conscious and unconscious elements of the psyche. 'The pathological element does not lie in the existence of these [unconscious] ideas, but in the disassociation of consciousness that can no longer control the unconscious.'⁵⁴ The remedy for such a situation is bringing these two elements into cohesion with one another, understanding the underlying unconscious elements and bringing them to the surface so that they can be dealt with.

Accordingly, the therapeutic method of complex psychology consists on the one hand in making as fully conscious as possible the constellated unconscious contents, and on the other hand in synthesising them with consciousness in the act of recognition.⁵⁵

Jungian psychology is, of course, unquestionably Nietzschean, and this split of the conscious and unconscious can be very easily understood in terms of Nietzsche's story of the internalisation of the instincts. For Jung, this split is still the cause of much distress, and it is only by understanding the unconscious tensions that have been neglected by bringing them to the surface that we can hope to deal with them. Again, for Jung, the unconscious contents are unknown to us, and for modern man, unknown in the additional sense that we have forgotten they exist and have neglected them. But by acknowledging their existence in whatever sense we can, bringing them to the surface and attempting to integrate them into our consciousness, we can become healthier individuals.

This may seem to break from Nietzsche in the sense that Jung speaks of bringing these contents to the surface and integrating these unconscious contents with our conscious mind; while we might be inclined to think of Nietzsche as suggesting that we are forever unaware of these unconscious elements. But, again, this would be to misunderstand Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, it is neither the case that we are always unaware of these elements, nor that we are unable to bring them to the surface to deal with them in any way—his discussion of unconscious drives would seem the most clear example of this. Consciousness is precisely *this* surface in which elements of the

⁵⁴ Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*: 83

⁵⁵ Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*: 84

unconscious or their effects can come to be partly known in Nietzsche: the bits of the unconscious we become aware of are 'the thinking that rises to consciousness' [...].⁵⁶ The drives are (some of) these unconscious elements in Nietzsche, and much as Jung talks of bringing elements of the collective unconscious—or the personal unconscious for Freud—to the surface to integrate them, so Nietzsche's discussion of drives may be thought of as a similar recognition of their existence and an attempt to identify and deal with them—e.g. the ascetic pleasure modern man feels through torturing himself as a sublimation of the natural expression of the will to power that has been curtailed by civilisation.⁵⁷ This in no way contradicts Nietzsche's insistence that the 'causal mechanism' of the unconscious is *wholly* inaccessible to us: we cannot see or access the drives directly, but we feel their effects and become aware of their existence when they rise to consciousness as 'shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general' thoughts.⁵⁸ In this way we can see that the Jungian and Nietzschean systems are continuous—in fact, as I will later argue, aspects of Nietzsche's works are quite arguably attempts at proto-Jungian psychotherapy on a mass scale.

1.3.1.2 Nietzsche's Reorientation

It will hopefully be becoming clear how these claims regarding our lack of awareness of the unconscious are a central element in Nietzsche's overall project. That unconscious processes are mental elements that we lack immediate access to and are unaware of is an integral element of Nietzsche's philosophy of mind that cannot be removed without distorting his most central ideas. That we *can* become aware of these unconscious elements in some sense is in no way contradictory, whether these elements be objects in our visual field that are processed but not consciously acknowledged, or drives that are constantly at work but only rise to the surface as 'superlative degrees'.⁵⁹

As discussed earlier, this role that the unconscious plays for Nietzsche is part of a reorientation of our understanding of reason and human mental life. Nietzsche wants to remind us that the unconscious exists and that it is still the guiding element of our

⁵⁶ GS 354

⁵⁷ GM II. 16

⁵⁸ GS 354

⁵⁹ Daybreak 115

actions, desire and beliefs. This project has as its goal the general acceptance of two fundamental psychological principles:

[CT] Consciousness is in some sense overrated: its significance in reasoning and general life is both overestimated and largely negative.

[UT] Unconscious processes of which we are unaware do much or all, of what we normally take to be consciousness at work; that this unconscious reasoning is in some way superior.

This intent is reflected throughout Nietzsche's work, in his insistence that unconscious drives are the real source of our actions—'thinking is only a relation between these drives' [BGE 36]; that consciousness is superficial—'the thinking that becomes conscious is only the smallest part of it, let's say the shallowest, worst part' [GS 354]; and that we mistakenly believe that conscious thought is genuine thought, genuine reasoning, because that is how we become aware of reasoning—'consciousness is not the development of reason but only how we become conscious of reason' [GS 354].

It is equally reflected in his genealogical explanations of our behaviours, morality and development as a species. We become confused and weak because our instincts are suppressed and conscious reasoning takes on a larger role.

Now they had to walk on their feet and 'carry themselves', whereas they had been carried by the water up till then: a terrible heaviness bore down on them. They felt they were clumsy at performing the simplest task, they did not have their familiar guide any more for this new, unknown world, those regulating impulses that unconsciously led them to safety[...][GM 2; 16]

As a relatively new apparatus, consciousness lacked the precision and efficacy of instincts honed by millions of years of evolution. Mankind became slow and fumbling.

- the poor things were reduced to relying on thinking, inference, calculation, and the connecting of cause with effect, that is, to relying on their 'consciousness', that most impoverished and error-prone organ! [GM 2; 16]

We then turn on ourselves and adopt ascetic behaviours as a means of controlling the drives that can no longer find an outlet, with this sublimation also offering some release.

Lacking external enemies and obstacles, and forced into the oppressive narrowness and conformity of custom, man impatiently ripped himself apart, persecuted himself, gnawed at himself, gave himself no peace and abused himself, this animal who battered himself raw on the bars of his cage and who is supposed to be 'tamed'; man, full of emptiness and torn apart with homesickness for the desert[...] [GM; II; 16]

And this pain and suffering explains the greater development of consciousness as a means of understanding our own suffering and finding allies and assistance in this alien and difficult landscape.

[...]he needed help and protection, he needed his equals; he had to express his neediness and be able to make himself understood - and to do so, he first needed 'consciousness', i.e. even to 'know' what distressed him, to 'know' how he felt, to 'know' what he thought. [GS 354]

Finally, we are able to make sense of the power and hold of Christianity as a means of alleviating suffering by explaining our pain as the result of our own failings; that it is only able to take hold because a gap has opened up between consciousness and the unconscious that allows inaccurate explanations of our predicament to distort elements of our unconscious functioning such that we become entirely enthralled with Christian dogma and symbolism.

You will already have guessed what has really gone on with all this and behind all this: that will to torment oneself, that suppressed cruelty of animal man who has been frightened back into himself and given an inner life, incarcerated in the 'state' to be tamed, and has discovered bad conscience so that he can hurt himself, after the more natural outlet of this wish to hurt had been blocked, - this man of bad conscience has seized on religious presupposition in order to provide his self-torture with its most horrific hardness and sharpness [GM II. 22].

1.3.1.3 *Concluding Remarks on Awareness*

In light of direct statements in the primary texts, the endorsement of philosopher's works with the same view, and a tradition both preceding and influenced by Nietzsche, I hope I have convincingly shown that it would be a mistake to deny the association of unconscious thought and an absence of awareness. This is not to say that this is by any means the only distinction between conscious and unconscious thought, and I will shortly address further differences, but it should be clear that for Nietzsche, at least one

fundamental distinguishing element between conscious and unconscious thought is that we are always aware of the former and never aware of the latter. We can be aware of the existence of unconscious thoughts, but only because we have become aware of some element or effect of that unconscious process in consciousness.

This being the case, it follows that at least one element of Katsafanas' reading of Nietzsche requires revision, in his claim that for Nietzsche we are able to have both conscious and unconscious awareness. This cannot be the case. It also follows from this that we can no longer use Katsafanas' remedy for the apparent contradiction of [P2]—the superfluosity of consciousness: we can no longer explain being able to act without consciousness through a mechanism of unconscious non-conceptually articulated awarenesses.

It may be helpful to finish this discussion on awareness by concluding in terms of an explanation of where Katsafanas may have gone wrong here. There is an important distinction to be made in Nietzsche between being aware of something and being affected by something: we are not always aware of the things that affect us, though we may be aware of their effects. This is the intended meaning of Liebmann's acknowledgment that "'to have representations' and 'to be conscious of them' is not at all the same thing[.]"⁶⁰ For Nietzsche, this manifests itself in the realisation that consciousness 'is merely an *accidens* of representation': the conscious mind is not the totality of our thoughts, and its experiences at any one point do not constitute the totality of what is experienced by the total organism.⁶¹ It is true then that perceptions must have an effect, but this effect can either be at the level of awareness, or below it. The parallel of this thought in Leibniz is that while we may only be aware of our more immediate surroundings, we are nevertheless affected by the whole universe. We might only feel the molecules of water immediately about us when swimming in the sea, but we are affected by every water molecule beneath us and even every molecule in the universe.

Each body is affected by the bodies that touch it, and feels some effects of everything that happens to them; but also through them it also feels the effects of all the bodies that touch them, and so on, so that such communication extends indefinitely. As a result, each body

⁶⁰ Liebman AR 212. For further discussion of this see Riccardi (20) p4; Loukidelis and Brinkmann (2015) p105 and Loukidelis (2006).

⁶¹ GS 357

feels the effects of everything that happens in the universe, so that he who sees everything could read off from each body what is happening everywhere; and, indeed, because he could see in its present state what is distant both in space and in time, he could read also what has happened and what will happen. . . . But a soul can read within itself only what is represented there distinctly; it could never bring out all at once everything that is folded into it, because its folds go on to infinity.⁶²

1.3.2 *Words Without Concepts and Concepts Without Words*

The discussion so far has focused on awareness specifically. This is because Katsafanas' solution to the problems of contradiction in Nietzsche was first to deny that awareness is a distinguishing factor of conscious thought. Having ruled out this factor he then looks for alternatives and finds the answer in the presence or absence of conceptual content.

Accordingly, the distinction between conscious and unconscious states is coextensive with the distinction between mental states which have conceptually articulated content and mental states which have nonconceptual content.⁶³

Briefly recapping, Katsafanas' reason for coming to this conclusion was Nietzsche's claim that 'only this conscious thinking occurs in words'.⁶⁴ Taken together with Nietzsche's further claims that 'words are acoustical signs for concepts' [BGE 268] and that 'concepts are possible only when there are words' [WP 506], he comes to the conclusion that where there are words there must also be concepts, and where words are lacking there can be no concepts. From this Katsafanas extends Nietzsche's initial claim, that 'only this conscious thinking occurs in words',⁶⁵ to the claim that the distinction between conscious and unconscious states is 'coextensive with' the distinction between mental states which have conceptually articulated content and mental states which have nonconceptual content.⁶⁶ In the last section the focus was on showing that the justification for this move—in the denial that awareness can serve as the distinguishing factor—was ill-motivated; in this section, the focus turns to showing

⁶² Leibniz *Monadology* 61

⁶³ Katsafanas (2005) P3

⁶⁴ GS 354

⁶⁵ GS 354

⁶⁶ Katsafanas (2005) P3

that the argument for a conceptual/non-conceptual distinction between consciousness and the unconscious is in itself questionable.

As noted above, three central statements come together to make this argument. The first, that 'only this conscious thinking occurs in words',⁶⁷ seems to be a straightforward stipulation from Nietzsche—he is defining as conscious the thinking that takes place in words. As such, we can take this at face value, with the other two elements of this argument being the operative ones.

[-CW] There can be no concepts without words.

[-WC] There can be no words without concepts.

It seems easy to see how these two claims lead directly to Katsafanas' conclusion if we also accept them at face value. If there can be no concepts without words and no words without concepts then it would seem that there can never be any situation in which there are words with no concepts or concepts with no words. As a result, Katsafanas concludes, if conscious thinking takes place in words and unconscious thinking does not, conscious thinking must utilise concepts and unconscious thinking must not.

However, even if we are willing to accept this argument so far, it is not immediately clear that Katsafanas is entitled to the next fundamental part of this argument in his move to the claim that 'to think in words is to think by means of concepts.'⁶⁸ It isn't immediately clear why there *needing to be concepts for there to be words* requires that *thinking in words means thinking in concepts*.

To make this a little more clear, all [-CW] and [-WC] imply is that in order for there to be words, concepts *must exist*, and that in order for there to be concepts, words *must exist*. All these claims amount to is that for one to exist the other must exist, not that actively engaging in activity with one means actively engaging in activity with the other, i.e. that thinking in words entails thinking in concepts or by means of them. To use a very crude example, there would be no tides without the moon, but that does not mean that the movements of the moon are the same thing as the movements of the tides.

Now, it may be that we have other reasons for associating consciousness and conceptuality, and part of this is that this connection is so firmly rooted in the analytic

⁶⁷ GS 354

⁶⁸ Katsafanas (2005) p3

tradition—but this does not change the fact that in itself this argument is a non sequitur: that one thing is necessary for another to exist says nothing about their functional equivalence. It is also worth noting that this very bias of the analytic tradition, that thinking in words is thinking in concepts, is a natural target of Nietzsche's, as a result of his endorsement of CT and UT.

[CT] Consciousness is in some sense overrated: its significance in reasoning and general life is both overestimated and largely negative.

[UT] Unconscious processes of which we are unaware do much or all, of what we normally take to be consciousness at work; that this unconscious reasoning is in some way superior.

This may seem like quite an alien way of thinking about consciousness, but if we unpack the two relevant premises it should become clearer how this conclusion is a natural consequence of Nietzsche's overall view.

I will not address [-CW - There can be no concepts without words], until the next chapter, as there is a significant amount of discussion of the unconscious required to do this fully. However, it should be quite straightforward in the context of the previous discussion to show now that the claim 'words are signs for concepts' [BGE 268] does not naturally lead to the conclusion that [-WC - There can be no words without concepts]—at least where this latter claim implies a functional equivalence or cotemporary existence. It is again not clear in what way Nietzsche's claim that 'words are signs for concepts' [BGE 268] gets us to the conclusion that there can be no words without concepts.

That words are signs for concepts in no way confirms that there cannot be words without concepts at any given point; it only shows that words cannot function as signs for concepts if there are no concepts. This has no bearing on whether words can exist independently of concepts at any given moment, and certainly has no bearing on whether using a word entails using a concept in that same act. Again, crudely, that there can be no chicken without there first being an egg does not imply that when a chicken exists an egg must at the same time exist.

To conclude this section, there is no obvious textual justification for reading Nietzsche as believing conscious and unconscious thought to be distinguished by, respectively, the presence or absence of conceptual content. A connection between conceptuality

and language does certainly exist in Nietzsche, but this connection as provided in the texts falls short of the cotemporary association Katsafanas requires for his reading. To be clear, I am not arguing that an absence of justification for a conscious/unconscious distinction based on the presence of conceptuality should immediately lead to us abandoning Katsafanas' reading; I am only, at this point, arguing that such a justification does not exist. In the following section, however, I will turn to four serious textual conflicts this reading creates within Nietzsche's psychology that should lead to our abandoning it as a plausible candidate.

1.3.3 *Awareness, Sophistication, Superiority and the Categories*

As a brief reminder of the background of Katsafanas' position, his solution to the tension in Nietzsche's philosophy of mind was to introduce a distinction between conscious and unconscious thought based on, respectively, the presence or absence of conceptuality. His motivation for doing so was grounded in the idea that awareness cannot serve as a distinguishing factor between consciousness and the unconscious in Nietzsche's work and that evidence from GS354 suggests that conceptuality can fill this role. As we have seen, this first claim runs into a host of difficulties: Nietzsche explicitly claims that the opposite—that the unconscious is something of which we are unaware, references with approval other philosophers who have taken an absence of awareness to be a defining feature of the unconscious, and this view is a fundamental element of Nietzsche's attempt to reorient our view of human mental life that is consistent and present throughout his works. We have also seen that the purported justification for distinguishing conscious and unconscious thought through conceptuality is also without merit: there is simply no evidence to support this position. From this, we can see that the motivation and justification for Katsafanas' position is lacking. In this section I look to the conflicts maintaining such a position creates with the remainder of Nietzsche's psychology.

Katsafanas claims that 'the distinction between conscious and unconscious states is coextensive with the distinction between mental states which have conceptually articulated content and mental states which have nonconceptual content.'⁶⁹ To function

⁶⁹ Katsafanas (2005) P3

successfully as an antidote to the tension in Nietzsche's works this claim entails a number of commitments. The first we are already familiar with in the need that unconscious states be mental entities of which we are aware and are able to access. The second is that we are able to perform unconsciously—which, for Katsafanas is the same as saying non-conceptually—the same actions that we are able to perform consciously. The third is that unconscious thought must be superior to conscious thought, not merely in being more accurate, but by being more sophisticated. Fourth, and lastly, we must see that the corruption and falsification caused by conscious thought is unique to conscious thought. I will be arguing that this reading fails in each of these respects.

Having gone already into some depth on the topic of awareness I will keep this brief to avoid repeating points. Katsafanas' reading entails that conscious and unconscious thoughts and experiences are things of which we are fully aware and have unlimited access to. His reading relies upon this, for in order to explain the odd claim that we can function without consciousness, Katsafanas needs to provide a functionality to the unconscious which enables it to perform the same complex tasks that are paradigmatic of conscious thought. Central to this, in Katsafanas' view, is what we might call in-the-moment control: we need to have the same access and control over these non-conceptual thoughts, guiding and directing them. For Katsafanas, this means interpreting non-conceptual thoughts as being experiential awarenesses that, while lacking conceptual content, still have determinate content that can function in the place of concepts. To illustrate this he uses the example of visualising the location of his car as a substitute for the conceptual articulation, "oh yes, I parked at location x". This is what he refers to as a non-conceptually, but phenomenally articulated thought.⁷⁰

But as we have seen Nietzsche associates unconscious activity with activity of which we are unaware and lack immediate access to, with those mental elements which rise up to awareness being those which he calls conscious. As such, this reading is in direct conflict with Nietzsche's usage of the "unconscious" throughout his works.

1.3.3.1 *Sophistication*

⁷⁰ Katsafanas (2005) p9-10

This reading becomes even more problematic, however, when we note that for Nietzsche, these phenomenally articulated awarenesses are supposed to enable us to perform the exact same tasks as consciousness: 'we could think, feel, will, remember, and also 'act' in every sense of the term, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness' [GS 354]. These so-called unconscious thoughts are not merely supposed to mimic certain conscious activities in certain instances, but are also supposed to be able to match them in terms of performative output in every way.

Reiterating briefly, Katsafanas' solution was that humans are able to think non-conceptually by means of, for example, mental images. When faced with a problem, an individual might form a mental image of a solution and then go on to act this solution out—all without thinking in words, all without conceptual content. In Katsafanas' example, when looking for his car, an image of the car in its location presents itself and he then moves towards it.

For example, suppose that I am looking for my car, and form a mental image of my car parked on Main Street. This thought represents my car on Main Street—that is why, after forming the mental image, I head toward Main Street. Thus, it is just another version—a nonconceptually articulated version—of the conceptually articulated thought that my car is parked on Main Street.⁷¹

This would be an example of a non-conceptually articulated thought, of unconscious thought. Now, the problem here, assuming we have no objection to thinking of this behaviour as non-conceptual—there is arguably a good case to be made that it is not—is that while we can see how this type of mental content could perform some of the tasks that conceptuality makes possible, they seem to be limited to simple acts of recognition. The most obvious example would seem to be mathematics—how can, for example, " $2456 + 300 = 2756$ " be a conclusion one can come to non-conceptually in terms of mental images, or indeed, by any means not utilising concepts? One could perhaps visualise the shapes of the numbers and put them together picturing something like the arithmetic one did in school, but to claim that such visualisation was not making use of concepts would seem entirely implausible.

But Katsafanas seems to agree with this analysis, anyway. He states that concepts have classificatory capacities that 'can be employed in non-perceptual contexts,' whereas

⁷¹ Katsafanas (2005) p10

non-conceptual content cannot.⁷² Concepts allow abstraction; we are able to call on an object not perceptually available to us and apply other concepts to it.

Or, put differently, conscious perceptions involve a classifying awareness, whereas unconscious perceptions involve only a discriminatory ability, only a perceptual sensitivity to features of the environment.⁷³

Here, Katsafanas seems to be accepting that unconscious thoughts on his reading do have fundamental differences with conscious thoughts in terms of their functionality, that they straightforwardly cannot compete on equal terms with conscious thought. This may explain the sense of unease felt with this reading of Nietzsche at the outset. Katsafanas is only able to explain how *some* of our conscious activities can be performed by our unconscious mind, not all of them, and Nietzsche is clear in his statement that 'we could think, feel, will, remember, and also 'act' in every sense of the term, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness' [GS 354].

But this reading also seems to be counterintuitive in terms of the interpretation given of the act of non-conceptual thought in the visualisation of a car—even by colloquial standards. Since Freud and Jung, the idea that we have unconscious elements that we are unaware of and that influence our actions has become embedded in the collective conscious. It seems relatively uncontroversial to think of the image of the car's location coming into view as a result of some unconscious process, and correspondingly odd to think of these images as being the unconscious thinking itself. Where would such images come from? We are familiar enough with the unconscious to note the strangeness of such a conception of mental life—as would Nietzsche be, for this is the very question Liebmann asks in the work Nietzsche is so familiar with: 'Could the immense mass of my personal thoughts-supply be radically destroyed, be cancelled entirely, since I am only conscious of a highly limited section of them?' He answers:

Obviously not! [...] [T]he forgotten representations are indeed not in consciousness, but in the soul; not free, but latent;⁷⁴

In such a situation, having formed an intention to perform a particular action, numerous unconscious memories, thoughts, feelings, instincts are in play. Some of

⁷² Katsafanas (2005) p9

⁷³ Katsafanas (2005) p9

⁷⁴ Liebmann Translation from Loukidelis and Brinkmann (2015) p104-105.

these may make themselves known consciously, or they may not; but that any image as a response and answer to that intent does manifest itself consciously is the result of those unknown unconscious elements. The "non-conceptual" image awareness of a car does not create itself ex nihilo. To think so would be to succumb to the same error Leibniz notes in believing that our actions are not affected by un-sensed unconscious mental entities, when really 'they often determine our behaviour without our thinking of them' deceiving us 'into thinking that there is nothing at work in us that tilts us one way or another'.⁷⁵

In summary, from all this, we can see that Katsafanas' reading also fails to match up with Nietzsche's use of the unconscious in terms of its capacity to mimic conscious thoughts in their cognitive and behavioural output. Katsafanas seems to readily acknowledge this, for example, in terms of his acceptance that conscious thinking involves a classifying awareness that can be employed in abstract thought. And Nietzsche is not just explicit in his statement that we could think act and will exactly the same without consciousness, but that we in fact already do: for '*still today*, the predominant part of our lives actually unfolds without this mirroring [...]'.⁷⁶

1.3.3.2 *Unconscious Superiority*

As bad as things may already seem for this interpretation in terms of unconscious thought being able to match up with conscious thought, this reading becomes even more strained when we note that Nietzsche does not merely claim that conscious thought is able to match each of the mental states of the conscious mind, but that unconscious thought is, in fact, *superior*. Nietzsche calls conscious thought the 'least vigorous' [GS 333], as well as the 'shallowest' and 'worst part' [GS 354] of thinking. He also speaks of unconscious thought as the real source of reasoning, while conscious thought is merely 'how we become conscious of reason'—all conscious thought is 'shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, a sign, a herd-mark' [GS 354].

There are two ways that we can make sense of this claim. The first sense, and the sense I take Katsafanas to employ, is that unconscious thought is superior due to the

⁷⁵ Leibniz NE Preface

⁷⁶ GS 354

superficiality and falsification that takes place in consciousness. The second reading, that I will support, is that conscious thought is inferior even before we take into account of these negative elements of consciousness, due to its very nature.

For Katsafanas, this inferiority is due to generalisation and falsification. These are two separate points.

First, conscious states do not capture all of the content of their unconscious counterparts. Second, conscious states causally interact with unconscious states, and this interaction alters the unconscious states in certain ways.⁷⁷

The generalisation is the aspect of consciousness that results in inaccuracy through conceptualisation. In making general rules we eliminate elements of the detail, failing to capture the precise nature of our experience. Offering an example, Katsafanas asks us to imagine looking at a picture of a tree and then attempting to describe this tree in all its detail, utilising whatever resources we might think appropriate. There is a sense, he suggests, in which we would never be able to capture all the detail of that experience of the tree, even given unlimited time and resources. He concludes with the thought that 'experience seems to outstrip our conceptual resources, so that our conceptually articulated mental states can only constitute the smallest portion of our experience'.⁷⁸

This can in some way be attributed to the stifling nature of a language of thought that is designed only to be a language of communication, but this is only part of the story. Katsafanas' second point is that because conscious states can interact with and change unconscious states, the inaccuracy caused by generalisation can be imparted to unconscious states, causing distortions and falsifications that can cause serious harm.⁷⁹ As discussed earlier, one example that Katsafanas offers is of guilt-conscience. A natural pain at the blocking of a drive is consciously conceptualised as guilt in the Christian mythology; through this constant conscious association of pain and guilt, the unconscious pain eventually becomes associated with guilt. In this way, conscious inaccuracy becomes a harmful unconscious association with profound and long-lasting effects.

⁷⁷ Katsafanas (2005) p15

⁷⁸ Katsafanas (2005) p15

⁷⁹ Katsafanas (2005) p18

Katsafanas' first point seems undoubtedly correct in the negative elements of generalisation, and the second claim offers a clear explanation of how conscious states can influence unconscious ones; however, we might pause before accepting Christian guilt's direct emergence from the limited distortions and lack of precision in conceptual engagement generally. For Nietzsche, the development of slave morality and the conceptualisation of suffering as guilt does not inevitably result from generalisation: as illustrated by the healthy psychology of the ancient Greeks—that will soon be discussed in more detail—as well as the observation that the extensive morality of guilt in Christianity is to a significant extent unique. Guilt morality is the result of numerous intertwined elements of the human psyche and history, but for Nietzsche, it is also in a very particular sense the result of a power struggle between the priestly caste and the noble mentality—someone must invent these ascetic structures of Christianity and actively guide others in their adoption. It is very questionable whether this specific kind of Christian distortion of the unconscious can occur without the kind of sustained and active pressure to reconceptualise, even if such a reconceptualisation finds its task made easier by the old psychological pathways of the debtor/creditor relationship, ancestor worship, and the need to have suffering explained. Nietzsche adds that every age has its own type of priest, and in this he seems to be warning more against a tendency towards asceticism through religious organisation than claiming that *any* conceptualisation inevitably leads to asceticism and life-denial.⁸⁰

Spelling this out in a little more detail, we might say that the requisite background for this kind of Christian reconceptualisation is ripe and present in all human psychology. In the first place, we have the need to have suffering explained.

What actually arouses indignation over suffering is not the suffering itself, but the senselessness of suffering[...]⁸¹

Suffering is not in itself bad. In fact, Nietzsche argues that we can put up with almost any amount of it if only we have a reason for doing so. But the converse of this point expressed above is that if we do not understand why we suffer the pain becomes almost unbearable, with the invention of the whole Christian 'machinery of salvation' being one of the responses to the unexplained pain suffered as a result of the

⁸⁰ GM III; 11

⁸¹ GM II; 7

initialisation of the instincts.⁸² Tied up with this is also the debtor/creditor relationship and ancestor worship in the sense of our understanding punishment as a debt to be repaid and the somewhat distinct idea of giving thanks to one's ancestors for the success of the society they founded.⁸³ We can easily imagine how Christianity co-opted these mechanisms in the most powerful way possible.

Christianity's stroke of genius: none other than God sacrificing himself for man's debt, none other than God paying himself back, God as the only one able to redeem man from what, to man himself, has become irredeemable – the creditor sacrificing himself for his debtor, out of love (would you credit it? –), out of love for his debtor! . . .⁸⁴

The stroke of genius was in aligning these old mechanisms of the psyche, in focusing all their power on the creation of one overwhelming conceptual framework of guilt, debt and suffering. In making man responsible for killing God, or the son of God, man now had a reason for the ultimate punishment and suffering, but in taking the sins of the world onto this shoulders Jesus/God pays off this debt—'the creditor sacrificing himself for his debtor'.⁸⁵ In one act Christianity renders man deserving of all possible punishment and at the same time absolves him, rendering him perpetually in debt—perpetually guilty.

In all this there is undoubtedly a sense in which one might say evolved psychological coping mechanisms came to their natural conclusion in Christianity; however, it is not clear that these came as a result of some natural distortion induced by conceptuality—as Katsafanas' reading requires, but were rather necessary compartments towards the world in the face of terrible tragedy and pain. They were mechanisms of survival. For Jung, these would be the universal mythological templates and symbols that regulate and provide balance between the conscious and unconscious. The important consequence of this, is that it does not seem that they fit naturally into Katsafanas' picture of innocuous perceptual distortions of conceptualisation that eventually remould the unconscious in dangerous ways; these distortions can only come about if there is a guide who inculcates them into the mental workings of that society—the priest—in an active and sustained effort.

⁸² GM II; 7

⁸³ GM II; 22

⁸⁴ GM II; 21

⁸⁵ GM II; 21

Bringing all this together, Katsafanas reads unconscious distortions as in some sense emerging from interpretive inaccuracy though generalisation and simplification; but we have seen in the example of guilt-conscience that this distortion has another source, in part in the 'protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life',⁸⁶ but also in the ascetic priests' attempt to wrest power from the noble mentality, and other sublimations of basic instincts. That slave morality, the ascetic priest and guilt-conscience come about at all is undoubtedly made possible by the internalisation of the instincts, language and the resulting consciousness; but this is an altogether different course to that of an inevitable development from distortion.

None of this is meant to suggest that Katsafanas is wrong in either of his claims that conceptuality introduces imprecision or that conscious thoughts can influence unconscious ones; but Nietzsche's descriptions of the processes that lead to the worst distortions in the human psyche involve other necessary guiding forces like the ascetic priest. Conceptualisation in itself is not enough to get us to the worst distortions and falsifications Nietzsche thought were so harmful to humanity. That further explanation is required leaves Katsafanas' reading incomplete and I will look to this in the next section as part of an alternative means of interpreting Nietzsche's philosophy of mind. Nor is this meant to suggest that the interplay of conscious and unconscious thoughts did not lead in these instances to the unconscious distortions Katsafanas speaks of. For the purposes of this discussion, however, it does seem to suggest that these worst elements of consciousness are not inherent elements of consciousness. The inferiority of consciousness is on Katsafanas' reading put down to the inherent imprecision of conceptuality and the damaging distortions they create. If these worst distortions are not necessary to conceptuality but contingent on other factors, we lack an explanation for such inferiority on this reading.

Nietzsche helpfully confirms that this reading is correct in his portrayal of the Ancient Greeks and their own mythologies and symbolism, using the very example of bad consciousness to illustrate his point. For Nietzsche, the Greeks were examples of a healthy way of going about dealing with the psychic turmoil that resulted from the internalisation of the instincts.

⁸⁶ GM III; 13; see also, GM III; 16

These Greeks, for most of the time, used their gods expressly to keep 'bad conscience' at bay so that they could carry on enjoying their freedom of soul: therefore, the opposite of the way Christendom made use of its God.⁸⁷

Here, the animal drives of man felt deified in their representations in the Greek gods rather than being suppressed as in Christian asceticism, and most vitally, the God's did not 'take the punishment on themselves, but rather, as is nobler, the guilt . . .'⁸⁸ Rather than saddling man with an irredeemable debt and guilt as in Christianity, the Greek gods, in fact, did the very opposite, taking responsibility for the crimes of man onto themselves.

– for centuries, the noble Greek asked himself this in the face of any incomprehensible atrocity or crime with which one of his peers had sullied himself. 'A god must have confused him', he said to himself at last, shaking his head . . .⁸⁹

Nietzsche here provides us with an example of how a fully conscious, developed man can deal with the internalisation of the instincts without creating the kind of distortions in the unconscious that Christianity provides, without the profound suffering and perpetual guilt: here, 'the animal in man felt deified, did not tear itself apart and did not rage against itself!'⁹⁰

It is worth noting that a very similar means of dealing with such inexplicable acts seems to have remained present until very recently in Western culture, whether in the form of the siren, the succubus, the mermaid or the witch. It would also seem to be a relatively accurate way of explaining such phenomena. Jung describes such a situation in the following passage.

When, for instance, a highly esteemed professor in his seventies, abandons his family and runs off with a young red-headed actress, we know that the gods have claimed another victim. This is how demonic power reveals itself to us. Until not so long ago it would have been an easy matter to do away with the young woman as a witch.⁹¹

⁸⁷ GM II; 23

⁸⁸ GM II; 23

⁸⁹ GM II; 23

⁹⁰ GM II; 23

⁹¹ Jung Archetypes 62

For Jung, we may be taken possession of by various archetypes—for Nietzsche, this would be a particular drive—and that drive may override all others making us appear possessed. A particularly intense possession might lead to the total overpowering of that individual by the drive or archetype in question, leading to that individual believing themselves to be Jesus or some other archetypal figure. Today still, it is not uncommon to hear psychologists speaking of archaic mammalian circuitry being responsible for certain of our actions.

It is clear then, from this example Nietzsche provides, that he did not believe the worst elements of distortion to be necessary to consciousness and as such cannot obviously be used as a simple means of explaining the superiority of unconscious thought to conscious thought; nor can they be used to explain Nietzsche's most dismissive and denigrating language towards consciousness. As a result, we still remain in need of an explanation for these two elements of conflict: why is the unconscious superior and what is the justification for Nietzsche's most dismissive descriptions of consciousness?

It seems that even these falsifying and distorting elements leave an explanatory gap, for we are still without an explanation for Nietzsche's claims that consciousness is the worst type of thought, that it is *always* 'thin', 'stupid' and 'shallow', and the corresponding superiority of unconsciousness. Going back to the text Nietzsche offers us many clues in his description of drives and the mirroring function that consciousness serves. In saying that consciousness is not the development of 'reason but only how we become conscious of reason' [GS 354], Nietzsche is making a more substantial claim that mirrors that of [BGE 36] — 'thinking is only a relation between these drives'. He is claiming that genuine reasoning takes place unconsciously and that we only believe reasoning to be conscious because this consciousness is how we become aware of its existence. Understood in this light we can begin to see that the source of the superiority of unconscious thought lies not merely in accuracy or depth, but rather in that unconscious activity is the location and source of genuine reasoning. Conscious reasoning is not only stunted and bland, but is also not even real reasoning—for it is merely a reflection, 'a mirroring' of the genuine unconscious process.

There is much left to be made sense of in this claim but for our current purposes this should be sufficient to show a further difficulty with Katsafanas' interpretation. The examples we have of thinking in images seem to be entirely devoid of sophistication, failing to even match up to the depth and precision of the conceptual abstraction enabled by consciousness. Given that unconscious thought is supposed to be of a higher

level than conscious thought it is difficult to see how this even poorer relation of conscious awareness is supposed to fulfil this criterion.

1.3.3.3 *Categorical Distortion*

Turning now to the final problematic element of Katsafanas' reading I will deal with, we have the issue of distortion and falsehood at the level of what Nietzsche refers to as Kant's categories. Nietzsche's exact understanding of Kant's system is to some degree unclear and many of these extracts—though not all—come from the notebooks; however, it is at least clear that Nietzsche had some degree of familiarity with Kant, the notion of the synthetic a priori [BGE 4], Kant's arguments regarding Euclidean geometry⁹² and the foundations of reason.⁹³ Nietzsche's take on the categories and reason generally is that they are evolved systems of utility only, that their purpose is not to model reality accurately but to simplify and aid survival. Nietzsche is here arguing that at the most fundamental level of perception, at the 'biological level' [WP 515], we too make things equal that are not, that 'it is only when we see things coarsely and made equal that they become usable to us.' [WP 515]. Most importantly Nietzsche adds:

It cannot be doubted that all sense perceptions are permeated with value judgments. [WP 505]

The significance of this is that Nietzsche is claiming that distortion and simplification occur at every level of perception. This brings up another problem for Katsafanas, in that he is claiming that Nietzsche's objection to consciousness is due to consciousness simplifying and falsifying. If such simplification and falsification is unavoidable, as they must be if they are present at the very foundations of the categories, of our bare perceptions of the world, then this distorting behaviour is present at every level of perception and not just the conscious level. As a result, Katsafanas does have a means of explaining Nietzsche's extreme negativity towards consciousness: distortions occur, on Katsafanas' own terms, at both the conscious and unconscious level—in all perception.

⁹² WP 515

⁹³ There is, however, much more to be made of the connection between Nietzsche and Kant: see Green (2002), particularly ch.2, Nietzsche's Neo-Kantian Roots.

But what makes this entire story all the more odd is that when we look to Nietzsche's treatment of falsification at this level, he appears either generally ambivalent or even defensive of it.

And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments (which include synthetic judgments *a priori*) are the most indispensable to us, and that without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the wholly invented world of the unconditioned and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world through numbers, people could not live – that a renunciation of false judgments would be a renunciation of life, a negation of life. [BGE 4]

Here, and in the beginning of BGE generally, Nietzsche adopts what might best be called a consolatory tone towards this distortion and falsehood. It is, he suggests, necessary for life! Using the precise terminology he normally reserves for his most virulent criticism of asceticism and Christianity, he speaks of its rejection as a *renunciation* and *negation* of life. With this, it seems our problems have doubled, for instead of having merely to explain why consciousness is both distorting, falsifying, damaging and also the source of superiority and strength, it looks as though we now have to explain why Nietzsche objects to consciousness without utilising generalisation and falsification as reasons for his doing so.

In light of the remaining inability to explain Nietzsche's remarks on consciousness, as well as the textual problems for this non-conceptualist interpretation of Nietzsche's views, I suggest there is very little to be said in favour of the view that Nietzsche believed conscious and unconscious thought to be distinguished by, respectively, the presence or absence of conceptual content.

Chapter 2 – Unconscious Concepts and Drives

We have seen that Katsafanas' reading of Nietzsche ultimately fails as an attempt to make sense of the benefit, damage and efficacy claims regarding consciousness in Nietzsche's theory of mind—how consciousness can all at once be said to have species elevating benefits, be damaging and disease-like, and at the same time lack efficacy. But, while this reading fails as a comprehensive interpretation, it succeeds in the sense of pointing towards the possibility of a coherent and unified theory. In bringing the many elements of Nietzsche's theory of mind to light, we have seen that Nietzsche's position is complex rather than confused, nuanced rather than contradictory, and that he has well thought-out and documented reasons for each of the seemingly inconsistent claims he makes regarding consciousness in the various passages. We are still, however, without a textually supported theory that unifies all of these claims.

Responding to Katsafanas, Mattia Riccardi builds on the idea that it is ultimately the generalising element of conceptuality—that generalisation is useful but introduces inaccuracies—that leads to Nietzsche's denigrating remarks on consciousness; but he breaks from Katsafanas in suggesting that it is not *all* conceptuality to which Nietzsche objects, but rather to a proprietary form of conceptuality that he refers to as '*socially mediated propositional articulation*'.⁹⁴ This refinement involves a distinction between unconscious conceptualisation that involves generalisation for the sake of efficacy, and conscious conceptualisation that has the additional component of a standardisation of terms within a community: the most helpful illustration here would be perceptual generalisation that leads us to respond to all "red berries" in the same way, in contrast to a socially mediated generalisation that leads to inaccurate translations of unique unconscious mental content, such as frustration at a blocked drive, being consciously interpreted as guilt, e.g. sexual frustration being interpreted as perversion and sin in the Christian mythology.

The justification behind this move is Riccardi's claim that Nietzsche allowed for unconscious conceptualisation. If conceptualisation can be unconscious, so the argument goes, then a) Katsafanas' identification of conceptuality with conscious mental content must be abandoned, and b) Nietzsche cannot be objecting to *all* conceptuality—for Nietzsche's attacks focus only on consciousness. Riccardi then

⁹⁴ Riccardi p2

identifies the particular species of conceptuality to which Nietzsche objects as being 'a socially acquired "theory of mind"' that evolves through language and social interaction and creates a uniformity of mental content.⁹⁵ In broad strokes, Riccardi agrees with Katsafanas that Nietzsche objects to consciousness due to the falsifying and distorting effects of conceptuality, but in introducing unconscious conceptual content he relocates the target of this criticism to the specifically conscious, socially mediated element of conceptuality. It is thus, on Riccardi's terms, not all conceptuality to which Nietzsche objects, but to the conscious language of thought that is defined by a rigid, socially determined symbolism.

In this section I will look at the argument Riccardi provides for his conclusion that conceptualisation can be unconscious and defend this conclusion as an important advance in our understanding of Nietzschean psychology. I will, however, stop short of agreeing that Nietzsche objects to socially mediated conceptuality, or indeed to conceptuality at all. Given that Nietzsche does not object to generalisation and falsification at the level of the unconscious, we need an explanation for why he would then object to it at the level of consciousness. The answer I offer is that Nietzsche does not object to conceptuality or generalisation at all. I put forward as examples of healthy conceptualisation Nietzsche's portrayal of the Ancient Greeks, as well as the proto-psychoanalytic therapy he attempts in his genealogical explorations. That he offers examples of full-fledged conceptuality that are healthy and avoid the most damaging distortions of Christian asceticism shows that Nietzsche did not object to conceptualisation or the emerging consciousness in themselves; rather, his objection is to a very specific type of conceptual framework that is rooted in asceticism, and whose road to life-denial must be guided by the ascetic priest. It is, specifically, a faculty of consciousness set loose, untethered to subconscious reality, unable to satisfy or even know the needs of the organism, to which Nietzsche objects.

A Second Interpretation: Riccardi on the unconscious

The core of Riccardi's position lies in his acknowledgement of two psychological mechanisms in Nietzsche's work that Katsafanas' reading largely neglects. These are

⁹⁵ Riccardi p15

the presence of latent perceptions—or unconscious functions of which we are unaware; and the capacity of these unconscious elements to perform sophisticated mental tasks. Recognition of these elements of Nietzschean psychology brings into play the two important themes of Nietzsche's writings noted in the first chapter: that consciousness is in some sense overestimated and that the unconscious is correspondingly underestimated.

[CT] Consciousness is in some sense overrated: its significance in reasoning and general life is both overestimated and largely negative.

[UT] Unconscious processes of which we are unaware do much, or all, of what we normally take to be consciousness at work; that this unconscious reasoning is in some way superior.

These elements together form the impetus for Nietzsche's reorientation of human psychology that understands the unconscious as doing the heavy-lifting in our mental life, as being the genuine source of our reasoning and actions. The existence of latent perceptions and unconscious processes, unseats conscious thought as the sole arbiter of mental life and action, while the acknowledgement that unconscious processes can be extremely sophisticated cements the relegation of the role of consciousness still further by showing that the unconscious is able to match the sophistication of the conscious. Riccardi's acknowledgement, at least in part, of this dual objective of Nietzschean psychology, allows for a more sophisticated analysis that incorporates a broader range of Nietzsche's claims on consciousness than can be taken on by Katsafanas' framework. E.g. If Nietzsche thinks that latent unconscious conceptual processes can perform sophisticated mental activities, we have a direct answer to the question of why Nietzsche thought we could act the same without consciousness. There is no longer any need to sideline or diminish more problematic statements.

2.1 Latent Sophistication

Having already discussed in depth the manifold reasons for understanding Nietzsche to accept the existence of unconscious mental content of which we are unaware I will only rehearse these arguments again briefly. Riccardi begins by noting Nietzsche's statement at GS354, that we can think, will, remember and act—all without consciousness. This statement implies a significant role for the unconscious, but in the

apparent absence of any definition of what this "unconscious" might amount to it is as yet unclear whether this is supportive of Katsafanas' reading—that such an unconscious exists, but as non-verbal awareness, or Riccardi's account—of the unconscious as mental content of which we are unaware. To remedy this ambiguity, he connects this to the Leibnizian reference that immediately follows this statement—that it has taken almost two hundred years to catch up with this 'precocious suspicion'—with the similarly phrased but more explicit statement of GS357: this latter statement directly references Leibniz's insight that consciousness is *only one part of the mental*, and not a necessary feature of mental content.⁹⁶ But how are we to make sense of this claim that conscious content is not coextensive with the mental? Given that Nietzsche is directly paraphrasing Otto Liebmann's analysis of the relevant Leibnizian ideas, and that Liebmann explicitly refers to the idea of latent perceptions and representations of which we are unaware, Riccardi argues that Nietzsche's lauding reference to Leibniz must be picking out his idea of latent representations.

This argument is convincing, though, as I have argued in the previous chapter, I am not certain of the significance of Nietzsche's referring specifically to either *latent* or *small perceptions* in particular. The important result, whether referencing Leibniz's *latent* or *petites perceptions*, is that Nietzsche is endorsing the idea that there is significant mental content that is unconscious, where unconscious means of which we are unaware—for Leibniz, both latent and small perceptions are not items of which we are directly aware. Connecting this with the claim that 'we could think, feel, will, remember, and also 'act' in every sense of the term, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness',⁹⁷ the inevitable conclusion is that this non-conscious thinking, willing, thinking and acting must take place unconsciously 'and 'unfelt'.⁹⁸ In this, the idea is introduced that at least part of human mental life takes place outside of our awareness.

This is, so far, a relatively modest claim, and not one to which any modern psychologist, neuroscientist or Nietzsche's contemporaries would likely object; we find further analogues of such unconscious influence throughout human mythology—whether in the Greek representation of a God driving a man to madness, or demonic possession in

⁹⁶ Riccardi p3

⁹⁷ GS 354

⁹⁸ GS 333

the western Christian tradition. Its more substantial consequences, however, are introduced when we look to the question of *how much* mental content happens to be unconscious, and from this, what kind of tasks this unconscious mental content is able to perform. Nietzsche's answer, as we know, is *nearly all of it*, for he states in GS354 that 'the predominant part of our lives' *already* unfolds without consciousness. But how can this be? While this may be quite convincing as an exposition of Nietzsche, we may still be left with a sour aftertaste given the counterintuitive nature of such a claim: we return to the old question—how can such unconscious content possibly match the sophistication of a conscious, engaged rationality at work, utilising a formidable conceptual apparatus?

2.2 Unconscious Conceptualisation

Riccardi's answer to this is quite straightforward: conceptualisation can take place in the unconscious also. If conceptualisation offers a level of sophistication necessary for more complex mental abilities, and if this conceptualisation is present at the level of the unconscious, then there is in principle no reason to think that unconscious processes cannot perform the same tasks said to be paradigmatic of conscious rationality. His justification for this position is twofold: in the first place he uses Nietzsche's examples of visual experience to show that conceptual generalisation takes place at the level of perception; and he follows this by showing that Nietzsche's contemporaries shared a similar view of unconscious conceptualisation—including Liebmann, to whom Nietzsche owes his 'essential insights into the Leibnizian story that proves central to his understanding of consciousness'.⁹⁹ I now turn to these two arguments.

Showing that some form of perceptual generalisation comparable to conceptualisation occurs in the unconscious is the first part of this move. To achieve this Riccardi begins with a discussion of Nietzsche's statements on the manner in which we form general representations of objects in acts of perception that only approximate the object in view, rather than attempt at precision. Speaking directly of the senses he states:

Given some stimulus, our eyes find it more convenient to reproduce an image that they have often produced before than to register what is different and new about an impression[...] [BGE 192]

⁹⁹ Riccardi p13

Moving to the example of a tree, he adds that we do not see it 'precisely and completely' but instead 'find it so much easier to imagine an approximate tree instead.'¹⁰⁰ On the surface of it, this certainly does appear to be Nietzsche stating that at the pre-linguistic and pre-conscious level we instinctively generalise and make equal the elements we encounter in our environment. This case is made all the stronger by the concluding remark that '[w]hat all this amounts to is: we are, from the bottom up and across the ages, *used to lying*.' In using the same language of distortion he deployed when discussing consciousness, Nietzsche seems to be suggesting that these are the same kind of errors and falsehoods introduced here at the bare perceptual level.

We certainly have here the existence of distortions and falsifications at the level of perception, but it would seem natural for Katsafanas to come back with the response that these errors are introduced *by conceptuality*. Riccardi's position relies on the idea that this specific type of falsification implies conceptualisation, such that falsification at the level of unconscious implies conceptualisation at the level of the unconscious. If Katsafanas can show that this unconscious falsification has a conscious source then he can remove Riccardi's justification for assuming unconscious conceptualisation. A central element of Katsafanas' view, as well as Riccardi's, is that distortions in consciousness are felt at the level of the unconscious, that it is only once these conscious errors have been taken up by the drives that they have full effect (or perhaps any effect). While the focus of much of these discussions is on the big distortions—the culture-defining ones, such as the internalisation of guilt in the Christian tradition—this does not mean that smaller, more innocuous effects are not also present. As such, Katsafanas can readily admit falsification at the level of the unconscious, but insist that this is the result of conceptualisation at the conscious level, rather than originating directly from the unconscious. Consciousness would, still here, be the original source of falsification, meaning that distortions at the perceptual level need not result from the presence of conceptualisation at the unconscious level. Unconscious distortions and generalisations would be the inheritance of *conscious* conceptualisation, not emergent from *unconscious* conceptualisation. As an example, we might perceive a particular poisonous tree as being a very similar but different fruit tree that one is familiar with: on Katsafanas' analysis, we might perceive the tree incorrectly, as looking the same as the fruit tree, because we have been taught that light-green tress, with five-points on

¹⁰⁰ BGE 192

their leaves and large, green fruit are fruit trees. Here, the unconscious representation results from conscious input.

Now, Riccardi has a number of options available to him as a response, one of which is to extend Nietzsche's descriptions of perceptual falsification in humans to animals that lack consciousness, so removing Katsafanas' line of defence: if such falsification is present in animals also, then this falsification cannot result from consciousness impinging on the unconscious, but must have its own source in the unconscious itself (—either this, or accept that animals have consciousness). Such a response may meet with some success; however, the statements discussed above regarding unconscious falsification are specifically about humans—it isn't clear whether or not Nietzsche intended such remarks to be extended to animals.

But this does not indicate that Riccardi is wrong in his conclusion. I hinted earlier that there is a stronger argument available and it lies in Nietzsche's statements on the categories, the foundations of logic and the evolution of the senses. This is what Nietzsche seems to suggest with his statement that 'we are, from the bottom up and across the ages, *used to lying*.'¹⁰¹ If falsification is present in the evolution of our senses, in the categories, in the most basic exchange of organisms with their environment, then we know that such falsification exists without consciousness. Nietzsche makes just such an argument in the notebooks of 1887:

All organs of knowledge and our senses are developed only with regard to conditions of preservation and growth. Trust in reason and its categories, in dialectic, therefore the valuation of logic, proves only their usefulness for life, proved by experience—not that something is true.¹⁰²

In this passage, Nietzsche extends falsification beyond the generalisation that results from consciousness, or even the suggested perceptual generalization of the human unconscious, and argues that it is in the very process of the *development* of these senses themselves and our faculty of judgment that falsification is introduced. We see and experience what we do of the world only because it is useful, not because it is true. Applying this position to Riccardi's argument, that something approximating the generalisation of conscious conceptualisation exists in the unconscious, we can

¹⁰¹ BGE 192

¹⁰² WP 507

conclude that the senses do indeed distort and falsify on a fundamental level, that they do so in animals and in humans even without consciousness: the senses themselves and the most basic evolutionary circuitry of judgment are on Nietzsche's view laced with approximation, generalisation and falsehood.

2.3 *Is Unconscious Generalisation Conceptual?*

In this, we have a strong argument for recognising the presence of generalised falsification at the unconscious level, but to make the next move against Katsafanas, Riccardi must show that this generalisation qualifies as conceptual. Doing so achieves his two main conclusions against Katsafanas.

- a) Katsafanas' identification of conceptuality with conscious mental content must be abandoned
- b) Nietzsche cannot be objecting to *all* conceptuality

If there is unconscious conceptual falsification then we know that that the distinction between conscious and unconscious states is not 'coextensive with the distinction between mental states which have conceptually articulated content and mental states which have nonconceptual content', as Katsafanas suggests.¹⁰³ We also know, given Nietzsche's exclusive critical focus on conscious falsification, that generic conceptualisation cannot be the target of Nietzsche's attacks.

That the conclusion of the previous section—generalised falsification is present at some level in the unconscious—need not lead to the conclusion that conceptuality must be present in the unconscious, is a possible response Riccardi acknowledges. We might, he suggests, accept that there is 'low-level falsification due to the unconscious mechanisms that govern our perceptions' but refuse to 'qualify such processes as genuine conceptualisation.'¹⁰⁴ But he offers a number of reasons for not accepting such an analysis.

¹⁰³ Katsafanas (2005) P3

¹⁰⁴ Riccardi p12

In the first place, Nietzsche seems to suggest that the kind of mental images that would be involved in perception at the unconscious level have the necessary features required to qualify as concepts.

Words are acoustic signs for concepts; concepts, though, are more or less determinate pictorial signs for sensations that occur together and recur frequently, for groups of sensations. [BGE268]

The implication of this, in explaining concepts as 'pictorial signs', is that the images in our generalised representation of the tree Nietzsche discusses seem to superficially fulfil a basic criterion for being a concept. Taking the statement that these signs represent 'sensations that occur and recur frequently', Riccardi draws out the idea that 'perceptual concepts are something like "sensory templates"', and that these templates form when we come across an object and are reactivated in future encounters with objects of a similar kind.¹⁰⁵ This understanding of a concept seems to match up well with Nietzsche's description of our behaviour in encountering the tree: we "reproduce" an image from a previous encounter or encounters, and this sounds exactly like the sensory template Nietzsche discusses in the BGE passage immediately above.

This way of thinking about concepts also fits well with other elements of Nietzsche's understanding of the unconscious. Riccardi points out that Nietzsche endorsed the Helmholtzian account of perceptions that sees them as 'the result of unconscious processing'.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Liebmann, who we already know Nietzsche was very familiar with, took animals to have a 'quite sophisticated mind', believing that the 'simple recognition of the objects of sensible intuition is but the primitive type of affirmative judgement' (Liebmann 1880 498).¹⁰⁷ Taken together, these considerations provide substantial evidence for the conclusion that such perceptual generalisation is both unconscious and has the type of structure that we would consider to be of a conceptual nature.

This recognition of unconscious conceptuality has two important consequences. First of all, it undermines Katsafanas' position that conceptual mental activity is to be identified with conscious processing. That we have unconscious conceptual activity is a brute

¹⁰⁵ Riccardi p12

¹⁰⁶ Riccardi p13

¹⁰⁷ Riccardi p13

contradiction of this claim. But for Riccardi, the more interesting element of this conclusion is that it calls into question the claim that Nietzsche objects to consciousness because it is conceptual: if unconscious processing is also conceptual and Nietzsche only objects to consciousness, then his objection to consciousness cannot merely be that it is conceptual.

We can therefore conclude that generalisation is a kind of falsification-involving conceptual capacity which falls on the wrong side of the divide Nietzsche draws at the beginning of GS54, namely on the side also populated by animals. It follows that whatever type of conceptualisation might be relevant in our context needs to satisfy the quite general constraint that it must not already occur at the level of unconscious conceptualisation which is typical for perceptual experience.¹⁰⁸

Again, this seems a natural consequence of the recognition that there exists unconscious conceptualisation. If it were the conceptual element of consciousness to which Nietzsche objects then he would also have made the same complaints of unconscious conceptuality—instead he calls it superior, and reserves his criticism for consciousness alone. We now face the problem of understanding why it is that Nietzsche objects to consciousness. Riccardi's answer is that it must be a specific type of conceptualisation to which Nietzsche is objecting, namely '*socially mediated propositional articulation*.'¹⁰⁹

2.4 *Socially Mediated Conceptualisation*

Conceptuality, as we have seen, cannot be the sole source of Nietzsche's objection to consciousness. Were it this alone, Nietzsche would have equal justification for objecting to unconscious mental activity and bare perceptual engagements with the environment; instead, he reserves his attacks for conscious mental activity. What, then, singles out conscious mental content for this particular treatment?

For Riccardi, the answer lies in Nietzsche's idea that the foundation of consciousness is social and linguistic.

¹⁰⁸ Riccardi p13

¹⁰⁹ Riccardi p2

'Consciousness is really just a net connecting one person with another – only in this capacity did it have to develop; the solitary and predatory person would not have needed it.'¹¹⁰

Responding to the question of why consciousness emerges at all, Nietzsche states that 'the subtlety and strength of consciousness is always related to a person's (or animal's) ability to communicate; and the ability to communicate, in turn, to the need to communicate.'¹¹¹ We can easily imagine where such an impetus came from. In the internalisation of the instincts and the development of the "state", huge suffering was present as the result of blocked drives and the punishments enforced on a still brutish man in order to instil some sense of predictability and order to his actions.¹¹² The need to understand what is demanded of one in order to avoid the worst punishments as laid down by law, and the capacity to understand one's own needs, to predict one's own actions and put a break on them if they are deemed illegal, became paramount.

The problems that emerge with this are, according to Riccardi, the result of what is required in terms of the relevant mental content needed to make such communication possible. Framing it in terms of the problem of a private language, he points out that for Nietzsche, the use of the same words is not enough to ensure a fluid exchange of ideas in a linguistic exchange.

Using the same words is not enough to get people to understand each other: they have to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences too; ultimately, people have to have the same experience *base*. [BGE 268]

What ensures that we mean the same thing by the same word is that the word represents the same inner experience. But why is this the case? According to Riccardi, 'language-mediated social intercourse has *de facto* made uniform the inner life of people belonging to the same community, thereby enabling mental terms to actually denote states of the same type.'¹¹³ Put another way, using the same words has somehow led to the people in a group having the same thoughts and feelings, the same internal states.

¹¹⁰ GS 354

¹¹¹ GS 354

¹¹² It should be noted that by "state" Nietzsche is not suggesting a particularly advanced development or society, but references merely the earliest groupings of people who have been conquered and are required to follow new laws and customs imposed on them by their conquerors. See GM 2; 17.

¹¹³ Riccardi p9

This, according to Riccardi, is where the problem begins. Any attempt to express unique internal states results in translation of these states into a common external language.

What was once unique and individual becomes standardised and vague:

My idea is clearly that consciousness actually belongs not to man's existence as an individual but rather to the community and herd-aspects of his nature; that accordingly, it is finely developed only in relation to its usefulness to community or herd; and that consequently each of us, even with the best will in the world to understand ourselves as individually as possible, 'to know ourselves', will always bring to consciousness precisely that in ourselves which is 'non-individual', that which is 'average'; that due to the nature of consciousness - to the 'genius of the species' governing it - our thoughts themselves are continually as it were outvoted and translated back into the herd perspective. At bottom, all our actions are incomparably and utterly personal, unique, and boundlessly individual, there is no doubt; but as soon as we translate them into consciousness, they no longer seem to be . . . ¹¹⁴

Conscious thinking takes place in words, which means that the language of conscious thought is a language of social communication, with the result that conscious thought is standardised in the same way that language is. This standardisation is particularly useful when it comes to understanding each other, but correspondingly unhelpful when it comes to expressing the unique internal states of an individual. Unique mental states are translated into abstract generalities when they are expressed in conscious thought. In this way these are distorted, muted and falsified; hence Nietzsche's statement that 'all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization.'¹¹⁵

This, for Riccardi, is the source of Nietzsche's claim that consciousness is damaging and falsifying. It is, indeed, on these terms, conceptualisation and the generalising effects that lead to distortion and error—as Katsafanas suggests; however, it is a particular species of these that lead to the most damaging distortions in human mental life. This species of conceptualisation is socially mediated, linguistic consciousness that generalises by making neutral and standardising thought according to a communally developed set of terms and categories.

¹¹⁴ GS 354

¹¹⁵ GS 354

2.5 *Constructing a Theory*

Bringing the elements of this theory together, we have a number of interesting deviations from Katsafanas' position discussed in the previous chapter. While the core element of conceptualisation remains as the source of falsification and Nietzsche's denigrating remarks on consciousness, Riccardi introduces latent perceptions, unconscious conceptualisation, and the claim that it is specifically socially mediated conceptualisation Nietzsche attacks. The test now is to see how these positions alter our overall understanding of Nietzsche's theory of mind and whether they enable us to bring together the various elements into a coherent whole.

Recapping briefly, the central difficulty of interpretation in drawing out a coherent system from Nietzsche's works is the three species of claim within Nietzsche's passages on consciousness that seem to either conflict or contradict each other. These were the benefit claim, the damage claim and the efficacy claim: Nietzsche seems to all at once view consciousness as a highest strength and source of human superiority, as damaging and disease-like, and lacking in efficacy. This resulted in two main problems to be answered.

[P1] How can consciousness be falsifying and distorting, damaging and a disease while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

These two questions can be found in more or less in a comparable form in Riccardi's analysis as his attempts to deal with those elements relating to Nietzsche's claims about falsification and those relating to his claims on superficiality.

Beginning with [P1] and the negative, falsifying elements of consciousness, we are able to understand the normative duality of consciousness as emerging through conceptualisation, much as Katsafanas does. Conceptualisation introduces generalisation and abstraction which, while useful and positive in its capacity to simplify perceptual experience and enable communication and the exchange of ideas, also suffers from these same characteristics in the errors they introduce through this simplification. Much in this seemed correct; however, in introducing the idea of unconscious conceptualisation, Riccardi introduced the need for a refinement of this

interpretation. First of all, if conceptualisation can be either conscious or unconscious, we are unable to make a distinction between the two based on the presence or absence of conceptuality. Secondly, if unconscious conceptualisation also takes place and is not something to which Nietzsche objects, then conceptualisation alone cannot be the reason for Nietzsche's denigrating remarks on consciousness. Riccardi's answer to this problem is to explain conscious conceptualisation in the context of Nietzsche's understanding of the relationship between consciousness and language. If the speakers of a language are to be able to make sense of each other, the language must be uniform, general and not express any unique differences of the individual. But conscious thought, according to Nietzsche, takes place in the symbols of this language—'conscious thinking takes place in words' [GS 354]—with the result that conscious thought carries over the uniformity of linguistic practices and referents. This, for Riccardi, is the reason for Nietzsche's specific concern with conscious conceptualisation. Conscious conceptualisation generalises the unique elements of the individual. It also has the further effect of introducing two specific kinds of error in our understanding of ourselves. Because of the self-referential propositional structure of language—"I am/feel/want"—we focus on the conscious, spoken element of our psyche, concluding that this consciousness is a total unity that comprises the extent of the organism, and further that this unity is causally efficacious and the source of all action and thought.¹¹⁶ In addition to the generalisation of unique thoughts according to a common, socially mediated schema, we also have these two specific errors conscious conceptuality introduces. Framing this reading in terms of an answer to [P1] we find the following answer.

[P1] How can consciousness be a damaging and distorting sickness and disease while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

[P1-R] Consciousness elevates humanity by enabling abstraction, but conscious thought takes place in a socially mediated language that generalises that thought according to the common terms of that language.

In this, we have a relatively satisfying answer to the primary conflict in Nietzsche's writings on consciousness, but we must now turn to the somewhat more complex issue of superficiality and [P2].

¹¹⁶ Riccardi p14

2.6 *The Efficacy of Consciousness*

Riccardi's answer to [P2] on the issue of superficiality and the extent to which consciousness can be said to lack efficacy also rests on the recognition that there exists unconscious conceptuality and latent perceptions. Riccardi's answer to this problem has two parts: he shows that unconscious processing is able to do the same work as conscious processing, and through the mechanism by which conscious content engages with the unconscious he draws out a fundamental sense in which consciousness can be said to truly lack efficacy.

The general problem of accepting that mankind is able to function the same without consciousness is centred on the capacities that conceptuality affords. It is natural and correct to understand conceptual development as resulting in man's sophistication and advance over other animals: conceptuality enhances learning, enabling the generalisation of single experiences into general rules and seems also to enhance the ability to predict and plan through the added nuance of abstraction. As such, any claim that higher levels of thought are possible without conceptuality will rightly be met with scepticism. But Riccardi sidesteps this objection by showing that conceptualisation is also present in the unconscious. Concepts are images that represent sets of sensations that have a common element. As a result, by linking concepts with image symbols rather than acoustic symbols—words—conceptuality becomes equally possible in the unconscious. In fact, contrary to Katsafanas, we might say that thinking in images is more accurately described as conceptual for Nietzsche than thinking in words—though words, in the right circumstances, will ideally incite the appropriate images. By acknowledging conceptual unconscious content we are able to understand that the unconscious is able to maintain a comparable level of sophistication to the conscious mind. This forms the first part of Riccardi's answer to [P2]

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness both elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

[P2-R(i)] As conceptuality is the element of human mental life that enables both sophistication and falsification, the presence of conceptualisation at the level of the unconscious allows such capacities to be present without consciousness.

However, Riccardi observes that this approach may still remain counterintuitive to an extent as well as appearing to conflict with certain elements of Nietzschean statements

on the effects of consciousness. In particular, we might wonder if this explanation is truly satisfying in the sense of explaining how we could go on *exactly the same* without consciousness. Riccardi points out that even in Nietzsche's own work significant processes would seem to require consciousness as an instigating element, for instance, in contemplating the *eternal return* or the development of *bad conscience*.¹¹⁷

Consciousness is a fundamental element in the development and pull of Christianity: given that Christianity has had such far-reaching effects it still remains somewhat odd to claim that consciousness lacks efficacy. Or as Katsafanas puts it, the 'way in which a state becomes conscious seems to have the most diverse and far-reaching of consequences.'¹¹⁸ To make sense of this Riccardi points us towards the mechanism by which consciousness engages with the remainder of the human mental apparatus.¹¹⁹

We have already, through the presence of latent perceptions and conceptualisation in the unconscious, a clear sense in which we can see that much of psychological causality resides 'at the level of unconscious dispositions.'¹²⁰ Whether we want to think in terms of latent perceptions, or insensible processes and drives, we find the direct impetus and calculation for much of our behaviour in the unconscious. We now need to make sense of the manner in which consciousness affects and engages with these unconscious processes. In a highly illustrative passage from the notebooks, Nietzsche explains the connection between the hidden element of our mental life and its relation to our interpretation of our conscious contents:

[W]hat becomes conscious is subject to causal relations that are completely withheld from us, —the succession of thoughts, feelings, ideas in consciousness does not mean that this sequence is causal: it is apparently so, though, and at the utmost level.'¹²¹

The fundamental level of causality is at the level of drives, latent perceptions and dispositions that are unconscious. Here, the full mental process takes place, with drives, perceptions and memories working with and against each other to formulate beliefs and actions. But as we know, only the 'superlative degrees' of this process ever manage to rise to the surface.¹²² It is these superlative degrees only that work their way up to

¹¹⁷ Riccardi p18

¹¹⁸ Katsafanas (2005) p23

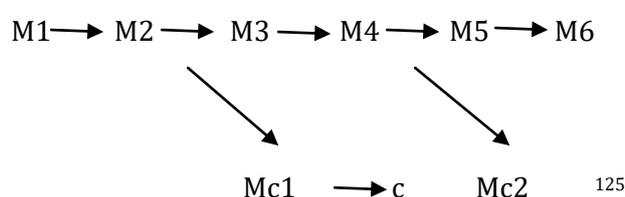
¹¹⁹ Riccardi p15-17

¹²⁰ Riccardi (forthcoming) p15

¹²¹ NL 1887, KSA 12, 11[145]

¹²² Daybreak 115

the level of consciousness and make themselves known, and here a kind of secondary, conscious 'mirroring' of these underlying processes take place.¹²³ As Nietzsche points out, this secondary mirroring is simply the disconnected fragments of the genuine underlying process, not the actual causal process itself. But given that this is all we come into contact with, we assume that this conscious series of experiences is the causal mechanism itself. This is precisely what Nietzsche is stating in GS 354 when he points out that the development of consciousness is not the development of reason, 'but strictly of the way in which we become conscious of reason'. Riccardi offers the following helpful illustrative aid.¹²⁴



The upper series of figures represent the unconscious causal mechanism leading from the initial mental state M1 to the final state M6. The lower level of mental states represent the elements of this unconscious processing that find their way to consciousness, with "c" representing the assumed conscious causal connection. Only M3 and M5 are in some sense manifested consciously. But due to the fact that we only come into contact with the conscious element of the mental, we assume that the lower state, the conscious mirroring, is the totality of our thought process and the real causal chain of thought, that "c" is a genuine causal connection. We are only aware of Mc1 being followed by Mc2 and so assume that the former is the cause of the latter, missing out the intervening mental states and being unaware of the unconscious counterparts of these unconscious states.

Applied to Katsafanas' example of looking for his car we can see that this is a far more plausible interpretation of those events.¹²⁶ Recall that on Katsafanas' version he is

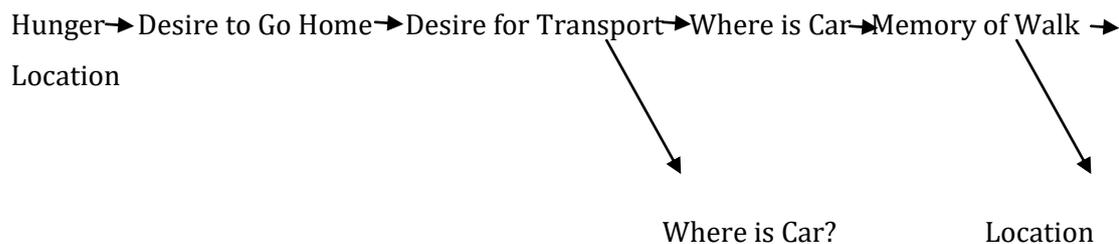
¹²³ GS 354

¹²⁴ Riccardi (forthcoming) p16

¹²⁵ Riccardi (forthcoming) p16

¹²⁶ Katsafanas (2005) p10

looking for his car, but after thinking about where he parked, instead of being met with a 'conceptually articulated' response such as "I parked on Main Street" he formed a mental image of his car parked on Main Street. For Katsafanas, this image is a non-conceptually articulated version of this thought. On Riccardi's version, the process would proceed along the following lines.



A series of unconscious mental states lead to a particular motivation and action, but due to our only being aware of two of these states—the desire to locate the car and the location of the car—we assume that these two conscious states were the totality of the mental processes involved in arriving at the final image of a car on Main Street. But it is not plausible to think either that the desire to find the car came from nowhere or that the conclusion of the location of the car came simply from the conscious thought "where is my car?" There must be some other mental state or states of which we are unaware that led, first, to the initial motivation, followed by some other intervening states that led to the conclusion. The absence of unconscious states in such a model would require that conscious states emerge without cause.

Riccardi also points out that this is a relatively sophisticated view, analogues of which we find in our contemporary theory of mind. In particular, David Rosenthal's theory of higher order thought bears 'striking similarities' to Nietzsche's position.¹²⁷ Rosenthal follows Nietzsche and Leibniz in stressing that not all mental states are conscious, and he also follows Nietzsche in questioning the reason for consciousness coming to exist after we acknowledge that the same mental states can be both conscious and unconscious. Most striking, however, is that Rosenthal seems to see eye to eye with Nietzsche on the central focus of this section—our lack of awareness of the underlying

¹²⁷ Riccardi (forthcoming) p7

processes of our psyche and the corresponding mistaken belief that this conscious content is self-caused.

Because our mental states are not all conscious, we are seldom if ever conscious of the mental antecedents of our conscious states. And conscious desires and intentions whose mental antecedents we are not conscious of seem to us to be spontaneous and uncaused. The sense we have of free agency results from our failure to be conscious of all our mental states.¹²⁸

From all this, it should hopefully be becoming clear that Nietzsche does indeed have a coherent position on consciousness, and that it is worth taking seriously. But how does this help us determine whether or not consciousness lacks efficacy? Riccardi's answer to this question is nuanced and involves two ways of understanding superfluosity. The first sense is that we can approach the question of conscious efficacy from the perspective of whether or not the existence or non-existence of consciousness has any impact on human behaviour. Viewed like this we can clearly demonstrate the efficacy of consciousness: Christianity, asceticism, guilt-conscience could not exist without consciousness; or as Riccardi puts it, linguistic communication requires consciousness, and so 'public and cultural representations' require consciousness in order for them to be able to affect us.¹²⁹ But, on the other hand, there is another sense in which we can interpret the efficacy of consciousness, and this is in terms of *how* conscious representations come to influence our actions.

Central to this alternative perspective is the manner in which our conscious thoughts are taken up into our psyche and affect behaviour. For Nietzsche, a conscious mental content in itself lacks force; it first has to be internalised and initiated into the conceptual image-structures that link directly with our drives, and unless it does so it can have no impact. In this sense, an unincorporated conscious content lacks force in much the same way as a word interpreted differently by members of a community signifies nothing. I can run up to another person and shout "Tiger" but if she thinks "Tiger" means "sunshine", or knows what "Tiger" *means*—though one might question whether she truly knows what Tiger means in this instance—but doesn't associate it with danger, then the word finds no friction with appropriate drive processes and she will be eaten instead of running. This situation is the same when worked internally for an individual. I might think, "I want to run a marathon" after watching the London

¹²⁸ Rosenthal 2005c p361

¹²⁹ Riccardi (forthcoming) p19

Marathon on television, but if that thought isn't incorporated and initiated into the underlying drive processes such that it can do battle with other motivating processes—such as a general aversion to exercise or career ambitions that preclude training—then this thought just evaporates. The thought has to be integrated into other pre-existing processes that have greater weight than those that contradict it. A contrasting example might be watching a marathon after a close friend suffers a heart attack. Here, the thought "I want to run a marathon" might find traction in a recognition of one's own mortality, a fear of a painful death and a desire to see one's grandchildren. This conscious thought has been incorporated into pre-existing unconscious mechanisms that have the capacity to initiate action.

In this, we can see that there is a *sense* in which consciousness lacks efficacy. A conscious process requires an unconscious counterpart of that conscious thought to have an effect. Without the unconscious element the conscious content has no impact. Conscious thinking is more like perceptual stimulation: it *might* initiate unconscious processes that lead to action, just as seeing a tiger might lead to running, but this conscious content is not itself part of the unconscious process that determines action. We are now able to add this to Riccardi's response to [P1] and [P2].

[P1] How can consciousness be a damaging and distorting sickness and disease while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

[P1-R] Consciousness elevates humanity by enabling abstraction, but conscious thought takes place in a socially mediated language that generalises that thought according to the common terms of that language.

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

[P2-R(i)] As conceptuality is the element of human mental life that enables both sophistication and falsification, the presence of conceptualisation at the level of the unconscious allows such effects to be present without consciousness.

[P2-R(ii)] Conscious thinking is able to affect action only through an unconscious counterpart of that thought and in itself lacks efficacy.

Taken together, we finally have a coherent and comprehensive interpretation of Nietzsche's theory of mind. Consciousness enables a specific kind of generalisation that is socially constructed. Such a construction has benefits that involve the exchange of information between persons, the capacity to abstract and generalise and record information that can be passed on to following generations. In this, however, there are also negative consequences. Such generalisation and abstraction takes place in a language that is communally derived, which removes individual nuance from introspection and perception, and erases idiosyncrasy from the individual. Thoughts translated into consciousness all suffer from these consequences. But there is also a sense in which consciousness can be said to be superfluous and lack efficacy. Conceptualisation also takes place on the unconscious level, meaning that *at least* some of the positive elements of generalisation are able to emerge without consciousness; there is also an important respect in which consciousness can be said to lack a *direct* role in our decision making processes. Conscious states may impart new data and enable data exchange between individuals, but these states are not themselves part of the underlying psychological process, as shown in the pictorial representations above: they are simply the conscious mirroring of the underlying unconscious states.

2.2 Assessing this Reading

Much as with my previous overview of Katsafanas' interpretation of Nietzsche, Riccardi's position represents a significant advance in our understanding of Nietzsche's theory of mind. In acknowledging the two hitherto overlooked features of Nietzsche's position, of latent perceptions and unconscious conceptuality, Riccardi has presented a theory that manages to draw together Nietzsche's disparate and sometimes odd-sounding psychological claims into a coherent and, I believe, plausible position. Conscious superfluousness is explained by unconscious conceptuality and the inefficacy of consciousness is explained by the conscious counterparts of unconscious thoughts having no effect without the unconscious. The damaging nature of consciousness is also explained through its standardisation of thought in the translation of unique individual experience into a subdued and generalised language of communication.

But while much of this is correct, and represents an advance over previous positions, I believe there remain a few significant errors of interpretation that must be addressed if we are to fully make sense of Nietzsche's position and offer a coherent interpretation of

it. Among these, paramount is Riccardi's reading of conceptual development in the unconscious. Riccardi is undoubtedly correct that Nietzsche allows for unconscious conceptuality (though this requires certain caveats), but given Nietzsche's association of words with concepts—'*concepts*, possible only when there are words' [WP 506]—that Katsafanas rightly notes, it is not clear that Riccardi is justified in precisely the way he thinks he is in dismissing Katsafanas' claim that Nietzsche's objection to consciousness is due to conceptual generalisation. To be clear, I believe Riccardi is right to do so, but his mistaken blanket acceptance of conceptuality *without consciousness* influences his later reconstitution of Nietzsche's justification for attacking consciousness. — Put as simply as possible in this brief introduction: Riccardi's belief in independent unconscious conceptuality in Nietzsche leads him to conclude that Nietzsche does not object to all conceptuality; which leads to his concluding that socially mediated conceptualisation is the guilty party. In this section I will argue that consciousness does, in fact, play a role in unconscious conceptualisation—which results in a slightly different motivating question to the one raised by Riccardi's position. Rather than the question being, *why does Nietzsche only object to conscious falsification when unconscious falsification also exists?* – our question becomes, *why does Nietzsche object only to consciousness when conscious and unconscious falsification are themselves intertwined?* Put more generally, given that Nietzsche doesn't really seem to object to conceptual abstraction, generalisation, or even falsification *at all* throughout his works, why would he suddenly object to it in consciousness?

[...]without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the wholly invented world of the unconditioned and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world through numbers, people could not live – that a renunciation of false judgments would be a renunciation of life, a negation of life. [BGE 4]

This may seem like an insurmountable difficulty, but the answer is relatively straightforward: Nietzsche does not object to falsification in itself, nor does he really object to consciousness *in itself*. The problem of consciousness is a problem of misuse, overestimation, and overuse combined with an ascetic narrative and nihilism. All this will become clear in the next section, but for now I want to focus on fully developing an understanding of the relationship between consciousness and conceptuality in Nietzsche that shows where both Riccardi and Katsafanas go wrong and that will motivate a need for the solution I am proposing.

Before looking to conceptuality directly, I will first discuss a further concern that should motivate us into looking for an alternative to Riccardi's conclusion that socially mediated conceptualisation is the cause of damaging generalisation. Rather than conceptuality being the source of standardisation of inner experiences within a community, the real culprit is, by Nietzsche's description, more aptly described as natural selection.

2.2.1 *Conceptuality or Natural selection?*

If we think back to the beginning of this chapter, we will hopefully recall that Riccardi lays the blame for the particularly damaging elements of conceptuality at the door of socially mediated conceptual articulation that he reads Nietzsche as discussing in section BGE268: communally derived terms neutralise and standardise the uniqueness of individuals through translation of unconscious idiosyncrasy into common symbols and experience. Riccardi's summary of this passage is that 'language mediated social intercourse has *de facto* made uniform the inner life of people belonging to the same community.'¹³⁰ In other words, by living together and using the same language, the inner life of these cohabiting linguists has become monochrome. This, according to Riccardi, has 'fatal consequences' that are then discussed in the context of GS354.¹³¹

In Nietzsche's eyes, however—and we are now on the second point— this has fatal consequences. For “each of us, even with the best will in the world to *understand* ourselves as individually as possible, ‘to know ourselves’, will always bring to consciousness precisely that in ourselves which is ‘non-individual’, that which is average” (GS 354). In other words, Nietzsche seems to hold that we interpret our own mental states in light of a socially developed “theory of mind”: we attribute to ourselves the same types of mental states we also attribute to others. Crucially, this is the main reason which substantiates (FC) [falsification claim], since it is the fact that “our thoughts themselves are continually as it were *outvoted* and translated back into the herd perspective” which causes “all becoming conscious” to bring about “a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization” (GS 354). Since one ends up ascribing to oneself attitudes identical to those one currently ascribes to others, the uniqueness of

¹³⁰ Riccardi (forthcoming) p9

¹³¹ Riccardi (forthcoming) p9

what we think, desire and feel is, if not completely blanked out, at least significantly blurred.¹³²

From this passage we can see that Riccardi understands the consequence of 'language mediated social intercourse' making uniform 'the inner life of people belonging to the same community' as being that we interpret our own thoughts according to this 'socially developed "theory of mind"' and that we ascribe to ourselves 'attitudes identical to those one currently ascribes to others.'¹³³

I have avoided trying to express this section in my own words and have quoted it in full because I have difficulty understanding the precise flow of argumentation here. The suggestion seems to be that cohabiting linguists develop uniform inner experiences to match a common set of acoustic symbols, and that these common acoustic symbols, when used, result in inner experience being translated—according to these symbols—into a common language of thought lacking nuance and idiosyncrasy: in short, the common language of signs leads to the destruction of individuality and unique thought. But the obvious problem with this way of understanding Nietzsche is that if the inner mental life of a cohabiting people has *already* been made uniform by a shared environment then there seems to be nothing left for conscious translation to corrupt: these people *already* have a uniform mental life before they go to think or speak.

To make this clearer, Nietzsche's exact claim in the section Riccardi quotes is as follows:

'[...]people in a community will understand each other better than they understand people belonging to other groups, *even when they all use the same language.*' [My emphasis.]¹³⁴

Nietzsche's point is this: it isn't use of the same language that makes the inner mental life uniform; rather, it is the fact that they *share the same experiences*.

Or rather, when individuals have lived together for a long time under similar conditions (of climate, soil, danger, necessities, work), there *arises* something that "understands itself" – a people.¹³⁵

¹³² Riccardi (forthcoming) p9

¹³³ Riccardi (forthcoming) p9

¹³⁴ BGE 268

Consciousness has little or nothing to do with this uniformity. Common 'soil, dangers, necessity, work' are responsible. To make this point another way: if living together already standardises and makes uniform inner mental life, then what efficacy can subsequent conscious thought have in terms of making inner life uniform and standardised?—this process is already finished: living in a community already presupposes shared inner representations. By the time people come to talk together with a developed consciousness, their inner mental life has already been standardised by growing-up and living together in the same environment. And if this is the case, then consciousness, at least in its role on this description at BGE268, has nothing to do with uniformity, superficiality and corruption of meaning; this process is taken care of by a common environment. If this is the case, then Riccardi is wrong to assign the blame for internal uniformity to the hands of consciousness and this cannot be the source of Nietzsche's objection to consciousness.

Now, it may be that Riccardi is trying to make another point: that a capacity to make sounds and living together jointly result in mankind evolving to have a uniform inner mental life—the damage of consciousness is done over generations to a community that shares a common environment and language. In this way, "consciousness"—by which we mean, somewhat questionably, the use of sounds in response to common objects and experiences—would slowly deselect those incapable of sharing in that common language and experience. This seems to me a far more plausible analysis—Nietzsche is fundamentally a Darwinist through and through—and would, by my lights, be an accurate rendering of Nietzsche's position in BGE 268.¹³⁶ But if this is the case, it can hardly be the subject of Nietzsche's concern with consciousness—and this is assuming we are willing to call *this* consciousness, for we are only talking about a capacity to make sounds and the presence of a shared environment, which is very arguably a threshold breached by an enormous swathe of animal life. But assuming we are willing to represent such behaviour as conscious, it makes little sense to complain about a selective process of which we are the end point and can no longer do anything about—the damage is long done. Correspondingly, Nietzsche doesn't appear to be talking about the dangers of consciousness in a manner that implies the process is

¹³⁵ BGE 268

¹³⁶ I will explain this perhaps unusual claim in the following pages.

over—that he warns about it at all is suggestive of his viewing it as a live and ongoing threat. As evidence of this, in his famous passage on consciousness at GS354, he states:

At bottom, all our actions are incomparably and utterly personal, unique, and boundlessly individual, there is no doubt; but as soon as we translate them into consciousness, they no longer seem to be . . .

It seems equally pertinent that following this quoted section he states that 'the growing consciousness is a danger'—which suggests that it is further growth beyond this point with which Nietzsche is concerned. This wording and context of these passages gives the distinct impression that we are *still* 'utterly personal, unique, and boundlessly individual' *until* we translate our thoughts into consciousness; that the danger is growing and can still yet be avoided. Finally, if one of the central consequences of making signs and communal living is that words come to mean the same thing when used by people, and that we consequently become capable of meaningful communication, then this is hardly something that Nietzsche can be purposefully objecting to. If this were what he meant by the dangers of consciousness, something so fundamentally intertwined with basic rationality as to be present in the earliest hominids, then his warning against consciousness would equate to a warning against evolving past homo erectus. Even the existence of birds—who call to each other to announce a predator, or bees—who use pheromones and dance as a means of communication, would undoubtedly have "suffered" from the standardisation of inner states guided by natural selection.

From this, we can see that the topic of discussion at BGE 268 is rather different from the topic of discussion at GS 354. The former is a discussion of a chronic, unavoidable historical process that involves continual natural and sexual selection and is for the most part over; while the latter is a current, acute process of standardisation of individuals that takes place in specific, isolated language acts. BGE 268 is not a warning about the dangers of consciousness; instead, I believe Nietzsche must be making a far more subtle and innocuous point about a natural and unavoidable process that takes place early on in evolutionary terms—relatively speaking—in any organism that evolves the capacity to communicate verbally or non-verbally with its peers.

I noted earlier that Nietzsche is fundamentally a Darwinist through and through, which may to some appear controversial. However, the influence of Darwin on Nietzsche is significant, and John Richardson has argued that Nietzsche has a 'close affinity with

Darwin'.¹³⁷ While Nietzsche is certainly critical of Darwin, this criticism focuses on the observation that rather than picking out and promoting the strongest and most exceptional, nature instead selects the average and the mediocre—for the average and the mediocre are better suited to survival.

Anti-Darwin. — What surprises me most when I survey the broad destinies of man is that I always see before me the opposite of that which Darwin and his school see or want to see today: selection in favour of the stronger, better-constituted, and the progress of the species. Precisely the opposite is palpable: the elimination of the lucky strokes, the uselessness of the more highly developed types, the inevitable dominion of the average, even the sub-average types[...]¹³⁸

There is likely a sense in which Nietzsche is interpreting Darwin unfairly or too narrowly here—it also isn't clear whether Nietzsche read Darwin's original works—for much of this could be read in a way that is compatible with Darwin's fundamental principles and even passes beyond them into hereditarianism. In fact, Richardson has suggested that Nietzsche's hostile stance came from a need to distinguish himself, 'because he knows how much he has taken over from Darwin—how big a part of his own view, this Darwinism looms.'¹³⁹ This is extremely plausible, especially given that Nietzsche offers remarkably clear and extensive explanations of natural selection in many of his arguments and genealogical explanations, and one such example, I will now argue, is BGE258, where Nietzsche is making this very same argument as above—that nature generalises and expels uniqueness and individuality, and he is doing so through appeal to natural and sexual selection rather than consciousness.¹⁴⁰

The starting point of the important passage of BGE268 is that those who use the same language must have a relatively homogenous internal life to go along with those representations in order for that shared language to be of any use. 'Using the same words is not enough to get people to understand each other: they have to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences too'.¹⁴¹ Nietzsche adds that this is why people who live together will understand each other better. This is all a matter of

¹³⁷ Richardson (2004) p12

¹³⁸ WP 685

¹³⁹ Richardson (2004) p3

¹⁴⁰ For more on the relevance of Darwin to Nietzsche's work see Richardson (2004) and Small (2005), esp. ch.11.

¹⁴¹ BGE 268

degree: neighbouring tribes who speak the same language will not understand each other as well as those within their own communities, but the fact that they can understand each other at all signifies some element of common experience and internal representation, and they will understand each other better than they can understand someone from some far-flung region that has no common weather, plants, predators, practices or work.

Why is this the case? Nietzsche's answer is paradigmatically Darwinian. Those who are unable to understand each other, or misinterpret each other, die.

Now, assuming that needs have only ever brought people together when they could somehow indicate similar requirements and similar experiences with similar signs, then it follows, on the whole, that the easy communicability of needs (which ultimately means having only average and *base* experiences) must have been the most forceful of the forces that have controlled people so far. People who are more alike and ordinary have always been at an advantage; while people who are more exceptional, refined, rare, and difficult to understand will easily remain alone, prone to accidents in their isolation and rarely propagating. Immense countervailing forces will have to be called upon in order to cross this natural, all-too-natural *progressus in simile*, people becoming increasingly similar, ordinary, average, herd-like, – increasingly *base*!¹⁴²

One of the central points of this passage is that those who cannot understand others or be understood will end up in isolation and without the protection of the group and will, as a result, rarely propagate. The use of signs, when combined with homogenous inner experiences by people in a shared environment, significantly decreases the chance of death and correspondingly increases the chances of passing on genes. In this way, nature has selected those who are, firstly, capable of communication, and secondly, have the most similar ways to each other of representing the world. On this interpretation, natural selection makes uniform the inner life of a people, not the translation of unconscious thought into consciousness in isolated language acts.

This is made all the more clear when we look at this last section as an answer to the question Nietzsche initially begins this passage with: “[W]hat, in the end, is *base*?” The German from which the translation ‘base’ or ‘common’ comes from is *Gemeinheit*, which entails both commonality as well as low status. Nietzsche’s eventual answer to this

¹⁴² BGE 268

question that we have just seen is ultimately 'people'. It is people as a whole who are base. Nature itself selects for base inner experiences as it is the simplest and most common experiences that can be most easily expressed. So Nietzsche's answer refers to people as a whole throughout history: people are kept as base as possible in order to aid basic survival. Those who are more common multiply and the development of individuals with different inner experiences are continually pushed back against. This is the state of things and always has been, and 'immense countervailing forces' will be needed to escape this 'natural, all-too-natural *progressus in simili*'.¹⁴³

While my intention here is to show that Nietzsche is talking about evolutionary processes as the cause of this standardisation in BGE268 rather than conscious thought—which is not necessary to make signs and have a common environment—it is worth briefly observing that much like Nietzsche's psychological theories, his forays into evolutionary biology are quite plausible and have relatively comparable contemporary analogues. The cooperative eye hypothesis, for example, suggests that the white of the human eye evolved to make it easier to follow each other's gaze, to know what another is planning, thinking or referring to.¹⁴⁴ Whether the implication of this is that those who lacked visible whites were less able to predict and understand each other's behaviour and so were more likely to perish before passing on their genes, or that they were not trusted and simply killed off (though the two undoubtedly overlap), the significance of being understood and consistency between one's visible external representations and silent intentions is a serious topic of research. The central point of all this, however, is to show that BGE268's references to the common representation of internal states is more obviously an evolutionary lament on Nietzsche's part, more directly comparable to passages on Darwin like WP 685. Consciousness plays, at most, a minimal role in falsification here. And it should be obvious why when we recognise that in talking about this selective process, Nietzsche is actually talking about the gradual development of consciousness itself rather than its consequences.

¹⁴³ *Progression of the same thing*. BGE 268

¹⁴⁴ Kobayashi, H. and S. Kohshima (2001)

2.2.2 Concepts and Consciousness

This is in contrast to GS354 where consciousness takes centre stage in its fully developed form and comes under attack through accusations of its superfluousness and damaging nature; to be contrasted with the vital selective role discussed in BGE268. But none of this is to suggest that these two processes are unconnected. They are fundamentally related in the sense that the selective standardisation of inner representations and development of a common language that takes place over a long period of time is the foundation that makes possible the later more damaging corruption and falsification that requires a fully developed consciousness.

It is perhaps easiest to think of this in terms of stages of man's development and so stages of generalisation. This 'taming of man'¹⁴⁵ is a general theme of Nietzsche's works that recurs frequently, but while these elements are all interconnected it would be a mistake to think of them as a single process or event, or of their effects as being of precisely the same kind. Instead, man is slowly tamed and made uniform in one sense by the state, by being forced to obey the alien laws of the conqueror until instincts are to some degree internalised and a gap appears between instinct and action. On another level, we have the selective process of BGE268 that precedes and continues past this internalisation, that introduces relative uniformity to our inner representations. Finally, we have the end result of these and other processes that result in modern man and his advanced faculty of consciousness which somehow introduces the possibility of added dangers and falsifications. But while they are related in this way, they are also distinct. Internal uniformity through selection is a generation-long process, largely complete, that makes possible a fully developed modern consciousness and its dangers, but is not that danger itself.

But for entire races and lineages, this seems to me to hold: where need and distress have for a long time forced people to communicate, to understand each other swiftly and subtly, there finally exists a surplus of this power and art of expression, a faculty, so to speak, which has slowly accumulated and now waits for an heir to spend it lavishly (the so-called artists are the heirs, as well as the orators, preachers, writers - all of them people who come at the end of a long chain, each of them 'born late' in the best sense of the term, and each of them, again, squanderers by nature). [GS354]

¹⁴⁵ GS 3; 13

This is Nietzsche in GS354 referring to this long process of standardisation by selection, as in BGE268, before looking to the added dangers of a consciousness at the endpoint of this process. The kind of timescales under discussion are 'entire races and lineages', with the people who have this consciousness and are most endangered by it only emerging at the 'end' of this long process, this 'long chain'. This danger emerges because the entire apparatus of conscious thought has evolved in a communicative capacity under pressures of natural and sexual selection and the state. As a result, this new 'faculty' [GS354], developed only with an eye to socialisation and communication has inherent dangers, one of which is that it can apparently translate the unique into the homogenous. But the question we now face is why is this developed consciousness more dangerous? And why does Nietzsche object to it as corrupting, distorting and falsifying in a manner that goes far beyond his criticism of other standardisation and taming such as in selection for internal homogeneity or instinct internalisation? To begin to answer this question we need to look to the nature of conceptuality itself and its relationship to consciousness and, more specifically, the precise role that the *word* plays in this process.

I claimed at the beginning of this section that Riccardi was correct to criticise Katsafanas' definition of the conscious and unconscious, but that his justification for doing so was muddled. Katsafanas claims that the distinction between conscious and unconscious activity is delineated by the presence or absence of conceptuality, respectively. However, in claiming that, for Nietzsche, both conscious *and* unconscious conceptualisation occurs, Riccardi has argued that conceptualisation cannot function as the distinguishing mark Katsafanas needs it to be. But more than this, if conceptualisation occurs in both the conscious and unconscious, then how can conceptualisation possibly be the motivation for Nietzsche's scathing critique of consciousness? If conceptualisation were the source of Nietzsche's animosity towards consciousness then he would have equal cause for a critique of unconscious thought. And yet he only attacks consciousness. This was the motivation for Riccardi's interesting and plausible suggestion that the source of Nietzsche's animosity for consciousness is to be found in consciousness utilising a proprietary form of conceptuality that is grounded in social and communicative utility.

But I suggested that this answer was wrong because the motivation was wrong, which led to the wrong question being asked. Katsafanas' position is flawed not because conceptualisation is something that happens independently in both the conscious and

unconscious; it is flawed because Nietzsche does not think that the mechanism of conscious *thought* takes place through concepts *at all*, but instead, in acoustic signs *for* concepts—importantly, this is not the same as our never being conscious or aware of concepts in some sense. For Nietzsche, conscious thought is the domain of words or acoustic symbols; while the 'more or less determinate', barely felt, sensations and images—that define the concept for Nietzsche—are rooted in the unconscious and seem to straddle the boundary between consciousness and the unconscious—between that of which we are aware and that of which we are unaware.¹⁴⁶

This is a dense and perhaps controversial series of claims and I will now turn to unpacking them and providing textual evidence. But it should hopefully be clear how, if this turns out to be the case, Riccardi's and Katsafanas' readings break down and a very different answer to the question of Nietzsche's animosity towards conscious thought must be sought. If conceptuality is not present in conscious thought at all then both Riccardi's and Katsafanas' readings, on which Nietzsche attacks consciousness on account of the presence of conceptual deployment in consciousness, must be abandoned. Nietzsche's dismissive remarks on consciousness will have to have nothing to do with conceptuality—which, while perhaps an odd claim, at least has the benefit of aligning with "concept" being mentioned not once in his most famous attack on consciousness in GS354.

2.2.3 *Words and Concepts*

The first clue that something is still amiss with Riccardi's reading of Nietzsche on consciousness is that, as Katsafanas correctly notes, Nietzsche thinks that words and concepts are closely related in some way; in fact, he actually states that concepts 'are possible only when there are words.'¹⁴⁷ While I have argued above that Katsafanas is mistaken in linking concepts as closely to words as he does—that 'to think in words is to think by means of concepts'¹⁴⁸—it is nevertheless accurate to recognise that Nietzsche does tie the two together in some fundamental sense—concepts are somehow reliant upon words for their existence; though, of course, this does not mean

¹⁴⁶ BGE 268

¹⁴⁷ WP506

¹⁴⁸ Katsafanas (2005) p3

that the presence of one in an activity implies the cotemporary functional presence of the other.

The significance of this for the topic at hand is that Katsafanas claims Nietzsche is dismissive of consciousness because it introduces falsification through conceptuality. By arguing that there is a separate and independent source of falsification via concepts in the unconscious, Riccardi has argued that Katsafanas' position must be flawed—if falsification via conceptuality were the cause then Nietzsche would have equal justification for attacking unconscious thought; but, he does not.

Riccardi manages to undermine Katsafanas' position by claiming that conceptual falsification and generalisation occur in the unconscious independently of conscious thought. The problem that this close connection between words and concepts introduces for Riccardi's argument is that it is no longer clear just how cleanly we are able to separate the purported conscious conceptual generalisation from unconscious conceptual generalisation. If conscious generalisation affects or is somehow present alongside unconscious conceptual generalisation, then how do we know that the former is not somehow responsible for the falsification that occurs in the latter? And if falsification present in the unconscious results from conscious activity, then Katsafanas can still claim that consciousness conceptualisation is the source of all falsification and generalisation and the reason for Nietzsche's attacks on consciousness. We also correspondingly lose motivation for the reading that Riccardi offers.

To emphasise the problem a little more clearly, the textual elements problematic for Riccardi's reading are Nietzsche's claims that concepts 'are possible only when there are words'¹⁴⁹ and that '[o]nly this conscious thinking occurs in words'¹⁵⁰ From this it directly follows that if unconscious conceptualisation exists then words have to be in existence in *some form*. There are two ways that we can read Nietzsche's statement that words must also exist. The first, and stronger version of this reading, would be that by "words" Nietzsche straightforwardly means consciousness. Words are the symbols in which conscious thought takes place, and so the additional presence of words means that the necessary ingredients of consciousness—words and concepts—are all present. If consciousness must be present for concepts to exist then we have no way of cleanly

¹⁴⁹ WP506

¹⁵⁰ GS 354

separating unconscious mental activity from conscious activity which means that any unconscious falsification may actually be caused by conscious falsification. As noted above, if this is the case, Katsafanas can maintain that *all* falsification has its source in conscious conceptualisation.

It isn't, however, quite as clear-cut as this. The implication is that consciousness is present in some form because words are, but it seems possible to have words without conscious *thought*: Nietzsche only says that conscious thought takes place in words and not that using a word entails conscious thought. An animal or child might have words and concepts without being truly conscious in the sense of an adult human. This would be the softer interpretation of the implications of the connection between words and concepts. But even if a fully-fledged consciousness is not present, words themselves are fundamentally conscious entities, which entails, on at least a basic level, conscious input in unconscious conceptualisation. But would words alone, rather than words as part of a conscious thought process, entail conceptualisation such that falsification emerges and can impact unconscious processes? The answer isn't immediately obvious.

This problem becomes even more complicated when we note that Nietzsche allows for degrees of consciousness and communication.

If one is willing to hear my answer and its possibly extravagant conjecture, it seems to me that the subtlety and strength of consciousness is always related to a person's (or animal's) ability to communicate; and the ability to communicate, in turn, to the need to communicate. [GS 354]

The most significant implication of this passage is Nietzsche's inclusion of animals in degrees of consciousness. If animals communicate and have consciousness to some degree, then Riccardi's argument becomes even more uncertain.

We can therefore conclude that generalisation is a kind of falsification-involving conceptual capacity which falls on the wrong side of the divide Nietzsche draws at the beginning of GS 354, namely on the side also populated by animals.¹⁵¹

But Nietzsche seems to allow that at least some animals share in consciousness to some degree as well as language. Even showing that animals can engage in conceptual

¹⁵¹ Riccardi p13

activity no longer achieves the required distance between consciousness and conceptuality because Nietzsche thinks animals can also share in that consciousness.

With this example and the previously discussed generalisation through natural selection, I think it relatively clear that word-*like* signs, falsifying generalisation and concept-*like* structures of mental content are present at the level below consciousness in Nietzsche's understanding. Evolution, being conservative, builds on old structures, rather than fashioning new ones entirely unrelated to previous systems. As such, it should be taken as relatively uncontroversial that various less sophisticated precursors to language—such as simple sounds and a limited vocabulary—and concepts and conceptual structures—e.g. a basic utilisation of cause and effect—must be present in non-human animals to varying degrees. The problem is that it just isn't clear from Nietzsche's writings at which stage he would call mental activity truly conceptual, think of sounds as words, or the use of words in thought as consciousness. However, even with this lack of clarity, Riccardi's claim of unconscious conceptualisation independent of consciousness has, at the very least, become a little muddled and difficult to textually substantiate. To make sense of all this, and the relationship between consciousness and concepts, we need to get a clearer understanding of how words function in relation to concepts.

Concepts, Words and the Unconscious

2.3.1 From Word to Drive

What is a concept for Nietzsche and what is its relation to words, images, sensations and the unconscious? Our first step is to define concepts and words, and in this at least Nietzsche helpfully provides clear definitions in the published and unpublished literature that align cleanly with each other. Beginning with the word, Nietzsche defines it as an acoustic symbol that represents numerous related images.

Words are acoustic signs for concepts [BGE 268]

—the collecting together of many images in something nonvisible but audible (word).

[WP 506]

A word is not a concept, but a sign for a concept, and is specifically manifested acoustically. What, then, is a concept? Nietzsche offers a clue above in his explaining

that a word is a sign for a concept and that words draw together similar images, which suggests that concepts involve images in some sense. But Nietzsche then goes into even greater detail.

[...]concepts, though, are more or less determinate pictorial signs for sensations that occur together and recur frequently, for groups of sensations. [BGE 268]

The tiny amount of emotion to which the "word" gives rise, as we contemplate similar images for which one word exists—this weak emotion in the common element, the basis of the concept. [WP 506]

A concept then is also a sign that has an image form, but that represents sensations or weak emotions, and is itself represented by a word.

Words are twice removed from the objects they represent, and concepts are once removed. Conscious thought, we might say, is the use of signs for another set of signs, that themselves represent some vague set of sensations. Words bring together many images and can place them next to each other in abstraction. A grouping of like-images is a grouping of vague but similar sensations that together constitute the concept.

A word is an acoustic sign for a concept

A concept is a pictorial sign for groups of sensations

So far so good, but things become less clear when we look to what these sensations themselves are. The best clue we have to go on comes from other sections in which Nietzsche refers to 'weak emotions' and sensations.

Language and the prejudices upon which language is based are a manifold hindrance to us when we want to explain inner processes and drives: because of the fact, for example, that words really exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes and drives; and where words are lacking, we are accustomed to abandon exact observation because exact thinking there becomes painful; indeed, in earlier times one involuntarily concluded that where the realm of words ceased the realm of existence ceased also. Anger, hatred, love, pity, desire, knowledge, joy, pain all are names for *extreme* states: the milder, middle degrees, not to speak of the lower degrees which are continually in play, elude us, and yet it is they which weave the web of our character and our destiny.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Daybreak 115

The first point we can draw from this passage is that words ultimately represent inner processes and drives. From this, we can add another level to the hierarchy.

Words > Concepts > Sensations > Unconscious Processes

Words—as acoustic signs, represent concepts—as images, which themselves represent with varying detail the underlying processes and drives through the vague sense we have of them. This relationship between words and concepts seems relatively clear, but we now have to understand the relationship between the concept and the unconscious processes to understand exactly what role and features they have.

A clue in this is offered in Nietzsche's claim that we only have words for our most 'extreme states, for the 'superlative degrees' of our unconscious processes. The majority of these states are, in fact, below the level of consciousness and simply 'elude us'. 'Words', Nietzsche says, 'really exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes'. In referring to our unconscious processes Nietzsche is referring back to the same unconscious processes of which we are unaware and Leibniz's *petites* and *latent* perceptions. Daybreak section 115, in particular, bears a striking resemblance to Leibniz's preface to the *New Essays*, where these tiny perceptions 'determine our behaviour without our thinking of them', 'deceive unsophisticated people into thinking that there is nothing at work in us that tilts us one way or another' and 'causes our desire and even our pleasure, to which it gives a dash of spice.'¹⁵³ But as we noted in the discussion of these passages in the previous section, these tiny perceptions do make themselves known to us occasionally, and where Leibniz uses the analogy of the wavelets breaking through in the crash of the wave to emphasise this, Nietzsche speaks of the 'the milder, middle degrees, not to speak of the lower degrees which are continually in play' but 'elude us', only breaking through in their 'extreme states' that are 'consequent on built-up congestions'.¹⁵⁴ We barely feel or experience any of the underlying processes that govern our actions or lead to our behaviours and 'weave the web of our character and our destiny'.¹⁵⁵

Understood in this context of this previous discussion, the sensations that the image-sign or concept represent are best understood as the various bits of the unconscious

¹⁵³ Leibniz NE Preface

¹⁵⁴ Daybreak 115

¹⁵⁵ Daybreak 115

that either manage or fail to make themselves felt or visible in some way. These barely-felt sensations and 'lower degrees' which 'elude us' [Daybreak 115], or latent and small perceptions in Leibniz's terminology, find their immediate representation in the concept, while their source and underlying reality are permanently hidden from us. These sensations themselves are many, muddled, barely felt or not felt at all. They are the *tiny emotions* Nietzsche refers to in WP506.

The tiny amount of emotion to which the "word" gives rise, as we contemplate similar images for which one word exists—this weak emotion in the common element, the basis of the concept. [WP 506]

With this added context we can understand the word as exciting—as an acoustic sign—the concept, where the concept—as a pictorial sign—represents and is defined and determined by weak and barely felt sensations that are the superlative degrees of the underlying latent unconscious processes and drives that guide our actions and define our character.

Words: acoustic sign, for

Concepts: pictorial sign, for

Sensations: barely felt element, of

Unconscious processes, drives and latent representations

If this so far is correct, then we are much closer to understanding the fundamental relationship between words and concepts, but the one element that is perhaps unclear in the manner in which the concept manifests itself as a pictorial sign. This is not a sign in the sense of a written word, letter or symbol that we might write or observe with our senses; certainly, Nietzsche means something more like the introspective experience of closing one's eyes and attempting to picture a tree to represent all trees, or the granular, faded visual imprint of some past experience—or a series of these. An important descriptive hint Nietzsche offers is that these signs are 'more or less determinate',¹⁵⁶ the implication of this being that the representation of a particularly clear image or object is not integral to the concept. This representation would seem more to fit a character in a dream that you know to be a certain person even though

¹⁵⁶ [BGE 268]

they lack any determinate features. You instead know who they are from some strange sense and feeling that informs you of this. The clarity of the representation of the concept generally might also be reliant on the same factors discussed in BGE268 such as familiarity with objects in one's environment or the use of such representation to survival, which then result in an easier, faster and more defined recall of such images. This would seem to be precisely the process of internal standardisation through selection that Nietzsche is discussing here.

In all souls, an equal number of frequently recurring experiences have gained an upper hand over ones that occur less frequently: understanding takes place faster and faster on this basis (the history of language is the history of a process of abbreviation); and people join closer and closer together on the basis of this understanding. The greater the danger, the greater the need to agree quickly and easily about necessities.¹⁵⁷

Interestingly, this reading offers something of the foundation necessary to make sense of Jungian archetypal symbols and mythologies in that it serves as an explanation for why such disparate cultures and individuals have used the same representations in their religious imagery and architecture and place the same archetypal figures in mythologies of a more or less identical structure, even where such imagery would never have been taught due to their heretical nature.¹⁵⁸

With this background now in place, I believe we are finally in a position to understand the nature of the relationship between words and concepts, and the manner in which the latter rely on the former. Before moving onto this, it is worthwhile briefly noting that while there is clearly much of value and interest in Nietzsche's understanding of the development and nature of language, there is also much that is unusual and likely even jarring to a contemporary philosopher's ear. I merely wish to acknowledge that there may be such concerns, but will not address them in detail as the ultimate plausibility of these ideas is not relevant for the purposes of this thesis: the primary concern is with understanding what Nietzsche did think about words and language so as to guide us to an understanding of what Nietzsche did think about the nature and value of consciousness.

¹⁵⁷ BGE 268

¹⁵⁸ One particularly striking example Jung notes is of a monk of the Cistercian order who has a vision of the King and Queen of heaven sitting beside one another on thrones. See Jung, *Archetypes* 132

2.3.2 *The Emergence of Higher Thought*

From the claim that concepts are 'possible only when there are words' we already know that Nietzsche viewed concepts as reliant upon words for their existence in some sense.¹⁵⁹ But understanding with a little more detail how it is that words, concepts and drives come together and develop has allowed us to understand that words offer the first tangible and defined element of mental content. Because of this, words have a dual role, as signs, and as the mechanism through which disparate but similar mental content develops into concepts.

Previous to the development of words, the only constancy was the regular occurrence of objects in an environment, the most powerful of which—predators and other dangers—leave an imprint to which sounds can be connected. Importantly, it isn't just thinking in words, or consciousness that develops this framework, but the use of words themselves—an example of which is Nietzsche's portrayal of the selective process in BGE 268. The layers of mental content below words are intangible and fleeting or else lack the required constancy to form distinct and determinate structures, measurements and comparisons. They are simply vague "images" of varying determination associated with the ephemeral, barely felt, superlative degrees of unknown relation to underlying unconscious processes. The emergence of the word connects these images and sensations, giving them fixed form, making equal that which is unequal and enabling abstraction. The significance of words seems to be that they offer a constant and regular framework on which unconscious structures can be further developed.

As Nietzsche observed, the levels of content below words are of a vague and varying determinacy.¹⁶⁰ This level, that we might refer to as the beginnings of consciousness, involves only images of varying quality and barely felt sensations. Those images and feelings that are most distinct will be the ones most closely related to survival and the most common to that environment.¹⁶¹ Predators, as the most significant danger, would be the most obvious image that would be necessary to represent.¹⁶² We see such behaviour in birds and even entirely different species in the same environment that react to the warning signs of other species in order to avoid danger. However, we can

¹⁵⁹ WP 506

¹⁶⁰ WP 506, D115

¹⁶¹ GS354, BGE 268, D115

¹⁶² GS354

see that where acoustic signs become more developed so do the inner representations and responses. Vervet monkeys, for instance, have at least three distinct alarm calls, each of which designates threat by leopard, eagle or snake and elicits a different response depending on the call/threat.¹⁶³ These would be examples of the most intense and frequent sensations and experiences in that environment. We can also see that where nuance of sign develops, more varied and appropriate responses become available to differing threats and situations.

However, where a word is absent, on Nietzsche's analysis, the internal states will lack specific or determinate form. We have only the 'weak emotion', latent and small perceptions and either poorly defined images or else no image at all. Behaviour at this level is instinctive; no gap is present between a stimulus and action. But words change all this; they begin to structure thought through 'the collecting together of many images in something nonvisible but audible'.¹⁶⁴ What words seem to be doing on Nietzsche's description is giving a structure to these barely felt inner states by categorising them in terms of like-images.

The tiny amount of emotion to which the "word" gives rise, as we contemplate similar images for which one word exists—this weak emotion in the common element, the basis of the concept. [WP 506]

Here, Nietzsche further confirms that similar images are here being categorised by the word and drawn together, and that they are categorised by the small sensations or weak emotions we have in relation to them. We already know from the earlier discussion that these weak emotions—and occasionally strong ones—are the tiniest fragments of the various drives breaking the surface of consciousness. Many of these unconscious processes never break the surface, or do so with such little frequency or force that they are largely neglected—which is why we lack words for most of these states: 'words really exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes and drives'.¹⁶⁵ That this common element is an extension of the drive tells us that the resultant concept, that is formed through the use of a word to excite various images, is drawn together not through the visual similarity of these vague and indeterminate memories,

¹⁶³ Cheney and Seyfarth *Behaviour* (1985), pp. 150-166

¹⁶⁴ WP 506

¹⁶⁵ Daybreak 115

impressions and internal states, but by the similarity of the drive process and underlying unconscious elements that these barely conscious and unconscious sensations have in common with each other. On a fundamental level, words themselves begin the process of taking all perceptual data and cross-referencing them according to particular drive processes.

There are two interesting consequences of this. The first is that some of these similar but different states and images that would have been treated as unique and individual by the unconscious are now treated as the same. Nietzsche immediately follows the last quoted section with the following remark:

That weak sensations are regarded as alike, sensed as *being the same*, is the fundamental fact. Thus confusion of two sensations that are close neighbours, as we take note of those sensations; but *who* is taking note?¹⁶⁶

In this, we have the birth of abstraction, taking two or more things that are not the same and treating them as though they are the same. This seems to be not only the foundation of abstraction but the beginnings of falsification and distortion. In making such groupings of sense and process and placing them under a single heading and conceptual sign we are not only enabling the generalisation of a single event and experience to other *only-similar* events, objects and situations; we are also creating a mental entity that can be ripped from context and placed against other mental entities also ripped from context that can be used in paradigmatically abstract activities such as mathematics, physics, philosophy and politics.

The more interesting element of this process, however, is yet to come, and it is important to state that this is the point at which we may begin to edge beyond what is directly and explicitly described in Nietzsche's works, in part because we have a wealth of experimental data from evolutionary biology and neuroscience that Nietzsche simply did not have available to him. What follows, however, remains in every way consistent with Nietzsche's ideas, and while the majority of what follows is textually verifiable, where exact textual verification is not available, the explanation I develop has precedent in already well-documented Nietzschean thought. This difference is perhaps best described as one of scale, of adding detail and evidence to the broad strokes sketched by Nietzsche over one hundred years ago.

¹⁶⁶ WP 506

With this in mind, it seems as though that in creating a determinate auditory scaffolding to represent the affections, objects, and processes of drives, a corresponding structure of this related imagery and sense crystallises in the unconscious. The word initiates the process that results in such crystallisation, but once formed, is no longer strictly necessary for its existence and engagement. This result of this crystallisation is the concept: rooted firmly in the unconscious, but sometimes manifesting with a vague, more or less determinate sense of an image that is fundamentally grounded in and known through barely-felt sense and emotion.

I have said that I am moving beyond the text because this goes beyond precisely what Nietzsche says about concepts and their development in relation to words in the sense that he does not explicitly say that words leave unconscious structures and imprints that crystallise in the unconscious. But a formulation like this is entailed both by the underlying structures he does describe and the outputs of this missing element in his description, as well as well as an analogous process that takes place through conscious behaviour generally.

In the first place, we have the known relationship of drive processes to words through Nietzsche's statements that words and concepts are a reflection of the underlying drives—'words really exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes and drives'.¹⁶⁷ But we also know that words are only acoustic symbols for concepts, and that concepts are pictorial symbols that draw together like sensations and emotions, which are the essence of the concept and have an immediate connection to the drives and unconscious processes. Nietzsche explicitly states that the ultimate object that words—and through them, concepts—represent, are drives and unconscious processes. Finally, we know that concepts are only possible when there are words. If we then add to this, via BGE268, that the existence of words—and not thinking in words, or consciousness, but simply words—makes inner processes uniform through selection; and that concepts are necessary for higher thought, but that consciousness and words *are not*—even though words are necessary for concepts: then there is no way of understanding Nietzsche's claims other than as words permanently restructuring the unconscious in a way that *does not* require the continued and permanent presence of concepts alongside that thought. This means that words and

¹⁶⁷ Daybreak 115

their relations to each other must leave their mark on the unconscious in the form of a permanent or semi-permanent imprint or structure. A more scientific way of expressing such a thought would be to speak in terms of neuroplasticity: to say that language restructures or creates certain pathways and processes in the brain. Data on this is incredibly limited—simply because we aren't going to intentionally prevent a baby from developing language so that we can do brain scans on it in a lab—but we can make some educated guesses from naturally occurring cases of limited linguistic development. Savantism and autism generally are helpful examples as they are characterised in the vast majority of cases by a serious deficit in linguistic capacity (with the rare exception of the polyglot savant). It is a plausible hypothesis that at least some element of these unusual cases seem to be explained by the absence of language as a filter, further evidenced by certain well-documented cases—such as that of Nadia—in which such extraordinary abilities are lost as a result of the acquisition of basic language skills.¹⁶⁸

But permanent restructuring of the unconscious is not entirely without precedent in Nietzsche. We know already that he accepted that fully formed conscious thought is capable of permanently restructuring unconscious processes and distorting behaviour and action without the continued presence of that conscious thought and words. This is a core element of both Katsafanas' and Riccardi's readings, such as in guilt conscience.

[...]conscious states causally interact with unconscious states in a variety of ways, by creating new unconscious states and by altering existing unconscious states.¹⁶⁹

A conscious understanding of suffering as the result of one's own failings and a debt to God, among other things, results in a permanent unconscious reconfiguration of one's responses to that state. As Katsafanas notes, 'conscious states introduce distortions into the mental economy as a whole.'¹⁷⁰ The result of this conceptualisation or crystallisation of this relationship of stimulus and sensation is that the entire structure of unconscious thought changes accordingly; there is no need for the words or crystallisation to repeat in each act of ascetic guilt, for example. In Nietzsche's own words:

¹⁶⁸ Selfe (2011)

¹⁶⁹ Katsafanas p23

¹⁷⁰ Katsafanas p24

‘the bad conscience is firmly rooted, eating into him and spreading within him like a polyp. . .’ (II.21).

As such, this idea of a crystallisation or permanent reconfiguration of inner states is already found within Nietzsche's writings and a readily accepted feature of his thinking in the secondary literature. In this sense, I do not think that it represents a significant break from his writings to suggest that such a process can also occur with individual words also, especially when a similar process is already described in terms of selection in BGE 268. This is also the natural and conventional way that we make sense of learning and the function of language and, in particular, skilled action. In learning a process or new skill we slowly work through the task, normally with extensive verbal direction—as in learning to drive. But once that process becomes crystallised in our unconscious we no longer need either verbal direction or conscious thought to be able to perform that task; in fact, as McDowell notes, skilled action is paradigmatically unconscious, with conscious interference with an already learnt skill being only detrimental to its performance.¹⁷¹

Before moving on, it is worth acknowledging the somewhat unusual dual-role that words occupy in Nietzsche's model of the development of concepts. Words feature as both signs for concepts, and as the mechanism that enables their existence—which, at least superficially, sounds a little strange. Perhaps the simplest way of making sense of this is to think of the word, initially, as a sound that picks out various states or representations that exist independently of the word, but have not yet been grouped together. The word is an acoustic sign, and remains an acoustic sign, but through referencing these similar but distinct mental elements, it connects them together, forming a concept, and fundamentally altering their relations to each other and the structure of the unconscious.

But more importantly—and we are finally in a position to offer an answer as to why Nietzsche believed we could think and act exactly the same without consciousness—this is the only reading that can make sense of Nietzsche's insistence that while words and consciousness are necessary for concepts and abstraction—which together entail higher thought—consciousness, or thinking in words, is not necessary for higher thought. On this account, our answer to the problem of superfluousness is relatively

¹⁷¹ McDowell (2013) p53

straightforward: words and consciousness prime the unconscious for discursive, abstract engagement by categorising the processes and interests of the unconscious and the external elements related to these unconscious processes and interests. They bring together these different and unique representations, experiences, memories, needs and processes and start grouping together similar ones—as Nietzsche describes in WP 506:

The tiny amount of emotion to which the "word" gives rise, as we contemplate similar images for which *one* word exists—this weak emotion is the common element, the basis of the concept.

Words themselves, in relation to the environment, begin this process in the sound-making, communal animal and certain states and processes become prominent and clearly defined; but with a more developed consciousness more specific and developed programming becomes possible. But the important point is this: once the connection of the elements that display like-sensations has been crystallised in the unconscious through our auditory language of signs, there is no need for that auditory sign to be present to be able to perform the corresponding action or thought process.

2.3.3 *A New Reading of Superfluosity*

With the important relationship between words, concepts, consciousness and the unconscious on a firmer footing, we are now in a position to fully assess Riccardi's claim that conceptual falsification occurs independently in the unconscious and offer our own explanation of Nietzsche's claim that we could go on exactly the same without consciousness.

Recapping briefly, our difficulty in understanding Nietzsche came about due to his noting that consciousness, that is manifested in humans through the presence of language and conceptuality, is the source of human advancement over the remainder of the animal kingdom, our superiority and strength, and our general capacity for higher thought. Nietzsche then appears to directly contradict himself with the claim that we

could go on exactly the same without consciousness and for the most part already do.¹⁷² These claims were framed in the form of the following problem.

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness both elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

The secondary literature offers two main responses to this problem. The first answer, from Katsafanas, denied that Nietzsche genuinely believed humans capable of performing exactly the same without consciousness. The second, from Riccardi, claimed that humans are capable of performing these same actions because conceptualisation occurs in both the conscious and unconscious. The discussion of the previous section now allows us to directly assess these claims.

The first thing to note is that words are necessary for the development of higher thought and human sophistication. The use of words fundamentally alters the underlying structure of the thought, and this occurs through the categorisation of data by the drives and their processes. This categorisation gives rise to concepts that are best described as constellations of emotion, sensation, memory and intention that are the relations and outputs of underlying unconscious drives and their processes. The second significant aspect of this is that concepts are themselves directly rooted in the unconscious. The word is conscious and tangible, and grasps and groups all representations of a like-quality, where such commonality is found in the image or objects exciting a particular or common drives. As such, while the concept is superficially conscious, both in the sense of it being symbolised by a word that is paradigmatically conscious, and its being represented by an image-like representation of varying determination, the greater part of the mechanism that is excited by the word is unknown and unconscious. The image and the sensation that represent the concept are, where present—and they are not always present—only the superficial element of the overall constellation, which is the ultimate object of the word, the presence of which is its job to excite. In short, the feeling and the image are the elements of the underlying processes that we are aware of, but that we are only ever aware of the image, feeling and accompanying word leads us to treat this combination of word and feeling as the concept and thought itself, as well as the entirety of mental content and

¹⁷² GS 354

totality of our being. This is what Nietzsche means when he says that consciousness is not reason itself, but only 'the way in which we become conscious of reason'.¹⁷³ This is also what Nietzsche means by the overestimation of consciousness: not that consciousness does not enable higher thought and human sophistication, but that it merely *enables* higher thought and sophistication—the fundamental mechanisms that 'weave the character and web of our destiny', that judge and lead to action, are fundamentally unconscious and fundamentally unknown to us.¹⁷⁴ The concept is only the tip we see of a cacophony of processes and instruments that are otherwise unknown to us, but are excited by the word.

In this context, we can see that where Katsafanas and Riccardi primarily go wrong is interpreting Nietzsche as meaning that we can go on acting and living similarly without consciousness at all. Due to the significant changes that take place in the brain through the presence of words both in the evolutionary process that Nietzsche describes, as well as the impact of language on the individual, it is clear that we could neither have evolved into modern humans nor engaged in any sophisticated processes once that evolution is complete, without consciousness. What Nietzsche does mean by our being able to go on the same without consciousness, and that we already do, is that once the process of learning a language for overall brain development as well as learning a particular skill is complete, we no longer need consciousness—thinking in words—to arrive at complex conclusions or perform complex tasks.

In this sense, Katsafanas was actually entirely correct to say that the manner in which Nietzsche thought humans could go on without conscious thinking in words was through the use of images and other non-linguistic processes. But he went wrong in thinking that such activity would not be conceptual and that thinking in words is conceptual. Such behaviour would be directly conceptual on Nietzsche's terms as opposed to being filtered through acoustic signs which are in themselves non-conceptual and merely excite conceptual activity.

Similarly, while Riccardi was correct to note the existence of unconscious conceptual processes occurring independently of conscious thought, these processes and structures in the unconscious are the result of a conscious engagement with words and

¹⁷³ GS 354

¹⁷⁴ Daybreak 115

conscious thought generally. As such, the extent to which the unconscious can be said to be the source of falsification is the extent to which words and consciousness have already been developed. The reconfiguration of the unconscious in a manner that falsifies and distorts is, as a result, entirely dependent on consciousness in the context Nietzsche describes such falsification and distortion. As a result, we can see that the presence of unconscious conceptuality or categorisation cannot deal the fatal blow against Katsafanas' position—that Nietzsche's objection to consciousness is the result of its being the source of falsification. On this account, consciousness is still the source of conceptual falsification.

This does not, however, constitute a defence of Katsafanas' overall position. Katsafanas associated conscious thought with conceptuality and the unconscious with non-conceptual activity. Furthermore, there still remain serious questions over the extent to which conceptuality causes Nietzsche's animosity towards conscious thought, not least of which is that the effects of consciousness seem to be a permanent reconfiguration of underlying unconscious states in evolution and childhood. At this point, however, we are in a position to offer a conclusive answer to the question of superfluousness.

Humans cannot reach anything like the level of sophistication they currently enjoy without consciousness. This is to some extent obvious from its effects through Christianity, science and mathematics. However, as the processes of consciousness permanently alters the underlying mental states, there is no need for the continued presence of consciousness. What this means is that when not learning a new skill we are completely capable of going about our lives without the use of consciousness at all. And specifically in terms of speaking, where we mean making sounds for the purposes of communication as opposed to a silent internal dialogue, conscious thinking is again not necessary, for it is only in limited circumstances—though perhaps this is different for a philosopher—that we play out our speech acts in our head before performing them on the world. This is what Nietzsche means when he says that 'the predominant part of our lives actually unfolds without this mirroring'.¹⁷⁵

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness both elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

¹⁷⁵ GS 354

[A2] Consciousness is required for the development of higher thought and its consequences through conceptualisation and the development of underlying processes; but consciousness is no longer necessary once such development has taken place.

Chapter 3: The Overestimation and Overuse of Consciousness

Having made progress in understanding why Nietzsche believes consciousness to be non-trivially superfluous, we now have to look to the consequences of this reading in terms of Nietzsche's claims that consciousness is damaging and falsifying. These consequences are significant and call for an entirely new approach to understanding the dangers of consciousness in Nietzsche's writings. Most noteworthy is that conscious thought itself is comprised of acoustic signs rather than concepts. As such, readings that characterise consciousness as conceptual, where such conceptuality in consciousness is the reason for the damaging nature of consciousness, can no longer do the required explanatory work. This is the case for the interpretations of both Riccardi and Katsafanas. Katsafanas straightforwardly claims that the realm of consciousness is coextensive with the conceptual where such conceptuality is the source of Nietzsche's antipathy towards consciousness.¹⁷⁶ Riccardi, in claiming both conscious and unconscious conceptuality for Nietzsche's theory of mind, refines this position and places the source of this same antipathy in 'some proprietary form of conceptualisation' that is specifically conscious.¹⁷⁷ But neither of these positions characterise consciousness accurately as a fundamentally non-conceptual process, with the result that a new explanation must be developed that does not account for Nietzsche's disparaging remarks on consciousness in terms of the presence of conceptuality in the mechanism of conscious thought.

One immediate option that would retain the relevance of conceptuality to Nietzsche's attacks on consciousness would be an attempt to make sense of consciousness' damaging and falsifying effects in terms of its *role* in the creation of a conceptual

¹⁷⁶ Katsafanas (2005) p2

¹⁷⁷ Riccardi (forthcoming) p2

framework rather than the non-conceptual conscious thought, but such an approach has two major problems. The first is that Nietzsche's critique, especially in the most sustained treatment of consciousness in GS354, attacks consciousness in terms of conscious *thought* itself and not the effects of consciousness—the critical remarks are concerned with thinking in words, specifically, not concepts. But we also have the more significant problem of explaining why Nietzsche would be concerned with falsification at all, given his general ambivalence and even, under certain conditions, positive attitude towards it generally throughout his works. The first chapter of BGE, in particular, has a central theme of explaining the utility of falsehood.

We do not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment; this is perhaps where our new language will sound most foreign.¹⁷⁸

This is a theme also present throughout Nietzsche's individual appraisals of psychological states and their developments, including the two central explanatory mechanisms of the will to truth and the will to power. E.g. The will to power takes an object as its goal, but the object itself is not the source of the pleasure in its acquisition, but the process of acquisition—'In the end, we love our desires and not the thing desired.'¹⁷⁹ Similarly, the Greek mythology is praised in its capacity to keep bad-conscience at bay, and even the ascetic priest receives limited praise for his lies to the extent that they are life-affirming.¹⁸⁰ There is present throughout Nietzsche's writings a general neutrality towards falsehood, and even outright approval under the right conditions.

This adds a second requirement to our search for an explanation of Nietzsche's antipathy towards consciousness. Not only must conceptuality be excluded from the justification for such a position, but falsehood must be, also. Given Nietzsche's positive or neutral appraisals of falsehood in numerous situations, its presence alone is not enough to explain his position on consciousness. More than this, Nietzsche's positive appraisals of the Greek conceptualisation of guilt through their mythology further shows that consciousness can be positive, and Nietzsche speaks only glowingly of this response to suffering and chaos. The same can also be said of Nietzsche's extensive investigation of the origin of various concepts and his attempts to reorient his reader's

¹⁷⁸ BGE 4

¹⁷⁹ BGE 175

¹⁸⁰ GM 2;23; GM 3.13

manner of conceptualisation in relation to them—needless to say, he viewed his own work as life-affirming and positive. Through these examples, it seems that we must also explain how consciousness, in addition to being distorting and damaging, can also be perfectly healthy and a positive aspect of human existence.

A pattern in Nietzsche's evaluation is hopefully becoming clear, and the core theme running throughout is that the extent to which a belief involves falsehood and distortion is more or less irrelevant to Nietzsche's normative model. What each of the distortions or false beliefs Nietzsche praises have in common is that they are life-affirming, positive, elevating models of reality: the Greek mythology, aspects of priestly hypnotisation, the will to power and even elements of Christian mythology; what the states Nietzsche attacks have in common with each other is that they do the opposite, they are life-denying, destructive and harmful to the species: the ascetic ideal, the ascetic priest, guilt-conscience. And this makes sense when we acknowledge that Nietzsche thinks that all human reason, categories, perception, judgment, is partial. 'Not "to know" but to schematize—to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require.'¹⁸¹ That consciousness involves falsehood thus offers no explanatory value in terms of telling us why Nietzsche singled it out for such overt criticism. However, what this realisation does do is point us towards a way of understanding what Nietzsche's reasons for attacking consciousness might be: in the extent to which consciousness can embolden life-denying and negative, ascetic elements.

In this section I will develop these claims, arguing that Nietzsche's objection to consciousness cannot be understood simply through reference to conceptuality and falsification as explanatory factors. I will also argue that Nietzsche's objection to consciousness, as well as its harmful effects, are not universal, and that Nietzsche allows for the healthy deployment of consciousness under the right conditions. Instead, Nietzsche objects to the overuse and misuse of consciousness and, in particular, the growing consciousness in Europe due to its harmful, ascetic, life-denying effects. If I have explained the background with sufficient clarity, this claim will hopefully not be surprising, but the interesting element lies in fully understanding the underlying nature

¹⁸¹ WP 515

of consciousness that renders its overuse intrinsically damaging, particularly in the context of an ever increasing nihilism after the death of the one God.

This most recent manifestation of life-denial, as with all others, finds its source in suffering, *ressentiment*, the priest and the ascetic ideal, but gains its unique power and significance in its occurring after the death of God. The polyp-like, life-denying damage and power of Christianity lies in the reflection of guilt back onto the sufferer, but its healing, mediating and pacifying qualities lay in this same source. But without God and the symbols and mythology of religion, this pacifying element disappears, and the ascetic priest is free to direct *ressentiment* wherever he pleases, no longer trammelled by the moderating forces of humility and guilt. This has two significant and deeply worrying effects that define the modern nihilism and the last one hundred years of human history. The first is that *ressentiment* and the causes of suffering can be redirected anywhere, and at anything—which seems to be the greater part of the reasoning behind Nietzsche's concern for the growing quasi-religious political activism in Europe that resulted in the horrors of communism and fascism and remains present today. The second is that the religious symbolism and mythology—which, however harmful, nevertheless regulated, moderated and mediated the relationship between the conscious and unconscious—just disappears. The stories, symbology and myths that kept *ressentiment* at bay are gone; and with this absence, there is even more limited communication between the conscious and unconscious, and even less to ground the conscious mind: consciousness is free to spin off its own meanings and "reason" with no tether to the unconscious and the concepts rooted in it—the ascetic priest and the dogmatic tendencies of humanity are free to manufacture acoustic symbols that have no or only limited reality in the unconscious—which is the same as saying no relation to nature, life and meaning—with the result that consciousness becomes its own force: young, stupid, and incredibly dangerous.

3.1. The Limited Relevance of Concepts and Falsification to Consciousness

Interpretations of Nietzsche's statements that consciousness is a 'corruption and falsification'[G354] tend to focus on the relationship between consciousness and

conceptuality as an explanation of its corrupting and dangerous nature.¹⁸² But, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the realm of conceptual activity and influence is the unconscious, while conscious thought is a scaffolding of acoustic signs. As a result, while it might still make sense to hold consciousness as being in some sense responsible for the creation of the underlying conceptual infrastructure, it no longer makes any sense to think of conscious thought as thought through concepts—where it is a conscious conceptual activity that is damaging and the reason for Nietzsche's attacks on conscious *thought*. Again, this is not to claim that consciousness is not ultimately responsible for conceptual development; rather, it is to claim that interpreting consciousness as conceptually comprised, where concepts are the harmful element of consciousness, is mistaken. Consciousness is comprised only of acoustic *signs* for concepts.

In part, this amounts to a distinction between consciousness as a whole, its development and effects on the one hand, and conscious thought itself, on the other. Nietzsche's famous attack of GS354 is directed at conscious thought—'the thinking which becomes conscious is only the smallest part of it'; 'only that conscious thinking takes place in words'— not the unconscious thought that consciousness enables. It is specifically thinking in words to which Nietzsche is objecting and that he finds most harmful, which is in no sense conceptual, but fundamentally social and linguistic. In this, that it is the social and linguistic element of consciousness to which Nietzsche objects, Riccardi is completely correct, but this social and linguistic element is non-conceptual, and so any interpretation that places concepts at the heart of Nietzsche's objection to thinking in words is mistaken.

But it is not only concepts that have limited relevance where Nietzsche's view of consciousness is concerned, but also, it seems, falsification itself. Throughout Nietzsche's works he seems to take a neutral stance on the presence of falsification, believing it to be a basic and necessary foundation of human existence. This neutral stance is visible in two main ways: in his explicit theoretical examination of falsification and its utility, and in his appraisals of particular events or psychological states that involve falsification.

¹⁸² Riccardi (forthcoming), Katsafanas (2005)

3.1.1 *Falsification in Theory*

Chapter one of *Beyond Good and Evil* represents a sustained treatment of the topic of falsification and error, introducing the idea of the will to truth to the reader along with the suggestion that many of mankind's most deeply held moral beliefs may turn out to be very different to their superficial characterisation in conscious thought, and that the unconscious underpinnings and origin of even our moral structures may be rooted in their evil opposites.

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 they are even essentially the same.¹⁸³

We claim that we want truth, and believe that truth is useful, but again, coming from a Darwinian perspective, Nietzsche points out that this simply may not be the case—'*why not untruth instead? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?*'¹⁸⁴ Part of what Nietzsche is claiming is that falsehood and distortion may have been most advantageous to survival, and that our most noble actions, as perceived consciously, may have their actual unconscious source in their life-preserving opposites, in the things we consciously abhor and decry. This is, of course, the very same origin as that of the will to truth—as a dogmatic insistence that the teachings of the church are not to be doubted: God is truth, the truth is holy; with the irony that this insistence on the value of truth within the Christian teachings turned on its master once it discovered that Christian mythology was not strictly grounded in reality.¹⁸⁵

An initial response to this might be to think that this will to truth is good, that it has turned on its dogmatic master and brought humanity towards enlightenment, but this would be to miss the subtext of these statements. That the will to truth has turned on its dogmatic master does not mean that it has turned on its dogmatic essence. Nietzsche is clear that a rejection of Christian dogma does not equate to a rejection of Christian morality.¹⁸⁶ It is just as likely that the will to truth has found a new master, that it has turned on the old one out of utility and that it still finds its essence in utility rather than truth—every philosophy is but a 'confession of faith on the part of its author' and an

¹⁸³ BGE 2

¹⁸⁴ BGE 1

¹⁸⁵ GM 3;27

¹⁸⁶ GM 3;27

attempt to impose their subjective values on the remainder of life.¹⁸⁷ 'Consequently, I do not believe that a "drive for knowledge" is the father of philosophy, but rather that another drive, here as elsewhere, used knowledge (and mis-knowledge!) merely as a tool.'¹⁸⁸ Much the same is true of atheism.

Nietzsche brings these claims together in BGE4 explaining that falsification is a necessary part of existence and that we simply could not go on without it.

We do not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment; this is perhaps where our new language will sound most foreign. The question is how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, how well it preserves, and perhaps even cultivates, the type. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments (which include synthetic judgments *a priori*) are the most indispensable to us, and that without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the wholly invented world of the unconditioned and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world through numbers, people could not live – that a renunciation of false judgments would be a renunciation of life, a negation of life. To acknowledge untruth as a condition of life: this clearly means resisting the usual value feelings in a dangerous manner; and a philosophy that risks such a thing would by that gesture alone place itself beyond good and evil.¹⁸⁹

Nietzsche makes a series of striking claims in this passage, beginning with an explicit statement that is one of the main claims of this chapter: 'the falsity of a judgement is not in itself an objection to a judgment.' To find motivation for a more nuanced understanding of Nietzsche's relationship with consciousness, we need to show that the falsification that occurs due to the supposed presence of concepts in consciousness is not something that Nietzsche would have objected to in itself. Nietzsche explicitly demonstrates his holding this view with the statement that falsehood is not in itself something to which he objects.

His reason for treating falsification in this manner is that he views its presence as necessary for human existence. In direct reference to the consequences of conceptualisation he uses as examples of necessary falsification the treating of two or more things as the same when they are not—'the self-identical'—as well as numbers and logic. These are the fundamental structures that lie at the foundation of reason and

¹⁸⁷ BGE 6

¹⁸⁸ BGE 6

¹⁸⁹ BGE 4

perception and the presences of falsification here means it runs throughout all human existence. This is the second significant aspect of this passage, in that it is not some limited falsification Nietzsche deems necessary for human life referred to here, but ubiquitous and unavoidable. He is speaking of the 'falsest judgments', of 'constant falsification'. Finally, and most importantly, his acceptance of falsification is not grudging or limited. Falsehood is 'indispensable to us'. Without it 'people could not live' — 'a renunciation of false judgments would be a renunciation of life, a negation of life.' Nietzsche is accepting falsehood as part of a healthy human existence, and in using language like the 'renunciation' and 'negation' of *life* when discussing the rejection of falsehood he is associating such a rejection with the same degree of harm and damage of the ascetic ideal and the ascetic priest.

Taking all of this into account, it does not seem that the mere presence of falsification can be anything like a sufficient explanation for Nietzsche's negativity towards consciousness, or elements of it. In these passages he goes beyond merely accepting it in certain cases, even seeming to be referencing the falsification specific to conceptuality when he claims it is necessary for life. As a result, it is clear we need another explanation for Nietzsche's attitude towards falsification.

Now, before looking more closely at the role falsification plays for Nietzsche, it should be made clear that criticism of the will to truth and Nietzsche's acknowledgment of the importance and benefits of falsification and distortion are not a denial of the importance of truth or accuracy. Truth is valuable; but Nietzsche is also pointing out that untruth and falsification are also sometimes invaluable, and that a will to truth that denies this is harmful and dangerous. But how precisely are untruth, distortion, and falsehood valuable, or even indispensable to us?

One answer seems to be that there is a fundamental level of falsification that is necessary for life. BGE4. For example, concerns very specific elements of falsification that seem to be intertwined with his and our notions of conceptuality and perception. He is speaking of 'synthetic judgments *a priori*', 'the fictions of logic' and of 'numbers'.¹⁹⁰ This is confirmed by numerous notebook passages that have an identical focus.

¹⁹⁰ BGE 4

'The entire apparatus of knowledge is an apparatus for abstraction and simplification—directed not at knowledge but at taking possession of things'. [WP503]

Logic is bound to the condition: assume there are identical cases. In fact, to make possible logical thinking and inferences, this condition must first be treated fictitiously as fulfilled. [WP512]

The inventive force that invented categories laboured in the service of our needs, namely of our need for security, for quick understanding on the basis of signs and sounds, for means of abbreviation:—"substance," "subject," "object," "being," "becoming," have nothing to do with metaphysical truths.— [WP513]

Not "to know" but to schematise—to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require. In the formation of reason, logic, the categories, it was *need* that was authoritative: not to "know," but to subsume, to schematise, for the purposes of intelligibility and calculation. [WP515]

Taken together, we can see that when Nietzsche is discussing falsification he is not referring to a superficial level of confusing one thing with another in consciousness or an error of judgement. Falsification on Nietzsche's terms runs to the depths of the organic process. Reason, logic, and the categories are the subject matter here, and the falsification Nietzsche is discussing is not a singular event but our very means of interacting with the world and making any judgment. Reason, logic, and the categories *are themselves falsifications*.

Nietzsche is again using evolution to explain the development of thought. We think the way we think only because it is useful, and what was useful—especially in dangerous situations—was a coarse and hurried appraisal of whether one thing was *sort-of-like* another thing, leading to the conclusion that these two things or situations are the same, so generating a prepared and skilful response. As a result, the work of the senses and reason is not to represent accurately and assess all of what lies around in the environment, but to pick out what is useful only and ignore the rest. This is categorisation by drive: the dividing up of the world into things that we want, things that can help us get what we want, and things that can stop us getting what we want. And where utility rather than accuracy is the goal, accuracy is quickly forgotten when accuracy and utility conflict. This evolutionary development is the subject of discussion in the above extracts and can be summarised as the two following claims: first, that the senses only represent that which is relevant to our interests.

'we have senses for only a selection of perceptions—those with which we have to concern ourselves in order to preserve ourselves' [WP 505]

In this, it is the drives that do the sensing, and why Nietzsche adds that '*all sense perceptions are permeated with value judgments*'.¹⁹¹ But secondly, that once taken up, the means of comparing and judging the data from our perceptions—data that is already partial—is itself not developed with accuracy in mind, but at arriving at the most useful conclusion to the organism with a speed appropriate to the situation. This is why Nietzsche refers to the categories and reasoning as 'abbreviations': as a means of acquiring with the least amount of cognitive effort required.¹⁹²

Put in terms relevant to the two analyses of Katsafanas and Riccardi above, this means that falsification is inescapable. It exists at the most basic level of existence, through consciousness and before it in the unconscious and in the very development of the senses. But it must also be understood as useful, as necessary for existence—without it, we could not judge or think or survive. From this we can draw out three separate claims: that falsification can be useful, is not harmful in itself, and is necessary for life. However, the most important element of this discussion is that Nietzsche includes conceptualisation in this analysis of falsification—that he includes the categories, reason and, in particular, the repeated reference to treating as equal that which is unequal, makes it clear that Nietzsche has conceptuality in mind when discussing the necessity of falsification—these are precisely the ways in which he describes the emergence and use of concepts.¹⁹³

The first conclusion we can now extract from this is that simply using falsification as an explanation for Nietzsche's antipathy towards consciousness is not enough. Katsafanas argues that the introduction of falsification leaves Nietzsche ambivalent about consciousness, while Riccardi argues that a specific type of conscious falsification is the source of his attacks. But given that Nietzsche has explained that falsification and, in particular, conceptual falsification is useful, necessary to life, and even that its

¹⁹¹ WP 505

¹⁹² WP 513

¹⁹³ Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 34[131]=WLN, 10; WP 506

renunciation would amount to a 'renunciation' and 'negation of life', the mere presence of falsification explains nothing.¹⁹⁴ Nietzsche states this explicitly.

'We do not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment; this is perhaps where our new language will sound most foreign.'¹⁹⁵

All this means that we must rethink our approach to understanding Nietzsche's position on consciousness. Conceptuality and falsification are, in themselves, neither negative nor positive. And yet these two factors have been understood as the central explanation for Nietzsche's forceful critique. The explanation I will be arguing for, I have already briefly outlined in the introduction to this chapter: it is not falsification or conceptuality to which Nietzsche objects in consciousness, but to specific cases of consciousness where the distortions it creates are harmful; more precisely, that the distortions it creates are not a manipulation of external states for utility, gain or survival; but the undermining of life-promoting, healthy internal states. Before expanding on this, however, one final piece must be moved onto the board, and this is that Nietzsche does not even object to *all* conscious thought—under the right circumstances it can be perfectly healthy, life-preserving and life-promoting.

3.1.2 *Consciousness in Ancient Greece and Nietzschean Thought*

One further neglected facet of Nietzsche's position on consciousness is that Nietzsche does not always object to consciousness. As we have seen, all judgment and perception involves falsification to some degree, which means that all consciousness involves falsification to some degree. If Nietzsche's attitude towards consciousness were based on the presence of falsification, he would, as a result, have to object to all consciousness. But he does not. Nietzsche offers two examples of a healthy, fully developed consciousness in action. The first concerns the Ancient Greek use of mythology in their religious practices to maintain a healthy psychology, and the second relates to Nietzsche's reorientation of our understanding of our own moral practices through their reconceptualisation. Reconceptualisation is still conceptualisation, and

¹⁹⁴ BGE 4

¹⁹⁵ BGE 4

we find examples of it in his treatment of guilt-conscience and the revealing of the ascetic priests three methods of placation.

Beginning with the Ancient Greeks, their mythology offers a striking example of the manner in which consciousness can be used to create a conception of the gods that is healthy and life-promoting. Nietzsche begins by arguing that the particular dangerous and damaging manner in which Europe and Christianity has used its gods is not necessary, and that there are other healthier conceptions.

That the conception of gods does not, as such, necessarily lead to that deterioration of the imagination which we had to think about for a moment, that there are nobler ways of making use of the invention of gods than man's self-crucifixion and self-abuse, ways in which Europe excelled during the last millennia[...]¹⁹⁶

Nietzsche then argues that the Greek 'conception of gods' was used to ensure 'the animal in man felt deified, did not tear itself apart and did not rage against itself!' and that they 'used their gods expressly to keep 'bad conscience' at bay so that they could carry on enjoying their freedom of soul'.¹⁹⁷ Giving a specific example of this, he states:

– for centuries, the noble Greek asked himself this in the face of any incomprehensible atrocity or crime with which one of his peers had sullied himself. 'A god must have confused him', he said to himself at last, shaking his head . . . This solution is typical for the Greeks . . . In this way, the gods served to justify man to a certain degree, even if he was in the wrong they served as causes of evil – they did not, at that time, take the punishment on themselves, but rather, as is nobler, the guilt . . .¹⁹⁸

Whenever something inexplicable or tragic occurs that is the fault of some individual, the guilt of such actions is placed on the gods. As noted in an earlier discussion of this passage, this is the opposite of a Christianity that seeks to place all guilt on the individual, even when there is nothing to feel guilty about. As also noted earlier, Jung has explained that this is a method of psychological self-preservation that has been present throughout human history—even alongside Christianity—in the form of demons or witches, or the idea that someone has been possessed when they do something particularly out of character or extreme.¹⁹⁹ However, the Greeks went

¹⁹⁶ GM 2; 23

¹⁹⁷ GM 2; 23

¹⁹⁸ GM 2; 23

¹⁹⁹ Jung A62

beyond this, taking this particular protective mechanism and unfolding it across a whole mythology to serve as a healthy means of conceptualising and incorporating inexplicable and traumatic events through fictitious representations of those events in consciousness.

The first thing that this tells us is that Nietzsche thought it perfectly possible for a fully-conscious human to engage that consciousness and conceptual capacities healthily. Nietzsche speaks of this Greek method as 'nobler', he calls them 'marvellous' and 'lion-hearted',²⁰⁰ and rather than harming man, muting, or moderating him, this conceptualisation limits bad conscience and stops the 'animal in man', or the blocked drives, from tearing the creature apart. From this we can see that consciousness and conceptualisation are capable of existing as positive, healthy elements of human existence. And importantly, this tells us Nietzsche does not object to all conscious activity, or consciousness in itself. It is consciousness utilised in a negative and harmful way to which Nietzsche objects and our next goal is to understand what particular manner of conscious deployment Nietzsche is speaking of here.

This represents a further major departure from Riccardi's reading. While Riccardi correctly notes that conceptualisation cannot be Nietzsche's only reason for attacking consciousness, he still maintains that falsification through conceptualisation is the cause, but in the specific format of socially mediated conceptualisation.²⁰¹ However, we have shown that Nietzsche does not object to conceptualisation, has no strong feelings about falsification, and finally that he does not even believe consciousness to be intrinsically harmful. Riccardi's reading conflicts here on all counts. Instead, we must find an explanation for Nietzsche's views on consciousness that does not make use of falsification or conceptualisation, and that leaves room for a healthy consciousness and conceptualisation.

The second major point to be extracted here offers a hint at what this explanation might be, and that is that mythology serves as a means of mediation between the unconscious and the conscious mind. This is a fundamentally Jungian point, the origin of which we seem to find here in Nietzsche. One of the significant roles that Greek gods played was that through them 'the animal in man felt deified', which meant that it did

²⁰⁰ GM 2;23

²⁰¹ Riccardi (forthcoming) p2

not 'tear itself apart and did not rage against itself!'²⁰² Consciousness was used by the Greeks to create an interpretive mythological system that acknowledged and healthily incorporated the drives, working directly with and through them. This is in total contrast to a human animal after the internalisation of the instincts who did not have this soothing conceptualisation.

Lacking external enemies and obstacles, and forced into the oppressive narrowness and conformity of custom, man impatiently ripped himself apart, persecuted himself, gnawed at himself, gave himself no peace and abused himself, this animal who battered himself raw on the bars of his cage and who is supposed to be 'tamed'; man, full of emptiness and torn apart with homesickness for the desert, has had to create from within himself an adventure, a torture-chamber, an unsafe and hazardous wilderness – this fool, this prisoner consumed with longing and despair, became the inventor of 'bad conscience'.²⁰³

This latter 'torture chamber' represents man before he has invented mythologies to soothe himself and explain his suffering and the pain at suppressed drives. The invention of such a mechanism of psychological manipulation and preservation are vital for a basic human existence, and this is why Nietzsche states that nearly every age has its own priest²⁰⁴ and why he thinks of atheism and any other ideology as fundamentally dogmatic and religious—Jung similarly thinks of all modern political ideologies, any "-ism"—even vegetarianism—as merely another form of dogmatic religious practice.²⁰⁵ The role of the myths and ideology is to conceptualise suffering, human existence, and our lives in a way that makes it all bearable, and they do this through stories and symbols that connect the unconscious with our conscious thoughts. In this sense, we can see that consciousness and conceptualisation, far from being only harmful and damaging, are actually necessary for life, and that when deployed in the correct manner, are actually able to result in a healthy, happy existence.

This brings us to Nietzsche's use of conceptualisation and his attempt to adjust and reorient modern man's interaction with his unconscious. We see this in his engagement with 'bad-conscience' and his explanation of the priestly methods of healing whilst poisoning.²⁰⁶ Nietzsche is mirroring the Greeks in their attempts to keep bad-

²⁰² GM 2;23

²⁰³ GM 2;16

²⁰⁴ GM 3;11

²⁰⁵ Jung A 125, 128

²⁰⁶ Gm 3;15

conscience at bay by explaining at least part of the suffering of modern man as the result of Christianity itself and the ascetic priest, and, in doing so, he is trying to take away the guilt. The whole story he tells of bad-conscience and guilt-conscience is an attempt to show modern man that he does not need to feel guilty, that he is not the cause of his own suffering—one might even call this the central objective of Nietzsche's *On The Genealogy of Morality*. A full analysis of this attempt will have to wait for the final section, when this is placed in the full context of Nietzsche's psychology and an explanation of the dangers of consciousness.

3.2 The Origins and Development of Consciousness

We are now approaching our ultimate explanation for Nietzsche's highly dismissive and critical attitude towards consciousness. In the past few sections, the approach has been to remove other plausible explanations for Nietzsche's position to motivate a need for the explanation that is now to follow. We first began by showing that conceptuality could not fulfil this role as an explanation for the dangers of consciousness: conscious thought does not take place in concepts; further, the effects of conceptuality are felt in the unconscious, which escapes Nietzsche's criticism. Conceptualisation can also be used healthily and in a manner that can reduce suffering. The same can also be said of falsification. Nietzsche is not critical of falsification in itself and even views it as necessary for a healthy and life-affirming existence. As a result, neither the presence of conceptuality nor falsification offers sufficient explanation for Nietzsche's attitude towards consciousness.

However, through investigation of the manner and scenarios in which Nietzsche treats falsification and conceptualisation differently, we have discovered a specific pattern to his valuations. Nietzsche is accepting of falsification when its results are positive and life-affirming, and critical of it where its results are not. This is what he meant when, after claiming that 'the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment', he states the following.

The question is how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, how well it preserves, and perhaps even cultivates, the type.²⁰⁷

From this, it is clear that it is not conceptualisation or falsification to which Nietzsche objects in consciousness, but that something about consciousness in the context he is discussing it is harmful to life and that this is the source of his criticism. Developing an understanding of the manner in which consciousness is harmful and unhealthy is the key to understanding the various denigrating remarks.

But we also found in the previous section that consciousness is not necessarily harmful and can be positive, even necessary for healthy existence. In the Ancient Greeks, Nietzsche offers an example of a healthy, fully-fledged consciousness at work. This adds another layer of complication to this explanation as we now have to understand why Nietzsche simply refers to "consciousness" in his attacks. The reading I will now develop to address these issues unfolds through the following key claims.

—Consciousness in its current form develops out of bad-conscience, through the internalisation of the instincts and the formation of the state: through these events a split between instinct and action—the conscious and unconscious—develops, which causes great chaos and suffering.

—A mediating influence between the conscious and unconscious is now required, and Christianity and the ascetic priest, as well as other priests and mythologies of other ages, come in to bridge this gap and limit the suffering and distress of blocked instincts.

—Christianity and the priest are partly life-preserving and partly life-denying, which is why Nietzsche sometimes has mixed attitudes towards Christianity. It serves the purpose of regulating the unconscious, so limiting suffering, but does so in a manner that can be unnecessarily unhealthy and life-denying—its being unnecessary so shown through the Greek alternative to this response. It is this unnecessary suffering and denial of the instincts that Nietzsche objects to in Christianity, as well as what he objects to in this manifestation of consciousness.

—However, this situation develops dramatically after the death of God. The mediating influence of Christianity disappears—and with it some suffering; but the need for it does not. This results in the embracing of Eastern religions as well as the invention of

²⁰⁷ BGE 4

new political ideologies. This has two dangerous and damaging effects that result from these invented quasi-religions having no meaningful symbolic link to the unconscious.

—First, the mediating influence that turns *ressentiment* back on itself and limits externalised cruelty disappears. Without the pacifying element in Christianity, the new priests are free to blame anyone for the suffering, which is why Nietzsche predicted chaos and turmoil in Europe.

—The second is that the merely superficial connection between these new ideologies and the unconscious would mean that the new symbols and mythologies become almost meaningless. The mantras and dogma of the new religions satisfy only the superficial elements of the unconscious, leaving a sophisticated and now acutely developed consciousness to spin frictionless, without meaning and unmediated by the deeper reasoning rooted in the unconscious mind and genuine conceptuality.

3.2.1. *The Birth of Consciousness*

The initial groundwork for consciousness is laid over hundreds of millions of years in the development of the proto-conceptual apparatuses or neural circuitry in the genetic ancestors of humanity: in Nietzschean terminology these would be the drives, or, framed in terms of their outputs, instinctive behaviours. The next step in this process comes with the development of signs of communication in animals—verbal or non-verbal—that result in a degree of standardisation of internal representation that makes more advanced communication possible—as discussed in BGE 268. So far, these are, at bottom, part of a long process of natural selection, and consciousness, as referenced in Nietzsche's critique, is still barely on the horizon.

Consciousness, by Nietzsche's lights, only begins the development of its final form with the great rupture of the soul that results from the internalisation of the instincts: where a gap opens up between stimulus and action that represents the split between conscious and unconscious thought. So profound is this break that Nietzsche actually compares it to the stage at which organisms first left the water and had to learn to walk.²⁰⁸

Now they had to walk on their feet and 'carry themselves', whereas they had been carried by the water up till then: a terrible heaviness bore down on them. They felt they were

²⁰⁸ GM II, 16

clumsy at performing the simplest task, they did not have their familiar guide any more for this new, unknown world, those regulating impulses that unconsciously led them to safety[...][GM 2; 16]

When once they were skilled negotiators of their environment, they now had to learn how to think again; or to think badly—that is, not instinctively, but slowly, cautiously and counter to those very instincts that had led to happiness and success. But what was it that necessitated this development of consciousness?

Nietzsche's second essay in *The Genealogy* is essentially devoted to the telling of this story. Understanding consciousness is a background development there, with the central explanatory target being guilt-conscience and the suffering that results from it; but to get to this point Nietzsche first has to explain how this 'declaration of war' against *instinct itself*, this oddity 'of an animal soul turning against itself, taking a part against itself',²⁰⁹ could actually come to take place, and this entails the development of consciousness. This new duality within humanity is the separation of the mental into the conscious and unconscious.

Such a thing as an animal turning against itself—by which Nietzsche means turning against millions of years of carefully honed precision and mastery at the hands of evolution—is clearly something that requires an equally profound explanation. And Nietzsche's fascinating opening claim is that this did not occur gradually or voluntarily—he claims to have dispensed with the 'fantasy' of a social contract—but suddenly, as 'a breach, a leap, a compulsion, an inescapable fate that nothing could ward off'.²¹⁰ His idea is that this breach occurs with the invention of the state and all the accompanying laws that are necessary to its survival. A 'conqueror' or 'some pack of blond beasts of prey', took a population that was until then 'unrestrained and shapeless' and imposed 'form' upon it.²¹¹ Mankind, until this point, were 'semi-animals', living by instinct in small groups with their own moralities of custom.²¹² At some point, however, a powerful group descends upon these formless, simple and distinct groups and organises them into one greater group, imposing on them their own laws, strict rules, and the violent reprisals for violation necessary to control a large mass of people.

²⁰⁹ GM II, 16

²¹⁰ GM II, 17

²¹¹ GM II, 17

²¹² Daybreak

Those terrible bulwarks with which state organizations protected themselves against the old instincts of freedom – punishments are a primary instance of this kind of bulwark – had the result that all those instincts of the wild, free, roving man were turned backwards, against man himself [GM 2; 16]

Animosity, cruelty, the pleasure of pursuing, raiding, changing and destroying'²¹³ are instincts Nietzsche lists as being curtailed, and these new limits are expressed clearly in the idea of punishment. Instead of natural vengeance, punishments are deployed within this new society 'as payment of a fee stipulated by the power which protects the wrongdoer from the excesses of revenge' and 'as a compromise with the natural state of revenge'.²¹⁴ But "punishment" becomes a core theme and mechanism in another sense for Nietzsche: as one might imagine, overriding instincts honed by millions of years of natural selection is no small task—it is, though, a simple one.

"[...]impaling, ripping apart and trampling to death by horses ('quartering'), boiling of the criminal in oil or wine (still in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), the popular flaying ('cutting strips'), cutting out flesh from the breast; and, of course, coating the wrong-doer with honey and leaving him to the flies in the scorching sun."²¹⁵

When a society is strong, punishments become lesser in their severity, for offenses 'do not seem to be as dangerous and destabilizing for the survival of the whole as they did earlier[...];'²¹⁶ but, as one might imagine at this earliest stage of civilisation, this society was weak and fragile, and as a result the most severe and unimaginable punishments were devised and let loose on a still simple group of 'semi-animals'. As John Richardson notes: '[i]n these early societies, persons are punished, and with a cruelty Nietzsche makes vivid, if they forget or lose sight of the rules.'²¹⁷ This period is described by Nietzsche as the most horrific and bloody period in human history, but the eventual result of all this suffering is that something resembling modern man and modern society begins to emerge.

With the aid of such images and procedures, man was eventually able to retain five or six 'I-don't-want-to's' in his memory, in connection with which a promise had been given, in order to enjoy the advantages of society – and there you are! With the aid of this sort of

²¹³ GM 2; 16

²¹⁴ GM II, 13

²¹⁵ GM II, 3

²¹⁶ GM: II; 10

²¹⁷ Richardson (1996) p240

memory, people finally came to 'reason'! – Ah, reason, solemnity, mastering of emotions, this really dismal thing called reflection, all these privileges and splendours man has: what a price had to be paid for them! how much blood and horror lies at the basis of all 'good things'! . . . [GM II, 3]

The task of overriding human nature, or at least disrupting it to some degree, is a significant one. Man must be burnt and bent on an anvil of hellfire—and an eternal threat of more of the same; but this is precisely what occurred. As a result of all this suffering, man was "able to retain five or six 'I-don't-want-to's'" — he had become predictable, able to follow the basic rules of civilisation, and this brings us back to our starting point of animals which are awkward, lacking instincts, 'clumsy at performing the simplest task'.²¹⁸ A break or a pause had been put on action.

This whole process that Nietzsche refers to as the internalisation of the instincts has two main consequences: it marks the beginnings of human consciousness and the development of bad-conscience. Forced to obey alien laws under the threat of the most severe punishments and death, something was placed for the first time between stimulus and response, and this handbrake on action marks the first stage of the division of the conscious and unconscious. Richardson again offers a particularly clear description of this process.

Under this great stress, the drives cede authority to that thinking organ, as what will remember the rules, or as what can keep (and so make) promises—that is, can commit itself to behave itself. So its 'thinking' is at first just referring to past and future, to rules and consequences, in a pause before acting.²¹⁹

However, we are at this point still far from a fully developed consciousness. An animal can be trained to override its basic instincts through training or abuse—a simple pause does not yet constitute consciousness or conscious thought. Nor does this context necessarily signify a true sublimation or repression of these instincts. The state does, however, constitute the necessary conditions for the development and genuine separation of the conscious in the emergence of bad-conscience and the suffering that results. The blocked drives and acutely honed and powerful instincts being unable to express themselves caused a profound suffering and psychic disturbance, which together provide the necessary impetus for the development of language—and it is

²¹⁸ GM 2; 16

²¹⁹ Richardson (1996) p240

only through a highly developed language that consciousness, as we understand it, can finally begin to emerge.

Nietzsche is explicit about the link between consciousness and language, stating that "the subtlety and strength of consciousness is always related to a person's (or animal's) *ability to communicate*" – further adding:

...this fact discloses the origin of consciousness. In short, the development of language and the development of consciousness (not of reason but strictly of the way in which we become conscious of reason) go hand in hand." (GS354).

Understanding consciousness in Nietzsche is not a matter of understanding the punishment and suffering that initiates the breach alone, but a matter of understanding these forces in combination with the linguistic development they initiate. Turning again to *The Gay Science* [354] we find the beginnings of a link back to suffering.

But for entire races and lineages, this seems to me to hold: where need and distress have for a long time forced people to communicate, to understand each other swiftly and subtly, there finally exists a surplus of this power and art of expression, a faculty, so to speak, which has slowly accumulated and now waits for an heir to spend it lavishly[...] [GS 354]

The ability to communicate became necessary when consciousness developed, and the need to communicate comes about when faced with suffering. Putting this in the context of punishment, man was forced to live under new rules in a fragile state that exacted terrible punishments for failures of adherence. This, in itself, might constitute enough suffering for the process to begin, but there is also to be added the suffering that comes from the blocking of instincts and the intense psychic pain of being unable to fulfil one's function.

Lacking external enemies and obstacles, and forced into the oppressive narrowness and conformity of custom, man impatiently ripped himself apart, persecuted himself, gnawed at himself, gave himself no peace and abused himself, this animal who battered himself raw on the bars of his cage and who is supposed to be 'tamed'; man, full of emptiness and torn apart with homesickness for the desert[...] [GM; II; 16]

The blocking of the instincts combined with severe punishments for expressing them would certainly seem to constitute the kind of suffering Nietzsche envisages for the process of becoming conscious to commence.

From all this, we can see two related elements that result in the development of consciousness. The first is a need to put a pause on action in order to avoid punishment—something from which a kind of reflectiveness emerges in order to fight instinct, to review acts and avoid pain; the second is the necessity of language in an environment of suffering. The true extent of the connection only becomes clear, however, when we add to this a further step in the chain. Man needed 'his equals', he needed 'to make himself understood', to express his neediness, and he needed to express his suffering, to find 'help and protection'²²⁰—but, before this, *before* he is able to express himself, he first needs to know what it is that *he* is, and what it is that he feels.

[...]he needed help and protection, he needed his equals; he had to express his neediness and be able to make himself understood - and to do so, he first needed 'consciousness', i.e. even to 'know' what distressed him, to 'know' how he felt, to 'know' what he thought. [GS 354]

In this, we have the first clear reference and explanation of the kind of self-consciousness Nietzsche was referencing when he earlier spoke of mirroring, 'reflection', thought, calculation and inference. Man must think and pause before action and be able to communicate these thoughts and understand those of others, but before this is possible he must also know what he himself thinks. Bringing these stories of punishment and language together we are now able to piece together a clear story.

Humans begin as free and independent 'semi-animals', living by instinct in small loosely defined groups. We can imagine that some basic level of the symbology we call "words" exists to a degree, but not in a sophisticated fashion—'the solitary and predatory person would not have needed [consciousness]'²²¹—and so self-awareness or consciousness would not yet have existed in any notable sense either. However, at some stage, these groups are combined under a state and compelled to follow alien laws and doctrines that go against their instincts. This results in both the initial suffering of being unable to express natural behaviours as well as the imposed suffering of severe punishment in order to maintain adherence to the rules of that group and to hold the society together. This situation would seem to necessitate the emergence of two mutually reinforcing and intertwined systems of behaviour. On the one hand, we

²²⁰GS 354

²²¹GS 354

have the space that emerges between desire and action that is developed through suffering—a process Nietzsche explains as the '*technique of mnemonics*'.

[...]perhaps there is nothing more terrible and strange in man's prehistory than his technique of mnemonics. 'A thing must be burnt in so that it stays in the memory: only something that continues to hurt stays in the memory' [GM II; 3]

On the other, we have the need to explain oneself, and so the need to know oneself, in order to gain protection, to acquire help and offer it. But these two processes are clearly interlaced. In the first place, the system of mnemonics Nietzsche refers to is clearly linked to the pause before action, the capacity to assess—something we associate directly with human—consciousness: essentially the reflection we speak of. Whether by word, sign, image or feeling, man was first taught to associate certain acts with the threat of suffering. This suffering would cause a pause in action, and after long enough for the action to be disregarded as a possibility altogether—the "'I don't want to's'".

'The whole inner world, originally stretched thinly as though between two layers of skin, was expanded and extended itself and granted depth, breadth, and height in proportion to the degree that the external discharge of man's instincts was obstructed.' [GM: II; 16]

In this pause, we find the foundation of the possibility of consciousness, though not the modern conscious *thought* Nietzsche attacks, but at least of self-awareness—a space carved out between instinct and action: a significant capacity to think in words must be added to this pause-before-action to qualify as conscious thought.²²² But in order to be able to predict their own actions and to think about them in a way that does not merely align with instinct, this new manner of thought became necessary: to be able to stop and override unconscious thought, and to understand their pain clearly enough to ask for help, they had to learn to *think in words*.

– the poor things were reduced to relying on thinking, inference, calculation, and the connecting of cause with effect, that is, to relying on their 'consciousness', that most impoverished and error-prone organ! [GM 2; 16]

In this way, humans were tamed, made truly predictable through the development of consciousness: in order to avoid punishment humanity learnt to pause before acting;

²²² GM: II; 16

and in order to predict their own actions, override instinct and ask others for help, two minds became necessary—the conscious and the unconscious.

From this description, we can see that the internalisation of the instincts is the starting point of consciousness in the creation of a capacity to stand back and assess reasons for actions in a way no animal has done before. This gap is the first stage of consciousness, a splitting of the mental into the unknown and instinctive unconscious and the externalised representation of these underlying contents in words. But as we have also seen in the second half of this section, this internalisation also results in a state of suffering that provides the impetus for the further development of consciousness in the development of a bad-conscience and suffering that necessitates the further development of linguistic capacities and conscious thinking in words. In the internalisation of the instincts we find the sufficient conditions for human consciousness to develop, as well as the impetus for its expansion and growth, but this in itself does not amount to the later, significant expansion of consciousness and internalised guilt on which Nietzsche provides his substantial commentary. This bad-conscience within the earliest state is still described as 'active' by Nietzsche—by which he means that man's instincts are still intact: this early man still wants the same things as the animal-man, and to this degree remains healthy, sick only in his inability to fulfil his needs.²²³ However, the second consequence of significance is that this state of affairs, in addition to provoking the hastened development of language as a tool and element of consciousness, also necessitates the development of mythologies in consciousness as a means of anaesthetising against suffering. It is in these mythologies that consciousness begins to change and act against the instincts and in these we find the second major step in the development of consciousness—in the ascetic priest and the ascetic ideal.

3.2.2 Religion as a Consequence of Bad Conscience

We have seen that bad-conscience creates a state of profound suffering which, combined with severe punishments for natural inclinations, result in a state in which

²²³ GM 2; 18

consciousness is pressed to develop quickly. The end result of this development is a capacity for modern conscious thought.

[...]where need and distress have for a long time forced people to communicate, to understand each other swiftly and subtly, there finally exists a surplus of this power and art of expression, a faculty, so to speak, which has slowly accumulated and now waits for an heir to spend it lavishly[...] [GS 354]

However, while the capacity for advanced conscious thought may now be present, this does not yet entail the negative associations of consciousness that Nietzsche discusses in GS354. As noted briefly above, consciousness after the emergence of bad-conscience does not yet entail by its very nature the reactive and unhealthy life-denial characteristic of modern humanity. The instincts remain intact. Nietzsche confirms this when he states that this earlier discussion of suffering is an "animal 'bad-conscience'".²²⁴ It is for this reason that Nietzsche states we 'must be wary of thinking disparagingly about this whole phenomenon because it is inherently ugly and painful'.²²⁵

Fundamentally, it is the same active force as the one that is at work on a grand scale in those artists of violence and organizers, and that builds states, which here, internally, and on a smaller, pettier scale, turned backwards, in the 'labyrinth of the breast', as Goethe would say[...]²²⁶

This initial stage of consciousness, of the *earliest* bad-conscience, is still deeply rooted in the drives and natural inclinations. This is what Nietzsche means by active valuations. The active comes from natural instinct, from one's own will, and represents a healthy affection for the things one genuinely desires; whereas the reactive is characterised by asceticism and slave morality, amounting to the turning upside-down of one's own most deeply held desires for the sake of protection and survival. Bad-conscience may refer to a state of profound suffering, but contained within it is 'that very instinct for freedom (put into my language: the will to power)'.²²⁷

This secret self-violation, this artist's cruelty, this desire to give form to oneself as a piece of difficult, resisting, suffering matter, to brand it with a will, a critique, a contradiction, a contempt, a 'no', this uncanny, terrible but joyous labour of a soul voluntarily split within

²²⁴ GS 3; 20

²²⁵ GM 2; 18

²²⁶ GM 2; 18

²²⁷ GM 2; 18

itself, which makes itself suffer out of the pleasure of making suffer, this whole active 'bad conscience' has finally – we have already guessed – as true womb of ideal and imaginative events, brought a wealth of novel, disconcerting beauty and affirmation to light, and perhaps for the first time, beauty itself . . .

The pain felt at the blocking of instincts, and the small remedial pleasure from a certain amount of mastery over the self in the controlling of these instincts, is still active. It is still rooted in natural desires, even where those desires are primarily rooted in cruelty, power and the desire to inflict harm. But we can also see from this passage why Nietzsche warns us not to think too 'disparagingly about this whole phenomenon because it is inherently ugly and painful'.²²⁸ This consciousness and its process of development in the emergence of a response to bad-conscience is at the same time the source of all the good things we associate with consciousness and reasoning that are distinctive of modern humanity. It is the 'true womb of ideal and imaginative events' and 'beauty itself . . .'²²⁹

From this, we can see that we are still far from the manifestation of consciousness that Nietzsche speaks of most disparagingly, and we have further confirmation of the earlier claims of this chapter, that Nietzsche does not object to consciousness as such. At this stage, his stance is clearly more descriptive than critical, and he adopts what we earlier called the conventional attitude towards consciousness—of acknowledging some negative elements while accepting the great and positive advances this rupture of the mental announces. The key to understanding Nietzsche's attitudes towards consciousness is now to see how this initial state becomes the negative, destructive consciousness of later humanity, i.e. not to take each of Nietzsche's statements and various claims on consciousness as merely different perspectives on the same object, but as appraisals of entirely different manifestations across time of a developing phenomenon. It is only by this means that we will be able to make sense of his various claims.

3.2.3 *The Need to Explain Suffering*

²²⁸ GM 2; 18

²²⁹ GM 2; 18

The most dramatic effects of the internalisation are not in the immediate effects of bad-conscience but in the long drawn out developments that they necessitate. The first of these we have seen in the resultant impetus to further develop language and with it the capacity for conscious thought; but the second, and partner of this first consequence of suffering, is a need to either lessen the pain or anaesthetise it.

The suffering as a result of the internalisation has already been well-documented. The terrible internal strife of being unable to fulfil basic yet fundamental demands that have been slowly trained over millions of years in itself was overwhelming for the animal-man and 'a terrible heaviness bore down on them'.²³⁰

[...]the poor things were reduced to relying on thinking, inference, calculation, and the connecting of cause with effect, that is, to relying on their 'consciousness', that most impoverished and error-prone organ! I do not think there has ever been such a feeling of misery on earth, such a leaden discomfort, – and meanwhile, the old instincts had not suddenly ceased to make their demands!²³¹

Furthermore, as though this were not enough, the added pain of punishment simply for attempting to fulfil these ancient demands makes such a state of existence unbearable. The problem, however, is not suffering in itself.

Man, the bravest animal and most prone to suffer, does not deny suffering as such: he wills it, he even seeks it out, provided he is shown a meaning for it, a purpose of suffering.²³²

The problem was that he had no meaning to his suffering, and his terrible pain resulted from "the fact that there was no answer to the question he screamed, 'Suffering for what?'"²³³ As a result, mankind needed a justification for this new, inexplicable and intense pain, with this second dramatic effect of bad-conscience being the emergence of the priest and mythological explanation and stories to both explain and soothe the wounds of this tortured creature. In other words, bad-conscience necessitates the creation of religion.

²³⁰ GM 2; 16

²³¹ GM 2; 16

²³² GM 3; 28

²³³ GM 3; 28

Nietzsche is helpfully quite clear about this development. The state of suffering previous to the emergence of religion is referred to as "animal 'bad-conscience', 'as a piece of animal-psychology, no more' where we 'encountered the feeling of guilt in its raw state, as it were.'²³⁴ But this need to have this suffering explained eventually turns him towards religion and the priest.

Man, suffering from himself in some way, at all events physiologically, rather like an animal imprisoned in a cage, unclear as to why? what for? and yearning for reasons – reasons bring relief –, yearning for cures and narcotics as well, finally consults someone who knows hidden things too – and lo and behold! from this magician, the ascetic priest, he receives the first tip as to the 'cause' of his suffering: he should look for it within himself, in guilt, in a piece of the past, he should understand his suffering itself as a condition of punishment . . .²³⁵

In this, consciousness reaches its next stage, though not yet its last. Mankind turns to mythology, religious symbolism and the priest as a means of explaining his pain, and in this we find the meaning and purpose of all religion. The priest emerges as a direct answer to the problem of the internalisation of the instincts.

We can regard it as inherently probable that from time to time, at certain places on earth, almost from necessity, a physiological feeling of obstruction will rule amongst large masses of people which, however, is not consciously perceived as such, through lack of physiological knowledge, so that its 'cause' and its cure can be sought and tested only on the psychological-moral level (– actually, this is my most general formula for what is usually called a 'religion').²³⁶

This passage contains a particularly important confirmation of the purpose and point of religion, but also of the mechanism by which it works. The point of religion and the priest is to reinterpret bad-conscience, to lessen the suffering—in Christianity, *sin* "is the name for the priestly reinterpretation of the animal 'bad conscience'"²³⁷—and in this Nietzsche is clear that the priest's role is to deal with the underlying physiological suffering. It is also clear that his means of doing so, of healing the sick, are rooted in conscious means. Rather than understanding that the distress is caused by the basic physiological blockage of the drives by the internalisation of the instincts, an attempt to

²³⁴ GM 3; 20

²³⁵ GM 3; 20

²³⁶ GM 3; 17

²³⁷ GM 3; 20

deal with these pains is made on the 'psychological-moral level'. The purpose and method of religion then, is to alleviate physical suffering through conscious moralisation—" this is my most general formula for what is usually called a 'religion'".²³⁸

In other words, the point of religion is to attend to physiological suffering in the unconscious through mediation with the conscious mind, and if we look to the examples Nietzsche gives of various events, procedures and mechanisms we can see that religion and the priest play out this role in every instance. The role of the Greek gods was that through them 'the animal in man felt deified', the goal of which was to ensure that the animal in man, the unconscious, did not 'tear itself apart and did not rage against itself!'²³⁹ Similarly, the conscious conceptualisation of guilt as falling on the gods served to limit the deeper misery of unknown suffering. The ascetic priest of Christianity utilises an excess of emotion to anaesthetise against the pain of unexplained suffering in combination with his hypnotising methods that include the small act of kindness—helping someone weaker, to excite the feeling of power and the will to power in the unconscious.²⁴⁰ Christianity 'prevented man from despising himself as man, from taking against life, from despairing of knowing'.²⁴¹ Each of these methods is either an attempt to distract from the underlying suffering, or else to satisfy the underlying unconscious urges.

From all this we can see that the role of the priest and of his mythology is to invent and deploy techniques to explain and alleviate suffering, and he must do so by using consciousness to frame events and instil perspectives through stories and symbols in such a way that the unsatisfied drives and mechanisms of the unconscious are redirected or at least pacified to a degree. It is equally important to note that the need for the priest and for his mythologies has now become permanent as a result of the internalisation: the 'ascetic priest makes his appearance in almost any age; he does not belong to any race in particular; he thrives everywhere; he comes from every social class'²⁴² and he is 'so abundant at all times, in almost all peoples'.²⁴³ Understood in this

²³⁸ GM 3; 17

²³⁹ GM 2;23

²⁴⁰ GM 3; 18-19

²⁴¹ *Nietzsche Reader* (2006) 20; 1

²⁴² GM 3;11

²⁴³ GM 3;17

way, we are now able to understand that the internalisation has made mankind in general into a fundamentally religious creature in that he has a permanent need of soothing ointments, stories, myths, symbols, all the priestly techniques, if he is able to live without misery and the deeper misery of unexplained suffering.

However, even here, we are not yet at the damaging and dangerous stage that leads Nietzsche to condemn consciousness. While the priest has now become a necessity, along with the mythologies that he brings and cultivates, this priest and these myths are not in themselves, ascetic, harmful and life-denying. There is a genuine physiological need and justification behind his work, his actions do reduce suffering, and while some priests do cause the kind of life-denial, rejection and ignorance of the body that will be discussed in the following section as the source of Nietzsche's hostility to consciousness, priests and myths in themselves are not necessarily harmful. The ancient Greeks have already been discussed above as examples of a healthy and life-affirming response to bad-conscience, as a successful means of keeping bad-conscience at bay. The emergence of the priest and man as a religious animal is not inherently harmful and destructive—at least no more so than the internalisation itself; what is important is the concepts being internalised and the manner in which suffering is alleviated. There is a further stage of the development of consciousness to pass through, in the form of the development of the ascetic priest and the ascetic ideal, before we will be able to fully understand Nietzsche's attitude towards consciousness—as well as precisely what he is referring to by "consciousness" in these attacks.

3.2.4 *The Age of the Ascetic Priest*

Understood in the context of the internalisation of the instincts, the priest has become a necessary feature of human existence, 'abundant at all times, in almost all peoples'.²⁴⁴ But as we will soon discover, some priests are not of the healthy Greek variety, but of a more insidious life-denying nature. Even these priests, however, satisfy a basic and fundamental need and have some positive effects. Nietzsche's problem with the ascetic priests of Christianity, in particular, seems to be that their method of healing does harm

²⁴⁴ GM 3;17

in equal measure, and that as the Greek mythology shows, such harm is unnecessary. We now turn to the manner in which asceticism becomes intertwined with Christianity, and through this the Western tradition.

The priest and religion, in general, have the role of mediating between unconscious instinct and the demands of society after the internalisation of the instincts. There are two main objectives to his procedures in terms of the benefits they bring. The first of these is to lessen the sense of suffering in order to make life bearable, both through distraction but also through attempts to genuinely satisfy certain needs of the unconscious. The primary focus of these methods is to stop the individual from experiencing extreme suffering. The second type of benefit the priest brings is that he prevents the disintegration of society by keeping *ressentiment* at bay.

This first type of priestly medication Nietzsche refers to as the 'innocent means' of the priest, in that they benefit those suffering without causing excessive harm.²⁴⁵ These means can be divided into roughly three methods: mechanical activity, the small pleasure and the communal sense of power. Mechanical activity is perhaps the most straightforward of these to explain and involves distracting the sufferer by leading their mind constantly away from contemplation of that suffering.

The alleviation consists of completely diverting the interest of the sufferer from the pain, – so that constantly an action and yet another action enters consciousness and consequently little room is left for suffering: because this chamber of human consciousness is small!²⁴⁶

By keeping busy, through work, the contemplation of past and future suffering can be blocked out to a degree. As Nietzsche notes, suffering itself is not the worst part of suffering, but suffering without reason. By preventing the people from focusing on their pain the priest does them a service and limits the extent of the suffering.

A further innocent practice of the priest is the small pleasure, in which good deeds are done to benefit someone weaker and more pitiful. These acts generate a sense of superiority and strength over the person being helped. Having power over someone, even someone far weaker than oneself, entails the activation of the will to power in some small degree.

²⁴⁵ GM 3; 19

²⁴⁶ GM 3; 18

[...] the ascetic priest thereby prescribes, when he prescribes 'love thy neighbour', what is actually the arousal of the strongest, most life-affirming impulse, albeit in the most cautious dose, – the will to power. The happiness of even the 'smallest superiority' such as that which accompanies all doing good, being useful, helping, honouring, is the most ample consolation used by the physiologically inhibited, provided they are well advised: otherwise they hurt one another, naturally in obedience to the same fundamental instinct.

While admittedly only will to power in the 'most cautious dose' this action of the priest nevertheless appeals to the unconscious instincts, satisfying them in some narrow sense. This engagement with the will to power may be limited, perhaps even distracting from the fundamental underlying problems facing the sufferer in a way that prevents them from being genuinely dealt with—the suggestion is not that these priestly methods are in all good!—but they are at least direct responses to independently caused suffering, and they appeal to the underlying unconscious mechanisms that are the fundamental reality at which suffering exists.

The final innocent method of the priest is the pleasure gained through the herd and the sense of power that this grouping together of the weak brings with it.

If we look for the beginnings of Christianity in the Roman world, we find associations for mutual support, associations for the poor, the sick, for burials, which have sprouted on the lowest level of that society, where the chief means to counter depression[...] ²⁴⁷

Together, and from the earliest days of Christianity, the weak and suffering performed small acts of kindness together. This instinct of grouping together is an instinct of the weak, for it results in a 'communal feeling of power' with the consequence that 'the individual's dissatisfaction with himself is overridden by his delight at the prosperity of the community'.²⁴⁸

As noted, each of these are the priests' innocent methods of muting suffering and tending to the sick. The benefits appear to outweigh the negative effects and there seems to be a genuine attempt at dealing with elements of the unconscious, through exciting the will to power and alleviating suffering through distraction. The methods themselves are best described as communal and physical and, as such, do not yet represent consciousness in its most harmful and ascetic sense; but this harmful ascetic

²⁴⁷ GM 3; 18

²⁴⁸ GM 3;19

side now emerges when we look to the "'guilty' means" of the ascetic priest, in the turning of *ressentiment* back onto the individual and the conscious attempt to reconceptualise bad-conscience as guilt.²⁴⁹

3.2.5 From Bad-Conscience to Guilt

The ascetic priest's guilty means of alleviating suffering still have the effect of lessening the suffering of the individual, but they also have far more important and vital consequences for the stability of society. One of the main effects of suffering or pain of any kind is that the sufferer looks for someone to blame, someone to lash out against.

For every sufferer instinctively looks for a cause of his distress; more exactly, for a culprit, even more precisely for a guilty culprit who is receptive to distress, – in short, for a living being upon whom he can release his emotions, actually or in effigy, on some pretext or other[...]²⁵⁰

Nietzsche believes this to be a basic and deeply ingrained psychological response that we cannot do away with. Whenever there is suffering or pain, even when it results from illness, a disease or physical complaint, an enemy and cause is looked for in the people surrounding those who are unwell: "they make evil-doers out of friend, wife, child and anyone else near to them. 'I suffer: someone or other must be guilty' – and every sick sheep thinks the same."²⁵¹ This response is the foundation of what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*.

Ressentiment is a psychological response that is rooted in envy and hatred but gains its meaning in a reactive manner. What reactive means here is that the valuational system that results from it is not based on the genuine and natural unconscious desires of the individual expressed through their instincts, but that it emerges as the opposite of the thing they most hate—the hatred of the enemy becomes so intense that "good" simply becomes anything opposed to the traits and values of their enemy.

This reversal of the evaluating glance – this essential orientation to the outside instead of back onto itself – is a feature of *ressentiment*: in order to come about, slave morality first

²⁴⁹ GM 3;19

²⁵⁰ GM 3;15

²⁵¹ GM 3;15

has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all, – its action is basically a reaction.²⁵²

By contrast, a noble or healthy morality "grows out of a triumphant saying 'yes' to itself", is rooted in strength and the natural inclinations of the unconscious.²⁵³ And as the "good", the strong, the noble are those who cause suffering in the weak—through making them *feel* weak, through taking what they desire, through hurting them—it is against the strong and the noble that this morality of *ressentiment* grows. A value system is then built up as a reaction to the strong, valuing the opposite of what is strong, natural and instinctive, simply because hatred for the strong has become so intense that anything different to them is good, must be promoted and valued above all else.

It is clear what the result of such a value system with such an origin must be. Before the internalisation of the instincts, the animal man could not help but have a "noble" reaction to *ressentiment* in that there is no consciousness in which envy and hatred can fester and grow. — 'When *ressentiment* does occur in the noble man himself, it is consumed and exhausted in an immediate reaction, and therefore it does not poison'.²⁵⁴ But after the internalisation, in the pause before action in the beginnings of consciousness, and with bad-conscience and the most severe punishments, the most ideal breeding ground for *ressentiment* had been designed; and the "morality" against which this new valuational system was being measured, as its opposite, was the expression of unconscious instinct itself! In this we find a morality founded on life-denial, hatred of the strong, the good, the happy, fuelled entirely by hatred and envy, as the most destructive of forces and the greatest of threats to society.

But, somehow, this *ressentiment* did not lead to the downfall of society. With so much suffering to be explained the ascetic priest had found his purpose and his congregation: his job was to redirect this *ressentiment* in such a way as to avoid 'the inner disintegration of the herd' in a 'hard and secret struggle against anarchy'.²⁵⁵

His particular trick, and his prime use, is to detonate this explosive material without blowing up either the herd or the shepherd; if we wanted to sum up the value of the

²⁵² GM 3;10

²⁵³ GM 3;10

²⁵⁴ GM 3;10

²⁵⁵ GM 3; 15

priestly existence in the shortest formula, we would immediately say: the priest is the direction-changer of resentment.²⁵⁶

The priest's job was to keep society stable and to prevent the new reactive morality of suffering from destroying society and itself. But where things become truly interesting, and equally strange, is when we come to look at precisely how the priest achieves this. In an act of unparalleled mythological genius, the priest turns this *ressentiment*, this hatred and search for the cause of suffering back upon the possessed.

'I suffer: someone or other must be guilty' – and every sick sheep thinks the same. But his shepherd, the ascetic priest, says to him, 'Quite right, my sheep! Somebody must be to blame: but you yourself are this somebody, you yourself alone are to blame for it, you yourself alone are to blame for yourself' . . .²⁵⁷

The original psychological foundation of *ressentiment*, in the assumption that if there is suffering someone else must be to blame and must be found, has been redirected back upon the sufferer. Combined with a fundamental need to express strength or power, sometimes manifested in the desire to inflict cruelty on others, these mechanisms combine and, as Christopher Janaway describes it, 'we vent our inbuilt drive to inflict cruelty on ourselves.'²⁵⁸ In this way, the priest assigns blame and satisfies *ressentiment* without the destruction of society and the healthy and the strong within it. In doing so, the priest has performed a necessary and vital service for society, but his particular methods create a different problem in that they encourage life-denial and bring a great deal more suffering into the world.

The connection between consciousness and the results of bad-conscience, from its initial creation up to the priest, is already clear and distinct. Bad-conscience makes room for consciousness in the creation of a pause before action to think in words to avoid punishment. But it also, at this early stage, forces the further development of consciousness through a need to communicate in the face of a deep, profound and inexplicable suffering. – In this way, bad-conscience has been the primary driving force behind consciousness coming into existence and its continued development. At this next stage, however, we find that consciousness and bad-conscience begin to feed off each other, with bad-conscience necessitating the development of the ascetic priest and

²⁵⁶ GM 3; 15

²⁵⁷ GM 3; 15

²⁵⁸ Janaway (2007) p120. See also pp124-126.

his mythology, and this new conscious mythology giving bad-conscience a new and deeper meaning through its association with guilt.

The great 'stroke of genius' in Christianity's and the priest's changing the direction of *ressentiment*, as well as its most harmful consequences, lie in the manner in which he achieves this.²⁵⁹ We already know that the priest turns the guilt back on the sufferer, but the critical element of his doing so lies in such guilt being irredeemable and ubiquitous. Man, the source of all evil—"Adam', 'original sin'"²⁶⁰—and so, already guilty, then kills the son of God, who in his death forgives all mankind for his sins. God has paid back man's debt.

[...]none other than God sacrificing himself for man's debt, none other than God paying himself back, God as the only one able to redeem man from what, to man himself, has become irredeemable – the creditor sacrificing himself for his debtor, out of love (would you credit it? –), out of love for his debtor! . . .²⁶¹

In doing so he leaves mankind with an unpayable debt, and with no way of paying back this sacrifice he is forever guilty. The debt or guilt becomes internalised and is continually reinforced by this mythology.

[...]bad conscience now so firmly establishes itself, eating into him, broadening out and growing, like a polyp, so wide and deep that in the end, with the impossibility of paying back the debt, is conceived the impossibility of discharging the penance, the idea that it cannot be paid off ('eternal punishment')²⁶²

The end result is an ascetic perspective on life-itself, produced by an ascetic priest and an ascetic mythology: 'a total dampening of the awareness of life'.²⁶³ Man becomes 'tamed, weakened, discouraged, refined, mollycoddled, emasculated (so, almost the same as injured...)'-'a system like this makes the sick patient more sick in every case'.²⁶⁴ The earth becomes 'the ascetic planet par excellence'.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁹ GM 2;21

²⁶⁰ GM 2;22

²⁶¹ GM 2;21

²⁶² GM 2;21

²⁶³ GM 3;19

²⁶⁴ GM 3; 21

²⁶⁵ GM 3;11

[...]an outpost of discontented, arrogant and nasty creatures who harboured a deep disgust for themselves, for the world, for all life and hurt themselves as much as possible out of pleasure in hurting: – probably their only pleasure.²⁶⁶

These systems of thought emerged as an answer to a very direct and overwhelming need, hence their presence throughout all recorded human history and their common symbols and forms—as documented extensively by Jung. A genuine and overwhelming need had been created for a means of regulating and placating the unconscious, and a symbolism and mythology had been created to fulfil that need in the form of Christianity and the other religions, to mediate between the external and unnatural demands of society and the unconscious that can no longer be satisfied. Because of this, for all that has been said of the negative elements of the Christian mythology and the ascetic ideal, it is unquestionable that it has genuine benefits and a life-preserving core. When this core disappears and these methods are no longer available to us the negative elements of the ascetic ideal may disappear, but the positive ones that held society together will also go with it.

To be clear, none of this is to suggest that Christianity and the ascetic priests are "good" or healthy—each are fuelled by hatred and jealousy and involve a denial of life and the body; but it would be a great error to underestimate the necessary and positive effects they had for the continuation of the species and basic functioning of society. The ascetic ideal is a damaging falsification, a lie, a trick, but it 'is a trick for the preservation of life'²⁶⁷

You take my meaning already: this ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this negating one, – he actually belongs to the really great conserving and yes creating forces of life . . . ²⁶⁸

At least *part* of the ascetic ideal was entirely necessary for the continued existence of man; not only for the sick, but in the preservation of the healthy through the turning around of resentment in the sick. Primarily this came in the form of turning *ressentiment*—a pure and otherwise unbridled rage and hatred and will to inflict cruelty on others—back on itself. This *ressentiment* will be left entirely unchecked without Christianity or some equivalent. And although the ascetic ideal undermined the

²⁶⁶ GM 3;11

²⁶⁷ GM 3;13

²⁶⁸ GM 3; 13

unconscious instincts, led to the general neglect of the physiological and meant mankind turned its back on most of what had hitherto been called life, it still acknowledged the unconscious as a serious problem to be understood and placated. The small act of kindness, the sense of power in the group, and even the damaging excess of emotion in the morality of guilt, all sought to either satisfy some small aspect of the instincts through the will to power, or else blot out the suffering caused by them with an overwhelming burst of emotion through the contemplation of guilt. The ideal was even used to benefit humanity in other respects, 'to exploit the bad instincts of all sufferers for the purpose of self-discipline, self-surveillance and self-overcoming'²⁶⁹

3.3 The Good and Bad of Consciousness

3.3.1 *Consciousness as an interpretive system*

Having developed a detailed understanding of the emergence and development of consciousness in the context of religion and the internalisation of the instincts we are now in a position to attempt a full explanation of Nietzsche's views on consciousness. This is achieved by combining this understanding with Nietzsche's earlier discussed psychological apparatus—more specifically, his view of words as signs that enable humans to simplify and generalise, and that thinking in these signs, or thinking in words, is conscious thought.

We know from the last chapter that Nietzsche understands words as signs for concepts—'Words are acoustic signs for concepts' [BGE 268]—and that words are part of a long process of simplification and generalisation that allow humans to make general rules and planned responses for similar stimuli. This simplification and generalisation is part of a long process of 'abbreviation', the goal of which is to make easier, more efficient and safe our interactions with our environment and with each other.²⁷⁰ This *abbreviation* occurs throughout the entirety of human development, in the evolution of the senses and categories, in the emergence of words, and in the development of the modern consciousness.

²⁶⁹ GM 3;16

²⁷⁰ BGE 268

Not "to know" but to schematise—to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require. In the formation of reason, logic, the categories, it was *need* that was authoritative: not to "know," but to subsume, to schematise, for the purposes of intelligibility and calculation. [WP515]

The very first stage is the development of the senses—'we have senses for only a selection of perceptions—those with which we have to concern ourselves in order to preserve ourselves'.²⁷¹ The senses abbreviate by taking in only what is necessary for our survival and cutting out everything else—'e. g., not the electric'.²⁷² Words are used in a similar fashion, as discussed in BGE 268, as a means of quickly communicating information to fellow members of a community and acquiring help and understanding. Even knowledge is developed under the same conditions.

'The entire apparatus of knowledge is an apparatus for abstraction and simplification—directed not at knowledge but at taking possession of things'. [WP503]

Understood in this context we are now better able to make sense of conscious thought, and the component parts present in its precursors, as a system of signs used to take 'possession of things' and interpret or abbreviate the environment, and that they are part of a long history of doing so in the organism. Consciousness measures reality 'against the wholly invented world of the unconditioned and self-identical' for the purposes of 'abstraction and simplification'; it assumes 'identical cases', 'taking possession of things' 'for security, for quick understanding on the basis of signs and sounds, for means of abbreviation' 'for the purposes of intelligibility and calculation' in order to 'preserve ourselves'.²⁷³ Consciousness is a means of interpreting the world: an interpretive system that simplifies, distorts, and makes equal that which is not for the benefits that such abbreviation brings.

Importantly, however, a particularly interesting and unique aspect of consciousness has emerged from the discussion of its origin and development, and this is that it is set up as separate from and antagonistic to—at least some of—the drives. John Richardson notes the possibility of such a development:

²⁷¹ WP 505

²⁷² WP 505

²⁷³ BGE 4 WP503 WP512 WP513 WP515 WP 505

Theoretical activity can change its own status. It can win a further degree of independence from the drives by setting itself up in opposition to them, as a practice or will that ignores or rather denies them. Instead of letting them dictate its goal, it now struggles to set sights for itself. Under the banner of the new goal, consciousness tried to wrest control of the organism away from the drives.²⁷⁴

However, rather than being only a possibility, Nietzsche's description of the nature and origin of consciousness suggests that it naturally tends towards such a conclusion. What I mean by this is that due to consciousness initially emerging as a pause on action to prevent the exercise of instincts that would result in punishment, the very mechanism of consciousness is inherently antagonistic to drives and instincts: its purpose is quite literally to put a hold on certain instincts and even stop them entirely if necessary. More importantly, the system of valuation or *interpretive system* present in consciousness must be a *competing system* to the unconscious drives. This is not to say that consciousness does not utilise or interact with the drives, but that the overall outputs and valuations of the entire interpretive system of consciousness as a whole, compared to the outputs and valuations of the interpretive system of the drives, must be different. That this must be the case is clear from there being no utility and so no reason for the development of a system that simply mirrors an underlying system with no differences—a point Nietzsche raises when questioning why consciousness came to exist at all in GS354. His answer, as we know, is that such a system came to be where a need for communication was necessitated by profound suffering and alien laws which resulted in the need for allies and to understand oneself—and which we now know was caused primarily by the internalisation of the instincts. Put another way, if the purpose of the pause that marks the origination of consciousness is to counteract or redirect the drive-system, the system that does the redirecting cannot be identical or it would have no effect. Bringing this together, we may say that consciousness is a competing interpretive system of the environment that is connected to but different to the drives.

None of this in itself, however, explains Nietzsche's denigrating attitude towards consciousness. From this description, it is clear that falsification and distortion are a central element of consciousness, as well as the entire perceptual apparatus, but as we know from our earlier discussion, falsification and distortion are not in themselves

²⁷⁴ Richardson (1996) p243

reasons to object to a judgement.²⁷⁵ More than this, such falsification is necessary for life.

[...]without a constant falsification of the world through numbers, people could not live – that a renunciation of false judgments would be a renunciation of life, a negation of life.²⁷⁶

We also know that Nietzsche doesn't object to this competing interpreting system of consciousness as such, or any system of interpretation generally. Consciousness is man's 'superiority', his 'highest strength',²⁷⁷ the falsification that comes with it is necessary for life, and the Ancient Greek mythology—that Nietzsche approves of and praises—offers an example of a healthy and life-promoting consciousness. The basic question of why Nietzsche attacked consciousness as damaging, dangerous, falsifying and a disease is still without an answer. One clear piece of evidence, however, is Nietzsche's statement that what is important in a judgment, and so also the valuation or moral system that these judgements together comprise, is the extent to which they are life-promoting and preserving.

The question is how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, how well it preserves, and perhaps even cultivates, the type.²⁷⁸

In this, we have a very strong suggestion as to where we can find an answer, and a large degree of consistency seems to be confirmed through an assessment of the different interpretive systems of *the senses*, the *Greek mythology* and *Christianity*. The extent of Nietzsche's approval or disapproval of each seems to relate to their ability to preserve life, to reduce unnecessary suffering and to promote the healthy expression of drives.

3.3.2 Nietzsche's appraisal of the senses, the Greeks and Christianity

The senses. Both in their pre-human animal origin of evolutionary development as well as the later capacity of humans and more advanced animals to divide up the world into elements that are relevant, good or harmful, and "the same", Nietzsche views such developments positively. This more basic, and to some extent pre-human, version of

²⁷⁵ BGE 4

²⁷⁶ BGE 4

²⁷⁷ Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 34[131]= WLN, 10

²⁷⁸ BGE 4

incorporation and interpretation are the fundamental conditions of organic matter— Nietzsche considers the protoplasm to represent such behaviour.²⁷⁹ As such, when Nietzsche says that this falsification, this system of representation, is necessary for life, he seems to be suggesting not that falsification is necessary for human life, but for any life to exist at all. Nietzsche's attitude to this system of representation is entirely positive; he sees it as necessary and part of basic organic existence, and to the extent that he refers to such activity as falsification, he does so only as an observation of its nature and not as a critique.

Much the same can be said of the later, more sophisticated human capacity to divide up the world of inner and outer experience and categorise them for utility. This is only a more sophisticated version of the process just discussed that may be described as its subjective counterpart. The categorisation of the world through the senses that emerges in the evolutionary process results in an "objective" inbuilt representation of the world, by which I mean that it is a constant of the species where any deviation represents a malfunction in the sensory capacities of the individual. These are the categories: "substance," "subject," "object," "being," "becoming,"²⁸⁰ The subjective interpretive system, on the other hand, is learnt through experience, though structured through these categories, and allows categorisation according to the particular culture or environment. Again, without such a system of interpretation people could not live.

This general development of categorisation on both the subjective and objective levels creates a stronger organism, better able to fulfil its drives and better able to survive. Mistakes may be made and opportunities missed through overgeneralisation but the positive results for the organism massively outweigh the negative ones. Nietzsche's appraisal of this system of interpretation is positive.

Greek Mythology represents a significant expansion of the interpretive system in that it occurs after the internalisation of the instincts, with the result that a substantial advanced consciousness exists and the necessity of religious or mythological interpretation is now present. The need to provide a meaning to suffering, as well as the necessity of mediation between the drives and conscious expectations, requires the invention of a system of representation that extends beyond incorporation of the

²⁷⁹ WP 510

²⁸⁰ WP 513

environment to the 'psychological-moral' level—which is Nietzsche's "most general formula for what is usually called a 'religion'."²⁸¹ As noted above, this interpretative system differs substantially from that of the senses due to its running alongside and even counter to the underlying drive system; this is in stark contrast to the earliest interpretative system of the senses and underlying categories which is largely incorporated into the drives and becomes either instinct—or second nature in later, more advanced organisms. Consciousness, by contrast, is a system that has a basic function and nature of standing alongside and opposed to instinct and second nature to the degree of its development.

The ancient Greek utilisation of this consciousness, however, is striking in the manner in which it was largely incorporated into the already existing drive system allowing the drives to work through it. While it did represent an entirely fictitious invention of a 'psychological-moral' interpretation in the form of religious mythology—and is not simply incorporating or grouping already extant representations for utility—this interpretative system worked to promote the drives and the organism. Suffering was made sense of by placing the guilt on the gods, so giving meaning to the chaos of existence and preventing man from losing will due to such pain;²⁸² similarly it 'deified' the drives and instincts in the gods, promoting their expression and so preventing nihilism and counteracting bad-conscience.²⁸³ As previously noted, Nietzsche is entirely approving of this system of interpretation.

This positivity towards the Greek mythology offers us an important perspective in coming to understand Nietzsche's position on consciousness, for although the Greek system of representation manifests itself in a 'psychological-moral' religious interpretation, this in itself does not lead to condemnation but is instead met with approval. This tells us that Nietzsche's objection to consciousness is not related to the point at which it takes on a religious, interpretive format alongside and outside of the system of the drives. However, it is equally important to note that to the extent that it represents a different system of interpretation, it still derives its valuations from the drives, albeit through a practical representation of the gods and the satisfaction of these drives through other cultural manifestations such as the *agon* (contest).

²⁸¹ GM 3; 17

²⁸² WP 4

²⁸³ GM 2; 23

Katsafanas has noted the important role the *agon* plays in Greek culture as interpreted by Nietzsche.

Nietzsche believes that many signal achievements of Greek culture were a result of the stress that the community placed upon the *agon*. Everywhere in Greek culture Nietzsche finds the *agon*: in institutions within which the poets and playwrights competed, in the striving of city against city, in the philosophers' struggles with their rivals. He notes that 'not only Aristotle but the whole of Greek antiquity thinks differently from us about hatred and envy', judging them to be, in some forms, good and worthy of the gods (HC, p. 35).²⁸⁴

In this way, Greek mythology and culture in general sought to find a healthy and acceptable way in which to express the underlying drives that had found their customary means of release blocked. This method allowed the expression of the underlying nature of the organism, limiting suffering and explaining the suffering that does occur through the gods—these are precisely the beneficial aspects of the Greek mythology that Nietzsche praises.²⁸⁵

Christianity, on the other hand, represents a very different interpretive system when it comes to dealing with blocked drives, suffering and guilt. Like the Greek mythology, it emerges out of a need to give meaning to suffering and deal with the suppression of the drives that results from the internalisation of the instincts. In this, it differs from the interpretive system of the senses in the same way as the Greek mythology, being a system in some sense outside and alongside the drives designed for their suppression or redirection.

But the major difference between the Christian mythology and the Greek mythology is in the manner in which this representative system deals with both guilt and the instincts. Suffering is explained not through the gods but through the guilt of he who suffers, with the meaning of suffering found in the idea that humans suffer because they deserve it. This guilt is then used to repress much of the drive system, allowing a superficial release through the drive to cruelty, except that this cruelty is turned back on the self—which then increases suffering. Guilt is utilised to superficially satisfy specific base and superficial tendencies like the desire to inflict harm on others and to

²⁸⁴ Katsafanas (2005) p23

²⁸⁵ GM 2; 23.

find a cause for suffering in those nearby, i.e. in *ressentiment*. The Christian mythology does, however, allow the muted expression of other basic drives, in particular, the will to power, through the small act of kindness or the power of the group—'albeit in the most cautious dose'.²⁸⁶ And it does have the advantage of turning *ressentiment* back on the sufferer, so preventing anarchy and the destruction of society and the sufferer.

Nietzsche's attitude towards this psychological-moral system of interpretation is overall very negative. This is due to the suppression of the drives in general and the negative way the drives that are exercised are utilised—in only the smallest amount necessary for survival and in the infliction of cruelty on the self which causes a profound increase in the amount of unnecessary suffering. Nietzsche does, however, note advantages in the neutralisation of bad-conscience that prevents anarchy and holds society together as well, as the corresponding capacity to redirect negative drives towards 'self-overcoming' and other positive results.

Bringing these three interpretive systems together and looking at their results and Nietzsche's assessment of them, we can see that Nietzsche does indeed measure the value of an interpretive system based on the benefit to the species it brings—'how far the judgment promotes and preserves life'.²⁸⁷ From the examples discussed we can see that the extent to which an interpretive system can be said to achieve this primarily revolves around three possible outputs: to what extent it allows a healthy expression of drives, reduces unproductive suffering, and preserves the existence of society and the individual.

In one sense, this makes Nietzsche's position on the role of consciousness clearer through his assessment of its manifestation in our three examples: the falsification and categorisation in the senses and the Greek mythology was beneficial, holding society together, satisfying the drives and lessening suffering of all kinds—as a result, these interpretive systems are met with approval by Nietzsche, even if they have some potentially negative effects in terms of standardisation and the introduction of error; the Christian psychological-moral system, on the other hand, is viewed on the whole, very negatively and meets with overt condemnation from Nietzsche. This is due to its creating unnecessary suffering and blocking the drives; however, to the extent that this

²⁸⁶ GM 3; 17

²⁸⁷ BGE 4

moral system preserves society and the individual—through the redirection of *ressentiment*, so preventing 'anarchy' and the 'disintegration of the herd'—it also receives praise,²⁸⁸ with the ascetic priest ultimately belonging 'to the really great conserving and yes creating forces of life'—among other things . . .²⁸⁹ This is reflected in Nietzsche's often mixed attitudes towards the priest, with Janaway describing his treatment of the priest as 'marked by ambivalences both descriptive and affective'.²⁹⁰

And yet, while this does much to explain Nietzsche's appraisal of each of these individual systems and the role of consciousness in each of them, it only goes so far in explaining why Nietzsche would condemn *all consciousness*, why he would claim that 'everything which enters consciousness thereby becomes shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, a sign, a herd-mark; that all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization.'²⁹¹

Consciousness clearly has overwhelmingly positive manifestations in specific contexts and ages: e.g. to the extent in which it is used in the categorisation of the senses and the mythological system of the Greeks it is clearly a positive influence, the presence of which Nietzsche supports; even the Christian mythology shows certain benefits of consciousness. Why then is his general appraisal that all consciousness is distorting damaging, dangerous and falsifying? A clue is offered in the subsequent line.

In the end, the growing consciousness is a danger; and he who lives amongst the most conscious Europeans even knows it as a sickness.²⁹²

It seems that Nietzsche's issues with consciousness relate to the extent to which it is manifested.

3.3.3 Nietzsche's denigration of consciousness: an answer

Looking back to Nietzsche's most explicit treatment of consciousness at GS 354, we are able to assess elements of it with a new perspective: namely, in understanding

²⁸⁸ GM 3; 15

²⁸⁹ GM 13;3

²⁹⁰ Janaway (2007) p224. See also, Staten (1990) pp47-48; Ridley (1998) pp45-50.

²⁹¹ GS 354

²⁹² GS 354

falsification and distortion as not necessarily negative and harmful in themselves—that their effects are to a degree necessary for life, even any organic life.

[...]everything which enters consciousness thereby becomes shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, a sign, a herd-mark; that all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization. In the end, the growing consciousness is a danger; and he who lives amongst the most conscious Europeans even knows it as a sickness.²⁹³

It was the combination of these critical claims with Nietzsche's positive statements regarding consciousness—including the examples of a healthy consciousness in the Greeks—this left us with a question as to why Nietzsche would make such an all-encompassing negative statement. This question came in the form of [P1].

[P1] How can consciousness be falsifying and distorting, damaging and a disease while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

This new perspective offers an immediate answer, which is that consciousness is a source of human superiority and a highest strength precisely *because* it is falsifying and distorting. An understandably natural way of reading Nietzsche's statement at GS 354 is that these falsifying and distorting characteristics of consciousness are *entirely* negative, and that it is this falsification and distortion that leads Nietzsche to conclude that consciousness is a 'danger' and a 'sickness'—this was the reading that Katsafanas and Riccardi extracted. But we have seen that the interpretive systems of the senses and the Greek mythology are positive and healthy and offer significant advantages, and that they do so precisely because of the elements of distortion and falsification present in these systems; and further that this distortion and falsification are necessary for life itself.²⁹⁴

Why then does Nietzsche list falsification and distortion along with all these other entirely negative evaluations like 'corruption', 'shallow', 'stupid', 'danger' and 'sickness'? The answer is that consciousness just straightforwardly *is* all of these things—as well as also being a 'sign' and 'general'.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ GS 354

²⁹⁴ BGE 4

²⁹⁵ GS 354

This duality of consciousness is brought out and confirmed concisely by Nietzsche in one of his notebook passages that I have alluded to previously.

Consciousness is the hand with which the organism reaches out furthest: it must be a firm hand. Our logic, our sense of time, sense of space are prodigious capacities to abbreviate, for the purpose of commanding. A concept is an invention which nothing corresponds to wholly but many things slightly: a proposition such as 'two things, being equal to a third thing, are themselves equal' assumes (1) things and (2) an equivalence – neither exists. Yet with this invented and rigid world of concepts and numbers, man gains a means of seizing by signs, as it were, huge quantities of facts and inscribing them in his memory. This apparatus of signs is man's superiority, precisely because it is at the furthest possible distance from the individual facts. The reduction of experiences to signs, and the ever greater quantity of things which can thus be grasped, is man's highest strength. Intellectuality as the capacity to be master of a huge number of facts in signs. This intellectual world, this sign-world, is pure 'illusion and deception', as is every 'phenomenal thing' – and 'moral man' will probably be outraged!²⁹⁶

Here, Nietzsche begins by explaining the benefits of abstraction and conceptualisation, detailing the relevance of conceptuality to the sophistication and advancement of the human species, but at the same time confirming that these abstractions are the 'furthest possible distance from the individual facts' and are a 'deception' and 'illusion'. Consciousness brings with it the greatest of advantages, but tied up with it are significant risks, with the greatest risk, Nietzsche explicitly tells us, being that abstraction, conceptuality and human sophistication in general are completely reliant upon falsification and represent to a degree an embracing of 'deception' and 'illusion'.

This is not simply confusing overstatement on Nietzsche's part, for he really does think that consciousness is inherently all of these listed things, and it is for this reason, due to the inherent falsification, distortion, stupidity, generalisation and corruption of consciousness, that while a minimal, appropriate use of consciousness is useful, beneficial, even necessary, the overuse and overestimation of consciousness is disastrous. This is why Nietzsche refers to the 'ridiculous overestimation and

²⁹⁶ Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 34[131]= WLN, 10

misapprehension of consciousness',²⁹⁷ and why he ends the above-quoted attack on consciousness with the claim that 'the growing consciousness is a danger; and he who lives amongst the most conscious Europeans even knows it as a sickness.'²⁹⁸

Consciousness is inherently falsifying, distorting, stupid, general and shallow—at all points and in all engagements; but it precisely this nature which gives it its advantages and enables life, through the confusion of one thing with another very similar thing that allows planning and preservation, and in the Greeks through the reinterpretation of suffering as in some part the fault of the gods—'that a God must have confused him' whenever something particularly terrible or inexplicable occurs²⁹⁹ (which, as archaic as it may seem, is actually an incredibly sophisticated metaphor for gene activation and neural circuits—in Nietzsche's words, drives—that have the capacity to entirely override other systems and make a person appear possessed, particularly in an uncharacteristic manner, at certain points in a life: e.g. puberty, middle-age, old-age, pregnancy and so on. This Greek explanation, like Nietzsche's drives, actually had a physiological underpinning—a metaphor for genes and neural circuitry!).³⁰⁰ And while consciousness does have the incredibly negative and life-denying effects that Nietzsche lists, it does so only when consciousness is overestimated and misused. Nietzsche's warning in GS 354 and GM 1; 11 is that because consciousness is an inherently falsifying, stupid, general and distorting capacity, it must be understood properly such that it is not misused—which means overestimated and overused. It is because it is 'growing' that it is such a danger, and why it is specifically in the 'most conscious Europeans' that it is known as a 'sickness'.³⁰¹

A further reason that any overuse of consciousness, which means any substantial use, is inherently dangerous, is due to its origin as an antagonist to the underlying interpretative system of the drives. Consciousness, as a system primarily developed to put a hold on or completely repress certain elements of the underlying drive system, must by definition be set up as an antagonist to that drive system—as discussed above it must be different in some way if it is to have any efficacy and not simply mirror the drives; when we combine the knowledge of this origin with the falsifying, stupid, general and distorting nature of consciousness we can immediately understand the

²⁹⁷ GM 1, 11

²⁹⁸ GS 354

²⁹⁹ GS 2;23

³⁰⁰ E.g. Gene activation and schizophrenia; see Skene, Roy, Grant (2017)

³⁰¹ GS 354

inevitable harm of overuse. We see this in Nietzsche's description of the mistake of Christianity in seeking an answer to the fundamentally physiological problem of bad-conscience on the 'psychological-moral level'.

We can regard it as inherently probable that from time to time, at certain places on earth, almost from necessity, a physiological feeling of obstruction will rule amongst large masses of people which, however, is not consciously perceived as such, through lack of physiological knowledge, so that its 'cause' and its cure can be sought and tested only on the psychological-moral level (– actually, this is my most general formula for what is usually called a 'religion').³⁰²

Consciousness is a competing interpretative system to the drives, the fundamental function and capacity of which is to, if not entirely stop, at least put a pause on and redirect the instincts. When we add to this that it is inherently 'falsifying', 'distorting' and 'stupid', we arrive at the inevitable conclusion that when used to any significant extent, consciousness will increasingly block and redirect drives and misunderstand the basic nature of these drives, suffering and other elements in the environment and the organism itself. These were, of course, its exact effects in Christianity and Nietzsche's very reasons for condemning it.

From this, we can conclude that the effects of a dangerous, overextended consciousness are precisely the effects of a harmful psychological-moral interpretation of the world—i.e. of a damaging religion. The overuse of consciousness leads to the suppression of drives and natural inclinations, suffering and a distorted worldview. In this way, we are able to understand any significant overuse of consciousness as leading directly to some—though not necessarily Christian—distortion or suppression of the drives. This is to be contrasted with the ancient Greeks, who addressed this physiological problem almost directly at the physiological level, by celebrating and deifying the drives; so avoiding the unnecessary overexpansion of a psychological-moral interpretative system, and with it consciousness.³⁰³ Framing this in terms of an answer to our initial question, we may say the following.

[P1] How can consciousness be falsifying and distorting, damaging and a disease, while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

³⁰² GM 3;17

³⁰³ To re-emphasise an earlier point, it is overuse and not *any* use that makes consciousness harmful. There are situations in which some expansion of consciousness becomes necessary.

[A1] Consciousness is man's superiority and highest strength precisely because it is falsifying and distorting—the falsification and distortions allow for abstraction, planning and communication; however, given the inherently falsifying and distorting nature of consciousness, as well as its basic function being drive suppression and its essential nature being a system of interpretation, any extensive use of consciousness leads to damaging distortions and the suppression of the organism according to the distorted and ascetic interpretative system that it necessarily creates by virtue of its origin, mechanisms and function.

3.3.4 *Consciousness after Christian mythology*

One further issue seems relevant in completing this explanation and this is the need to understand the 'growing consciousness' in Europe in the context of a declining Christianity and ever-increasing atheism.³⁰⁴ Given the claim that an extensive presence of consciousness will manifest itself in the form of an equally extensive psychological-moral system of interpretation, it is reasonable to ask why it is the case that consciousness is increasing at a time of decline in Christianity.

The first thing to say is that Christianity represents only one response to the need for a mythological system of interpretation. A decline in Christianity does not equate to a decline in religious behaviour or the use of mythology. Instead, Nietzsche's surprising answer to this question is that the death of God has the opposite of a moderating effect when it comes to the development of consciousness, that the removal of the ancient mythologies and symbols that have guided mankind away from the worst suffering and *ressentiment* gives a renewed impetus to the development of consciousness. Nietzsche's claim is that the absence of religious mythology through the decline of Christianity actually pushes consciousness towards its terrible peak, and that without the *ressentiment*-regulating influence of the ascetic priest risks sending Europe into chaos and war.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ GS 354

³⁰⁵ GM 3; 24

The reasoning behind this is that the internalisation of the instincts and resultant bad-conscience that necessitated these mythologies still remains, and that it is only once we do away with the Christian mythology that we begin to realise how much we needed it. Nietzsche frames this in terms of the threat of nihilism—that the removal of the Christian God once again opens us up to the horrors of a meaningless existence and meaningless suffering.

We now notice in ourselves needs, implanted by the long-held morality interpretation, which now appear to us as needs to untruth: conversely it is on them that the value for which we bear to live seems to depend.³⁰⁶

This 'morality interpretation', or *psychological-moral* interpretation as Nietzsche sometimes calls it, turns out to have been keeping nihilism and meaninglessness at bay: 'it prevented man from despising himself as man, from taking against life, from despairing of knowing [...] in sum: morality was the great *antidote* against practical and theoretical *nihilism*.'³⁰⁷

Understanding why Nietzsche would believe this to be the case becomes clearer when we frame the death of God in the context of the creation of religious mythology. These systems of thought emerged as an answer to a very direct and overwhelming need, hence their presence throughout all recorded human history and their common symbols and forms—as documented extensively by Jung.³⁰⁸ A genuine and overwhelming need had been created for a means of regulating and placating the unconscious, and a symbolism and mythology had been created to fulfil that need in the form of Christianity and the other religions, to mediate between the external and unnatural demands of society and an unconscious that can no longer be satisfied directly. Because of this, for all that has been said of the negative elements of the Christian mythology and the ascetic ideal, it is unquestionable that it has genuine benefits and a life-preserving core. When this core disappears and these methods are no longer available to us certain negative elements of the specifically Christian manifestation of the ascetic ideal may disappear, but the positive ones that held society together will also go with it.

³⁰⁶ *Nietzsche Reader* (2006) 20; 2

³⁰⁷ *Nietzsche Reader* (2006) 20; 1

³⁰⁸ See Jung: *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*

As a result, with an absence of meaning and faced again with chaos and suffering, man needs his mythological explanations even more, and will desperately start manufacturing new ideals/idols. Nietzsche makes this point in the context of the repeated undermining of Christian mythology across the ages.

Has man perhaps become less in need of a transcendent solution to the riddle of his existence because this existence has since come to look still more arbitrary, loiterer-like, and dispensable in the visible order of things? Has not man's self-deprecation, his will to self-deprecation, been unstopably on the increase since Copernicus?³⁰⁹

Nietzsche's point is that the more meaningless our existence seems and the more our mythological structures are undermined, the more desperately we feel the need for them. The need for the dogma, the will to believe anything to lessen the suffering, is only increased with every chip taken out of the edifice of the idol/ideology—undermining Christianity, increasing the doubt, the suffering, the meaninglessness only increases the reliance upon and commitment to what remains until the total destruction of the deity results in an all-consuming urge and willingness to find a replacement, any replacement—as long as it explains suffering and tells us who to blame: it is clearly no coincidence that the sudden growth and importance of political ideology coincides with the decline in the Christian mythology.

Nietzsche goes on to detail two specific consequences that will likely manifest with the death of a mythological system of interpretation. The first is an increase in nihilism, and with it the potential for greater asceticism through the denial of the value of certain basic drives. This again results from the simplistic and distorting nature of consciousness and is found in the fact that human consciousness is idiotically binary.

But extreme positions are replaced not by moderate ones, rather by equally extreme but opposite ones. And so the belief in the absolute immorality of nature, in purposelessness and senselessness is the psychologically necessary *affect* once belief in God and an essentially moral order can no longer be sustained. Nihilism now appears, *not* because aversion to existence is greater than before, but because people have begun to mistrust any "sense" in evil, even in existence. *One* interpretation has collapsed, but because it was

³⁰⁹ GM 3; 25

considered *the* interpretation, it appears as though there is no sense in existence whatsoever, as though everything is *in vain*.³¹⁰

In other words, once the popular interpretation of the underlying meaning of existence collapses, humanity does not merely draw back and attempt to find a less ambitious, more modest interpretation of life, but instead adopts the opposite attitude—that there is absolutely no justification and meaning to be found in nature. This can manifest itself as an even greater embrace of consciousness and ascetic elements, so failing one of the three tests Nietzsche uses to judge the extent to which a representational system is beneficial to the species: the extent to which it acknowledges and expresses the drives. In the belief that no ultimate values are to be found anywhere in nature, modern humanity rejects to a greater extent than before the meaning to be found in the unconscious and instead pursues the creation of ever more detached psychological-moral explanations of life in the form of political ideology.

Among these ideologies—and Nietzsche really does include every ideology created to assuage suffering and assign blame—are atheists, agnostics—'who worship the question mark itself as God',³¹¹ sceptics, socialists, the anti-Semites³¹² and even scientists. – Even science represents the 'driving force in the inner evolution' of the ascetic ideal, resting on the 'same foundation.'³¹³ However, two major differences are present here in these new ideologies that make them far more dangerous and destructive than the old Christian mythology, and this is beyond the danger that comes with the arrogance of thinking one has abandoned superstition and *cares only about truth*.

The other more disturbing consequence of the decline of our mythological structures is that with the death of Christian mythology so too goes the capacity to turn *ressentiment* back upon the herd and detonate it safely. The greatest benefit of the ascetic priest to society was that he prevented anarchy and the brutal vengeance the sufferers wanted to exact on all those around them. Christianity had a powerful and extensive mythology seemingly designed directly for this purpose, examples of which are found in the

³¹⁰ *Nietzsche Reader* (2006) 20; 4

³¹¹ GM 3;25

³¹² GM 3; 14

³¹³ GM 3;25

command that one "turn the other cheek"³¹⁴ or that only he who has not sinned may 'cast the first stone.'³¹⁵ Nietzsche notes this absence in the vengeful moralising present throughout Europe at the time and it is for this reason that he states that it is moving towards a 'catastrophe'³¹⁶ and predicts 'wars the like of which have never been seen on earth before'.³¹⁷ But Nietzsche is even more specific than this. Having described Europe 'these days something like the air of the madhouse and hospital'³¹⁸ he goes on describe how *ressentiment* has already begun to take over.

Here, the worms of revenge and rancour teem all round; here, the air stinks of things unrevealed and unconfessed; here, the web of the most wicked conspiracy is continually being spun, – the conspiracy of those who suffer against those who are successful and victorious, here, the sight of the victorious man is hated.³¹⁹

Searching for a new ideal, a new mythology to lessen suffering, and confident that they themselves are not to blame for it, these new Europeans begin their search for *those* who are the cause of their suffering. This search for a person or group to blame represents the natural order that had until recently been diverted by Christianity back towards the self.

[...]the material on which the formative and rapacious nature of this force vents itself is precisely man himself, his whole animal old self – and not, as in that greater and more eye-catching phenomenon, the other man, the other men.³²⁰

But this aberration in the psychology of vengeance leaves the European along with his faith in Christian mythology. Instead, he now spins conspiracies and invents quasi-religions to justify his hate. We know, of course, who Nietzsche is referencing here and he does so explicitly—the socialists and the antisemites. One specific figure he picks out is Eugen Dühring who identified as *both* a socialist and antisemite—which was not unusual for this period and is explained through Nietzsche's description of the origins of both socialism and antisemitism: both born out of *ressentiment* and both desperately searching for someone to blame and inflict cruelty upon.

³¹⁴ Luke 6:27-31

³¹⁵ Bible John 8.7

³¹⁶ WP Preface: 3

³¹⁷ *Ecce Homo, Why I am Destiny*

³¹⁸ GM 3;14

³¹⁹ GM 3;14

³²⁰ GM 2;18

The hoarse, indignant baying of sick hounds, the vicious mendacity and rage of such 'noble' Pharisees, can be heard right into the hallowed halls of learning (– I again remind readers who have ears to hear of that apostle of revenge from Berlin, Eugen Dühring, who makes the most indecent and disgusting use of moral clap-trap of anyone in Germany today: Dühring, today's biggest loudmouth of morality, even amongst his kind, the anti-Semites.³²¹

This speaks both to the depth of Nietzsche's insight—that this two-hundred-year struggle to discover a new idol is still underway and that we are still just as in need of our evil enemies—but should also be a sobering reminder that we are still just as capable of the horrors of the last century, perhaps even more capable.

To conclude, we can see from this that the need for a moral-psychological interpretation of life has remained through the continued presence of bad-conscience and suffering. That consciousness does not decline after the overthrow of the Christian mythology only shows that another mythology has taken its place and that the need to give a meaning to suffering and existence manifests itself all the more with the decline of an old system of valuation, resulting in a lunge towards an ever deeper consciousness, and growth in the harmful and dangerous denial of the instincts and *ressentiment*.

³²¹ GM 3; 14

4. Assessment and Conclusion

From this discussion of Nietzsche's various statements on consciousness, it is hopefully clear that there is a coherent and interesting theory of mind to extract from his writings; however, if this is the case, a further question then announces itself: how plausible is Nietzsche's theory of the origins and nature of consciousness? A full treatment of this question will, perhaps, require a greater involvement of neuroscience or evolutionary biology, and a comprehensive answer is certainly not possible in the space available here. Nevertheless, we may at least point to plausible contemporary analogues of the major aspects of Nietzsche's positions in contemporary philosophy, as well as significant recent research in evolutionary biology and psychology that offer extensive support for significant aspects of Nietzsche's model. A brief survey of the relevant literature suggests that his position is sophisticated, philosophically well-motivated and plausible.

Nietzsche's main positions, and the focus of his attempted reorientation of our understanding of the human animal, orbit around two main species of claim:

[CT] Consciousness is in some sense overrated: its significance in reasoning and general life is both overestimated and largely negative.

[UT] Unconscious processes of which we are unaware do much, or all, of what we normally take to be consciousness at work; that this unconscious reasoning is in some way superior.

Consequently, supporting evidence from the sciences or philosophy for Nietzsche's positions would come from either the undermining of the role consciousness plays in human life, or an acknowledgement of the underestimation of the significance of unconscious mental states. In particular, for [CT], we would want to see, as a starting point, confirmation that a substantial portion of our mental life is unconsciousness and

unknown to us—let us call this [CT-a]. For a more substantial degree of support, we would also want to see evidence or contemporary philosophical analogues for the claim that conscious thinking is in some way limited as a discursive tool, and, in particular, that it falsifies in an unhelpful manner when attempting to model reality—[CT-b]. In terms of [UT], and in addition to [CT-a], we would need to see support for the idea that unconscious thought is superior to conscious thought in some way: that unconscious thought is better at accurately modelling reality[UT-a], and that unconscious thought utilises conceptual capacities in some sense, and so is capable of a high degree of sophistication[UT-b]. These four criteria represent the four central claims of Nietzsche's theory of mind:

[CT-a] A substantial portion of our mental life is unconsciousness and unknown to us.

[CT-b] Consciousness falsifies in an unhelpful manner when attempting to model reality.

[UT-a] Unconscious thought is better at accurately modelling reality.

[UT-b] Unconscious thought utilises conceptual capacities and is capable of a high degree of sophistication.

As we will now see, there is a substantial amount of support for these claims in recent advances in neuroscience, evolutionary biology and psychology, as well as contemporary philosophy.

4.1 On the philosophical plausibility of this position

Beginning with [CT-a]—that a substantial portion of our mental life is unconsciousness and unknown to us—Mattia Riccardi has noted that at least two major elements of Nietzsche's psychology are present in the picture of consciousness proposed by David Rosenthal. Riccardi notes that there are 'striking similarities between Nietzsche's

position and the account of consciousness defended by David Rosenthal, the most famous proponent of HOT theory in contemporary philosophy of mind.³²²

The first claim relevant to [CT-a] that Rosenthal makes is that 'mental states can occur without being conscious'.³²³ This, in itself, is not particularly controversial: unconscious states of which we are unaware have, *to varying degrees*, been a feature of psychology since Freud and Jung, and arguably before;³²⁴ importantly, however, Rosenthal moves beyond this and further into line with Nietzsche.

Because our mental states are not all conscious, we are seldom if ever conscious of the mental antecedents of our conscious states. And conscious desires and intentions whose mental antecedents we are not conscious of seem to us to be spontaneous and uncaused. The sense we have of free agency results from our failure to be conscious of all our mental states.³²⁵

This picture of consciousness is strikingly similar to Nietzsche's, with Rosenthal even observing the overestimation of consciousness: not only does Rosenthal note that not all mental states are conscious, but further adds that only a small portion of the causes of our conscious states are known to us, and that this leads us to falsely conclude that our conscious states alone determine our actions.³²⁶ We still, however, have a long way to go before getting to the major claims of Nietzsche's theory.

We can, however, jump forward significantly in this regard, by looking at a few aspects of the debate between John McDowell and Hubert Dreyfus over the presence of conceptuality in our mental life. Without going too far into a long and complex topic, this discussion centred on McDowell's claim that, for humans, conceptuality is ubiquitous—that conceptual capacities are to some degree present in all our behaviours, actions and perceptions.³²⁷

To avoid making unintelligible how the deliverances of sensibility can stand in grounding relations to paradigmatic exercise of the understanding such as judgements and beliefs ...

³²² Riccardi (forthcoming) p7

³²³ Rosenthal (1997) p729

³²⁴ It should be noted that Freud and Jung differ somewhat in their understanding of the unconscious, with Freud's focus being the personal, subjective unconscious, and Jung focusing more on the archetypes of the objective, collective unconscious.

³²⁵ Rosenthal 2005c: 361

³²⁶ Riccardi (forthcoming) p16

³²⁷ There are, potentially, some *very* limited exceptional cases.

we must insist that the understanding is already inextricably linked in the deliverances of sensibility themselves.³²⁸

This last line, in particular, is strikingly close to Nietzsche's own claims about the extent to which our judgments are present in our perceptions—'It cannot be doubted that all sense perceptions are permeated with value judgments'.³²⁹ More interesting, however, is McDowell's response to Dreyfus' accusation that McDowell's position here mistakenly represents the way humans relate to the world as being 'pervaded by self-critical conceptuality'.³³⁰ Very roughly, Dreyfus is arguing that McDowell's claim, that conceptuality is ubiquitous in human mental life—present and active in all perceptions and actions—mischaracterises humans as always self-critical and conceptually engaged.

The relevant aspect of this to Nietzsche's view of consciousness is that McDowell responds by arguing that Dreyfus has confused the utilisation of concepts with detached rational engagement, and McDowell proceeds to offer a number of examples of conceptuality at work in instances that lack awareness and detached critical reflection—in Nietzsche's terminology: utilising concepts without thinking in words. A further element of Nietzsche's position on consciousness can be found in these examples, in his understanding of conceptuality that allows for conceptual deployment and sophisticated mental capacities without consciousness; and in the recognition that skilled action is paradigmatically unconscious, [UT-b].

Attempting to provide an example in which conceptuality is present without reflective behaviour, McDowell introduces a runner following a trail who then comes across a sign pointing to the left.³³¹ This runner then unreflectively follows the sign, going to the left along the trail. Now, for McDowell, the distinction between, on the one hand, the runner pausing, considering the meaning and nature of the sign, and then proceeding to follow it as a result of inference, and on the other, the original, unreflective description, is not a distinction based on the presence or absence of conceptual engagement. For McDowell, conceptuality is equally present in this unreflective act and the reflective

³²⁸ McDowell (1994) p46

³²⁹ WP 505

³³⁰ Dreyfus (2013) p.16

³³¹ McDowell (2009) p129

one, and his reason for making this claim is that in both instances the runner went left *for a reason*. The runner utilised conceptual capacities in both situations.

Acting for a reason, which one is responding to as such, does not require that one reflects about whether some consideration is a sufficient rational warrant for something it seems to recommend. It is enough that one could.³³²

What is important here is that the runner 'has the capacity to step back': if you then asked the runner why she went to the left at a later point, the fact that she could say, "I went to the left because the sign was pointing left" shows that she acted for a reason, that her conceptual capacities were engaged at the time. What McDowell seems to be saying is that the fact the runner is capable of utilising her rationality via concepts in a paradigmatic exercise of reason shows that those very concepts and her rationality are available to her generally: more specifically, in non-paradigmatic instances. McDowell's point is that relevant concepts are utilised in relevant situations even when an act of rationality isn't explicit. This might not be immediately obvious when thinking about an arrow, but consider a runner coming across the following sign, where the meaning is i) touch your right foot, ii) jump and iii) spin around clockwise.



i. ii. iii.

It may be less clear whether rationality and conceptuality is being utilised in unreflectively running to the left when a left arrow is present, but if the runner sees this sign and unreflectively touches her left foot, jumps and spins around clockwise before continuing down the track, it would be difficult to argue that she could have done this without the relevant learnt concepts i, ii and iii. McDowell's point is that concepts must be available and utilised in these non-paradigmatic acts of rationality in order for humans to respond to them appropriately; that we do respond to them appropriately can only be explained by the utilisation of concepts.

That humans behave in this manner, displaying highly complex mental capacities and skills in unreflective acts, is entirely commonplace. We display such behaviours when

³³² Ibid.

driving, playing an instrument, or in any kind of skilled behaviour, and McDowell further mirrors Nietzsche in claiming that, once consciousness has been used to learn a skill, in many instances the presence of consciousness is only harmful to that ability once it is learnt. One example he uses is of a baseball player no longer able to throw because of consciousness impinging on his crystallised unconscious skill.³³³ In other words, once consciousness has been used to acquire a particular skill or ability, that ability crystallises in the unconscious and consciousness is no longer needed to exercise that capacity—and further, that consciousness can be harmful to this now crystallised skilled behaviour; which is, of course, precisely Nietzsche's position on the role of consciousness in the development of concepts.

This is relevant to Nietzsche's attempt to make a non-trivial distinction between conscious and non-conscious acts in that McDowell provides an example of sophisticated rational engagement that utilises concepts, but stands outside the normal paradigm of an engaged, reflective, conscious rationality. Both McDowell and Nietzsche pick out the same relevant aspects: namely, an absence of reflection and language in such an act; in this, we have an example of sophisticated rationality at work that is unconscious—by which I mean unreflective and instinctive: [UT-b], that unconscious thought utilises conceptual capacities and is capable of a high degree of sophistication.

4.2 On the plausibility of these claims from a scientific perspective

Before moving onto explicit support for Nietzsche's position from the sciences, it is worth noting that some scepticism may be present in terms of the genealogical stories Nietzsche provides—it is not uncommon to face incredulity towards anything beyond the claim that these stories are meant to be purely illustrative. There are two things to say to this. The first is that mainstream anthropological theories pertaining to the evolution of language are no less speculative, and the second is that even these theories are now moving towards Nietzsche in suggesting that the primary function of conscious reasoning is *social* and not rational.

In fact, recent evolutionary psychology has done far more to vindicate Nietzsche's theories than to embarrass him—and this holds true far beyond the scope of his views

³³³ McDowell (2013) p53

on language. Of particular note are Nietzsche's claims that conscious reasoning is a weaker and inferior version of unconscious reasoning, and that conscious thought develops not for seeking truth and representing reality but as a social tool: 'he needed help and protection, he needed his equals; he had to express his neediness and be able to make himself understood' [GS 354]. This is precisely the argument put forward in a recent article in the journal of *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

Reasoning is generally seen as a means to improve knowledge and make better decisions. However, much evidence shows that reasoning often leads to epistemic distortions and poor decisions. This suggests that the function of reasoning should be rethought. Our hypothesis is that the function of reasoning is argumentative. It is to devise and evaluate arguments intended to persuade. Reasoning so conceived is adaptive given the exceptional dependence of humans on communication and their vulnerability to misinformation. A wide range of evidence in the psychology of reasoning and decision making can be reinterpreted and better explained in the light of this hypothesis.³³⁴

This article questions the conventional wisdom that "reasoning" improves knowledge and allows us to make better decisions; instead, it argues, it is there to serve a social function, to gain assistance and bring others to your cause. This is, of course, precisely what Nietzsche is arguing throughout *The Genealogy*, from the claim that conscious reasoning falsifies and distorts, to the idea that this reasoning is a social tool and not a rational one. The authors even directly reference *distortion*, stating that 'that reasoning often leads to epistemic distortions and poor decisions.' This directly supports [CT-b]: that consciousness falsifies in an unhelpful manner when attempting to model reality.

Of equal note is the work of evolutionary psychologist David Buss who discusses the difficulties modern man faces as a result of 'evolved mechanisms' that are unable to be successfully deployed in modern contexts having been selected for 'ancestral environments'.

Impediments include large discrepancies between modern and ancestral environments, the existence of evolved mechanisms "designed" to produce subjective distress, and the fact that evolution by selection has produced competitive mechanisms that function to benefit one person at the expense of others.³³⁵

³³⁴ Mercier and Sperber (2011) p57

³³⁵ Buss, D. (2000) p.16

Again, this is precisely the development discussed by Nietzsche as the 'internalisation of the instincts', where evolved mechanisms are no longer useful, or can no longer find expression in a modern environment. An example offered by Buss that is particularly striking in its similarity to Nietzsche's treatment of the internalisation and blocked drives is the reference to the inability to inflict revenge as a source of distress, with society now determining the punishment.

Ancestral humans relied on their friends and relatives to seek justice, to correct social wrongs, to deal with violence inflicted on them from others. Modern humans rely on hired police and a legal system whose labyrinth makes the horror of Kafka's *The Trial* look like a tea party.³³⁶

One might argue that in the same way as Nietzsche described his contemporary psychology as having taken almost two-hundred years to catch up with Leibniz, it has taken our own one-hundred years to *almost* catch up with Nietzsche; but it will be sufficient to state that far from being dubious and improbable, Nietzsche's theory of mind is eminently plausible with significant elements of it having been vindicated by current evolutionary psychology.

4.3 Conclusion

The primary objective of this work is to make sense of a series of seemingly incompatible claims made by Nietzsche on the topic of consciousness. These are the benefit claim, the damage claim and the efficacy claim, which together seem to suggest that Nietzsche, all at once, thought consciousness to be man's highest strength, damaging and disease-like, and lacking in efficacy. This results in two central questions to be answered:

[P1] How can consciousness be falsifying and distorting, damaging and a disease, while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

³³⁶ Buss, D. (2000) p.16

Finding a solution to these apparent conflicts is important for two main reasons. The first is that consciousness has a central explanatory role throughout Nietzsche's major works and ideas, and forms the foundation of his major ethical positions: e.g. the emergence of bad-conscience, his critique of Christianity, the ascetic priest and modern Europe. An absence of a coherent theory of mind could have significant consequences for the plausibility of the remainder of his work. Second, it is highly implausible that a fundamental incompatibility of claims regarding so central a mechanism in Nietzsche's work could have been overlooked by him, which suggests a significant misinterpretation has occurred.

Two recent and important interpretations of Nietzsche's theory of mind, both of which represent a significant advancement in our understanding of Nietzsche's position on consciousness, are found in the work of Paul Katsafanas and Mattia Riccardi, who have both attempted answers to [P1] and [P2], explaining much of the background to Nietzsche's various claims on consciousness: showing that they reference thoughtful, nuanced positions, rather than a chaotic and ad hoc hyperbole. A thorough investigation of these readings, however, shows that there are still significant elements of Nietzsche's position on consciousness left unexplained by these readings of Nietzsche, and that significant elements of each interpretation introduce new conflicts and inconsistencies with further aspects of Nietzsche's texts.

Katsafanas' position is primarily based on a distinction he introduces between conceptual and non-conceptual awareness. For Katsafanas, Nietzsche uses "unconscious" and "conscious" in a manner that breaks from the traditional usage of referencing, respectively, the presence or absence of awareness; instead, he believes that Nietzsche's reference to the "unconscious" is to non-conceptually articulated *awareness*. This distinction allows Katsafanas to explain the confusion over Nietzsche's statements and offer a more coherent interpretation: by understanding unconscious to mean a non-conceptual engagement with the world, of which we are aware—such as thinking in images—we are able to understand how Nietzsche might think we could go on to act and think without consciousness. Katsafanas also explains [P2]—the benefits and damaging nature of consciousness—through the claim that conceptualisation introduces falsification into human mental life, which is distorting and damaging, with the result that Nietzsche appears generally ambivalent about consciousness due to its dual nature.

A number of problems emerge from this reading, the first of which is that it fails to adequately explain why Nietzsche believed humans were capable of behaving 'exactly' the same without consciousness—non-conceptual thought, such as thinking in images, is severely limited when compared to conceptual abstraction, and Nietzsche claims unconscious thought is superior to conscious thought. A further problem is that there is an absence of textual support for Katsafanas' distinction between the conscious and unconscious in terms of the presence or absence of conceptuality, rather than, at least in part, awareness. Through looking at explicit statements made by Nietzsche, as well as his appraisals of Leibniz, it becomes clear that Nietzsche does, in fact, use "unconscious" to specifically reference mental states of which we are unaware. Another issue arises from locating the source of Nietzsche's objection to consciousness in its introduction of falsification through conceptuality. Nietzsche believed falsification to be present at the fundamental levels of the categories and the senses, and he also understood falsification to be 'indispensable to us', stating that we do 'not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment'.³³⁷ As falsification is present before consciousness, is indispensable to humanity, and because Nietzsche does not object to falsification in itself, falsification cannot serve as a sufficient explanation for Nietzsche's criticism of consciousness. In summary, this reading does not sufficiently explain Nietzsche's hostile attitude towards consciousness, or why Nietzsche believed humanity could go on exactly the same without consciousness;³³⁸ and it contains a number of claims that contradict other important mechanisms of Nietzsche's psychology, e.g. the relationship between awareness and consciousness, and the status of falsification (as discussed in 1.3.1, and 1.3.3).

While this reading ultimately proves inadequate, it does point a way towards making sense of Nietzsche's various confusing claims, and Mattia Riccardi builds on this interpretation in a number of respects, making some substantial changes, most notably in acknowledging the significance of the unconscious in terms of its basic nature and capacities. Riccardi notes that Nietzsche believed the unconscious to be comprised of mental states of which we are unaware, and further, claims that conceptualisation occurs to some degree in unconscious thought. The presence of conceptualisation in the unconscious, and through it, the capacities and sophistication that come with

³³⁷ BGE 4

³³⁸ GS 354

abstraction, paves the way to answering [P1] and [P2]. If conceptualisation exists in the unconscious, then we have an explanation for how humans can behave in a sophisticated manner without conscious thought: sophisticated abstraction can take place in the unconscious, thus explaining how we can go on the same without consciousness. The presence of unconscious conceptualisation also leads Riccardi to revise Katsafanas' claim that Nietzsche's critical attitude towards consciousness is caused by consciousness introducing falsehood through conceptualisation. Because Riccardi's reading allows for unconscious conceptualisation, and Nietzsche does not object to unconscious thought, Riccardi suggests that Nietzsche objects specifically to socially mediated conceptual articulation.

This reading, in acknowledging the presence of conceptualisation in the unconscious and the sophistication of unconscious thought, represents a significant advancement in our understanding of Nietzschean psychology; however, there still remain unanswered questions and elements of contradiction. The first of these concerns Riccardi's claim that Nietzsche objects to consciousness due to its introducing falsification through conceptualisation in consciousness. The same objection to Katsafanas' similar claim applies here: Nietzsche does not object to falsification in itself, but rather looks to the consequences of falsification when passing a judgment.³³⁹ The presence of falsification is not in itself enough to explain Nietzsche's negative attitude towards consciousness. In addition to this, while Riccardi was correct to note the existence of conceptuality in the unconscious, his claim that conceptuality can exist without consciousness is rendered problematic by Nietzsche's statement that concepts are 'possible only when there are words', the implication of which is that consciousness must exist to some degree for concepts to come into existence—casting doubt on Riccardi's claim that conceptualisation can develop independently of consciousness.³⁴⁰

To make sense of this continued confusion, Nietzsche's understanding of the nature of concepts and their relationship to conscious development and the unconscious must be developed. Words are necessary for concepts and advanced human thought to emerge due to their capacity to offer a tangible scaffolding around which to group and structure experience, memories, drives and their outputs. As a result of this, advanced conceptual structures develop at a level below consciousness and words—words are signs for

³³⁹ BGE 4

³⁴⁰ WP 506

concepts; concepts are pictorial representations of underlying relations of drives. Because consciousness—thinking in words—is comprised of auditory signs and not concepts, we may understand Nietzsche as claiming that conscious thought takes place in signs for concepts, something which he directly states, and not concepts themselves.

The picture now developed is relatively conventional in the sense that language, consciousness, and advanced conceptual thought are closely related: in that conceptuality is necessary for human sophistication and that words are necessary for the development of concepts. The unique and interesting element of Nietzsche's model, however, is that once concepts have been created through the use of words, they become crystallised in the unconscious and words are no longer necessary for their deployment. This would seem to be a relatively common and uncontroversial account of how humans generally acquire skills; through conscious instruction until reaching the point that the ability is crystallised in the unconscious and capable of deployment without conscious involvement, e.g. McDowell's master playing blitz chess apparently thoughtlessly.³⁴¹ By this means, we are able to explain Nietzsche's claim that we could go on exactly the same without consciousness: it is not that nothing would change if consciousness had never existed; but that consciousness is no longer necessary for advanced conceptual thought once these capacities and relations have been crystallised in the unconscious.

[P2] How can humans be exactly the same without consciousness if consciousness both elevates mankind while also distorting and damaging its experience of the world and itself?

[A2] Consciousness is required for the development of higher thought and its consequences through conceptualisation and the development of underlying processes; but consciousness is no longer necessary once such development has taken place.

A final problem remains in our understanding of Nietzsche's forceful attacks on consciousness. While Nietzsche claims that *all* consciousness is distorting and falsifying, and that the growing consciousness is damaging and a danger, he also offers positive appraisals of the use of consciousness in ancient Greek society, and is neutral

³⁴¹ McDowell (2013) p53

or positive towards falsification and conceptualisation when its results are positive. It isn't yet clear why Nietzsche would take such a hostile and negative approach to *all* consciousness when he clearly notes its benefits and positive overall output in numerous instances. The answer to this is that when Nietzsche refers to consciousness as 'falsifying', 'distorting', 'general', 'stupid', he is genuinely stating that consciousness is all of these things in all contexts and deployments.³⁴² The extent to which consciousness is damaging, harmful, a sickness and disease, however, is dependent on the *extent* to which consciousness is used. Falsification, distortion and the general stupidity of consciousness is useful due to the generalisation it introduces, which enables the confusion of one thing with another, enabling abstraction, planning and communication: different internal states of humans are confused for the same, enabling communication; different external events and entities are confused as the same, allowing forward planning and increased survival. However, due to the intrinsic stupidity of consciousness, and its distorting and falsifying nature, as well as its origin as a device used for the blocking of drives, when consciousness is used to any significant extent in the creation of a moral-psychological interpretive system, the level of distortion and falsification becomes profoundly dangerous and damaging, and the resulting structure of interpretation will be inherently life-denying in its suppression of drives and instinct.

[P1] How can consciousness be falsifying and distorting, damaging and a disease, while also being the source of human superiority and a highest strength?

[A1] Consciousness is man's superiority and highest strength precisely because it is falsifying and distorting—the falsification and distortions allow for abstraction, planning and communication; however, given the inherently falsifying and distorting nature of consciousness, as well as its basic function being drive suppression and its essential nature being a system of interpretation, any extensive use of consciousness leads to damaging distortions and the suppression of the organism according to the distorted and ascetic interpretative system that it necessarily creates by virtue of its origin, mechanisms and function.

³⁴² GS 354

Through this reading, we can see that Nietzsche had a coherent theory of consciousness. His main claims, that consciousness is inherently falsifying and distorting, that consciousness is the source of human superiority, and that we can go on without it for the vast portion of our daily lives, are all compatible. Together, these form a philosophical program that is interwoven with and supports his ethical positions, and ultimately aims at pushing back against an overestimation of the value and capabilities of conscious thinking, seeking to remind humanity of the significance of unconscious processes and drives, and the meaning and value contained within them.

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