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Faculty of Humanities

Philosophy

The Drives and Affects in Nietzsche's Accounts of Knowledge, Freedom, and Affirmation

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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In this thesis I give accounts of the drives and affects in Nietzsche's work and use them to give further accounts of three main topics in Nietzsche's positive philosophy: knowledge, freedom, and affirmation.

In the first two chapters I give accounts of the drives and affects respectively. I argue that the affects play a prominent role in Nietzsche's work because of their connection to what he thinks it means to value something. I argue that, for Nietzsche, valuing x involves having a positive affective orientation toward x induced by one's strongest drives.

In chapter 3 I give an account of Nietzsche's perspectivism. I argue that it consists of two main claims, one descriptive and one prescriptive. The descriptive claim is that knowledge is guided shaped by the affects. The prescriptive claim is that knowledge can be enhanced by using the affects.

In chapter 4 I outline Nietzsche's three-pronged attack on what he deems an absurd conception of freedom. I then give an account of Nietzsche's positive conception of freedom. I argue that Nietzschean freedom is a kind of self-determination, it involves being determined by values that are suited to the conditions of one's flourishing.

In chapter 5 I argue that affirmation is primarily an unreflective process that involves willing power in a way that enhances life. Nietzsche claims that the essence of life is the will to power. Thus, I argue that affirming life just is willing power in a way that brings about the enhancement, expansion, and increased complexity of the will to power itself.

In chapter 6 I look at one particular affect, gaiety, of the kind expressed by what Nietzsche calls "higher laughter" and look at the role it plays in the three main topics of the thesis. I have two goals in the chapter. The first is to illuminate the nature of one particularly important affect in Nietzsche's

positive thought. The second is to use that affect to draw out some important interrelationships between affirmation, freedom, and knowledge.

Finally, in the conclusion, I look at Nietzsche's style. One important aspect of Nietzsche's style is that it is affectively engaged and designed to elicit an emotional reaction in its audience. I examine one particular aspect of Nietzsche's emotive style, namely, his use of humour. I show how Nietzsche uses humour to two main ends. Firstly, it plays a role in Nietzsche's ad hominem attacks on philosophers, religions, and traditional morality. Secondly, he uses humour to foster the intimacy of a shared sense of community. Humour is one of the ways in which Nietzsche uses his style to find the appropriate readers for his works.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Charles Boddicker

Title of thesis: The Drives and Affects in Nietzsche's Accounts of Knowledge, Freedom, and Affirmation

I 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.

I confirm that:

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

Signature:

Date:

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Abbreviations of Nietzsche's Works

Unless otherwise stated, I have used the following translations of Nietzsche's works, referring to them with the following abbreviations.

- A:** *The Anti-Christ (1888)*, in Norman, J. and Ridley, A. (eds.), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Trans. Norman, J.
- BGE:** *Beyond Good and Evil (1886)*, Horstmann, R. P. and Norman, J. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Trans. Norman, J.
- BT:** *The Birth of Tragedy (1872)*, in Guess, R. and Spiers, R. (eds.), *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Trans. Spiers, R.
- D:** *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality (1881)*, Clark, M and Leiter, B. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Trans. Hollingdale, R. J.
- EH:** *Ecce Homo (1888)*, in Norman, J. and Ridley, A. (eds.), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Trans. Norman, J.
- GM:** *On the Genealogy of Morality (1887)*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998. Trans. Clark, M and Swenson, A.J.
- GS:** *The Gay Science (1882; Part 5: 1887)*, Williams, B. (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Trans. Del Caro, A. and Nauckhoff, J.
- HH:** *Human, All Too Human (1878)*, in *Human, All Too Human*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Trans. Hollingdale, R. J.
- TI:** *Twilight of the Idols (1889)*, in Norman, J. and Ridley, A. (eds.), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Trans. Norman, J.
- UM:** *Untimely Meditations (1873-6)*, Breazeale, D. (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Trans. Hollingdale, R. J.
- WP:** *The Will to Power*, Kaufmann, W. (ed.). New York: Vintage, 1968. Trans. Hollingdale, R. J. and Kaufmann, W.

- WLN: *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, Bittner, R (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Trans. Sturge, K.
- Z: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1883-5)*, Del Caro, A. and Pippin, R. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Trans. Del Caro, A.

INTRODUCTION

One striking and unique aspect of Nietzsche's work is his constant reference to affective experiences. This fixation on affective experience is present in all his books, and even manifests itself in the title of one: *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*). Nietzsche's writing abounds with observations, explanations, definitions, and expressions of feelings, as well as condemnation or praise of them. Furthermore, he does not just write about feelings, his style of writing seems designed to *provoke* them in his readers as well. For Nietzsche, human experience is suffused with affective experience because of the vast influence of what he calls "drives." The drives pervade human life, they structure our experience and indeed, according to Nietzsche, make up who we are.

The aim of this thesis is to show how looking at the role that the drives and affects play in Nietzsche's thought can shed light on three of his central philosophical concerns. In chapters 1 and 2 I give accounts of the drives and affects, and in chapters 3, 4, and 5 I use them to inform further accounts of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), freedom, and affirmation. In the final chapter I use "gaiety," which I take to be one word for the kind of complex affective orientation expressed by what Nietzsche calls "higher laughter," as a case study. I show that gaiety, or laughter, plays an important role in all three of the topics I consider and can help elucidate interrelationships between them. Thus, in addition to demonstrating the importance of the affects I will also try to elucidate the role that laughter plays as a recurring motif in Nietzsche's work. In this introduction, I summarise the main points of each chapter, and introduce laughter as a case study.

Chapter 1

In chapter 1 I assess two interpretations of what Nietzsche calls "drives," namely the dispositional and homuncular interpretations. On the first interpretation drives are relatively stable dispositions to behave in certain ways, and on the second they are homunculi or proto-persons that possess either a limited kind of agency or full agency. I see whether either of these readings can avoid what Riccardi calls the "homuncular fallacies"¹ without running into textual counter-evidence.

¹ Riccardi (2017).

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The chapter consists of four sections. In section 1.1 I introduce the drives and the two fallacies. Any account of the drives will have to explain their two main functions. The first is that a plurality of drives is capable of forming a self or “soul” (*BGE* 12). The second is that drives structure our experience of the world.² I show how accounts of the drives are led astray by focusing on only one or the other function. The two functions that Nietzsche attributes to the drives seem to require personal-level capacities, and this opens his account up to two fallacies. The mereological fallacy occurs when one ascribes necessarily personal properties or capacities to a subpersonal entity. It is called a ‘mereological’ fallacy because it involves ascribing to a part of something a property which can only be possessed by the whole thing. The explanatory fallacy occurs when one explains a personal-level property by positing a subpersonal entity that already has the property to be explained. Drives are meant to explain what it is to be a conscious agent. However, if the drives themselves possess the characteristics of a conscious agent, then Nietzsche has merely shifted the burden of explanation to the subpersonal-level by reintroducing the notion of the agent at the level of the drives.³ This would make his account of the self explanatorily idle.

In section 1.2 I outline the homuncular reading and argue that it commits both fallacies and that textual evidence suggests it is not Nietzsche’s view. These problems tend to push interpreters to accept a dispositional reading. In section 1.3 I argue that while the dispositional reading can avoid the homuncular fallacies, it requires us to interpret Nietzsche’s agential characterisations of the drives as elaborate metaphors. I assess two attempts to formulate a dispositional interpretation that does not write off Nietzsche’s agential language as metaphorical and conclude that both fail. Thus, neither the homuncular interpretation *nor* the dispositional interpretation accurately represent Nietzsche’s view. Despite this textual difficulty, in section 1.4 I argue that one ought to accept the dispositional reading of the drives on charitable grounds. It is the more philosophically defensible interpretation, it is what Nietzsche seems to have in mind at least *some* of the time, and it is the most philosophically fruitful position available to him. I put forward a modified version of Katsafanas’ account of the drives. On my account drives: i) generate an affective orientation ii) admit of an aim and an object and iii) alter or direct perception in such a way that they cause agents to actively pursue their ends.

Chapter 2

In chapter 2 I give an account of the affects and explain their relationship to valuing. The great importance that the affects have in Nietzsche’s work rests largely on their relationship to what he thinks it means to value something. Thus, the main goal of this chapter is to give an account of Nietzsche’s conception of valuing. I answer the descriptive question of what it means for someone

² *GS* 7, 139, 152, 301; *BGE* 186.

³ Janaway (2007), Katsafanas (2013, 2014).

to value something, rather than the normative question of whether what someone values is in fact valuable. I argue that, for Nietzsche: an agent values X iff the agent has a positive affective orientation toward X that is induced by one of the agent's strongest drives. I develop my view in response to Paul Katsafanas' 2016 account. Katsafanas improves upon previous accounts by incorporating drives and affects into a single account of Nietzschean value. Previous accounts had only incorporated either one or the other. Nevertheless, I identify two problems with his view.

Katsafanas argues that an agent values X iff the agent (1) has a drive-induced positive affective orientation toward X, and (2) does not disapprove of this affective orientation. My two criticisms correspond to Katsafanas' conditions (1) and (2) respectively. The first criticism is that the condition that only "drive-induced" affects count as values does not carve out a genuine subset of affects. I provide textual evidence to show that Nietzsche thinks *all* affects are drive-induced. I propose instead that we identify valuing with positive affects induced by our *strongest* drives. The subset of affects induced by our strongest drives is a genuine subset of affects. The second criticism is that "disapproval" in condition (2) is ambiguous. I show that condition (2) becomes redundant when we have an adequate understanding of what Nietzsche takes 'disapproval' to mean.

This chapter has four sections. Since valuing involves having a *drive-induced affective* orientation, it is important that I make clear what these two terms mean at the outset. Thus, in the 2.2 I briefly reiterate the account of the drives given in chapter one. In 2.3 I give an account of the "affects." In 2.4 I outline Katsafanas' view and introduce the problems that he raises for Poellner, Richardson, and Clark & Dudrick. Finally, in 2.5, I raise two problems for Katsafanas and show how my view can address these two problems and the three that he raises for Poellner, Richardson, and Clark & Dudrick. I conclude by showing how I can accommodate Nietzsche's claim that drives *explain* our consciously held values.

Chapter 3

In chapter 3 I examine the affects' relationship to knowledge, or enquiry (*Erkenntniss*). In the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche claims that "we need a *critique* of moral values" and that in order to do this we need a kind of knowledge we have up to now "neither had...nor even desired" (*GM* preface 6). My main claim in this chapter is that it is one of Nietzsche's concerns in the *Genealogy* to figure out the best way to acquire this kind of knowledge, and I argue that the *Genealogy* itself embodies, and to some extent lays out, methods of enquiry that Nietzsche sees as appropriate or especially effective at engaging the topics above. Furthermore, I will argue that the most important feature of this methodology is that it is *affectively engaged*. In sketching these methods of enquiry Nietzsche explicitly contrasts his approach with Schopenhauer's knowledge-ideal of the "pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of cognition," and emphasises the importance of what he calls the *affects* (*GM* III 12). One of Nietzsche's perennial goals is to alert the reader to

Introduction

the omnipresent, but largely unrecognized, role that feelings, emotions, and affects play in our attempts to understand ourselves and the world, and to encourage us to *use* feelings, rather than extinguish them, in order to address problems about morality and value (*GM* preface 7).

Nietzsche's views on how we ought to enquire into morality so as to gain the kind of knowledge we have "up to now" neither had nor desired are most clearly expressed in book III section 12 of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. This passage tends to be considered the definitive statement of Nietzsche's so-called "perspectivism," which is often taken to be his theory of knowledge. In section 3.2 I engage with the literature on perspectivism. I situate my reading of the passage in between what I see as two more extreme readings. These are, on the one hand, Ken Gemes' reading, according to which the passage has no epistemological ambitions but rather presents a vision of greater health. And on the other hand, Lanier Anderson's interpretation, according to which Nietzsche means to offer an epistemological theory. On my reading, *GM* III 12 sketches a methodology for enquiring into the problems introduced in the preface of the book. In section 3.5 I argue that perspectivism consists of two main claims, one descriptive and one prescriptive. The first claim describes the nature of enquiry. Enquiry is guided and shaped by the affects. The second is a prescriptive claim about how we ought to enquire given that the descriptive claim is true. It is that we can enquire *better* if we approach a matter, like morality, from a variety of "affective interpretations," which, I argue, are Nietzschean "perspectives." I argue that there are two reasons why this is the case. The first is that bringing more affects to bear on a matter such as morality can acquaint us with the conditions out of which moral values have grown. This enables us to ask better questions about morality, e.g. it enables us to question the "value of our values." The second is that it can reveal unnoticed ambiguities in our moral feelings. By allowing more affects to speak about a problem we can probe our intuitions about it and test whether we hold our views on the basis of good reasons.

Chapter 4

In chapter 4 I look at Nietzsche's remarks on freedom. Nietzsche often denies that we have freedom of the will. For example, most commentators agree that he rejects a conception of freedom on which we can be the complete cause of events, that is, on which we can cause events to happen without any causal input from entities outside of our empirical selves. He also criticises conceptions on which an agent could act differently in situations where the antecedent conditions surrounding her will remain the same.⁴

⁴ Poellner (2009).

Nevertheless, Nietzsche affirms that certain figures he admires are free in some respect. He praises Goethe as someone who has “become free,”⁵ and he says that the “*sovereign individual*” is “autonomous and supermoral” and has “the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*.”⁶ The passages in which Nietzsche affirms freedom suggest that he wants to offer an alternative conception to the ones he frequently criticises.

In order to resolve this tension, I propose, as others have,⁷ to limit the scope of Nietzsche’s attack on freedom to one specific kind, namely “superlative metaphysical freedom.” For Nietzsche, this is a moralized conception of freedom that is connected to notions of meriting reward and punishment. Rejecting superlative metaphysical freedom is part of Nietzsche’s broader attack on selfless, Christian morality. This leaves room for Nietzsche to develop an alternative conception of freedom, one that is demoralised and naturalistic, and that does not conflict with his vision of human psychology.

This chapter has two main parts. In part one I look at the kind of freedom that Nietzsche rejects. Nietzsche does not advance a positive position of his own within the traditional metaphysical debate on free will, but he does engage critically with a certain picture of free will that he calls “superlative metaphysical freedom” (*BGE* 21). Nietzsche’s attack on this picture has three prongs. First, he endeavours to show that it is incoherent. Second, he gives psychological diagnoses of the origins of the concept. For example, he argues that it was fabricated in order to hold people responsible for their actions. Third, he gives an explanation for why we feel *as if* it is possible to have freedom in the superlative metaphysical sense. Nietzsche’s engagement with the traditional metaphysical debate does not extend further than his rejection of superlative metaphysical freedom. He does not engage with any more moderate positions on free will, and his positive picture of freedom does not resemble other views within this debate.

In part two I turn to Nietzsche’s positive account. When Nietzsche talks positively about freedom, he describes it as an ideal. Thus, freedom is not something metaphysically or evolutionarily built into us, but something that certain people can attain. In this respect, Nietzsche is not alone in the history of philosophy. Rutherford points out that Spinoza and the Stoics both advanced conceptions of freedom on which freedom can be possessed only by certain rare individuals.⁸

I argue that Nietzschean freedom is a kind of self-determination. More specifically, it involves determining oneself according to values that are consistent with the conditions of one’s flourishing.

⁵ *TI* Skirmishes 49.

⁶ *GM* II 2.

⁷ Gemes (2009), Katsafanas (2016), Kirwin (2018).

⁸ Rutherford (2011).

Introduction

For Nietzsche, I will take “flourishing” to be a state in which, in shorthand, an individual can “vent its power completely and attain its maximum in the feeling of power” (*GM III 7*).

Two questions immediately arise from this characterisation. Firstly, does the imposition of *any* value upon oneself make one free, or is there a privileged set of free-making values? And secondly, what makes something count as a case of genuine “self-determination”?

To answer the first question, I strike a middle position in between Robert Guay and Katsafanas’ two more extreme views. According to Guay, there are no constraints on the values we can impose upon ourselves, and according to Katsafanas, the values we impose upon ourselves must be consistent with the “will to power.” For Katsafanas, this means that traditionally Christian values like compassion are incompatible with freedom. I argue that while there are no *universal* constraints on value (e.g. will to power), there are particular constraints that arise from each individual’s unique psychology. The values that enable one to flourish are the one’s under which one can count as free. The relevant constraints will vary from person to person.

To answer the second question, I argue that *genuine* self-determination involves more than reflectively judging that something is valuable. It involves a change at the level of one’s drives, and this change can be effected by a process of self-artistry. Self-artistry is the means by which Nietzsche thinks we can create new values. By altering the structure of one’s drives, letting some grow and others wither, we can alter our evaluative stances toward things and determine ourselves according to values that promote flourishing.

Chapter 5

In this chapter I give an account of Nietzsche’s distinction between the affirmation and negation of life. I argue that this is a distinction between two kinds of willing, or two ways in which we “will power.” Nietzsche disapproves of one way and approves of the other. Nietzsche disapproves of instances in which we will power in a way that tends toward the decline, or “degeneration” of life, he often refers to these as expressions of a “will to nothingness.” I take such expressions of the will to power to constitute “life-negation.” On the other hand, he approves of instances in which we will power in a way that tends toward the expansion or enhancement of life. I argue that affirming life *just is* willing power of the kind that Nietzsche approves, that is, the kind that tends toward the enhancement of life.

Commentators have remarked on the difficulty of extracting an account of affirmation from Nietzsche’s work.⁹ He seems to say substantially more about the negation of life than about its affirmation. My view helps explain Nietzsche’s reticence on affirmation. If affirmation is identical

⁹ Gemes (forthcoming), Forster (2017: 384).

to willing power in a particular way, then Nietzsche frequently talks about affirmation in virtue of talking about the will to power.

In 5.1 I situate my view within the secondary literature. Accounts of affirmation form two camps. The first claims that affirmation is primarily a kind of reflective endorsement of a state of affairs, e.g. my “life,” and how it has turned out. The second claims that it is primarily an unreflective expression of one’s drives, Gemes calls this “naïve affirmation.”¹⁰ The first interpretation is the most prevalent. I side with Gemes and argue against the more prevalent interpretation by showing that reflectively endorsing a state of affairs is not necessary for affirmation. On my interpretation, affirmation is primarily pre-reflective or “naïve,” and reflective affirmation is always a symptom, or expression, of this pre-reflective state.

In 5.2 I look at what it is that we affirm when we affirm “life,” by introducing two ways in which Nietzsche uses the word. On the one hand, Nietzsche uses the term “life” in a personal sense. That is, to refer to a person’s lived experience and the various particular features that make up that lived experience. In other words, to refer to the interval between birth and death that constitutes an individual’s life. On the other hand, he uses “life” in a biological sense to refer to the essential property, or tendency, that all living things share, namely, a “will to power.” These two senses of “life” map onto the two kinds of affirmation sketched in the previous section. When we affirm life in the personal sense we do so reflectively, by reflecting on the contents of our lives and willing their eternal recurrence. When we affirm life in what I call the Dionysian sense we do so unreflectively, in virtue of willing power in a certain way.

In 5.3 I set the stage for my interpretation of Nietzschean affirmation by outlining Schopenhauer’s views on the affirmation and negation of the will, and Nietzsche’s reaction to them. For Schopenhauer, the affirmation/negation distinction is a distinction between willing and not willing. Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer’s account of the distinction on the grounds that “negation of the will,” in Schopenhauer’s sense, is not possible, it is merely another way in which the organism continues to will. He claims that Schopenhauer’s “negation of the will” is really a disguised “will to nothingness.” I take the will to nothingness to be what Nietzsche refers to when he talks about “negating life.”

In 5.4 I draw on my discussion of Schopenhauer in order to give my account of Nietzsche’s distinction between affirmation and negation. Rather than a distinction between willing and not willing, I argue that it is a distinction between two *kinds* of willing. Negating life involves willing in such a way that one’s drives and passions are “castrated,” restrained, or made small. The antipode of this kind of willing is *affirmation*. For Nietzsche, affirming life involves willing in such a way that

¹⁰ Reflective accounts of the affirmation of life tend to favour a personal conception of the object of affirmation, i.e. of “life.” Unreflective accounts are more hospitable to the biological conception.

Introduction

one's drives and passions are enhanced, expanded, or increased. In this way, affirmation involves willing power in such a way that life's essence, the will to power itself, is increased or enhanced.

Finally, Nietzsche insists that affirming life is a great achievement. In 5.5 I look at two obstacles to affirmation that correspond to two conceptions of life covered in section two: Nietzsche talks about "life" in 1) a personal sense, and 2) in a biological sense to refer to life's "essence." It is difficult to affirm our lives in a personal sense because our lives contain unwanted particulars. It is difficult to affirm the life's biological "essence," the will to power, because we have internalised a "slavish" value structure in which power is condemned or negated. Finally, I show how Nietzsche thinks we can overcome these obstacles. We overcome the first through a process of "self-artistry" that allows us to see our lives as "beautiful" or "desirable;" we overcome the second by rejecting the value structure that condemns power and creating new life affirming values.

Chapter 6

In chapter 6 I take one particular affect as a case study. This is the affect expressed by a special kind of "higher laughter." Because the affect is complex, it does not admit of easy naming. One good candidate is "gaiety," of the kind referred to in the title of *The Gay Science*. But sometimes Nietzsche seems to refer to it by naming a string of affects that compose it: "a new and barely describable type of light, happiness, relief, amusement, encouragement, dawn" (GS 343). Because of this difficulty I will often refer to it by its most characteristic expression, *laughter*, despite the fact that laughter is not an affect itself. One reason why this is justified is that higher laughter often seems to stand not just as an expression of this affect, but as a *symbol* for it.

I use laughter, or gaiety, as a case study because it is an affect at the centre of Nietzsche's positive philosophy. Thus, it plays a role in all three of the topics of Nietzsche's positive project that I consider in this thesis, namely knowledge, freedom, and affirmation. Ample attention has been paid to the affects associated with Nietzsche's negative attack on traditional morality and philosophy, for example, *ressentiment*, guilt, and bad conscience. In this way, the affective profile of Nietzsche's target, the feelings that underlie and motivate their philosophical activity, is relatively clear. Thus, one reason for my focus on laughter is that it helps illuminate the affective profile of Nietzsche's positive ideal of good enquiry, freedom, and the affirmation of life. My goal in this chapter is twofold. On the one hand, I use laughter to illuminate some interconnections between the three topics covered in the thesis, and thus some interconnections between various aspects of Nietzsche's positive thought. Secondly, I give an account of the role that a particularly important affect, namely the one expressed by higher laughter, plays in Nietzsche's work.

I begin the chapter by connecting Nietzsche's higher laughter to the three dominant theories of laughter in the history of philosophy, namely, the incongruity, superiority, and relief theories. Although Nietzsche did not mean to advance a general theory of laughter, looking at how higher

laughter relates to these three theories helps bring it down to earth. This is because higher laughter, while being something “new” and “superhuman,” has features pointed out by all three of these theories (*BGE* 294).

After considering higher laughter’s relation to three theories of laughter, in section 6.2 I look at the role it plays in Nietzsche’s accounts of affirmation, freedom, and knowledge. One reason why laughter is important in Nietzsche’s work is because it is a symptom or physiological expression of the affirmation of life. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* laughter takes on its highest significance, it is presented as a consummate goal toward which the “higher men” are to strive, and indeed, Zarathustra consecrates it, sanctifies it, and pronounces it holy (*Z on the higher men* 18, 19, 20). In order to draw out this significance I give a reading of Nietzsche’s parable of the shepherd and the snake at the beginning of Book III in the section *On the Vision and the Riddle*.

The parable is important because it draws out a “psychological problem” in the Zarathustra type. The problem is that Zarathustra “does no to everything everyone has said yes to so far” and at the same time “is affirmative to the point of justification, to the point of salvation, even for everything past” (*EH* 7, 8). How can Zarathustra be a yes-sayer and a no-sayer at the same time? Is he affirmative or does he negate? I draw on my analysis of affirmation in chapter five to show that negation, or destruction, is compatible with affirmation, and so that a kind of “affirmative negation” is possible.

The idea that negation is compatible with affirmation is contentious and appears on the surface to be almost contradictory. I present two ways of dealing with this tension. The first is to deny that affirmation is a kind of reflective conscious endorsement. If affirmation involves conscious endorsement of life as a whole, then this might seem incompatible with taking an attitude of disapproval toward what is small and weak in oneself, which are features of life as a whole. In other words, one cannot “say-yes” and “say-no” to the same thing at the same time. Thus, the practitioner of “affirmative negation” would fail to affirm life. However, as I argue in chapter five, Nietzsche’s primary notion of affirmation does not involve conscious endorsement. Rather, one affirms life simply in virtue of willing power in the appropriate way. Willing power in a way that tends toward the expansion of life is compatible with taking an attitude of disapproval or negation toward certain aspects of life. Indeed, since those small and weak aspects of ourselves inhibit willing power in this way, such an attitude may be a necessary one for affirming life.

There is another way to resolve the tension and that is simply to point out that “endorsement” is an ambiguous term. Endorsing something, in the sense of welcoming it, being happy that it exists, or even loving it, seems compatible with taking an attitude that negates or destroys that same thing. I use Nietzsche’s parable of the birds of prey and the lambs to show that, for him at least, a positive

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attitude of “love” or endorsement can be held simultaneously with an attitude that negates or destroys the object of one’s love.

The attitude that the birds of prey express toward the lambs is analogous to the attitude that the life-affirmer takes toward that which is small in herself. Although she endeavours to root these things out and destroy, or negate them, she can welcome them as a source of resistance to overcome. Thus, it is possible to welcome something, and to affirm it consciously, and at the same time to negate, destroy, or eliminate it through overcoming. Indeed, if this were not possible then it seems the will to power could *never* be affirmative, since willing power involves precisely welcoming resistances to overcome or negate.

At times Nietzsche suggests that life is “*essentially*” a destructive and exploitative enterprise (*GM II 11*). This is perhaps part of what Nietzsche was getting at when he claims later in *Ecce Homo* that “negation and destruction are conditions of affirmation” (*EH “Destiny” 4*). If willing power involves overcoming resistance in the pursuit of an end, then willing power must also involve negating or destroying that resistance. Furthermore, if will to power is the essence of life, then life essentially involves destruction, or the exploitation of some resistance as a means to increasing one’s power. Finally, if *affirmation* involves willing power in a way that enhances life, then affirmation too must involve the negation of a resistance that one overcomes in the pursuit of a first order aim. Because Nietzsche characterises laughter as a kind of joyful destruction, or destruction with a good conscience, laughter is a symbol for affirmation, and more specifically for a kind of affirmation that involves negation. In this way, it is also a symbol and expression of a healthy will to power.

In 6.2 I use laughter to illuminate the relationship between freedom and affirmation. Looking at laughter helps show that one can be autonomous and not affirm life. I demonstrate this by focusing on the figure of Christ, who although “free,” did not affirm life in Nietzsche’s sense (*A 40*). In one instance, Nietzsche puts this point by claiming that Christ did not laugh (*Z “On the Higher Man” 16*). In this section Zarathustra claims that Christ did not laugh because he did not *love* enough. In a way Nietzsche desires that his love be greater, or of a greater kind, than Christ’s. Christ’s love is incompatible with negation and destruction. Nietzsche pits this attitude against a Dionysian love that embraces both suffering and destruction. And this destructive, Dionysian attitude is precisely what Christ lacked. Christ’s love was not great enough to destroy, and so not great enough to create.

In 6.4 I look at the connection between laughter, or *gaiety*, and enquiry. Nietzsche often claims that laughter and good enquiry go hand in hand. Since laughter is an expression of affirmation, one reason why Nietzsche associates laughter with knowledge is because affirmation can make us better enquirers. Thus, in this section I try to show both that affirmation and laughter can benefit enquiry.

Nietzsche sets up the idea of a “gay science” as an alternative to what he calls the ascetic ideal, for which truth is valued unconditionally. In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche claims that the ascetic ideal cancels itself out when its unconditional honesty forces it to question its belief in the uncriticisability of truth. Although the ascetic ideal pursues truth at any price, at its core, for Nietzsche, is a highly questionable claim. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s alternative to the ascetic ideal does not abandon truth altogether, on the contrary, he desires to justify our pursuit of it in the aftermath of the collapse of the ascetic ideal.¹¹ His justification is that knowledge can be a means of enhancing life, of expanding the will to power. Nietzsche means to pursue knowledge in the service of life, and affirmation, rather than at the expense of life. This not only leads to a healthier kind of enquiry, it is also practically necessary. The collapse of the ascetic ideal threatens enquiry altogether. Once the unconditional value of truth is called into question, it might seem that there is no reason to pursue knowledge at all, but for Nietzsche this is not the case. The pursuit of knowledge is justified by its capacity to enhance life. However, Nietzsche also states things the other way around, not knowledge as a means to life, but: “‘*Life as a means to knowledge*’ with this principle in one’s heart one can not only live bravely but also *live gaily and laugh gaily!*” (GS 324). By affirming life, by willing power, we see the world as strange, unknown, and desirable, and we are spurred on to enquire into it (GS 355, 324). In this way, affirming life is an impetus to enquiry, and life can become a means to knowledge.

Conclusion

I conclude by looking at one important aspect of Nietzsche’s style, namely, his use of jokes and humour. In this way, I use my conclusion to build on the discussion of laughter and gaiety in chapter 6, and on the remarks about Nietzsche’s style in 3.4. I argue that Nietzsche uses humour to two main ends. Firstly, Nietzsche integrates humour into his *ad hominem* attacks on philosophers, religion, and traditional morality. These attacks are designed to shake our affective attachments to their targets. Secondly, I draw on Ted Cohen’s account of jokes to show how Nietzsche uses humour to generate intimacy with his readers. Nietzsche is perennially interested in finding the right kind of reader, I show how Nietzsche’s humour is one important way in which he uses his style to achieve this end.

¹¹ GM III 24.

CHAPTER ONE: THE DRIVES

Introduction

In this chapter I assess two interpretations of Nietzsche's drives, namely the dispositional interpretation and the homuncular interpretation. On the first interpretation the drives are relatively stable dispositions to behave in certain ways, and on the second the drives are homunculi or proto-persons that possesses either a limited kind of agency or full agency. I see whether either of these readings can avoid what Riccardi calls the "homuncular fallacies"¹² without running into strong textual counter-evidence suggesting that it is not Nietzsche's view.

In section 1.1 I introduce the drives and the two fallacies. In section 1.2 I outline the homuncular reading and argue that it commits both fallacies and that textual evidence suggests it is not Nietzsche's view. These problems tend to push interpreters to accept a dispositional reading. In 1.3 I argue that while the dispositional reading can avoid the homuncular fallacies, it requires us to interpret Nietzsche's agential characterisations of the drives as elaborate metaphors. I will assess two attempts to formulate a dispositional interpretation that does not write off Nietzsche's agential language as metaphorical and conclude that both fail. Thus, neither the homuncular interpretation nor the dispositional interpretation seem to fully capture Nietzsche's view. Despite this textual difficulty, in 1.4 I argue that we ought to accept the dispositional reading of the drives on charitable grounds. It is the more philosophically defensible reading, it is what Nietzsche seems to have in mind at least *some* of the time, and it is the most philosophically fruitful position available to him.

1.5 Introduction to the Drives and Two "Homuncular Fallacies"

¹² Riccardi (2017).

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I will now introduce the drives by looking at some examples from the text. Nietzsche uses the concept of “drive”¹³ to explain a wide variety of psychological phenomena.¹⁴ He refers to the concept in all of his published works. In his first book he describes ancient Greek tragedy as a synthesis of two competing primordial “artistic drives,” the Apolline and Dionysiac (*BT* 1, 12). In *Daybreak*, he claims that human beings are constituted by drives (*D* 119). He says that the self is a relation of drives and that conscious thinking is a relation of drives (*BGE* 6, 9, 12; *GS* 333, 335). Additionally, Nietzsche develops his theory of will to power out of his earlier account of the drives, and refers to the will to power as: “the strongest, most life-affirming drive” (*GM* III 18).¹⁵

Despite the frequency with which Nietzsche employs the concept of drive, he does not characterise it explicitly, thus it is difficult to formulate strict criteria for what counts as a drive. Rex Welshon provides a helpful list of just some of them. I will reproduce it here with some omissions and additions: there is a drive to doubt, negate, collect, and dissolve (*GS* 113); to laugh, lament, and curse (*GS* 333); for truth (*UM* 91, *GS* 110); for knowledge (*BGE* 6, *D* 429); for curiosity, dialectical investigation, and contradiction (*UM* III 6); for distinction (*D* 113); for the herd (*GS* 50); for weakness (*GS* 347); to appropriate and submit (*GS* 118); for hatred, envy, covetousness (*BGE* 23); for sentimentality, nature idolatry, the anti-historical, the idealistic, the unreal, and the revolutionary (*TI* IX 49); and for power (*GM* III 18, *WP* 720).¹⁶ It is difficult to say what the items on this variegated list have in common. One helpful way to approach them is to look at what they’re supposed to *do*.

The drives play two important roles in Nietzsche’s work that are often treated separately in the secondary literature. Firstly, a plurality of drives is capable of forming a self or “soul.” The drives form a self by competing with one another to form a hierarchy that Nietzsche refers to in political terms as a “commonwealth” (*BGE* 19). Thus, for Nietzsche the human organism is some kind of political hierarchy composed of drives. Secondly, the drives structure our experience of the world.¹⁷ In *D* 119, Nietzsche shows how drives can structure experience by drawing an analogy between waking and dreaming. When dreaming, the drives are given free rein to posit extraordinary causes for the sounds of church bells, the pressure of bedclothes, or internal physiological states, and in doing so construct the whole imaginary world that is the dream (*D* 119). Nietzsche claims that in waking life the drives still shape experience in this way but with less inventiveness. They generate

¹³ Nietzsche seems to use *Trieb* and *Instinkt* to mean the same thing, see Katsafanas (2016), Janaway (2007). Daniel Conway (1997) and Luca Lupo (2012), on the other hand, both draw a distinction between *Instinkt* and *Trieb*. I will not resolve this issue here, for the purposes of this chapter I will treat “*Trieb*” and “*Instinkt*” as synonymous.

¹⁴ According to Richardson (2004), Katsafanas (2016), and Riccardi (2017), they are his main explanatory devices.

¹⁵ Despite the connection between drives and the will to power, I will not discuss the will to power in this chapter. For a discussion of will to power see chapter six, “Nietzsche on the Concept of Life.”

¹⁶ Welshon (2004).

¹⁷ *GS* 7, 139, 152, 301, *BGE* 186.

affective orientations that can draw us toward specific aspects of experience or make certain objects stand out. In this way, even ordinary experience involves a great deal of “invention,” “colouring,” “gilding,” “lighting,” and “staining” (*D* 119, *GS* 7, 139, 152, 301; *BGE* 186).¹⁸ Thus, while Nietzsche claims that ordinary experience is not *created* by the drives, in the way that dreams are created by them, he does think that they largely determine the way in which the world appears to us. To sum up, the drives have two roles, they form a political hierarchy and they structure our experience. This allows us to distinguish between the ways in which the drives interact with one another and the ways in which they interact with the world. It is important to take both of these functions into account. I will show later on how neglecting one or the other can lead to confused and incomplete interpretations of the drives.

Nietzsche endows the drives with a variety of complex capacities so that they can play these two roles. In order to form political hierarchies Nietzsche says that the drives “command,” “obey,” and “rule” over one another (*BGE* 19). In order for the drives to structure experience Nietzsche says that they “comment,” “interpret,” “posit causes,” “evaluate,” and “adopt perspectives” (*D* 119; *HH* I.32; *KSA* 12:7 [60]). One feature of these capacities that has dogged interpreters is that they are ordinarily used to describe agents, and seem to be *personal* rather than *subpersonal* capacities. Nietzsche seems to regard the drives as persons-within-persons, or homunculi, that can have conscious thoughts and experiences and that literally form a political hierarchy. This opens up Nietzsche’s account of the subpersonal constituents of the self to two “homuncular fallacies.”¹⁹ Mattia Riccardi, drawing on Dan Dennett and Zoe Drayson, refers to these as the *mereological* and *explanatory* homuncular fallacies. I will now take a closer look at these two fallacies.

The mereological fallacy occurs when one ascribes necessarily personal-level properties or capacities to a subpersonal entity. It is called a “mereological” fallacy because it involves ascribing to a part of something a property which can only be possessed by the whole thing.²⁰ Which properties or capacities one should construe as necessarily personal-level is open to interpretation. Dennett suggests that pains and other sensations, along with consciousness, can only be meaningfully ascribed to persons. Riccardi points out that matters are more controversial when it comes to intentional states.²¹

The explanatory fallacy occurs when one explains a personal-level property by positing a subpersonal entity that already has the property to be explained. This is an especially pressing worry for Nietzsche. His account of the drives is meant to explain what it is to be a conscious self.²²

¹⁸ Katsafanas (2005, 2016).

¹⁹ Riccardi (2017).

²⁰ Drayson (2012).

²¹ Drayson (2012: 4).

²² *BGE* 12, *GM* I 13, *D* 119, *GS* 333, *WLN* I 58.

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However if the drives themselves possess the characteristics of a conscious self, then Nietzsche has merely shifted the burden of explanation to the subpersonal-level by reintroducing the notion of the self at the level of the drives.²³ This would make his account of the self explanatorily idle.

Riccardi reminds the reader that despite the spectre of these two fallacies, it is not necessary to prohibit the use of concepts like “interpret, evaluate, command, and obey” in our descriptions of subpersonal entities. If our descriptions avoid the two fallacies then they can be said to meaningfully characterise the nature of the subpersonal, or in Nietzsche’s case, the drives.²⁴

Now that I’ve introduced the drives and outlined the homuncular fallacies, I will assess the two interpretations and see whether either can avoid the two fallacies without running into textual counter-evidence suggesting that it is not Nietzsche’s view. I will begin by assessing the homuncular interpretation.

1.2 The Homuncular Interpretation

In this section I assess the homuncular interpretation. I argue that a homuncular theory of the drives commits both homuncular fallacies. I conclude the section by looking at textual evidence that suggests it is not Nietzsche’s view.

The homuncular interpretation takes Nietzsche’s agential language literally. On this view, a drive is a kind of proto-person, or homunculus, to which interpreters attribute varying degrees of agency. Peter Poellner takes Nietzsche’s agential language to imply that the drives are agents within agents.²⁵ In other words, the agency that the drives possess is no different from the agency that human beings possess. He rejects Nietzsche’s account of the drives after failing to find a satisfactory way in which they can be said to be non-conscious agents.²⁶ If Nietzsche *were* to attribute the kind of agency that human beings possess to the drives then he would be committing both homuncular fallacies, and on those grounds Poellner is correct in saying that Nietzsche’s account of the drives would be untenable. In this way, any interpretation that attributes human-like agency to the drives should be rejected on the grounds that it commits both homuncular fallacies. This problem has led Clark & Dudrick to formulate a more moderate homuncular interpretation on which the drives possess a *simple* form of agency. By attributing to the drives a more primitive form of agency they

²³ Janaway (2007), Katsafanas (2013, 2014).

²⁴ Riccardi (2016). Clark and Dudrick (2012).

²⁵ Poellner (1995). Sebastian Gardner (2015) also rejects Nietzsche’s account of the drives on the grounds of homuncularism. Thiele (1990) and Wotling (2011) give interpretations on which the drives are homunculi that possess a robust form of agency but do not reject Nietzsche’s account on those grounds; however, they do not discuss the homuncular fallacies.

²⁶ Katsafanas (2016: 81). Poellner (1995).

believe they can avoid the homuncular fallacies. I will look at their view in slightly more detail since Clark & Dudrick do more to defend their view against the homuncular fallacies than other interpreters who also accept versions of the homuncular interpretation.

According to Clark & Dudrick, the drives are relatively ignorant homunculi that can organise themselves into a full-scale agent.²⁷ On their view, the drives are primitive “political agents” that can perform relatively simple tasks such as “commanding” and “obeying” but not the more complex tasks characteristic of full-scale agents. Clark & Dudrick take willing and acting on values to be complex tasks that only full-scale agents, or persons, can perform.²⁸ Commanding and obeying are purportedly simpler than these and can be performed by drives. Thus, they argue that they can avoid the explanatory fallacy by claiming that the drives’ activities are simpler than the one’s they are brought in to explain.²⁹ They attempt to avoid the mereological fallacy by claiming that while the drives, as primitive proto-agents, may possess some personal-level properties, they do not possess any *necessarily* personal-level properties. Clark & Dudrick’s account is attractive because it makes sense of why Nietzsche describes the drives as if they were agents, namely, because they *just are* agents, albeit of a more primitive variety. Nevertheless, the moderate homuncular interpretation ultimately commits both homuncular fallacies because in order for the drives to command and obey one another they would have to be more complex than Clark & Dudrick make them out to be. In the following paragraphs I will lay out Clark & Dudrick’s account in more detail and explain why it commits the homuncular fallacies.

Clark & Dudrick’s account of the drives is couched in their “normative” reading of *Beyond Good and Evil*. In *BGE* 12 Nietzsche claims that “there is absolutely no need to give up ‘the soul’ itself,” and they take this appeal to the notion of the soul to mean that there is an irreducibly normative dimension to Nietzsche’s account of the self, and ultimately to his philosophy as a whole.³⁰ They frame their normative reading in terms of Sellars’ distinction between the “space of reasons” and the “space of causes.” Thus, they claim that “the object of psychological investigation, the human soul, is not a naturalistic entity... It is a normative entity, which exists only in and through the space of reasons.”³¹ Because of this they reject any purely naturalistic, causal analysis of the drives’ interaction.

On a purely naturalistic interpretation, the drives form a hierarchy on the basis of their causal strength. For example, on Riccardi’s naturalistic interpretation, what it means for a drive A to “dominate” a drive B, is for drive A to be able to cause affects that inhibit the discharge of drive B.

²⁷ Clark and Dudrick (2009, 2012).

²⁸ Clark & Dudrick (2012: 198).

²⁹ Clark & Dudrick (2012).

³⁰ Clark & Dudrick.

³¹ Riccardi (2017: 12).

³² Clark & Dudrick give a much different analysis of “domination.” On their normative reading, one drive does not dominate or rule over another simply “in virtue of causal efficaciousness... but in virtue of being recognised as having a *right* to win.”³³ Because drives are capable of recognising rights on Clark & Dudrick’s view, their interactions with one another are, in some sense, mediated by reasons. This seems to suggest that the drives are conscious entities, which would lead them to commit the mereological fallacy.

To support their claim, and deflect the mereological fallacy, Clark & Dudrick draw an analogy between the drives’ order, and the social standings that exist among some non-human animals, like wolves and chimpanzees, which scientists sometimes describe as “political.”³⁴ Clark & Dudrick point out that while these animals do not “*take themselves*” to form a political hierarchy, their behaviour is best explained not in terms of brute strength but in terms of the animals’ rank in a social order.³⁵ Thus, analogously, they claim that the drives need not be conscious of their political situation, and that they need not be conscious *at all*, in order to form political relations with one another.³⁶

Both Riccardi and Katsafanas point out problems with this analogy. Firstly, they claim that while it may be true that wolves and chimpanzees do not engage in reflexive thought about their social standing, it does seem as if they possess conscious awareness, and a wide range of other cognitive capacities, without which they would be incapable of forming political hierarchies.³⁷ For example, they are aware of their size and strength in relation to the other animals in the hierarchy, whether they possess a surfeit or a deficit of resources, and they can feel pleasure and pain in response to these and other stimuli. Some of these cognitive capacities are the kind of necessarily personal-level properties that would lead Nietzsche to commit the mereological homuncular fallacy were he to attribute them to the drives. Because commanding, obeying, and recognising rights presuppose these other capacities, they are more complex than Clark & Dudrick make them out to be. In order to command and obey the drives would have to possess necessarily personal-level properties. Thus, Clark & Dudrick’s account commits the mereological fallacy. Furthermore, since the drives are also part of an account that is supposed to *explain* necessarily personal-level properties like agency, their account commits the explanatory homuncular fallacy as well. On these grounds, we should reject even a moderate formulation of the homuncular interpretation of the drives.

One final, and more general, worry for Clark & Dudrick’s reading is that it only explicitly accounts for how the drives interact with one another (i.e. commanding and obeying), and not how they

³² Brian Leiter (2002) gives a similar naturalistic reading on which the drives form a hierarchy on the basis of their causal strength.

³³ Clark and Dudrick (2012).

³⁴ Clark and Dudrick. (2012: 199).

³⁵ Clark and Dudrick (2012).

³⁶ Clark and Dudrick. (2012: 199).

³⁷ Riccardi (2017).

interact with the world. It is unclear whether they would be able to apply their analysis to some of the drives' other functions, such as, evaluating, interpreting, or adopting perspectives. Clark & Dudrick attempt to avoid the homuncular fallacies by claiming that commanding and obeying are simpler than the processes they are used to explain, namely willing and acting on values. For their analysis to cover *all* of the drives' problematic features, they would either have to say that interpretation and evaluation are also simpler processes than the ones they are brought in to explain, or provide some alternative analysis. One might argue that the drives engage in a more primitive form of evaluation or interpretation than the full-scale versions characteristic of agents, however this is not the route that Clark & Dudrick seem to take.

We will see later on that Katsafanas accounts for how the drives interact with the world by claiming that they can "interpret" or "evaluate" in the sense that they *cause agents* to perform these activities. Could Clark & Dudrick avail themselves of this alternative analysis? They do indeed seem to offer a similar kind of response in their discussion of what Nietzsche means when he says that the drives "do philosophy" in *BGE* 6. They claim that in order for the drives to philosophize, one thing they do is "gain control" of a person's "cognitive capacities—perception and the ability to reason and calculate, for example."³⁸ The relationship of "gaining control" is unclear. They elaborate by saying that "the drive that does philosophy not only focuses the person on those features of reality that serve the drive's interests, but also systematically develops and defends an account of reality from its point of view."³⁹ This seems to imply that when the drives interpret, or develop points of view on the world, they do so *through the whole agent*, by mobilizing and directing the agent's cognitive and perceptual capacities. Thus, Clark & Dudrick seem to anticipate Katsafanas' explanation of the way in which the drives can be said to interpret experience. They both appeal to the idea that drives can "see," "interpret," or "experience" the world in virtue of being part of a whole that is capable of performing these functions. However, as we will see in more detail later on in my discussion of Katsafanas, this strategy belabours the text. Nietzsche does not say that the drives cause the agent to interpret experience, he says that the drives interpret experience *themselves*.

We have concluded that the homuncular interpretation of the drives commits the two fallacies, but is it Nietzsche's view? I will now consider two pieces of evidence that suggest that Nietzsche did not think the drives were homunculi. First of all, consider the list of drives in section one of this chapter. Some of these included the drive "to laugh," "for curiosity," "for hatred," "to appropriate and submit." On the face of things it seems implausible that my drive to laugh, for example, is any kind of agent. Clark & Dudrick claim that each drive "systematically develops and defends an

³⁸ Clark & Dudrick (2012: 146).

³⁹ Clark & Dudrick (2012).

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account of reality from its point of view.”⁴⁰ Is my drive to laugh is a semi-conscious entity that develops a hilarious account of reality from its point of view? Or is it rather a stable disposition that I have to see the world in such a way that it looks hilarious to me? The second not only seems more plausible, it seems to be what Nietzsche has in mind. To take another example, my drive “to collect” does not seem to be a conscious or semi-conscious entity that strives on its own to collect things. A much more straightforward interpretation of the text would claim that a drive to collect is a tendency or disposition that an agent can have to collect things. Thus, the items on this list appear to name patterns of behaviour, dispositions to feel certain ways, or character traits. To analyse this list of drives as a list of readily individualizable conscious entities capable of recognizing political authority does not seem true to the text.

Katsafanas points out another aspect of the homuncular interpretation that suggests it is not Nietzsche’s view. Nietzsche insists that he wants to rethink, in some way, our conception of the subject. For example, he says, “and as for the *Ego!* That has become a fable, a fiction, a play on words: it has altogether ceased to think, feel, or will!” (*TI* VI.3). He also claims that we “deceive ourselves” about the fact that we are composed of a plurality of drives “by means of the synthetic concept of the ‘I’” (*BGE* 19). Nietzsche thinks that when we recognise that we are composed out of a multitude of drives we need to reassess our conventional and philosophical notion of the unified subject. The homuncular view assumes that there *is* a unified subject, but that *we* are not it, rather each individual drive is. This does not seem to be what Nietzsche is saying in the above passages. He does not say that we are misapplying our concept of the unified self, and that it should be applied to *different* and *more* entities, rather he says we need to rethink our very notion of what it is to be a self.⁴¹

To conclude I will give a brief summary of my discussion. The homuncular reading takes Nietzsche’s agential characterisations of the drives at face value. Any homuncular interpretation that attributes the kind of agency that human beings possess to the drives commits the homuncular fallacies and should be rejected. In order to avoid the fallacies, Clark & Dudrick attribute to the drives a simple kind of agency that falls short of full agency. By attributing a simpler kind of agency to the drives they believe they can respond to the homuncular fallacies *and* account for Nietzsche’s agential language. The main problem with Clark & Dudrick’s account is that the supposedly simpler processes of “commanding” and “obeying” seem impossible without presupposing other psychological states like consciousness and the ability to feel pleasure and pain. Because Clark & Dudrick attribute the capacity to command and obey to the drives they end up attributing a more robust form of agency to them than they intended. Thus, while Clark & Dudrick may be able to give

⁴⁰ Clark & Dudrick (2012: 146).

⁴¹ Katsafanas (2016).

a satisfying explanation for why Nietzsche uses agential language, they cannot do so without committing the homuncular fallacies.

I then considered whether the homuncular interpretation was an accurate reading of Nietzsche and found that there is evidence to the contrary. Firstly, when we look at a list of the drives they appear to name patterns of behaviour, dispositions to feel certain ways, and character traits, rather than proto-persons with their own unique experience of the world. Secondly, we noted that Nietzsche is interested in rethinking our conventional/philosophical notion of the unified self. The homuncular interpretation claims that the drives are unified selves. Since Nietzsche was interested in rethinking our notion of the unified self, he probably did not accept a theory that presupposes the existence of a unified self. In conclusion, the homuncular interpretation should be rejected on both philosophical and interpretive grounds.

1.3 The Dispositional Interpretation

The interpretive and philosophical problems associated with the homuncular interpretation often push interpreters to accept the dispositional interpretation. The dispositional interpretation involves *not* taking Nietzsche's agential characterisations of the drives at face value. On this reading, the drives are dispositions to behave in certain ways. Because the drives are dispositions they are not literally agents, Nietzsche's agential talk is metaphorical, the drives merely behave at times *as if* they were agents. Some interpreters have conceded that this response is problematic on interpretive grounds.⁴² It is highly unlikely that Nietzsche expressed his settled view almost entirely in elaborate metaphor. In this section I will look at two attempts to formulate a dispositional interpretation of the drives that does not involve writing off Nietzsche's agential language as metaphorical. I will conclude that neither of these can account for Nietzsche's agential language in a satisfactorily non-metaphorical way.

To begin I will outline the dispositional interpretation. It is the most popular interpretation of the drives, however interpreters cash it out differently, and with varying degrees of specificity.⁴³ Katsafanas provides the most detailed criteria for the kind of disposition that counts as a drive. On his view, drives are dispositions that induce affective orientations. They admit of an aim and an object, the aim is the relatively constant pattern of behaviour sought by the drive, and the object is the variable occasion for expression. The drives are active psychic forces that seek out their own

⁴² Katsafanas (2016). Riccardi (2017).

⁴³ Schacht (1983), Cox (1999), Hales and Welshon (2000), Leiter (2002), Janaway (2007), Katsafanas (2016), Riccardi (2017).

expression, and to do so they often distort the agent's perception of her environment in order to cause the agent to act in ways that give the drives expression.⁴⁴ This allows for there to be a metaphorical sense in which the drives "interpret" experience. That is, by giving an affective tint to the agent's perception of her environment, the drives cause certain features of it to stand out in ways that incline the agent to engage with her environment in different ways.

The dispositional reading is attractive because if drives are dispositions then they are relatively philosophically unproblematic. They are not themselves agents, they are not conscious, and they need not possess any necessarily personal-level properties. Therefore, on the dispositional reading Nietzsche would not be committing the mereological fallacy. Furthermore, because dispositions do not possess the properties of selfhood that Nietzsche means to explain, he is not committing the explanatory fallacy either. In this way, the dispositional interpretation can avoid both homuncular fallacies.

The main problem with this reading is not a strictly philosophical one, but rather an interpretive one. That is, the dispositional interpretation makes it difficult to account for Nietzsche's frequent use of agential language when characterising the nature and activity of the drives. For example, it is unclear in what sense a disposition can be said to interpret, evaluate, or adopt a perspective, except in a highly metaphorical sense. An agent might have a disposition to interpret or evaluate, but the disposition itself is not doing the interpreting, the agent is. Furthermore, as Poellner points out, the ordinary meaning of these activities usually entails the presence of consciousness.⁴⁵ How can something be said to "interpret" another thing if it not conscious of what is to be interpreted? How can something issue and obey commands without being conscious of itself and the thing to be obeyed/commanded?⁴⁶ In this way, the main problem facing the dispositional reading is an interpretive one. It seems to require that we write off Nietzsche's agential language as metaphorical, however there are not good textual grounds for doing this.

I will now look at the first of two attempts to resolve this problem. Katsafanas takes a unique approach to the issue by pointing out that it is not the case that the drives either have agential properties or they do not. If this were the case, he admits, then it would be preferable to interpret the drives as homunculi, since it is implausible that Nietzsche's homuncular language is entirely metaphorical.⁴⁷ According to Katsafanas, there is a neglected third alternative on which we can deny that the drives *considered in isolation* can reason, evaluate, or interpret, while maintaining that *embodied drives*—drives considered as part of the whole organism—can reason evaluate and

⁴⁴ Katsafanas (2016).

⁴⁵ Poellner (1995).

⁴⁶ Katsafanas (2016).

⁴⁷ Katsafanas (2016: 97).

interpret.⁴⁸ Katsafanas elaborates on this point in a footnote by saying that drives can reason, evaluate or interpret in the sense that they can “induce in the agent affective dispositions that constitute reasonings, evaluations, or interpretations.”⁴⁹ I take this to mean that drives can be said to reason in the sense that they can cause agents to reason. While this move relieves Nietzsche of the homuncular fallacy it still does not seem to do justice to the text in the way that Katsafanas hopes. Nietzsche does not say that drives *cause* agents to reason or evaluate, he says that they *do so themselves*.

Katsafanas’ appeal to embodied drives is meant to make the way in which the drives can be said to interpret or evaluate less metaphorical.⁵⁰ This move doesn’t seem to achieve its goal. Consider the following case. A mind-altering drug could induce in an agent an “affective disposition that constituted a reasoning, evaluation, or interpretation.” For example, an agent might be given a pill that induces paranoia, so that certain features of the world, perhaps rustling sounds in the dark or airplanes overhead, are especially salient. She might be given to draw conclusions from evidence in ways that she otherwise would not, perhaps she might think that people are following her or that her family members are imposters. In this case, the pill is performing the same function as a drive, it is generating affective orientations that cause the agent to behave in a certain way. Do we want to say that while the pill, on its own, is incapable of reasoning or interpreting, it can do these things when it hijacks the cognitive faculties of an organism? This seems strange, it is natural to say that there is *no* sense in which the pill is performing these tasks, rather, the agent is. If one did want to say that the pill is behaving like an agent, one could only say so in a highly metaphorical sense. The same seems to be true for the drives.

It is also the case that even if Katsafanas’ appeal to embodied drives was successful, it can only account for *some* of the drives’ problematic capacities. Katsafanas focuses specifically on how drives interpret and evaluate the world, however his appeal to “*embodied drives*” is less plausible when applied to the ways in which the drives interact with one another. Nietzsche says that the drives form a political hierarchy, and that they command and obey one another. These faculties are intentional and seem to presuppose consciousness, thus they are just as problematic as “reasoning, evaluating, and interpreting” and Katsafanas needs to account for them as well if his response is to fully succeed. However it is unclear how Katsafanas could successfully apply his analysis to these cases. Nietzsche does not suggest that the drives form a political hierarchy by *inducing in the agent* dispositions that constitute the formation of an internal political hierarchy. On Nietzsche’s account, the drives purportedly form a hierarchy of their own accord, and this activity occurs unbeknownst

⁴⁸ Katsafanas (2016).

⁴⁹ Katsafanas (2016).

⁵⁰ Katsafanas (2016: 97).

to the agent.⁵¹ Thus, these capacities seem to be ones that the drives must possess *considered in isolation*. If the drives must possess these problematic intentional capacities in isolation, then Katsafanas' appeal to "embodied drives" can at best only account for *some* of the capacities that Nietzsche attributes to the drives.

Now I will turn to the second attempt to reconcile Nietzsche's agential language to the dispositional interpretation, which is put forward by Mattia Riccardi. He agrees with Katsafanas that Nietzsche's agential talk is "too pervasive" to be interpreted away and tries to preserve the "genuinely mental" nature of the drives in his own response to the homuncular fallacies.⁵² He argues that Nietzsche's normative talk of "commanding" and "obeying" or "dominating" is reducible to non-normative causal relationships. These normative terms are problematic because we usually reserve them for talk about agents. On Riccardi's interpretation, what it means for a drive A to "dominate" a drive B is for drive A to be able to cause affects that inhibit the discharge of drive B.⁵³ Causal dispositional relationships need not possess necessarily personal-level properties like consciousness or sensation, so Nietzsche can legitimately appeal to them in giving an account of the self. Nevertheless, Riccardi's "Humean" dispositional account reduces Nietzsche's agential talk to metaphor and seems to belabour the text in a way he originally sought to avoid.⁵⁴ Riccardi recognises this, and asks himself "why Nietzsche would use normative terms at all if they were simply dummies that lump together many simpler causal processes?" His answer "appeals simply to the fact that this practice was, and still is, extremely common not only among philosophers, but also among psychologists avowedly in the business of providing causal explanations and models."⁵⁵ He then provides three examples to support his appeal to Nietzsche's intellectual environment.

Riccardi's appeal to historical precedent is problematic. The similarity between Nietzsche's use of normative terms and their use by those who push a mechanistic, non-normative agenda, is not enough to show that Nietzsche used them to the same effect. Furthermore, an examination of thinkers that Riccardi does not consider suggests that Nietzsche is not using normative terms in this way. In his study of Nietzsche's relation to 19th century biology and psychology, Gregory Moore identifies Wilhelm Roux as having the strongest influence on Nietzsche's conception of the organism as a self-regulating site of internal struggle between parts (or drives).⁵⁶ According to Moore, "Nietzsche makes his own Roux's conception of the organism as a spontaneously self-

⁵¹ See *D* 115, *D* 116, *D* 119.

⁵² By "genuinely mental" Riccardi seems to mean that the drives, while not conscious, have "perhaps minimal" representational capacities (2017: 5).

⁵³ Riccardi (2017).

⁵⁴ Riccardi (2017: 5).

⁵⁵ Riccardi (2017: 22).

⁵⁶ Riccardi does not discuss Roux or Moore in his paper.

organising complexity,” however he eschews “the mechanistic paradigm” favoured by Roux.⁵⁷ Moore goes on to say that from *BGE* onward “Nietzsche attempts to explain the world within a framework that purports to represent a more deliberate and sustained anthropomorphism than the mechanistic paradigm to which nineteenth century biology supposedly conformed.”⁵⁸ This suggests that while Nietzsche’s use of normative terms conforms in some respects to their general use in the 19th century, it also goes well beyond what was common, and deliberately so.⁵⁹ In order for Riccardi’s appeal to historical precedent to be satisfactory, he would need to explain why Nietzsche uses normative terms to an extent that goes well beyond that of his closest influences if he intends to be interpreted as working within the confines of a strictly mechanistic paradigm.

I will now mention one final, and more general, problem with Riccardi’s account of the drives. It is helpful once more to distinguish between the way drives interact with the world and the way they interact with each other. Riccardi’s analysis of “domination” in strictly causal terms is fairly straightforward, and it seems as though he could give similar causal analyses of some other concepts Nietzsche deploys in order to describe how the drives interact with one another (e.g. obey, command). However, when we look at the ways in which the drives interact with the world, Riccardi’s causal analysis seems less plausible. It is more difficult to analyse interpretation or evaluation in merely causal terms, and Riccardi does not attempt to do so in his paper. How does a disposition interpret, evaluate, or adopt a perspective without consciousness, sensation, or some level of subject-hood? Riccardi could fall back on Katsafanas’ reply that drives *as part of the whole organism* are capable of performing these tasks, however he rejects this response.⁶⁰ Thus, Riccardi’s reply to the homuncular fallacies is at best incomplete.

I will now sum up the main points of this section. To begin, we saw that Nietzsche seems to attribute agential capacities to subpersonal entities that he calls “drives.” This opens him up to two homuncular fallacies. The dispositional account tries to save Nietzsche from homuncularism by not taking his agential talk at face value. It involves interpreting the drives as dispositions to behave in certain ways. This allows Nietzsche to avoid the two homuncular fallacies, but makes it difficult to account for his prolific use of agential language in his characterizations of the drives. We looked at two possible responses.

The first is that when Nietzsche says that the drives interpret, evaluate or perform any personal-level activity, he means that the drives *cause the agent* to perform those activities. This is unsatisfactory because Nietzsche does not say that the drives cause agents to perform these

⁵⁷ Moore (2002).

⁵⁸ Moore (2002).

⁵⁹ Moore goes so far as to claim that Nietzsche’s account of will to power “drops all pretence of mechanistic explanation” (2002: 43).

⁶⁰ Gemes (2013) also points out the difficulty of determining *what* does the interpreting (i.e. the agent or the drive).

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activities, he says that they do so themselves. It is also incomplete because Nietzsche attributes some problematic capacities to the drives, like their ability to form a political hierarchy, which they must possess independently of the agent as a whole.

The second response claims that using normative terms like commanding and obeying to describe non-normative phenomena was paradigmatic of 19th century biology and psychology, and that Nietzsche was simply falling in line with this practice. This is unsatisfactory because it neglects the extent to which Nietzsche deliberately broke from this paradigm by characterising the drives almost exclusively in normative language. One might expect Nietzsche to state at some point that he intends for his normative talk to be interpreted non-normatively, but he does not offer any unambiguous clues.⁶¹

These are the two most explicit attempts to reconcile Nietzsche's agential language to a dispositional account of the drives. Since both attempts fail, we should conclude that the dispositional interpretation is not likely to be Nietzsche's view. Nevertheless, it does seem to be Nietzsche's view at least *some* of the time, and for that reason, I will argue in the next section that we should accept it on charitable grounds. Furthermore, reconstructing a Nietzschean dispositional account of the drives is worthwhile because it helps illuminate other aspects of Nietzsche's own work. In the final section I will elaborate on the reasons for thinking that the dispositional interpretation is Nietzsche's view at least some of the time.

1.4 A Nietzschean Dispositional Account

I have looked at two different interpretations of Nietzsche's drives. The homuncular reading, although it has the virtue of taking Nietzsche's agential language at face value, falls victim to the two homuncular fallacies. There is also textual evidence suggesting that it is not Nietzsche's view. The dispositional interpretation is capable of avoiding the homuncular fallacies but fails to give a satisfactory non-metaphorical explanation of Nietzsche's agential language. Thus, it is also not likely to be Nietzsche's view.

If the two most popular and compelling interpretations of the drives clash with the text, what could Nietzsche possibly mean by drive? I believe that the confusion arises from the text itself. Nietzsche describes the drives as agents and as dispositions, and a compelling case can, and has, been made for both the homuncular and the dispositional interpretations. Nevertheless, there is counter-evidence against them as well. It is worth noting that the blame for this confusion does not lie

⁶¹ I discuss the *least* ambiguous clue, found in *D* 119, in the last section of the chapter, and use it to argue that Nietzsche accepts a dispositional account of the drives at least some of the time.

entirely with Nietzsche, but also with the particular philosophical problem he was dealing with. One thing that Nietzsche's account of the drives is meant to do is carve out a middle-ground in between the natural and the normative domains. They seem to be part of his "task" of "translating man back into nature," or of situating normativity within a natural, or at least *human*, context (*BGE* 230).⁶² That Nietzsche's attempt to do this contains loose ends, equivocations, and ambiguities does not indicate philosophical ineptitude but rather the immense difficulty of the task he sets for himself. Furthermore, by developing both positions within his writing he demonstrates that he is alive to this problem and at pains to work out a coherent solution.

In this last section I will do two things. First, I will present a piece of textual evidence that supports the claim that Nietzsche intended readers to interpret his agential descriptions as metaphors for causal relationships. Second, I will say more about what a Nietzschean dispositional account should look like, broadly agreeing with the account put forward by Katsafanas. Although Katsafanas attributes the view wholeheartedly to Nietzsche, it is best to refer to it as a "Nietzschean" view because textual evidence can only support the claim that he held the view at least some of the time. Now we can turn to the evidence that supports this claim. In a lengthy and important consideration of the drives' activities Nietzsche says:

To express it more clearly: suppose a drive finds itself at the point at which it desires gratification—or exercise of its strength, or discharge of its strength, or the saturation of an emptiness—*these are all metaphors*—: it then regards every event of the day with a view to seeing how it can employ it for the attainment of its goal; whether a man is moving, or resting or angry or reading or speaking or fighting or rejoicing, the drive will in its thirst as it were taste every condition into which the man may enter, and as a rule will discover nothing for itself there and will have to wait and go on thirsting: in a little while it will grow faint, and after a couple of days or months of non-gratification it will wither away like a plant without rain (*D* 119, emphasis mine).

Here Nietzsche explicitly states that his talk about drives desiring gratification is metaphorical. It also seems safe to conclude that his talk of the drives *regarding* events, *seeing* how to attain a goal, *thirsting* after satisfaction, feeling *faint* or *ungratified*, are also metaphors. The drives do not literally *feel* or *see* anything, Nietzsche describes them that way "to express" his point "more clearly", i.e. because his metaphorical language sheds light on the nature of their activity (*D* 119). Additionally, the fact that Nietzsche says that these are "*all*" metaphors, lends itself to the thought that *all* of Nietzsche's agential drive talk, throughout his *oeuvre*, is meant to be metaphorical. While this last thought is tempting, it would involve an irresponsible leap. *D* 119 is the only passage in which Nietzsche explicitly characterises his agential language as metaphorical, and it is not obvious

⁶² Schacht (2012).

that he subscribes to it in his later work. Thus, while the passage may not definitively show that Nietzsche's agential characterisations are meant to be metaphors for causal relationships, it does make the claim more plausible. At the very least, the passage provides support for calling a dispositional account of the subpersonal a *Nietzschean* account.

In what follows I will lay out some constraints on a successful Nietzschean dispositional account and say more about what such an account of the subpersonal should look like. First of all, one is required to interpret Nietzsche's descriptions of how the drives interact with the world, and how they interact with each other, as metaphorical. The drives do not *literally* interpret or evaluate the world, rather they are capable of *causing the agent* to interpret the world in a particular way.⁶³ Secondly, the drives do not *literally* command and obey one another, rather they form a hierarchy on the basis of their causal strength. These interpretations allow for there to be a metaphorical sense in which the drives can interpret, evaluate, command, and obey. Thus, despite the frequency with which Nietzsche offers agential or anthropomorphic characterisations of the drives, if we wish to end up with a philosophically defensible position, we must construe these characterisations as metaphorical.

I largely agree with Katsafanas' dispositional account of the drives, so I will summarise it here and point out two issues that I have with it. These issues appear small on the surface; however, I will try to show that they point toward a larger disagreement regarding Nietzsche's conception of the self.

Katsafanas claims that the drives are dispositions, and he attributes three main features to them: i) they generate an affective orientation ii) they admit of an aim and an object: the aim is the characteristic pattern of activity that the drive seeks and the object is the variable opportunity for expression, and iii) they actively seek opportunities for expression, "sometimes distorting the agent's perception of her environment in order to incline the agent to act in ways that give the drives expression."⁶⁴ I accept i) and ii), however there are two problems with iii).

The first problem has to do with the metaphor of active seeking in iii). Although Katsafanas notes that talking about the drives as "*forces...and pressures seeking discharge*" is vague and metaphorical, he fails to drive home the point that talk of "active seeking" is also vague and metaphorical. Drives have the causal power to impel agents to seek out their ends, but there is no non-metaphorical sense in which the drives can be said to seek anything out.

The second problem is with Katsafanas' claim that the drives are capable of "distorting the agent's perception." The word "distorting," in this context, is misleading. It is misleading because it implies that such a thing as perception *undistorted* by drives is possible. However, Nietzsche suggests that

⁶³ See Gemes (2009) "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," for a similarly de-homuncularised interpretation of commanding and obeying.

⁶⁴ Katsafanas (2016).

the drives are a *condition* for perception, and so that perception cannot occur unaccompanied by drive activity. For example, in *GM III 12* Nietzsche contends that “an eye that does not have any direction, in which the active and interpretive forces through which seeing first becomes seeing something are to be shut off, are to be absent...what is demanded here is always an absurdity and non-concept of an eye” (*GM III 12*).⁶⁵ Here Nietzsche is reacting against Schopenhauer’s conception of will-less objectivity.⁶⁶ He argues that when we disconnect the will from perception (or from “knowing” i.e. *Erkennen*), rather than increasing objectivity we “castrate the intellect.” Words like “colouring,” “gilding,” “lighting,” “staining,” or “directing,” as opposed to “distorting,” are more in line with Nietzsche’s aims, and indeed these are the words that he uses to describe how the drives affect perception (*D 119, GS 7, 139, 152, 301; BGE 186; GM III 12*). To conclude, Katsafanas’ third point is closer to the text if we reformulate it as follows: iii) the drives *alter* or *direct* perception in such a way that they can cause agents to actively pursue their ends.

The issue regarding distortion might seem like a minor one, however it points toward a much larger topic that has been in the background throughout this chapter, namely, Nietzsche’s conception of the self. As we noted at the beginning of the paper, the drives are supposed to play an important role in Nietzsche’s account of the self. Some commentators have suggested that the self should be identified with one or more drives, and that there is nothing to the self over and above the drives.⁶⁷ When Katsafanas talks about the drives distorting perception, he seems to imply a conception of the self as something distinct from the drives, and Katsafanas does indeed endorse such a view. On Katsafanas’ view the Nietzschean self is not composed of drives alone but of two distinct parts. He claims that Schiller’s conception of a bipartite self consisting of “Reason and Sensibility” is analogous to Nietzsche’s.⁶⁸ Although he is clear that Nietzsche would disagree with Schiller about the nature of those parts, he thinks that Nietzsche agrees that the self is made up of two distinct kinds of states: reflective judgements (Reason) and drives and affects (Sensibility). Talk of distortion lends itself to this view because it implies that our drives and affects cloud and distort the clear picture of the world presented by Reason. Thus, drives are things that *get in the way* of perception, rather than things that facilitate perception or make it possible.

I will not give a full discussion of Nietzsche’s conception of the self but I will point out a few problems with Katsafanas’ picture. First of all, it seems to run contrary to *GM III 12*. If we eliminate our drives and affects, we do not end up with an undistorted picture of the world, rather we “castrate the intellect.” This phrase suggests that drives and affects are conditions for the possibility of experiencing and knowing things about the world. It also suggests that reasoning and reflective

⁶⁵ I provide a much more detailed analysis of this passage in chapter three.

⁶⁶ Janaway (2007, 2017).

⁶⁷ Mattias Risse (2007), for example, suggests that Nietzsche was an eliminativist about the self.

⁶⁸ Katsafanas (2016).

thought are not separate from the drives and affects, but continuous with them. Nietzsche seems to make this point on numerous occasions.⁶⁹ For example, he says:

We suppose that *intelligere* must be something conciliatory, just, and good, something essentially opposed to the instincts, when in fact it is only a certain behaviour of the drives towards one another (*GS* 333).⁷⁰

He also says in *Beyond Good and Evil* that “thinking is only a relation between these [our] drives” (*BGE* 36). These two passages by no means make clear what Nietzsche’s conception of the self is. Nevertheless, they do seem to exclude accounts on which reflective thought and drive activity are construed as distinct kinds. This is not necessarily to say that Nietzsche accepts an eliminativist view of the self. As many have noted, various aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy, his account of the creation of values, self-overcoming, or self-mastery, seem to require a self that can stand back from the drives and affects and adopt attitudes toward them.⁷¹ I mean only to claim that an account of the self that separates reasoning from drive activity is inadequate to the text.⁷²

I will conclude this section by summarising my dispositional account of the drives, agreeing with Katsafanas’ point i. and ii. And adding my reformulated iii. The drives are relatively stable dispositions that induce affective orientations. They aim at a characteristic pattern of activity (e.g. doubting, negating, collecting, laughing, lamenting, and so on...) and achieve expression of their aims through an object. Thus, my drive “to collect,” for example, aims at the activity of collecting, and can be satisfied by hitting upon objects like stamps, books, postcards etc.... Finally, the drives are capable of changing how an agent perceives the world in such a way that the agent is inclined to seek out objects that give the drives expression. Thus, if I have a strong drive to collect, then collectable items, and certain features of those items, will become salient to me while others fade into the background. More can be said about the drives, for example their relation to consciousness, willing, and action, however these three key points will suffice to give a good impression of what a Nietzschean dispositional account of the subpersonal should look like.

1.5 Conclusion

⁶⁹ Katsafanas points this out earlier in the book, citing (*GS* 1, *GS* 335, *BGE* 187), but not the two quotations above (2016: 77).

⁷⁰ Nietzsche uses the Latin “*intellegerere*” because he is discussing a quotation from Spinoza: “not to laugh at or lament over or despise, but to understand (*intellegerere*)” (*GS*: 185).

⁷¹ Janaway (2007, 2009), Gardner (2009), Anderson (2012).

⁷² Leiter (2016) makes a similar criticism in his review of Katsafanas’ book.

I will conclude by summarising the chapter. Nietzsche posits subpersonal entities called “drives” that he uses to explain a wide variety of psychological phenomena. He claims that the drives are capable of performing intentional or normative activities such as commanding, obeying, interpreting, and evaluating. These features are problematic because intentional/normative language is usually used to describe agents rather than subpersonal entities like the drives. In other words, the way in which Nietzsche describes the drives makes it seem as if they were persons-within-persons, or homunculi, that count as conscious agents. This gives rise to the mereological and the explanatory homuncular fallacies.

In order to give a charitable reading of Nietzsche we should interpret him in such a way that his account of the drives avoids these two fallacies. Nevertheless, we don’t want to be so charitable that the view we end up with no longer matches up with what Nietzsche explicitly states in the text. Thus, in sections 3 and 4 I set out to determine whether either of the two most popular interpretations of Nietzsche’s drives could avoid the homuncular fallacies without running into strong textual counter-evidence. I concluded that neither the dispositional nor the homuncular interpretation could successfully do so. The homuncular interpretation commits the homuncular fallacies, and despite having the virtue of taking Nietzsche’s agential language at face value, it faces strong textual counter-evidence. The dispositional reading can avoid the homuncular fallacies, but at the cost of interpreting Nietzsche’s agential characterisations of the drives as elaborate metaphors. Since there is not enough textual evidence to license a metaphorical interpretation of Nietzsche’s agential characterisations of the drives, the dispositional view is unlikely to be Nietzsche’s.

In section 5 I argued that we should accept a Nietzsche-*inspired* dispositional account of the subpersonal. Such a view can be pieced together from Nietzsche’s text without extreme difficulty or distortion, and indeed, there is evidence that he held such a view at least part of the time. Nevertheless, the dispositional view needs to be reconstructed from the text, it cannot be found there in any unambiguous form. For now, I hope to have shown that any homuncular interpretation (even a moderate one like Clark & Dudrick’s) falls afoul of the two homuncular fallacies and clashes with the text; and furthermore, that although the dispositional interpretation cannot be reconciled with Nietzsche’s prolific agential language, we should accept it on charitable grounds.

CHAPTER TWO: A NIETZSCHEAN ACCOUNT OF VALUING

Introduction

In this chapter I give an account of Nietzsche's conception of valuing. I answer the descriptive question of what it means for someone to value something, rather than the normative question of whether what someone values is in fact valuable. I argue that, for Nietzsche: an agent values X iff the agent has a positive affective orientation toward X that is induced by one of the agent's strongest drives. I develop my view in response to Katsafanas' 2016 account. Katsafanas improves upon previous accounts by incorporating drives and affects into a single account of valuing. Previous accounts had only incorporated either one or the other. Nevertheless, I identify two problems with his view.

Katsafanas argues that an agent values X iff the agent (1) has a drive-induced positive affective orientation toward X, and (2) does not disapprove of this affective orientation.⁷³ My two criticisms correspond to Katsafanas' conditions (1) and (2) respectively. The first criticism is that the condition that only "drive-induced" affects count as values does not carve out a genuine subset of affects. I provide textual evidence to show that Nietzsche thinks *all* affects are drive-induced. I propose instead that we identify instances of valuing with positive affects induced by our *strongest* drives. The subset of affects induced by our strongest drives is a genuine subset of affects. The second criticism is that "disapproval" in condition (2) is ambiguous. I show that condition (2) becomes redundant when we have an adequate understanding of what Nietzsche takes "disapproval" to mean.

This chapter has four sections. In 2.1 and 2.2 I give brief accounts of the "drives" and "affects" respectively. Since valuing involves having a *drive-induced affective* orientation, it is important that I make clear what these two terms mean. In 2.3 I outline Katsafanas' view and introduce three problems that he raises for Poellner, Richardson, and Clark & Dudrick's accounts. Finally, in 2.4, I raise two problems for Katsafanas and show how my view can address these two problems and the three that he raises for Poellner, Richardson, and Clark & Dudrick. I conclude by showing how my view can accommodate Nietzsche's claim that drives *explain* our consciously held values.

⁷³ Katsafanas (2016: 120).

2.1 The Drives

As I showed in the previous chapter, the drives are one of Nietzsche's main explanatory devices. All of the authors I consider in this chapter, with the exception of Poellner, agree that drives are dispositions.⁷⁴ In the previous chapter I argued that while a dispositional account of the drives is not always the kind of account Nietzsche is working with, it seems to be one that he is working with at least some of the time, and thus that we should use it to interpret Nietzsche's work on charitable grounds. It is the only option available to Nietzsche that avoids the two homuncular fallacies. Thus, I put forward a *Nietzschean* dispositional account of the drives. This is the account I will be working with in this chapter, and throughout the thesis.

On my account, the drives have three main features. Firstly, they are relatively stable dispositions that induce affective orientations. Secondly, they aim at a characteristic pattern of activity, and achieve expression of their aims through an object. For example, my drive to investigate aims at the activity of investigating, and can be satisfied by hitting upon objects such as hypotheses, counter-examples, and arguments. Thirdly, the drives are capable of altering the agent's experience in such a way that the agent is inclined to seek out objects that allow the drives to express themselves. For example, my drive to investigate will make things that are likely to satisfy the drive stand out. It might do so by causing me to have desires to read particular books, to conduct certain experiments, or to test certain hypotheses, and by making objects pertinent to the continuance of my investigations salient. Finally, drives are largely outside of our rational control. I cannot develop a new drive simply by adopting new habits or patterns of behaviour, rather, the drives that we happen to have is to a large degree not up to us.⁷⁵

These criteria draw out two important features of drives. One is that they are capable of altering an agent's experience of the world by causing the agent to interpret it in a particular way. Nietzsche says that they are responsible for "colouring," "gilding," "lighting," and "staining" experience (*GS* 7, 139, 152, 301; *BGE* 186). Another is that they form a hierarchy with one another on the basis of their causal strength, and the way in which this hierarchy is constituted determines a person's character. This is why Nietzsche says that a "totality of *drives*" constitute a man's being, and that a

⁷⁴ Richardson (2004), Katsafanas (2016). In their reply to critics, "Defending Nietzsche's Soul" (2014), Clark & Dudrick modify the account put forward in their 2012 book so that it is more compatible with a dispositional interpretation. They claim: "We do not think he [Nietzsche] *always* treats the drives as proto-agents: sometimes a drive is just a drive (to paraphrase Freud)...We follow John Richardson in taking a drive to be a particular kind of disposition" (2014: 344). Poellner rejects Nietzsche's account of the drives on the grounds that they are philosophically untenable homunculi (1999, 2007).

⁷⁵ These criteria are very similar to the ones Katsafanas proposes in (2016: 106). I add condition four, inspired by (Janaway, 2012: 187).

philosopher's being, "*who he is*," is determined by "what order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand in relation to each other" (*D* 119, *BGE* 6).

To sum up, drives are dispositions that alter the way we experience the world, and these dispositions form a hierarchy based on their relative strength that determines who we are. Now I will give an account the affects and their relationship to the drives.

2.2 The Affects

Nietzsche talks about affects as often as he talks about drives. Drives and affects are the two principal psychological states that he appeals to when giving explanations for why people behave, think, or value the things they do. The range of affects is also as extensive as the range of drives. Janaway provides a helpful list of the things Nietzsche explicitly calls "affects" in *GM* and *BGE*:

Anger, fear, love, hatred, hope, envy, revenge, lust, jealousy, irascibility, exuberance, calmness, self-satisfaction, self-humiliation, self-crucifixion, power-lust, greed, suspicion, malice, cruelty, contempt, despair, triumph, feeling of looking down on, feeling of superior glance toward others, desire to justify oneself in the eyes of others, demand for respect, feelings of laziness, feeling of command, and brooding over bad deeds.⁷⁶

This list shows that in order for something to count as an affect, it has to involve *feeling* of some kind. In addition to the examples above, Nietzsche also talks about affects as our "inclinations and aversions," "pro and contra," and our "for and against."⁷⁷ These latter examples mirror Schopenhauer's terminology and his view that all affects are positive or negative stirrings of the will.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, some of the affects seem to involve not just feeling, but a distinct cognitive content as well. *Ressentiment* is a good example of an affect with cognitive content.⁷⁹ It involves not only feelings of displeasure, unease, and frustration, it also requires that these feelings are "*ordered in a certain way and directed at certain contents*," as Katsafanas puts it. *Ressentiment* involves having a frustrated desire to express power over someone who denies you the opportunity to express that power. If one's feelings are not ordered and directed in this particular way, then

⁷⁶ Janaway (2007: 206).

⁷⁷ Janaway (2007).

⁷⁸ Janaway (2007).

⁷⁹ Katsafanas (2016).

those feelings cannot count as an instance of *ressentiment*. Thus, some affects are non-cognitive feelings, while others may have a cognitive component.⁸⁰

One way to understand the relationship between drives and affects is to think of them as dispositions and their instantiations. Note that there is some overlap between the list of drives and the list of affects, for example there is a drive and an affect of “hatred.” One thing this suggests is that while the *drive* to hatred is a disposition to behave hatefully, the *affect* of hatred is a specific instance of hatefulness, or of hateful feelings. We can think of drives and affects in this way even though there is not a neat one to one correspondence between them. Most often it seems that our drives instantiate themselves in a complex of affective states. Nietzsche seems to make this claim in the notebooks when he says: “Every thought, every feeling, every will is not born of one particular drive but is a total state, a whole surface of the whole consciousness, and results from how the power of all the drives that constitute us is fixed at that moment (I 61).” This suggests that it is not important to isolate each drives’ corresponding affect since a given affect is always instantiated or caused by a multitude of drives. Now that I have given brief accounts of the drives and affects, I will show how Katsafanas uses them to construct an account of valuing.

2.3 Katsafanas’ Account of Nietzschean Valuing

In his book *The Nietzschean Self: Moral Psychology, Agency, and the Unconscious*, Paul Katsafanas argues that an agent values X iff the agent (1) has a drive-induced positive affective orientation toward X, and (2) does not disapprove of this affective orientation. He gets to this view by bringing together aspects of two types of competing account. They are Richardson’s drive-based account, on the one hand, and Poellner and Clark & Dudrick’s affect-based accounts on the other. In order to flesh out Katsafanas’ view, I will first look at Richardson’s view and then the Poellner/Clark & Dudrick view and show how Katsafanas uses them to formulate conditions (1) and (2).

2.3.1 Richardson’s Account

I will begin by looking at Richardson’s account and Katsafanas’ two criticisms of it. Richardson begins by pointing out a duality in Nietzsche’s concept of value. He claims that “We must distinguish a value...as a *taking-for-good* (a viewing-good) versus... as a *taken-for-good* (a viewed-as-good): on the one hand the act or activity of **valuing** some content—positing it as good—and on the other

⁸⁰ Katsafanas points out that affects like *ressentiment* can refer either to a single mental state with cognitive and non-cognitive elements, or a complex of cognitive and non-cognitive states. Nietzsche doesn’t need to take sides in this debate (2016: 103-4).

the **valued**, the content so posited.”⁸¹ Thus, there are two questions Richardson sets for himself in giving an account of Nietzschean value. First of all, what does it mean to value something, that is, what is *valuing*? And secondly, what does it mean when we value something, what is *valued*, or what is the content of our values?

According to Richardson, Nietzsche “takes the role of valuing (and thereby making values) away from a central ego-will-mind, and disperses it among a multitude of drives, with a quite different kind of teleology and intentionality. Each drive is a valuing.”⁸² He goes on to say that “a drive’s value is simply the outcome it tends plastically (and responsively) toward.”⁸³ The “plasticity” of a drive is its ability to generate different behaviour in response to different circumstances, so that the drives’ outcome will be achieved in all of them. For example, my drive to collect (Nietzsche’s example)⁸⁴ might express itself by collecting stamps under one circumstance, awards in another, or biological specimens in a third depending on my circumstances or preferences. This means that strictly speaking we don’t value the objects that our drives hit upon in order to achieve satisfaction (stamps, awards, specimens, etc.), rather we value the drives’ aim, i.e. the activity of collecting. In this way, Richardson identifies values with the outcomes, or “aims” in Katsafanas’ terminology, of drives.

With this material in hand, Richardson answers the two questions he poses as follows: “Valuing = being disposed to responsive behavior for a selected goal,” and “Value = the selected goal of a responsive behavior (and its disposition).”⁸⁵ The aims or goals of our drives seem like good candidates for the label “value.”⁸⁶ As Katsafanas points out, values are typically regarded as things that structure large patterns of behaviour and that require us to modify our behaviour in different circumstances in order to achieve our goals. The ends of our drives seem to perform this function. If I have a drive to collect things, then large patterns of my behaviour will be structured around the activity of collecting, and I will modify my behaviour depending on the circumstances so that I am more likely to find the kinds of things I like to collect. In this way, drives behave like values, and so Richardson concludes that what it is to value something is to have a drive toward it and what is valued is the drive’s end.

On Richardson’s picture, it seems that our consciously espoused value judgments do not always match up with the aims of our drives. I might be a pacifist and insist that I disvalue violence, while simultaneously recognising that I have aggressive tendencies, or a drive to aggression. In order to

⁸¹ Richardson (2004: 71).

⁸² Richardson (2004: 74).

⁸³ Richardson (2004).

⁸⁴ GS 113.

⁸⁵ Richardson. (2004: 76).

⁸⁶ Richardson (2004).

deal with this Richardson notes that values need not occur in a conscious act.⁸⁷ He distinguishes between a reflective and an unreflective kind of value. Unreflective values are primary to consciously espoused value judgments, Richardson says they are “built into our bodies.”⁸⁸ These values are the ones that are influential in guiding our behaviour. Conscious, reflective value judgements are secondary to unreflective values and have a much less significant impact on behaviour.

Katsafanas points out two problems with Richardson’s account. Firstly, he points out that it seems wrong to count the aims of *all* our plastic dispositions as values. He offers alcoholism as an example. An alcoholic who finds his alcoholism reprehensible might have a plastic disposition (or drive) to drink alcohol, but at the same time consciously *disvalue* the drive’s end of drinking alcohol. Richardson might respond that the agent unreflectively values drinking alcohol and reflectively disvalues it. But this does not tell us why we are justified in counting a disposition toward drinking alcohol as *genuine* valuing. The fact that unreflective values have more motivational clout than reflective ones does not seem enough to justify labelling the former our *real* values and the latter something of secondary importance. It seems plausible to say that the alcoholic disvalues drinking alcohol in virtue of finding the activity reprehensible.

The second problem with Richardson’s view is that it is unclear how reflective value judgments relate to unreflective, drive-based values.⁸⁹ This is problematic because Nietzsche wants to claim that drives *explain* our consciously espoused value judgments. For example, he says that: “Our moral judgments and evaluations too are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us” (*D* 119). And: “Wherever we encounter a morality, we find an evaluation and ranking of human drives and actions” (*GS* 116). And finally:

...The drive for the preservation of the species—erupts from time to time as reason and passion of mind; it is then surrounded by a resplendent retinue of reasons and tries with all its might to make us forget that fundamentally it is drive, instinct, stupidity, lack of reasons. Life *ought to* be loved, *because—!* Man *ought to* advance himself and his neighbour, *because—!* (*GS* 1).

Here Nietzsche suggests that we can appeal to the drive for the preservation of the species in order to explain why philosophers make certain value claims. Richardson’s sharp distinction between unreflective, body values and reflective, agent values makes it unclear how Nietzsche could successfully make claims of this sort. For Richardson, “values are built into our bodies, and their

⁸⁷ Richardson (2004: 73).

⁸⁸ Richardson (2004: 74).

⁸⁹ This is the same problem that Katsafanas identifies in (2016: p. 114), however I draw out the problem in different terms.

conscious and linguistic expression is something quite secondary,” (Richardson, 2004: p. 73-4) he elaborates by saying:

What we usually call our ‘values,’ which are the values we’re aware of and put into words, the principles we refer to in order to steer our actions. They are our ethics and morality. By contrast with body values, I’ll call these *agent values*. These are *conscious* and *linguistic*, the rules or ideals we formulate and then refer to in ‘moments of decision’ (Richardson, 2013 p. 767).

The problem for Richardson is that he seems to take our body values to be our “real” values and our conscious, linguistic values to be something like *mere talk*. It’s tempting to read Nietzsche as thinking that our morality and religion is nothing but mere talk, a conceptual veil that obfuscates the real, bodily values that are actually motivating the agent.

This picture is not quite right. Our reflective value judgments are in no way secondary to our unreflective body values, so long as they are accompanied by positive drive-induced affective orientations. It is conceivable that an agent might judge that something is valuable simply because they have seen others do the same, and so think on that basis that it must be the thing to do, and *this*, for Nietzsche, would not count as *any* kind of valuing, reflective or unreflective, it is simply mere talk. And this is because such talk is not underpinned by drive-induced affective attachment, or a pro-attitude. However, this is not the status of *all* our consciously espoused values, and indeed, not the status of most of them. Our reflectively held “principles,” our “ethics and morality,” *do* tend to be accompanied by affective attachment. In general, we are emotionally committed and invested in our ethical principles, and Nietzsche means to explain this affective commitment by appeal to the drives. All valuing, reflective and unreflective, is explained by drives because genuine valuing is drive-induced. Thus, we can retain Richardson’s distinction between unreflective and reflective values if we use the terms as follows: “unreflective value” picks out positive drive-induced affective orientations of which we are unaware, and “reflective value” picks out positive drive-induced affective orientations that are accompanied by thoughts of approval or endorsement.⁹⁰ Judgments of the form “x is valuable,” unaccompanied by positive drive-induced affects, are not cases of valuing at all. I elaborate further on how drives explain values in section four.

2.3.2 Poellner/Clark & Dudrick’s Account

One term that is notably absent from Richardson’s account is *affect*. In order to deal with the problems with Richardson’s account, Katsafanas draws on Poellner and Clark & Dudrick’s affect-based accounts of Nietzschean value. Katsafanas adopts two conditions of adequacy for an account

⁹⁰ Katsafanas (2016: 121).

of value from Poellner. The first is that value judgments involve an attitude of favouring or disfavouring towards some features of the judgment's object, and the second is that value judgments should "appear as objective," or appear to be constrained by features of their objects.⁹¹ Poellner argues that affective experiences meet these conditions. For example, we experience the love we have for a person's character as being merited by, or to be an appropriate recognition of, the nature of the object of our love.⁹² Thus, Poellner argues that perceiving something as attractive, having a positive affective response toward it, plus the thought that this positive response is merited by the object's features, constitutes a valuing of that thing. Clark & Dudrick put forward a similar view. They claim that "To value something—as opposed to merely desiring it—is to accept that there is *reason* to take certain actions and attitudes towards it (for instance, to approve or disapprove of it, and to do or refrain from doing it)."⁹³ Thus, Poellner and Clark & Dudrick agree that valuing something involves having a positive affect toward it, but that this is not enough, in order for a positive affect to count as a case of valuing one must also regard the affect as justified. Since the views are similar I will treat them together. Katsafanas proposes that we summarise the Poellner/Clark & Dudrick view as follows: to value X is to have a positive attitude toward X, together with the thought that this positive attitude is warranted.⁹⁴

Katsafanas identifies two problems with this view. Firstly, he claims that it is implausible to identify values with affects-regarded-as-justified because someone can have fleeting affects that they regard as justified but that do not count as values. Katsafanas gives the example of having a fleeting attraction toward skydiving. We can imagine someone that is attracted toward skydiving just once in their life, and considers this attraction to be justified by the belief that skydiving will be exhilarating. After some time elapses the person's attraction toward skydiving fades, they never go skydiving, and indeed they never give it a second thought. On Poellner's view it seems as if this person nevertheless *values* skydiving, because they had an attraction toward it that they regarded as justified. This strikes Katsafanas as incorrect. He sums up his point crisply: "a 'value' held only for a moment is no value at all."⁹⁵ One way of phrasing the problem with Poellner's account is that it cannot distinguish values from mere *likings* or feelings of attraction.

In order to make it the case that mere likings do not count as cases of valuing, Katsafanas concludes that valuings can only be identified with a sub-set of affects. In order to identify this sub-set he appeals to Richardson's drive-based account of value. Thus, he claims that Nietzschean values must be *drive-induced* positive affective orientations. This is condition (1) of his definition. This condition

⁹¹ Katsafanas (2016: 115).

⁹² Poellner (2007: 230-1).

⁹³ Clark & Dudrick (2012: 213).

⁹⁴ Katsafanas (2016). Langsam (2018) leans toward a similar view.

⁹⁵ Katsafanas (2016: 117).

is supposed to address the problem of identifying values with mere likings or fleeting attractions. Katsafanas claims that it does so because drives do not induce discrete, specific affects toward their objects, but complex affective orientations. Affective orientations are constituted by a range of attractions, emotions, and perceptual saliences, thus involving a “host of interconnected, mutually reinforcing affects and behavioural dispositions.”⁹⁶ Katsafanas claims that drive-induced affects are more stable and abiding than ordinary affects, since they are centred on a common aim. Thus, drive-induced affects aren’t fleeting, they are things that structure our behaviour over long stretches of time, perhaps even our whole lives. These seem like better candidates for the label “value” than fleeting discrete affects.

In section 2.4 I take issue with this claim on the grounds that *all* affects are drive-induced, including fleeting ones. Thus, even a temporary attraction to sky-diving counts as a drive-induced affective experience. While I agree with Katsafanas’ claim that discrete affects should not count as values, the condition that affects must be “drive-induced” to count as valuings does not rule out discrete affects. In the next section, I argue that there is a different subset of affects that *can* do this work, namely the subset of affects induced by our *strongest* drives.

The second problem that Katsafanas identifies with the Poellner/Clark & Dudrick view is with the condition that affects count as values when they are *regarded as justified*. Clark & Dudrick flesh this out by claiming that affects can count as values only when the agent takes there to be reasons for having the affect.⁹⁷ This condition strikes Katsafanas as being excessively intellectualistic, and he offers compelling textual evidence that speaks against Clark & Dudrick’s view. Nietzsche often talks about agents who have values but do not reflect on whether those values are justified. For example, in *HH* Nietzsche says:

The fettered spirit takes up his position, not for reasons, but out of habit; he is a Christian, for example, not because he has knowledge of the various religions and has chosen between them... he encountered Christianity... and adopted [it] without reasons, as a man born in a wine-producing country becomes a wine drinker... Ask a fettered spirit for his reasons against bigamy, for example, and you will learn whether his holy zeal for monogamy is based on reasons or on habit (*HH* I.226).⁹⁸

This shows that Nietzsche’s hypothetical Christian values monogamy not because he considers his attraction to it to be justified by reasons, but out of habit and custom. Similarly, Nietzsche says “*to the realists*” in *GS* 57 that:

⁹⁶ Katsafanas (2016: 117).

⁹⁷ Katsafanas (2016: 118) see Clark & Dudrick (2009: 214).

⁹⁸ Quoted from Katsafanas (2016: 118).

You still carry around the valuations of things that originate in the passions and loves of former centuries! Your love of 'reality,' for example—oh, that is an old, ancient 'love'! In every experience, in every sense impression there is a piece of this old love; and some fantasy, some prejudice, some irrationality, some ignorance, some fear, and whatever else, has worked on and contributed to it (GS 57).

The realist might consider his love of “reality” to be justified by reasons, but part of Nietzsche’s point is that all of these reasons would be post-hoc. The realist values reality because of fantasies, prejudices, and irrationalities that have been passed on to him from earlier generations, and he would value “reality” regardless of whether he reflected on his reasons for doing so.

In order to deal with this problem Katsafanas modifies the condition that affects can count as values only when they are regarded as justified, to the condition that affects can count as values only when we do not *disapprove* of having those affects. This is condition (2). For Katsafanas, condition (2) is a necessary condition for something to count as an instance of valuing. It is meant to be a less intellectualistic version of Clark & Dudrick’s condition. It performs two roles: it enables Katsafanas’ view to account for unreflective values better than Richardson’s, and it is less intellectualistic than Clark & Dudrick’s view because it makes it the case that one values the ends of one’s drives automatically, i.e. without reflection. Thus, Katsafanas takes it to improve upon both Richardson’s view and the Poellner/Clark & Dudrick view.

In order to see how it might improve upon Richardson’s view, recall that he claims that values are identified with the aims of our drives, and that this implies the implausible claim that we value the aims of *all* our drives. Consider an example: on Richardson’s account, an ascetic monk who consciously espouses that sex is disvaluable, while having a strong drive to engage in sexual activity, will still count as valuing sex. This seems wrong, we are inclined to say that the ascetic does not value sexual activity despite being attracted to it. Katsafanas’ (2) remedies this by claiming that the ascetic does not value sex despite having a strong attraction to it, because he *disapproves* of this attraction.

Katsafanas also notes that his view does not require him to draw a sharp distinction between reflective/unreflective values in the way that Richardson’s does. This distinction was problematic because it made it unclear why unreflective drive-based “values” should count as values, rather than mere dispositions. It also made it unclear how unreflective values relate to reflective ones, and this is problematic because Nietzsche wants to say that drives *explain* our consciously espoused values in some sense. On Katsafanas’ view “unreflective values” can simply refer to drive-induced affective orientations, while “reflective values” can refer to drive-induced affective orientations that are accompanied by reflective thoughts of approval or disapproval. On this picture, both forms

of valuing are continuous, what differentiates them is the level of awareness that accompanies them.

This is how Katsafanas purports to improve upon Richardson's account, but what about Clark & Dudrick's? Clark & Dudrick's view seemed problematic because Nietzsche claims that we can have values unaccompanied by thoughts of justificatory status. Katsafanas claims that his account improves upon Clark & Dudrick's because it doesn't involve interposing an extra step in between having a drive toward something and valuing that thing. On Katsafanas' view, we automatically value the ends of our drives, this is the "default position."⁹⁹ We can only disvalue the ends of our drives by reflecting upon them and expressing disapproval. In this way, it takes work *not* to value the ends of one's drives.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Katsafanas' account allows one to have values that are not accompanied by reflective thoughts about justificatory status.

I will conclude this section by reflecting on Katsafanas' final formulation of his position: "an agent values X iff the agent (1) has a drive-induced positive affective orientation toward X, and (2) does not disapprove of this affective orientation."¹⁰¹ The first condition is meant to rule out cases of mere liking or fleeting attraction. Drive-induced affects are more stable and enduring than discrete affects. The second condition is meant to account for values that are not accompanied by reflective thoughts about their justificatory status. It also allows us to account for discrepancies between drives and consciously espoused value judgments better than Richardson's distinction between unreflective and reflective values. On Richardson's view, reflective and unreflective values seem to be different kinds of states, whereas on Katsafanas' they are the same state accompanied by different levels of awareness. Because they are the same state, Katsafanas is able to give an account of the way in which drives *explain* values. I elaborate on this account in section 2.4.2.

2.4 A New Account of Nietzschean Valuing

In this section I give my own account of Nietzschean valuing. I present two criticisms of Katsafanas' view and show how my account can address these problems. I also show how my account can address the problems for Richardson, Poellner, and Clark & Dudrick's accounts that I introduced in 2.3. Katsafanas argues that an agent values X iff the agent (1) has a drive-induced positive affective orientation toward X, and (2) does not disapprove of this affective orientation. My two criticisms correspond to Katsafanas' conditions (1) and (2) respectively. The first criticism is that the condition

⁹⁹ Katsafanas (2016: 120).

¹⁰⁰ Katsafanas (2016: 120).

¹⁰¹ Katsafanas (2016: 120).

that only “drive-induced” affects count as values does not carve out a genuine subset of affects. I provide textual evidence to show that *all* affects are drive-induced for Nietzsche. The second criticism is that “disapproval” in condition (2) is ambiguous. I show that condition (2) becomes redundant when we have an adequate understanding of what Nietzsche takes ‘disapproval’ to mean. I will look at these problems in turn.

2.4.1 First Criticism: All Affects are Drive-Induced

The problem for condition (1) arises because Katsafanas wants to avoid counting fleeting attractions as values, so he tries to carve out a sub-set of affects that excludes these cases. As I showed in the previous section 2.3.2, this is a problem he identifies in Poellner’s account. If valuing consists merely in considering a positive affect to be justified, then even transitory feelings of attraction can count as cases of valuing so long as we consider those feelings of attraction to be justified. Poellner’s view cannot distinguish between *valuing* something and merely *liking* it.

In order to rule out fleeting attractions Katsafanas claims that an affect must be *drive-induced* in order to count as a case of valuing, because drive-induced affects are more stable and enduring than ordinary affects. Furthermore, drives don’t just induce discrete affects, for example the drive to compassion does not merely induce the feeling of compassion, rather it generates a range of attractions, emotions, and propensities that encourage one to seek out opportunities to act compassionately. Katsafanas call this an “affective orientation,” and claims that it is more plausible to identify valuings with this complex orientation than with discrete affects. I agree with Katsafanas’ point about identifying valuings with affective orientations, however condition (1) still does not do the work that Katsafanas wants it to because it rests on a problematic assumption. In order for Katsafanas’ point to go through he must assume that Nietzsche takes there to be affects that are not drive-induced, however it is not obvious that this is the case, and there is evidence to the contrary. If the affects cannot float free of drive activity, then the subset of affects that are “drive-induced” is not a genuine one, since it includes *all* the affects.

Drives seem to be what distinguish sentient creatures like human and non-human animals from insentient objects. They are what enable us to have feelings. Nietzsche claims that “a drive to something or away from something divorced from a feeling one is desiring the beneficial or avoiding the harmful, a drive without some kind of knowing evaluation of the worth of its objective, does not exist in man” (*HH* I. 32). He also asks, “Can we assume a *striving for power* without a sensation of pleasure and unpleasure, i.e. without a feeling of the increase and diminution of power?” (*WLN* 248). These quotations suggest that if one of my drives is active, then I am having an affective experience. Thus, drive activity always results in a feeling of inclination or aversion, in an affect. We cannot have a drive without also having an affect. But can we have affects without having drives? That is, can we have affects that are not caused or induced by drive activity?

Although Nietzsche never explicitly claims that all affects are drive induced, he seems to be working under this assumption. Affects are a kind of feeling, more specifically, they involve feelings of inclination or aversion to a state of affairs. For Katsafanas, “Nietzsche uses ‘affect’ in the way that contemporary philosophers use ‘pro-attitude’ or ‘desire’: as a catch all term for emotions, feelings, aversions, inclinations, urges, desires, and so forth.”¹⁰² Unlike sensations of redness, coldness, or smoothness, affects always have a positive or negative valence, because, as Nietzsche claims in the notebooks, they are “*reactions of the will*” (WLN 211).¹⁰³ It is not obvious that affects in this sense can exist independently of the workings of our drives. If the drives do not induce our feelings of inclination or aversion, what else could? Consider Nietzsche’s talk of the will as:

Above all, something *complicated*, something unified only in a word—and this single word contains the popular prejudice that has overruled whatever minimal precautions philosophers might take (BGE 19).

Ultimately, for Nietzsche, “All willing is simply a matter of commanding and obeying, on the groundwork, as I have said, of a society constructed out of many ‘souls’” (BGE 19). What are these “souls” or “under-wills” that command and obey: they are the drives. The passage Nietzsche seems to allude to in BGE 19 is BGE 12, in which he endorses the hypothesis that the soul is “a society constructed out of drives and affects.” In this way, Nietzsche equates the will with the soul, both are a “society” of commanding and obeying parties, and these parties are the drives.¹⁰⁴ If the affects are positive or negative reactions of the will, and the will is a composite of drives, then it seems unlikely that Nietzsche would entertain the possibility of affects that are not induced by drives. Because of this it is plausible that Nietzsche takes all affects to be drive-induced, and so Katsafanas’ condition (1) does not carve out a genuine subset of affects.

Condition (1) is more convincing if we reformulate it as follows: an agent values X iff the agent (1*) has a positive affective orientation toward X that is *induced by one of her strongest drives*. Note that (1*) is my final view; in the next subsection I will show that condition (2) is redundant and thus that I can leave it out of my reformulation. Our strongest drives tend to persist over long periods of time, they are responsible for shaping our lives and characters, and only rarely can we deviate from their aims. These seem capable of giving affective orientations the stability that Katsafanas seeks in order for them to count as values. Furthermore, the subset of affects induced by our strongest drives does carve out a genuine subset of affects.

¹⁰² Katsafanas (2016: 103).

¹⁰³ KSA 13:11 [71]/WLN 211.

¹⁰⁴ Clark and Dudrick (2012: 188).

2.4.2 *Second Criticism: Nietzsche on "Disapproval"*

Now I will turn to the problem with condition (2). Katsafanas introduces condition (2) in order to avoid a view on which we value the ends of *all* of our drives. He identifies this problem in John Richardson's account. To illustrate this problem, I introduced the case of the ascetic monk who recognises that he has a drive to engage in sexual activity, but who nevertheless consciously espouses that he disvalues sexual activity. Despite having a drive toward sex, we don't want to say that the monk values it, perhaps because he values chastity instead. In order to accommodate this case, Katsafanas claims that the monk does not value sexual activity because he disapproves of the drive's aim. So the monk does not satisfy the second condition.

Katsafanas elaborates on what it means to disapprove of a drive's aim in a footnote. He claims that, "Disapproval can take a variety of forms. It can be manifest in explicit judgments... " or "more modestly, it can be a feeling of aversion, doubt, or conflict, or dissatisfaction with one's attitude toward X."¹⁰⁵ So the monk could disapprove of sexual activity by judging that it is disvaluable, or by feeling conflicted or uneasy about it, and this would mean that he does not value it.

Katsafanas' characterisation of disapproval does not seem to capture the whole picture, for Nietzsche. If my disapproval of one of my attitudes is constituted by a feeling of aversion or conflict, then it seems that Nietzsche would explain this phenomenology by positing *another drive* that is in conflict with the disapproved of drive. And this seems to be true not only for cases in which I feel averse to certain drives' aims, but also when I *consciously espouse* that certain drives' aims are disvaluable. To see this, consider Nietzsche's discussion of six methods for "combating the vehemence of a drive" in *D* 109. He concludes this section by claiming:

What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of *another drive* which is a *rival* of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us.... While 'we' believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive *which is complaining about another*; that is to say: for us to become aware that we are suffering from the vehemence of a drive presupposes the existence of another equally vehement or even more vehement drive, and that a struggle is in prospect in which our intellect is going to have to take sides (*D* 109).

This passage gives us an idea of what Nietzsche thinks *disapproving* of a drive means. If we feel oppressed or tormented by a drive, say the drive for aggression, and take measures to prevent the expression of that drive, this must be because the full expression of some equally strong, or stronger drive is inhibited by the drive for aggression, and needs to overpower it in order to achieve its full expression. If this conflicting drive were not present, then we would go on either consciously

¹⁰⁵ Katsafanas (2016: 120 fn. 3).

or unconsciously valuing aggressive activity. Furthermore, even in cases in which I *consciously espouse* that aggression is disvaluable, there needs to be another stronger drive that is in conflict with the drive for aggression, otherwise it wouldn't be possible for me to become aware of my disapproval.

Now I will show that we do not need to add Katsafanas' condition (2) to my reformulated (1*), because condition (2) is redundant. This becomes apparent when we remove the ambiguity in condition (2) by reformulating it in light of our discussion of what Nietzsche takes disapproval to mean. As we saw, consciously espousing disapproval of a drive's aim, or feeling uneasy about a drive's aim, means having a conflicting, stronger, drive that aims at something else. We can reformulate condition (2) so that it reflects this analysis. Instead of saying: (2) does not disapprove of this affective orientation, we can say instead: (2*) does not have a stronger drive that conflicts with the drive inducing the relevant affective orientation. These amount to the same thing, however (2*)'s redundancy is more obvious than (2)'s. This is clear when we add (2*) to (1*), we get: an agent values X iff the agent (1*) has a positive affective orientation toward X induced by one of her strongest drives, and (2*) does not have a stronger drive that conflicts with the drive inducing the relevant affective orientation. Condition (2*) does not add anything to condition (1*). The fact that the relevant affect is induced by one of the agent's *strongest* drives, implies that there is not a stronger drive in conflict with it. So we can safely leave condition (2) out.

My revised account has two important implications. One implication is that we do not automatically value the aims of *all* of our drives. The bare fact that I have a drive for aggression, or knowledge, or sexual activity does not imply that I value aggression, knowledge, or sexual activity. These drives must be strong enough in relation to my other drives in order to express themselves for me to value their ends. This addresses the problem Katsafanas identifies in Richardson's account, namely, that not every goal toward which we are disposed counts as a value. If I have a relatively weaker disposition toward sexual activity that is suppressed by a stronger disposition, then I do not value sexual activity. So our monk might have a drive for sexual activity but a stronger drive for chastity¹⁰⁶, or perhaps a stronger "will to nothingness", as Nietzsche might say. The monk's drive for sex would have to become stronger than his drive for chastity in order for the monk to count as valuing sexual activity. The monk disvalues sex, not just because he disapproves of it, as Katsafanas says, but because he has a drive that conflicts with his drive for sex.

Another implication is that I cannot disvalue the aims of my strongest drives. This helps to avoid over-intellectualizing Nietzsche's position. Clark & Dudrick are open to this charge because they argue that in order to value something one must have a positive affect toward it that one regards as justified. Thus, valuing requires *reflecting* on the justificatory status of one's affects. Katsafanas

¹⁰⁶ GS 21.

formulates his definition in terms of “not disapproving” of an affect, rather than regarding it as justified, in order to avoid the charge of over-intellectualisation. However, we can avoid the charge in another way. Recall again *D* 109, where Nietzsche says: “What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of *another drive* which is a *rival* of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us...” (*D* 109). This means that regarding one’s attraction to something as justified or unjustified is a matter of having a drive toward or away from that thing. Both regarding-as-justified, and expressing disapproval, presuppose the presence of a stronger drive that I do not disapprove of or that I would regard as justified were I to reflect on it. We value the aims of our *strongest* drives by default, whether or not we become aware of them. Thus, on my account, in order to value something an agent need not reflect on the justificatory status of their affects.

To conclude, my competing account addresses the two problems with Katsafanas’ account in addition to three problems that Katsafanas identifies in Richardson, Poellner, and Clark & Dudrick’s accounts. First, unlike Poellner’s account, my account does not include fleeting affects as values, since our strongest drives induce affects that structure our behaviour over long stretches of time. Second, unlike Richardson’s account, my account does not imply that we value the ends of all of our drives, only the ends of our *strongest* drives. And third, unlike Clark & Dudrick’s it does not require that we reflect on the justificatory status of all of our values and it allows us to have values of which we are unaware.

2.4.3 Drives Explain Values

Nietzsche thinks that drives explain our consciously espoused values. Although I agree with Katsafanas’ account of how the drives explain values, I argue that they have more explanatory power than he claims.

According to Katsafanas, drives can cause us to consciously value their ends because they are capable of altering our experience of the world so that their ends seem justified. This is how drives explain consciously espoused value judgements. Drives are capable of “colouring,” “gilding,” “lighting,” or “staining,” experience, and in this way, they make certain features of the world appear salient. For example, my drive for aggression makes me see the world such that aggressive behaviour seems warranted. The drive could lead me to interpret another’s benign behaviour as a personal snub, their respectful silence as indifference, or their attentive concern as intrusiveness. In each case, I am encouraged to think that aggressive activity is warranted when in fact it is not. The drive for aggression can also help me latch onto features of the world that might *genuinely* warrant aggression. Drives can prime an agent to respond appropriately to her environment. This shows how drives can cause agents to make conscious judgments of the form “my attraction toward X is justified,” or “my aggressive activity toward X is justified.” In this sense, drives can explain why

we value their aims, that is, because they encourage us to interpret our circumstances in ways that make their aims seem justified.

I believe that this account of how drives explain consciously espoused values is correct, however I argue that Nietzsche wants to grant drives even more explanatory power than Katsafanas allows them. On my account, drives explain values in a stronger sense. As I said in the previous section, we cannot disvalue the aims of our strongest drives. Thus, if we can identify an agent's strongest drives, then we can identify the contents of her values. Consider another important discussion of drives, affects, and values in *BGE* 268, here Nietzsche says:

Which group of sensations is aroused, expresses itself, and issues commands in a soul most quickly, is decisive for the whole order of rank of its values and ultimately determines its table of goods. The values of a human being betray something of the *structure* of his soul and where it finds its conditions of life, its true need (*BGE* 268).

We find here again the idea that an agent's *strongest* drives, or the group that commands "most quickly" determines the agent's values. What it means for an agent to value an activity is for one of her strongest drives to aim at that activity. Furthermore, an agent's "table of goods," the contents of her values, are the aims of her strongest drives. My account captures the sense in which an agent's values "betray" the structure of her soul; an agent's values *just are* the aims of her strongest drives. In this sense my account is similar to Richardson's. We can simply identify the contents of our values (our "*taken-for-good*") with the aims of our drives, however not, as Richardson claims, with the aims of *all* of our drives, but rather with the aims of just our *strongest* drives.

A similar account also applies to negative valuations. In order to explain disvalues, Nietzsche also appeals to a person's drive-structure. In order to explain why an agent believes that the aims of her drives are disvaluable, we can appeal to a stronger drive that is in conflict with those drives. We can explain why the monk disvalues sexual activity, despite having a drive to engage in it, by appealing to his conflicting, stronger drive for chastity. This stronger drive explains why he feels uneasy or oppressed by the aims of the weaker drive, and also why he reflectively claims that his attraction to the weaker drive's aim is unjustified.

2.5 Conclusion

My goal in this chapter was to give an account of what Nietzsche thinks is involved in *valuing* something. In order to do this I began by giving brief accounts of the drives and affects. Then I looked at Katsafanas' account of Nietzschean valuing on which: an agent values X iff the agent (1)

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has a drive-induced positive affective orientation toward X, and (2) does not disapprove of this affective orientation. This interpretation has the virtue of showing how the drives *and* affects relate to valuing. In this respect, it is superior to the interpretations put forward by Richardson, Poellner, and Clark & Dudrick, as these deal only with either the drives or affects separately. Nevertheless, I identified two problems with Katsafanas' account.

The first problem occurs in condition (1). Katsafanas claims that in order for a positive affect to count as a case of valuing it must be drive-induced. I argued that *all* affects are drive-induced, and thus, that Katsafanas condition (1) does not carve out a subset of affects. Thus, condition (1) fails to exclude fleeting affects, which seem poor candidates for valuings. My reformulation addresses this problem as well. Affects induced by our *strongest* drives do make up a genuine subset of affects, so it is not the case that all affects count as values.

The second problem with Katsafanas' account is that his description of what it means to disapprove of a drive's aim is ambiguous. I presented textual evidence to show that disapproval, for Nietzsche, is constituted by the presence of a stronger drive that conflicts with a weaker drive. The feeling of the stronger drive struggling with the weaker drive, and oppressing it in the pursuit of its own aim, is the feeling of disapproval. Nietzsche suggests that it is impossible to become aware that one disapproves of a drive unless there is a stronger drive that conflicts with the disapproved of drive. One thing this implies is that we cannot disvalue the aims of our *strongest* drives, since there is not a stronger drive that could enable us to express a negative attitude toward it. In this way, we are beholden to our strongest drives, we cannot disvalue their aims because the presence of a conflicting, stronger drive is a condition for the possibility of disapproval of any kind. With this in mind, we can reformulate Katsafanas' condition (1) in a way that avoids this problem: an agent values X iff the agent (1) has a positive affective orientation toward X that is *induced by one of her strongest drives*.

My competing account addresses the two problems with Katsafanas' view in addition to three problems that Katsafanas identifies in Richardson, Poellner, and Clark & Dudrick's accounts. Unlike Richardson's account, my account does not imply that we value the ends of all of our drives, only the ends of our *strongest* drives. Unlike Poellner's account, it does not include fleeting affects as values, since our strongest drives induce affects that structure our behaviour over long stretches of time. Unlike Clark & Dudrick's it does not require that we reflect on the justificatory status of all of our values and it allows us to have values of which we are unaware. Finally, it explains the strong sense in which Nietzsche thinks that drives explain our consciously espoused values. An agent's values are identical with the aims of her strongest drives.

CHAPTER THREE: KNOWLEDGE (*ERKENNTNISS*) AND AFFECT

Introduction

In the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche lays out some of the goals of the book. One goal is to present us with “hypotheses on the origins of morality,” however more importantly than hypotheses about its origins “we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined*” (*GM* preface 4, 7). To assess the value of morality we need to *know* certain things. According to Nietzsche, “we need to know about the conditions and circumstances under which the values grew up, developed and changed (morality as result, as symptom, as mask, as tartuffery, as sickness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, remedy, stimulant, inhibition, poison), since we have neither had this knowledge up till now nor even desired it” (*GM* preface 6).

My main claim in this chapter is that it is one of Nietzsche’s concerns in the *Genealogy* to figure out the best way to acquire this kind of knowledge, and I argue that the *Genealogy* itself embodies, and to some extent lays out, methods of enquiry that Nietzsche sees as appropriate or especially effective at engaging the topics above. Furthermore, I argue that the most important feature of this methodology is that it is *affectively engaged*. In sketching these methods of enquiry Nietzsche explicitly contrasts his approach with Schopenhauer’s knowledge-ideal of the “pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of cognition,” and emphasises the importance of what he calls the “*affects*” (*GM* III 12). One of Nietzsche’s perennial goals is to alert the reader to the omnipresent, but largely unrecognized, role that feelings, emotions, and affects play in our attempts to understand ourselves and the world, and to encourage us to *use* feelings, rather than extinguish them, in order to address problems like those mentioned above, namely “the problems of morality” (*GM* preface 7).

Nietzsche’s views on how we ought to enquire into morality so as to gain the kind of knowledge we have “up to now” neither had nor desired are most clearly expressed in section 12 book III of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. This passage tends to be considered the definitive statement of Nietzsche’s so-called “perspectivism,” which is often taken to be his theory of knowledge. In the section 3.1 I engage with the literature on perspectivism. I will situate my reading of the passage in between what I see as two more extreme readings. These are, on the one hand, Ken Gemes’

reading, according to which the passage has no epistemological ambitions but rather presents a vision of greater health. And on the other hand, Lanier Anderson's interpretation, according to which Nietzsche means to offer an epistemological theory.¹⁰⁷ On my reading, *GM III 12* sketches a methodology for enquiring into the problems introduced in the preface of the book. I will argue that perspectivism consists of two main claims, one descriptive and one prescriptive. The first claim describes the nature of enquiry; it is that enquiry is guided and shaped by the affects. The second is a prescriptive claim about how we ought to enquire given that the descriptive claim is true. It is that we can enquire *better* if we approach a matter, like morality, from a variety of "affective interpretations,"¹⁰⁸ which, I argue, are Nietzschean perspectives.¹⁰⁹

3.1 Reading *GM III 12*: Gemes and Anderson

Commentators have tended to interpret the claims in *GM III 12* as a set of theses about knowledge in general, and have often attributed to Nietzsche a theory of knowledge on the basis of this and a few other passages. Gemes, reacting against this tendency, takes issue with the idea that Nietzsche has any "grand timeless theses about the nature of knowledge, truth etc...."¹¹⁰ and argues instead that *GM III 12* is not about knowledge, but *health*, and that perspectivism is a vision of greater health in which repressed drives are freely expressed. I stake out a position in between these two extremes. I argue that while Nietzsche is not constructing an epistemological theory, he does make claims about the nature of knowledge. More specifically, he attempts to describe the best way to enquire into the problems introduced in the preface of the book, and the ones that occupy him most of all throughout all his work, namely the "problems of morality."

I'll now record the end of *GM III 12* in full before looking at Gemes' and Anderson's interpretations of it, and then I'll give my own reading:

Finally let us, particularly as knowers, not be ungrateful toward such resolute reversals of the familiar perspectives and valuations with which the spirit has raged against itself all too long now, apparently wantonly and futilely: to see differently in this way for once, to *want*

¹⁰⁷ I will focus on Anderson's 1998 paper, rather than Maudemarie Clark's seminal chapter in *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* for two reasons. First, both views are self-described "neo-Kantian" theories of perspectivism; I take Anderson's later account to be an updated version of Clark's earlier neo-Kantian interpretation. Second, Anderson improves on Clark's account by giving a clearer and more specific statement of what he takes a Nietzschean "perspective" to be, this makes him a more useful target for my purposes.

¹⁰⁸ (*GM III 12*).

¹⁰⁹ I am largely in agreement with Janaway (2007, 2017). Some aspects of the structure of this paper, and the two main claims of perspectivism, are similar to those in Janaway (2007, 2017).

¹¹⁰ Gemes (2009, 2013).

to see differently, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future ‘objectivity’—the latter understood not as ‘disinterested contemplation [*interesselose Anschauung*]’ (which is a non-concept and absurdity), but as the capacity to have one’s pro and contra *in one’s power*, and to shift them in and out: so that one knows how to make precisely the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge. For let us guard ourselves better from now on, gentlemen philosophers, against the dangerous old conceptual fabrication that posited a ‘pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge [cognition]’; let us guard ourselves against the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as ‘pure reason,’ ‘absolute spirituality,’ ‘knowledge in itself’: here it is always demanded that we think an eye that that cannot possibly be thought, an eye that must not have any direction, in which the active and interpretive forces through which seeing first becomes seeing-something, are to be shut off, are to be absent; thus what is demanded here is always an absurdity and non-concept of an eye. There is *only* a perspectival seeing, only a perspectival ‘knowing’; and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our ‘concept’ of this matter, our ‘objectivity’ be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to disconnect the affects one and all, supposing that we were capable of this —what? would that not be to *castrate* the intellect? . . . (GM III 12).

According to Gemes, the *Genealogy* is a therapeutic work that seeks to cure the reader from a “sickness” caused by repressed drives. Perspectivism, he argues, is Nietzsche’s remedy to this malady.¹¹¹ For Gemes, GM III 12 is not primarily about knowledge, but *health*, and perspectivism represents Nietzsche’s vision of greater health in which repressed drives are freely expressed. Thus, he says that perspectivism is the “injunction to let as many drives as possible be expressed.”¹¹² Why then, does Nietzsche talk about knowledge and objectivity in GM III 12 at all? According to Gemes, Schopenhauer’s account of will-less objectivity is representative of a more general cooling of the passions, and it is this more general tendency to deny the will that Nietzsche is reacting against. Nietzsche targets knowledge and objectivity specifically in this passage because these are the things that his opponents (representatives of the ascetic ideal like Schopenhauer) value most of all. Thus, if Nietzsche can shake our confidence in the ascetic ideal’s highest values then he has a greater chance of freeing the reader from the spell of that ideal altogether and achieving his therapeutic goal of greater health.

¹¹¹ Gemes (2009, 2013).

¹¹² Gemes (2009, 2013).

I agree with Gemes on a number of points. First of all, that Nietzsche does not have any “grand timeless theses about the nature of knowledge,” and that he has a strong preference for psychological questions over epistemological ones. I also agree that Nietzsche is primarily concerned with health over knowledge, and that health is indeed the focus of *GM III 12*. Nevertheless, I disagree that *GM III 12* has nothing positive to say about how we ought to seek knowledge, and that the passage serves mainly as an “injunction to let as many drives as possible be expressed.”¹¹³ In *GM III 12* Nietzsche addresses his readers “particularly as knowers,” and the passage addresses the way in which philosophers pursue their characteristic activity, namely knowledge seeking. As Janaway notes in response to Gemes, an overriding preoccupation with the healthy expression of drives is not incompatible with a thesis about how to philosophize.¹¹⁴ For Nietzsche, philosophizing is a way of expressing one’s drives. He refers to the philosopher as a complex of drives, and provides a list of some of them: “his doubting drive, his negating drive, his wait-and-see (“ephectic”) drive, his analytical drive, his exploring, searching, venturing drive, his comparing, balancing drive” (*GM III, 9*).¹¹⁵ For Nietzsche, the drives are in play when we do philosophy, and there may be a way of philosophizing that involves the drives’ healthy expression. While I concur with Gemes that Nietzsche’s overriding concerns are *psychological* rather than epistemological, it is important to note that he is nevertheless making a point about the importance of the psychological conditions under which *knowledge* is pursued.¹¹⁶

While Gemes says that Nietzsche has no epistemological ambitions in *GM III 12*, in an earlier paper Lanier Anderson insists that Nietzsche is “transforming and extending certain broadly Kantian ideas in epistemology.”¹¹⁷ He argues that Nietzsche is putting forward a position called “perspectivism” that, like Putnam’s “internal realism, attempts to carve out a middle way between strong realism and wholesale relativism.”¹¹⁸ On this view, Nietzsche asserts that we always view the world through the lens of some cognitive perspective. Anderson interprets “perspectives” along broadly Kantian lines as “schemes” that “organise our experience” and are “composed out of our basic concepts.”¹¹⁹ He says that “Nietzsche understands perspectives...as schemes of concepts that give the world a certain appearance because of the way they organize experience.”¹²⁰

¹¹³ Gemes (2009, 2013).

¹¹⁴ Janaway (2017).

¹¹⁵ See also *BGE* 6.

¹¹⁶ Additionally, in *GS 333* Nietzsche reprimands Spinoza precisely for misunderstanding “the nature of knowledge,” so while Nietzsche’s theses on this score are not “grand” or “timeless” he is certainly interested in understanding and commenting upon the nature of knowledge.

¹¹⁷ Anderson (1998).

¹¹⁸ Anderson (1998).

¹¹⁹ Anderson (1998).

¹²⁰ Anderson (1998).

On Anderson's reading, according to perspectivism, "all knowledge is proper to some particular, partial perspective."¹²¹ This opens Anderson's reading up to the familiar problem of self-refutation, which plagues most readings of Nietzsche's perspectivism. That is, if all knowledge is proper only to a particular perspective, then perspectivism is also proper only to some particular perspective, and we have no reason to prefer it over metaphysical realism, transcendental idealism, or anything else. To respond to this Anderson appeals to Putnam style internal-reasons. He points out that different perspectives share epistemic values like simplicity, empirical adequacy, or internal coherence, and that we can appeal to these to generate arguments in one perspective that will be taken as reasons in another perspective.¹²² According to Anderson, Nietzsche can present an argument in favour of perspectivism by showing that the concept of the thing in itself is incoherent. Since this concept is integral to metaphysical realism and transcendental idealism, demonstrating its incoherence calls into question the coherence of the two larger views. Since the perspectives generated by realism and transcendental idealism have internal coherence as an epistemic value, this gives them reason to prefer perspectivism, which does not rely on the incoherent conception of the thing in itself, to realism or transcendental idealism, which do.

I take issue with Anderson's reading for two related reasons. The following two sections will consider these reasons. The first is that he misidentifies Nietzsche's target in *GM III 12*, and the second is that he misconstrues Nietzsche's notion of a "perspective." Anderson refers to "metaphysical realism and Kant's transcendental idealism" as the "chief alternatives" to Nietzsche's perspectivism, however the second half of *GM III 12* suggests a different alternative. Here Nietzsche directly contrasts his view with Schopenhauer's. He says that we "should guard ourselves better... against the dangerous old conceptual fabrication that posited..." and then he quotes *The World as Will and Representation*, "a pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge [cognition]" (*GM III 12*). Schopenhauer makes clear that this state of pure cognition stands for his ideal of objectivity, he says: "a purely objective, and therefore correct, apprehension of things is possible only when we consider them without any personal participation in them, and thus under the complete silence of the will" (*WWR II 215*). According to Schopenhauer, in order to mirror an object more perfectly, to see its "clearest image," one must reach a state in which one is not moved by any emotions, passions, or affects. One must be temporarily freed from "servitude to the will" (*WWR I 34*).

Nietzsche seems to sketch an alternative to the Schopenhauerian conception of objectivity, advocating instead a rich personal involvement with one's object of investigation, when he says at the end of *GM III 12* that:

¹²¹ Anderson (1998).

¹²² Anderson (1998).

The more affects we allow to speak about a matter, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more will our “concept” of this matter, our “objectivity” be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to disconnect the affects one and all, supposing that we were capable of this: what? Would that not be to *castrate* the intellect? (*GM III 12*).

Since Schopenhauer maintained that the affects, or willing, always have a negative influence on cognition, it seems natural that Nietzsche is contrasting his view with Schopenhauer’s in this passage. Thus, *contra* Anderson, it seems that Nietzsche’s target in *GM III 12* is primarily Schopenhauer’s theory of objectivity. I expand on this claim in the following section.

3.2 Nietzsche’s Target in *GM III 12*: Schopenhauerian Objectivity

According to Schopenhauer, human beings are essentially, what he calls, the “will to life.” Each individual human being/human body is an expression or “objectification” of the will to life. Willing, for Schopenhauer, is an incredibly broad notion that encompasses all “desiring, striving, wishing, longing, yearning, hoping, loving, rejoicing, exulting, and the like, as well as the feeling of unwillingness or repugnance, detesting, fleeing, fearing, being angry, hating, mourning, suffering, in short, all affects and passions” (*FW 10*). All human activity, including cognition, can be explained by appealing to the fact that our essence consists in willing life. Ordinary cognition of the world is permeated by willing. Schopenhauer says that the intellect, like hands, feet, teeth, or any part of the body, is a “tool in the service of the will” (*WWR II 205*). He describes it as a “mere mechanism, a means for the preservation of the individual and the species as much as any organ of the body. Originally in the service of the will and determined by the accomplishment of its aim, cognition remains entirely in its service throughout” (*WWR I 177*).

Although cognition exists in order to satisfy the needs of the will, Schopenhauer nevertheless sees willing as having a detrimental effect on the intellect’s operations. He says:

The intellect can fulfil its function quite properly and correctly only so long as the will is silent and pauses. On the other hand, the function of the intellect is disturbed by every observable excitement of the will, and its result is falsified by the will’s interference (*WWR II 215*).

Every feeling or emotion “twists, colours, and distorts...the original perception of things”, and we need to suppress these in order to see things aright (*WWR II 373*). For example, he says that the affects “love and hatred entirely falsify our judgement; in our enemies we see nothing but

shortcomings, in our favourites nothing but merits and good points, and even their defects seem amiable to us" (*WWR II* 217). In this way, even though the intellect is by nature "aimed at truth," the will's interests are better served if the intellect does not pursue its particular aim to the highest degree, and the intellect functions better to the extent that it is not made to satisfy the interests of the will (*WWR II* 217).

This is why Schopenhauer's ideal of objectivity is a state in which the will is absent to the highest degree: i.e. the "pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge [cognition]" (*GM III* 12). He says that "*genius* is nothing other than the most perfect *objectivity*," it is the ability "temporarily to put one's interests, willing, and purposes entirely out of mind, and consequently, fully relinquish one's personality in order to remain as the *pure cognitive subject*, the clear eye of the world..." (*WWR I* 209). Commentators frequently refer to Nietzsche's "optic metaphor" when he talks about bringing "more eyes, different eyes" to bear on a matter; however, the metaphor's original source is Schopenhauer's "clear eye of the world."¹²³ In this way, Nietzsche is not breaking new poetic ground but merely responding to Schopenhauer on Schopenhauer's own terms. For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer's "clear eye of the world" is "an eye that cannot possibly be thought, an eye that must not have any direction, in which active and interpreting forces through which seeing first becomes seeing-something are to be shut off, are to be absent; thus, what is demanded here is always an absurdity and non-concept of an eye" (*GM III* 12).

Anderson's reading, however compelling in its own right, seems to miss the mark when it comes to Nietzsche's target in *GM III* 12. Nietzsche's primary concern is not to call into question the coherence of the concept of the thing in itself, but rather the coherence of Schopenhauer's ideal of objectivity. Schopenhauer says that we enhance cognition when we cut off the influence of the affects. Nietzsche seems to say the opposite: cognition is guided by the affects and can be enhanced by *using* the affects. This interpretive mistake is important because it leads Anderson to misconstrue Nietzsche's notion of a "perspective" as a Kantian-style conceptual scheme. This is the second problem for Anderson's reading.

3.3 What is a Perspective?

Nietzsche says in *GM III* 12 that there is "*only* a perspectival 'knowing'...*the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our "concept" of this matter, our 'objectivity' be." This passage tells against Anderson's reading. It suggests that Nietzsche does not *equate*

¹²³ Anderson (1998). Leiter (1994).

perspectives, or “eyes,” with concepts, rather perspectives are somehow responsible for making our concepts of things more complete.

What are perspectives then? Many take a perspective to be something like a philosophical position on a given problem. Interpreters assume that Nietzschean perspectives are something like claims, opinions, or beliefs about a particular phenomenon, i.e. what we might call “points of view” in ordinary discourse.¹²⁴ Although Anderson notes that Nietzsche’s notion of a perspective is somewhat loose, he seems to accept a version of this kind of view. He treats perspectivism, transcendental idealism, and realism as competing perspectives, or “conceptual systems,” that organise our experience. He also offers Christianity as an example of a perspective.¹²⁵ Construing perspectives in this way leads to the problem of self-refutation that Anderson notes. If “all knowledge is proper to some particular, partial perspective” then we have no reason to adopt perspectivism over idealism or realism; or to accept Nietzsche’s criticisms of Christian morality for that matter.

Nietzsche refers to “perspectives” three times in the perspectivism passage. The first is when he asks us not to be ungrateful toward reversals of familiar “perspectives and valuations,” and the second is when he says that we can make the difference in “perspectives and affective interpretations” useful for knowledge. I contend that in these two sentences Nietzsche is not listing two things that we should not be ungrateful toward (i.e. perspectives and valuations), and two things that can be useful for knowledge (i.e. perspectives and affective interpretations). Rather, in both instances he is naming the same thing twice, the first time metaphorically, as a “perspective,” and the second time non-metaphorically, as a “valuation,” in the first instance, or as an “affective interpretation,” in the second. Perspectives *just are* valuations, which just are, as I have argued in section 2.4, a subset of affective interpretations. “Perspective,” for Nietzsche, is a metaphor for an affective interpretation or a valuation, since he takes valuations to be a subset of affective interpretations.¹²⁶

In the third reference to perspectivism Nietzsche fairly clearly identifies the “eyes” or “perspectives” of the optic metaphor with affects. He claims:

¹²⁴ This seems to be a clearer statement of what Clark (1990) is getting at when she refers to “cognitive perspectives” as our “corpus of beliefs” or “factors responsible for beliefs.” Nehamas at times calls perspectives “points of view on the world” (1985: 42-73). Welshon adopts a similar view (2009).

¹²⁵ Anderson (1998: 13).

¹²⁶ More specifically, in chapter two I argue that valuations are a *subset* of affective interpretations. They are affective interpretations *that are induced by our strongest drives*. It is unclear whether Nietzsche means to identify “perspectives” with affective interpretations in general, or the smaller subset of affective interpretations that count as valuations.

There is... *only* perspectival “knowing”; and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our ‘concept’ of this matter, our ‘objectivity,’ be.

This fits with his remark earlier in the passage that “perspectives and affective interpretations” can be made “useful for knowledge” (*GM III 12*). Affects, or affective interpretations are the “eyes” or “perspectives” that we must multiply in order for our concept of a “matter” to be more complete. This reading explicitly contrasts Nietzsche’s view with Schopenhauer’s. According to Schopenhauer, the affects are precisely what we need to *eliminate* in order for the intellect to achieve its aim of truth to the highest degree, for Nietzsche, they are what we must *multiply*.

Anderson neglects the affective dimension of Nietzschean perspectives. Nevertheless, his Kantian-inspired reading does accurately capture some of their features. For example, in *GM III 12* Nietzsche does indeed seem to take for granted the Kantian thought that human beings are not passive receptors of data, but active interpreters that shape their experience. In *GM III 12* he says that Schopenhauer’s pure subject of cognition cuts off the “active and interpretive forces through which seeing first becomes seeing something” (*GM III 12*). On my reading however what shapes our experience and gives it an interpretation are not conceptual schemes, but affects, or “affective interpretations” (*GM III 12*). In 2.1, I introduced Katsafanas’ notion of an “affective orientation” as a “system of affectively charged perceptions and thoughts”.¹²⁷ I claimed that drives generate affective orientations by structuring an agent’s perceptions, affects, and thoughts in a certain way. The way in which an affective orientation is structured determines which features of the agent’s environment will become salient.¹²⁸ I take Nietzsche’s “affective interpretations” to be equivalent to the notion of affective orientation in this sense. Our affective interpretations shape our experience by determining which features will become salient. Thus, although Anderson is right when he says that perspectives constitute a subjective contribution to experience; he is incorrect when he says that we make that contribution via conceptual schemes rather than affective interpretations.

If we interpret perspectives as affects then we can deal with the problem of self-refutation in another, simpler, way than Anderson does. Namely, if perspectives are affects then they do not have a truth value and they cannot contradict one another. Furthermore, since “perspectivism” itself is not an affect, it is not a perspective in Nietzsche’s sense, and does not count as merely “one among many” subjectively valid perspectives.

¹²⁷ Katsafanas (2016). See also 2.3.1.

¹²⁸ Katsafanas (2016).

3.4 What is “Perspectivism”?

While this may solve one problem, it does raise a host of others. The affects are, admittedly, less obvious candidates for enhancing knowledge than conceptual schemes. What can Nietzsche mean when he suggests that to “disconnect the affects” would be to “castrate the intellect”? And when he says that the “*more* affects” we bring to bear on a matter the more complete will our objectivity be?

Nietzsche never gives a clear definition of perspectivism as a “doctrine” or “theory.” To the extent that we can define it at all, I will argue that it consists of two main claims that he makes in *GM III 12*, one descriptive and one prescriptive. The first claim describes the nature of enquiry. Enquiry is guided and shaped by the affects. This is what Nietzsche means when he suggests that to “disconnect the affects” would be to “castrate the intellect” (*GM III 12*). The second is a prescriptive claim about how we ought to enquire given that the descriptive claim is true. It is that we become better enquirers when we are able to “bring to bear” a variety of affective interpretations on a single “matter,” say, for example, morality. The claims appear to be separate; we can accept that the affects guide and shape cognition, but not that multiplying them will enhance it. Therefore, I will look at them separately.

Before I look at the two claims that constitute Nietzsche’s perspectivism it is worth saying a few words about Schopenhauer and Nietzsche’s conceptions of knowledge. In the passages we have been considering, neither Schopenhauer nor Nietzsche are primarily concerned with propositional knowledge. Thus, in these passages they are not concerned with problems to do with propositional knowledge, such as providing necessary and sufficient conditions for what counts as knowledge or giving an explanation of what counts as a justified belief. Nietzsche’s perspectivism is implausible if we read him as making claims about the nature of propositional knowledge; for example, it is hard to see how the affects factor into an account of justified belief. If one focuses solely on propositional knowledge, it is easy to write off the affects as playing no role in knowledge acquisition. One must approach Schopenhauer and Nietzsche with a broad conception of epistemology in order to make sense of their claims.

Schopenhauer recognises propositional knowledge (*Wissen*) as a subset of cognition (*Erkenntniss*). For Schopenhauer, propositional knowledge is justified by reference to further propositions, concepts, or by direct perception.¹²⁹ The kind of affect-less cognition that we are concerned with, and that Nietzsche criticises in *GM III 12* is entirely distinct from *Wissen*. This special kind of

¹²⁹ Arthur Schopenhauer. *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*.

cognition does not involve concepts and has its paradigm expression in certain aesthetic experiences or in cases of extreme ascetic resignation. For example, we can achieve this state when contemplating beautiful natural objects:

If we do not allow our consciousness to become engrossed by abstract thinking, concepts of reason; but.... Instead of all this, we devote the entire power of our mind to intuition and immerse ourselves in this entirely, letting the whole of consciousness be filled with peaceful contemplation of the natural object... (*WWR I 200*).

If we do this then “we *lose* ourselves in this object completely, i.e. we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, the clear mirror of the object” (*WWR I 201*). Thus, the kind of knowledge Schopenhauer is most interested in does not involve propositions or concepts at all, but an intuitive engagement with a fundamental, timelessly existing reality.

Although Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer’s account of affect-less engagement with objective reality, he is also concerned with something other than propositional knowledge. Although it is not clear from the text exactly what he means by knowledge, or knowing (*Erkennen*), here are two suggestive passages from *The Gay Science*:

Through immense periods of time, the intellect produced nothing but errors; some of them turned out to be useful and species-preserving; those who hit upon or inherited them fought their fight for themselves and their progeny with greater luck.... Gradually the human brain filled itself with such judgements and convictions; and ferment, struggle, and lust for power developed in this tangle. Not only utility and delight, but also every kind of drive took part in the fight about the 'truths'; the intellectual fight became an occupation, attraction, profession, duty, dignity—knowledge and the striving for the true finally took their place as a need among the other needs (*GS 110*).

And in section 324:

No, life has not disappointed me. Rather, I find it truer, more desirable and mysterious every year—ever since the day the great liberator overcame me: the thought that life could be an experiment for the knowledge-seeker—not a duty, not a disaster, not a deception! And knowledge (*Erkenntniss*) itself: let it be something else to others, like a bed to rest on or the way to one, or a diversion or a form of idleness; to me it is a world of dangers and victories in which heroic feelings also have their dance—and playgrounds (*GS 324*).

It is clear from these passages that Nietzsche is not primarily concerned with propositional knowledge. One thing they pick out is that “knowledge” or “knowing” (*Erkenntniss/Erkennen*), for Nietzsche, is not a static state. Whatever it may be to others, for Nietzsche it seems, knowledge is

not a “bed to rest on,” or an end-point, but a “world” of victory and struggle. One thing Nietzsche seems to mean by this is that *Erkennen* is motivated by drives, and that it is a kind of “striving” or struggling. It is the kind of thing that can be an “occupation” or “profession.” Additionally, *GS* 110 suggests that knowing is something that has a history, and that has changed and developed over time. Perhaps he means that depending on the drive(s) motivating our knowing, the activity can take different shapes and involve different kinds of behaviour. Whether or not the activity generates true or false beliefs, it seems it can still be a case of knowing if it aims at the truth and exhibits characteristic patterns of behaviour. This helps us get a rough sketch of what Nietzsche means when he talks about knowing (*Erkennen*). It is an activity, and a kind of striving, rather than a static end-state, that involves a protracted project of enquiry and doing things like interpreting, experimenting, and hypothesizing. So when Nietzsche says that disconnecting the affects inhibits knowing, and that multiplying them can enhance knowing, he is talking about this activity. On my reading, perspectivism is a thesis about how to do this activity in the best way possible. Now I will look at the two main claims of perspectivism in more detail.

3.4.1 *Descriptive Claim: No Affect-less Cognition*

For Schopenhauer, ordinary cognition is always in the service of the will. Nietzsche seems to accept a similar claim. He says that knowing is a kind of “striving” that is motivated by drive processes. He also notes in *GS* 110, like Schopenhauer, that the intellect originally operated as a tool to satisfy the needs of the species. In this way the two agree that when it comes to ordinary cognition, the intellect operates in the service of the will. In *GM* III 12 Nietzsche uses this point of agreement to turn Schopenhauer against himself.¹³⁰ He does this by diagnosing Schopenhauer’s positing of the concept of the pure subject of cognition as a symptom of underlying affective states. Schopenhauer fabricated the concept to satisfy a desire to escape the pain of “physicality,” out of “ascetic self-contempt,” “anti-nature,” or a desire for redemption from the ordinary world (*GM* III 12).

Nietzsche begins *GM* III 12 by asking the reader: “Supposing that an incarnate will to contradiction and anti-nature is prevailed upon to ‘*philosophize*’: on what will he vent his most capricious will?” Although he does not name Schopenhauer here, the phrase “incarnate will to contradiction and anti-nature” is a fitting description. In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer’s account of will-less aesthetic experience in similar terms when he says, “someone is contradicting you, and I am afraid that it is nature” (*TI* “Skirmishes” 22). Schopenhauer’s pure subject of cognition can be explained by his “will to contradiction and anti-nature,” as these and others are the drives that motivate Schopenhauer’s project of enquiry. In this way Nietzsche uses Schopenhauer’s own

¹³⁰ Janaway (2017).

theory about how ordinary cognition works to explain why he fabricates the concept of a pure subject of cognition.

Nietzsche seems think that not only Schopenhauer's concept of objectivity, but all philosophy can be similarly diagnosed as a symptom of underlying affective states. In *BGE* he famously states that "every great philosophy" has been "the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir" (*BGE* 6). He goes on to say that "anyone who considers the basic drives of man to see what extent they may have been at play just here as *inspiring* spirits (or demons and kobolds) will find that all of them have done philosophy at some time... For every drive wants to be master—and it attempts to philosophize in that spirit" (*BGE* 6). Just as Schopenhauer's ascetic self-contempt and anti-nature were the inspiring spirits that led him to posit the pure subject of cognition, behind other philosophical systems or worldviews lie other affective states. In this way, the claims that we make about ourselves and the world are often guided or shaped by the affects. This is even more so the case when it comes to great philosophical worldviews like those of the Stoics, Epicureans, or Spinoza, for example.¹³¹ Thus, Nietzsche says, "in the philosopher... there is nothing whatever that is impersonal..." and to "eliminate the will," as Nietzsche says in *GM* III 12, is to eliminate the "*inspiring* spirits" of every great philosophy and bring the activity to a standstill (*BGE* 6, *GM* III 12).

3.4.2 Prescriptive Claim: Affects Enhance Cognition

In this section I will argue that there are two ways in which the affects can enhance cognition, or make us better enquirers. First, Nietzsche thinks that feeling a variety of affects can help us develop the capacity to ask new and better questions. This is the case because doing so can acquaint us with the conditions and circumstances out of which morality has grown. Second, attending to our affects makes us better at calling our intuitions about a problem into question. Nietzsche thinks that when we do philosophy, we need to take into account the role of the drives and affects that are working in us. He calls this developing an "intellectual conscience" or a "conscience behind your 'conscience'" whose job is to call into question why "you feel something to be right" (*GS* 2, 335).

3.4.2.1 "A Will to Question Further..."

In *GM* III 12 Nietzsche contrasts a "future 'objectivity'" with the contradictory notion of objectivity as "disinterested contemplation." He says that this future objectivity consists in "the capacity to have one's pro and contra *in one's power*, and to shift them in and out: so that one knows how to make precisely the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge." He goes on to say:

¹³¹ *BGE* 7, 9.

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

These passages suggest that Nietzsche is putting forward a positive alternative to the Schopenhauerian conception of will-less, affect-less objectivity, one on which cognition can be enhanced by using the affects in a certain way.

As we noted earlier, this claim seems implausible if we attend to narrower epistemological concerns that focus on propositional knowledge. Katsafanas highlights these concerns in an example:

I am serving on a jury and must assess the case against an individual charged with murder.... I attempt to cultivate feelings of rage, indignation, sympathy, desire for revenge, desire for forgiveness, and so forth. Is this emotional tangle really going to help me to adjudicate the merits of the case, weigh the evidence, and achieve ‘better’ knowledge of the arguments on each side? That seems incredible.¹³²

As we have noted, Nietzsche does not seem to be concerned with propositional knowledge. It is unlikely that when he says “the more affects... we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter (*Sache*),” he means “one and the same proposition.”¹³³ In *GM III 12* Nietzsche does not mean to offer a methodology for answering questions like, “how do we know that X murdered Y,” rather, he means to tell us something about how we ought to enquire into a subject matter. Given the aims of the book outlined in the preface, one particular subject matter that he is likely to have in mind is morality, or “moral values,” and the “conditions and circumstances out of which they have grown” (*GM* preface 6).

Even with this clarification we are still left with a similar problem. How does the “emotional tangle” in the passage from Katsafanas help us gain knowledge about moral values? Multiplying the affects in this way still seems more liable to obscure rather than shed light on truths about morality. This is a significant challenge, and I think the best way to answer it is to appeal to Katsafanas’ own Nietzschean notion of an “affective interpretation.” Affective interpretations are complex affective states that structure our experience by determining which features of it will become salient. I want to suggest that when Nietzsche says that the affects can be made useful for knowledge, he has these complex affective states in mind. In this way, Nietzsche is not encouraging the reader to

¹³² Katsafanas (2013).

¹³³ Or, for that matter, one and the same “object” as Leiter says in “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*” (1994). Clark also suggests that what Nietzsche is talking about in this passage is physical objects (1990: 137).

enquire into a matter by cultivating discrete affective states like “rage, indignation, sympathy, desire for revenge” *ad nauseam*, but instead to strategically engage with a matter from various complex affective interpretations.

In the preface to *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche stresses the relation between a philosopher’s ideas and his physiological constitution. The passage echoes the one in *BGE* mentioned earlier in which Nietzsche says that the claims of great philosophers can be explained by underlying affective states. Here Nietzsche suggests how bringing more affects to bear on a matter can aid our enquiry into that matter. He says:

Only great pain...forces us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths and put aside all trust...I doubt that such pain makes us ‘better’—but I know that it makes us *deeper*. Whether we learn to pit our pride, our scorn, our willpower against it, like the savage who, however badly tormented, repays his tormentor with the malice of his tongue; or whether we withdraw before pain into Oriental nothingness—called Nirvana—into mute, rigid, deaf self-surrender, self-forgetting, self-extinction: one emerges from such dangerous exercises in self-mastery as a different person, with a few more question marks, above all with the *will* henceforth to question further, more deeply, severely, harshly, evilly, and quietly than one had previously questioned (*GS* preface 3).

In this passage Nietzsche describes how undergoing a “great pain” can make us into better enquirers, willing to question “more deeply” than before. The process seems to involve a kind of “self-mastery” in which one can “withdraw before pain into Oriental nothingness” as a kind of “dangerous exercise” and then emerge from that withdrawal at will. This Oriental nothingness seems to be itself a complex affective state involving “mute, rigid, deaf self-surrender, self-forgetting, self-extinction.” It seems to be the philosopher’s ability to inhabit affective states like this one and then move out of them, that makes them better at asking questions. Nietzsche’s preoccupation with our ability to ask good questions, rather than with getting answers, fits with his characterization of *Erkenntniss* as a kind of activity. Bringing more affective states to bear on a matter makes us better seekers after knowledge because it enables us to ask better questions.

The beginning of *GM* III 12 (which is not contained in the original long quotation) is strikingly similar to the passage from *The Gay Science* quoted above. Here he talks about:

The ascetics of the Vedânta philosophy” whose denial of the self was a “triumph!...no longer merely over the senses, over appearance, but a much higher kind of triumph, a violence and cruelty to *reason*: this reaches its peak when the ascetic self-contempt, self-derision or reason decrees: ‘there is a realm of truth and being, but precisely reason is *excluded* from it!’ (*GM* III 12).

After describing the ascetic philosophy in such terms, Nietzsche declares that “as knowers” we should “not be ungrateful toward such resolute reversals” of “familiar perspectives and valuations” (*GM III 12*). And then he goes into the now familiar part of the passage that lays out what I have argued are the two main claims of perspectivism.

When Nietzsche goes on to describe the “intellect’s...future ‘objectivity’” as “the capacity to have pro and contra *in one’s power*, and to shift them in and out” he seems to be describing something analogous to the “self-mastery” required for the “dangerous exercise” of withdrawing into “Oriental nothingness” and emerging with a “will... to question further” (*GM III 12, GS preface 3*). In this way, when Nietzsche talks about having “pro and contra in one’s power” he seems to be talking about the power to feel from the affective interpretation that gives rise to a philosophical position like Buddhistic “Nirvana” or Vedic asceticism. In this way, having the ability to switch in and out of different affective interpretations is useful for acquiring the kind of knowledge Nietzsche is after, namely knowledge of “the conditions and circumstances out of which” moral values have grown, because the affects largely constitute these conditions.

This reading seems close to the traditional reading that I was trying to avoid, on which Nietzsche’s perspectives are philosophical positions or claims, however my reading is crucially different. On my reading perspectives are the affective states that give rise to philosophical claims and claims about value. The closeness of these two views explains why commentators are tempted to describe perspectives as philosophical claims, however my reading avoids problems of self-refutation and better captures the way in which perspectives can be made useful for knowledge.¹³⁴ That is, given Nietzsche’s descriptive claim that *Erkenntniss* is guided and shaped by affects, and that affects serve as the “inspiring spirits” of philosophical claims and claims about value, the ability to feel from the affective interpretations that give rise to those claims gets us in touch with the conditions and circumstances out of which they have grown. Furthermore, becoming acquainted with the affective root of morality enables us to ask new questions about it. For example, we can “call them into question” by asking what is the “*value of these values*”? or by asking whether “a symptom of regression also lay in the ‘good,’ likewise a danger, a temptation, a poison, a narcotic through which perhaps the present were living *at the expense of the future*?” (*GM III 12*).

3.4.2.2 *The Intellectual Conscience*

One methodological implication of Nietzsche’s perspectivism is that we need to call our intuitions into question and not take them for granted when philosophizing. It is worth nothing that this is by no means a radical implication, and that it is consistent with the methodological orthodoxy in Western philosophy. I take this to be a welcome result. Nietzsche’s perspectivism has perennially

¹³⁴ It also better captures the *affective* dimension of Nietzschean perspectives. As rightly emphasized in Leiter (2002), Janaway (2007), Katsafanas (2016).

invited the charge of relativism. I argue, on the contrary, that perspectivism is in part an injunction to question one's intuitions in the pursuit of knowledge.

This interpretation is borne out by Nietzsche's characterisations of having an "intellectual conscience." In these passages Nietzsche champions "honesty" and "reason," indeed in *Gay Science* 319 he calls for "we *reason-thirsty* ones...to face our experience as sternly as we would a scientific experiment, hour by hour, day by day."¹³⁵ Far from relativism, Nietzsche encourages his readers to face up to their experiences honestly and to hold their views on the basis of good reasons. If perspectivism is a set of claims about how we ought to go about seeking knowledge, it would make sense for perspectivism to be bound up with Nietzsche's notion of "intellectual conscience."

Nietzsche describes the intellectual conscience as a "conscience behind your 'conscience'" and says that the great majority of individuals lack one. He claims that most people confidently go about "handling their scales, calling this 'good' and that 'evil'" without calling into questions whether the *scales themselves* are properly balanced. The intellectual conscience enjoins us to ask ourselves:

'What did I really experience? What was going on inside and around me? Was my reason bright enough? Was my will turned against all deceptions of the senses and stalwart in warding off the fantastic?' (GS 319)

It is again worth noting Nietzsche's endorsement of a kind of orthodoxy, he champions a "bright reason" capable of warding off fantastic deceptions. Again in GS 335 Nietzsche characterises the intellectual conscience as a capacity for "self-observation," particularly, observation of one's feelings. He claims:

You judgment, 'that is right' has a prehistory in your drives, inclinations, aversions, experience, and what you have failed to experience; you have to ask, 'how did it emerge there?' and then also, 'what is really impelling me to listen to it?'...that you feel something to be right may have its cause in your never having thought much about yourself and in your blindly having accepted what has been labelled *right* since your childhood (GS 335).

In all of Nietzsche's passages on the intellectual conscience he advises us to attend to our feelings and to question them, to examine the feelings that underlie our attachments to certain views, philosophical or otherwise.¹³⁶

In the same vein, Nietzsche remarks later in *BGE* that future philosophers will have to be in part critics who:

¹³⁵ GS 2, 319 (emphasis mine), 335.

¹³⁶ Having a conscience behind one's conscience can also help us ask better questions. In another passage on the intellectual conscience, GS 2, Nietzsche eloquently prioritizes the activity of *questioning* over finding answers.

Smile... if somebody should say in front of them: "This thought elevates me; how could it fail to be true?" Or: "This work delights me; how could it fail to be beautiful?" Or: "This artist makes me greater; how could he fail to be great?" (*BGE* 210).

In other words, the philosopher's feelings of "delight" or "elevation" should be treated as objects of suspicion and investigated rather than used as further support for their claims.

Nietzsche's talk in *GM* III 12 about *allowing affects to speak about*, or *bringing affects to bear on a problem* are vague. One thing he could mean here is that we simply need to attend or reflect on the affects we feel when we approach a subject matter. Given that my judgment "this is right" can have its prehistory in affects I "have failed to experience," Nietzsche may be encouraging his reader to not let affects slip by their conscious radar. We get a better sense of why we hold a given philosophical position when, instead of ignoring our affects, or letting them guide us unconsciously, we attend to them directly, "as sternly as we would a scientific experiment," and "bring them to bear" on the matter at hand (*GS* 319, *GM* III 12). For Nietzsche, we become better, more careful, enquirers when we understand the "prehistory" of our judgments, and we can do this by bringing our affects to bear on a matter.

Nietzsche seems to offer a specific example of why it is important to bring one's affects to bear on a matter in the preface to the *Genealogy*. Here he criticises Paul Rée's genealogical account of morality; Rée is a case of someone who has *failed* to bring their affects to bear on their particular matter of investigation. He rejects Christian explanations of value, but accepts what Nietzsche sees as the core of the Christian account of what is morally valuable, namely selflessness, compassion, or "the unegoistic."¹³⁷ Rée begins by accepting what Nietzsche sees as a modern prejudice or "Idée fixe," that the unegoistic has positive value, before he enquires into the history of morality (*GM* I 2). For Nietzsche this is a methodological error. It also betrays a lack of intellectual conscience. Rée accepted the voice of his conscience; that the unegoistic has positive value, without questioning that voice, he lacks a "conscience behind his conscience." If Rée had pressed his intuitions in the way that Nietzsche presses his readers' in the *Genealogy* then he would have found that he was not working on solid foundations. In this way, bringing more affects to bear on a matter can be a way of challenging our intuitions about it.

One of the most important upshots of bringing one's affects to bear on a matter is that the process can reveal important *ambiguities* in our moral feelings. Rée blinded himself to these ambiguities by neglecting to allow more of his affects to speak on his subject matter. In *GM* I 13, Nietzsche offers a short parable about lambs and birds of prey that is engineered precisely to draw out such

¹³⁷ Janaway (2007).

ambiguities. Here he offers a picture of the kind of “good” posited by a person in a state of *ressentiment* i.e. “the lamb”:

—That the lambs feel anger toward the great birds of prey does not strike us as odd: but that is no reason for holding it against the great birds of prey that they snatch up little lambs for themselves. And when the lambs say among themselves “these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is as little as possible a bird of prey but rather its opposite, a lamb,—isn’t he good?” there is nothing to criticise in this setting up of an ideal, even if the birds of prey should look on this a little mockingly and perhaps say to themselves: “we do not feel any anger towards them, these good lambs, as a matter of fact, we love them: nothing is more tasty than a tender lamb.”— (*GM I 13*).

Here, Nietzsche sheds a different light on what we tend to think of as our “virtues”: he recasts abstention from violence and retaliation, avoidance of evil, patience and humility, as the *prudence* of the weak, a kind of “playing dead” dressed up as something meritorious. Nietzsche’s parable is meant to show us that what the virtues of the powerless really are, without their clothing, is simply weakness expressing itself, the lamb expressing “his *essence*” (*GM I 13*). By ending this parable with a joke, Nietzsche encourages the reader to join in the birds’ light-hearted mockery at the expense of the lambs, in other words, he gets us to step outside of our ordinary set of values and *feel* from the point of view of the bird of prey.

Nietzsche plays with the fact that we can identify with both the lamb’s and the bird’s perspectives to some extent. We sympathize with the lambs’ unfortunate plight but we also admire the bird’s magnanimous appreciation of the lambs and their lack of anger toward them. Ordinarily, the bird’s cruelty might simply revolt us, but the humour of Nietzsche’s parable tempts us into a position from which the lamb’s struggle seems rather pathetic and the bird’s cruelty a natural and inevitable consequence of who they are. It primes us for the thought that “to demand of strength that it *not* express itself as strength...is just as nonsensical as to demand of weakness that it express itself as strength” (*GM I 13*).

In this way, Nietzsche’s story reveals ambiguities in our feelings about morality. While we may unreflectively feel that abstention from violence and retaliation are valuable, the parable urges us to question the strength of our commitment. Again, this can put us in a position to ask new questions about the values generated by *ressentiment*. When we have identified their affective root we can begin a “*critique of moral values*,” we can ask what the “*value of these values*” is. We can ask ourselves whether we want to remain beholden to values that have their root in reactive feelings of resentment and self-denial. The ability to step outside of one’s ordinary affective orientation, to have “pro and contra *in one’s power*, and to shift them in and out,” in other words, to embrace *perspectivism*, helps answer that question.

3.5 Conclusion

To conclude, I have argued that Nietzsche's perspectivism as set out in *GM* III 12 consists of two main claims, one descriptive and one prescriptive. The first claim describes the nature of enquiry. Enquiry is guided and shaped by the affects. For example, Schopenhauer's desire for redemption and resentment against a life of willing explain his philosophical theory of the pure subject of cognition. Nietzsche thinks that the claims of other great philosophers in the western and eastern philosophical traditions can be explained in a similar way.

The second is a prescriptive claim about how we ought to enquire given that the descriptive claim is true. It is the claim that we can enhance cognition by bringing more affects to bear on a matter. There are two reasons why this is the case. The first is that bringing more affects to bear on a matter such as morality can acquaint us with the conditions out of which moral values have grown. This enables us to ask better questions about morality, e.g. it enables us to question the "value of our values." The second is that it can reveal unnoticed ambiguities in our moral feelings. By allowing more affects to speak about a problem we can probe our intuitions about it and test whether we hold our views on the basis of good reasons.

CHAPTER FOUR: FREEDOM AND AFFECT

4.1 Introduction

Nietzsche often denies that we have freedom of the will. For example, most commentators agree that he rejects a conception of freedom on which we can be the complete cause of events, that is, on which we can cause events to happen without any causal input from entities outside of our empirical selves. He also criticises conceptions on which an agent could act differently in situations where the antecedent conditions surrounding her will remain the same.¹³⁸

Nevertheless, Nietzsche affirms that certain figures he admires are free in some respect. He praises Goethe as someone who has “become free,”¹³⁹ and he says that the “*sovereign individual*” is “autonomous and supermoral” and has “the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*.”¹⁴⁰ The passages in which Nietzsche affirms freedom suggest that he wants to offer an alternative conception to the ones he frequently criticises.

In order to resolve this tension, I propose, as others have,¹⁴¹ to limit the scope of Nietzsche’s attack on freedom to one specific kind, namely, what he calls in one instance: “superlative metaphysical freedom.” For Nietzsche, this is a moralized conception of freedom that is connected to notions of meriting reward and punishment. Rejecting superlative metaphysical freedom is part of Nietzsche’s broader attack on selfless, Christian morality. This leaves room for Nietzsche to develop an alternative conception of freedom, one that is demoralised and naturalistic, and that does not conflict with his vision of human psychology.

This chapter has two main parts. In part one I look at the kind of freedom that Nietzsche rejects. Nietzsche does not advance a positive position of his own within the traditional metaphysical debate about free will, but he does engage critically with it in order to show that a certain picture of free will is incoherent. He calls this picture “superlative metaphysical freedom” (*BGE* 21). This kind of freedom requires that the agent be the sole cause of her actions, and that external factors have no casual input. Nietzsche’s attack on this picture has three prongs. First, he endeavours to

¹³⁸ Poellner (2009).

¹³⁹ *TI* Skirmishes 49.

¹⁴⁰ *GM* II 2.

¹⁴¹ Gemes (2009) “Nietzsche on Freedom, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual,” Katsafanas (2016), Kirwin (2018).

show that it is incoherent. Second, he gives psychological diagnoses of the origins of the concept. For example, he argues that it was fabricated in order to hold people responsible for their actions. Third, he gives an explanation for why we feel *as if* it is possible to have freedom in the superlative metaphysical sense. Nietzsche's engagement with the traditional metaphysical debate does not extend further than his rejection of superlative metaphysical freedom. He does not engage with any more moderate positions on free will, and his positive picture of freedom does not resemble other views within this debate.

In part two I turn to Nietzsche's positive account. When Nietzsche talks positively about freedom he describes it as an ideal. Thus, freedom is not something metaphysically or evolutionarily built into us, but something that certain people can attain. In this respect, Nietzsche is not alone in the history of philosophy. Rutherford points out that Spinoza and the Stoics both advanced conceptions of freedom on which freedom can be possessed only by certain rare individuals.¹⁴²

I argue that Nietzschean freedom is a kind of self-determination. More specifically, it involves determining oneself according to values that are consistent with the conditions of one's flourishing. For Nietzsche, I take "flourishing" to be a state in which, in shorthand, an individual can "vent its power completely and attain its maximum in the feeling of power" (*GM III 7*).

Two questions immediately arise from this characterisation. Firstly, does the imposition of *any* value upon oneself make one free, or is there a privileged set of free-making values? And secondly, what makes something count as a case of genuine "self-determination"?

To answer the first question, I strike a middle position in between Robert Guay and Paul Katsafanas' two more extreme views. According to Guay, there are no constraints on the values we can impose upon ourselves, and according to Katsafanas, the values we impose upon ourselves must be consistent with the "will to power." For Katsafanas, this means that traditionally Christian values like compassion are incompatible with freedom. I argue that while there are no *universal* constraints on value (e.g. will to power), there are particular constraints that arise from each individual's unique psychology. The values that enable one to flourish are the one's under which one can count as free. The relevant constraints will vary from person to person, and there is no need to rule out individual Christian values from the autonomous life.

To answer the second question, I argue that *genuine* self-determination involves more than reflectively judging that something is valuable. It involves a change at the level of one's drives, and this change can be effected by a process of self-artistry. In chapter two I argued that valuations are affective orientations induced by one's strongest drives. In this way, one's values are a direct consequence of the structure of one's drives. By altering the hierarchy of one's drives, letting some

¹⁴² Rutherford (2011).

grow and others wither so that the balance of power between them shifts, we can alter our evaluative stances toward things. Nietzsche's calls this process of drive manipulation, "self-artistry," and self-artistry is the means by which Nietzsche thinks we can create new values and become free.

4.2 Part One: The Negative Project

Nietzsche's negative remarks are not divorced from his positive remarks. As Richardson and Kirwin rightly emphasize, Nietzsche's claims about freedom form a unified project, he tells us what freedom is not in order to draw out what it really is.¹⁴³ Nietzsche's attack on free will has three prongs. Firstly, he argues that a conception of free will in a "superlative metaphysical sense" is incoherent. Secondly, he gives psychological diagnoses of the origins of this concept. Foremost of these is the claim that this conception free will was fabricated in order to hold others responsible for their actions. Thirdly, he endeavours to show why we feel *as if* we have free will in this incoherent sense. Keeping these lines of argument separate can help make sense of Nietzsche's many-pronged attack on free will.

4.2.1 First Prong: The Incoherence of Free Will

Nietzsche claims that freedom of the will in a "superlative metaphysical sense" is incoherent because it requires that the agent be a "*causa sui*," and the idea of a *causa sui* is self-contradictory. In *BGE* 21, he borrows a metaphor from Schopenhauer in order to denounce the idea of a self-causing will, the *causa sui*. He claims:

The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has ever been conceived, a type of logical rape and abomination. But humanity's excessive pride has got itself profoundly and horribly entangled with precisely this piece of nonsense. The longing for "freedom of the will" in the superlative metaphysical sense (which, unfortunately, still rules in the heads of the half-educated), the longing to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for your actions yourself and to relieve God, world, ancestors, chance, and society of the burden—all this means nothing less than being that very *causa sui* and, with a courage greater than Münchhausen's, pulling yourself by the hair from the swamp of nothingness up into existence. Suppose someone sees through the boorish naiveté of this famous concept of "free will" and manages to get it out of his mind; I would then ask him to carry his "enlightenment" a step further and to rid his mind

¹⁴³ Kirwin (2018), Richardson (2009).

of the reversal of this misconceived concept of “free will”: I mean the “un-free will,” which is basically an abuse of cause and effect (*BGE* 21).

This key passage has been used to support a variety of different interpretations. Leiter argues that Nietzsche is straightforwardly denying that we have freedom of the will. According to Leiter, Nietzsche argues that freedom requires being a *causa sui*, and since nothing can be *causa sui*, we do not have freedom.¹⁴⁴ This reading has been challenged. Other commentators draw attention to the last sentence of the passage in which Nietzsche denies “the reversal of this misconceived concept of ‘free will’ ... the ‘un-free will,’ which is basically an abuse of cause and effect.” Nietzsche’s denial of “unfreedom” in addition to freedom suggests that he is doing something different from straightforwardly denying freedom of the will. Some commentators have argued that Nietzsche does not mean to engage in the traditional metaphysical debate, but instead to diagnose the psychological conditions that lead us to propose and accept extreme metaphysical theories about the will’s relationship to the world.

This reading is partially correct, but it does not capture all that Nietzsche is up to in this passage, for one, it does not explain why Nietzsche labels the *causa sui* “self-contradictory”. This charge amounts to something more than psychological diagnosis. Furthermore, since these psychological diagnoses constitute the second prong of Nietzsche’s attack, I will briefly postpone discussion of them.

What makes this passage unique is the focus on the incoherence of a concept of freedom. Nietzsche’s evocation of Baron Münchhausen bears this other dimension of his criticism out. He takes this metaphor from Schopenhauer, who calls the farcical image of Münchhausen “the right emblem of the *causa sui*.”¹⁴⁵ For Nietzsche this image is meant to illustrate the absurdity of “superlative metaphysical freedom,” a kind of freedom in which the agent is the sole cause of action and external factors like “God, world, ancestors, chance, and society” have no causal input. This kind of freedom is akin to Münchhausen pulling himself, and his horse, out of a swamp by his own pigtails. As Kirwin rightly emphasises, the story is not meant to illustrate a simple feat of strength, rather it portrays a misunderstanding of the nature of strength. By analogy, superlative metaphysical freedom represents a misunderstanding of the nature of freedom. It is a kind of freedom we could not possibly have because it is absurd.

After denouncing freedom as absurd, one might expect Nietzsche to simply claim that we are not free, however this is not what he does. Rather, since superlative metaphysical freedom is something

¹⁴⁴ Leiter (2002).

¹⁴⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*. He also invokes the story of an Austrian, who upon finding himself unable to reach the clasp of his high Shako hat, stood on a chair.

we could not possibly have, it is not something we could be said to meaningfully lack either. Thus, Nietzsche proceeds by specifying the incoherence in “the reversal of this misconceived concept of ‘free will’... the ‘un-free will,’ which is basically an abuse of cause and effect.” Both errors (that of the free will and the unfree will) are rooted in the same mistake about cause and effect. This is the naturalistic tendency to “objectify” [*verdinglichen*]¹⁴⁶ causes, and to think of them as things that “press and push” until they “effect” some end (*BGE* 21).¹⁴⁷ This involves thinking of causes as *forces* that move things around and make things happen.¹⁴⁸ Those who claim that the will is unfree picture human beings at the mercy of these forces, pushed and pulled about by the whims of various causal connections. In order to be free, human action must come from somewhere outside of this causal order. In other words, the only way to break free from the constraint of these forces would be if we could generate them *ourselves* ex nihilo, i.e. be a *causa sui*. Those who accept determinism agree with Nietzsche that we cannot be *causa sui*, but since they do not recognise the concept as incoherent they conclude on this basis that human beings simply lack freedom.

Nietzsche’s rejection of unfreedom rests on his rejection its picture of cause and effect. He sees causes not as forces that push until they achieve an effect, but rather as “pure *concepts*, which is to say as conventional fictions for the purpose of description and communication, *not* explanation.” He claims that “in the ‘in-itself’ there is nothing like ‘causal association’” (*BGE* 21). Nietzsche often describes reality as a “whole” or “continuum” that we can usefully carve up by describing in terms of cause and effect, even if resultant picture does not accurately map onto the world (*TI* Errors 8, *GS* 112, *D* 112). We are part of a whole that we artificially carve up into various centres of force; doing anything at all is only possible *within* it, being part of the whole is a precondition for acting. To desire to be outside of the causal order, to be a *causa sui*, is to desire to be other than what we are, and to make action impossible. In this sense, we are not “unfree” either, we are not buffeted around by alien forces beyond our control, rather, we exist as part of the whole and can only act within it.

Both superlative metaphysical freedom, and its reverse, unfreedom, claim that in order to be free our actions must arise from outside of the “whole” or “continuum” rather than from within it. This is unacceptable, for Nietzsche. As we will see, on his alternative account of freedom, free persons are ones that embrace and see themselves as acting within this whole.

¹⁴⁶ Hollingdale translates *verdinglichen* as “objectify,” Kaufman as “reify.”

¹⁴⁷ He attributes this error to: “natural scientists (or whoever else thinks “naturalistically” these days) in accordance with the dominant mechanistic stupidity...” (*BGE* 21).

¹⁴⁸ Relevant here is Nietzsche’s claim that “The belief in the will as the cause of effects is the belief in forces that work by magic” (*GS* 127).

4.2.2 Second Prong: Psychological Diagnoses

As we saw in the previous section, *BGE* 21 incorporates two prongs of Nietzsche's attack on free will. Thus, in addition to claiming that "superlative metaphysical freedom" is self-contradictory, Nietzsche also offers some psychological diagnoses to explain why people are tempted to accept this conception of freedom. Janaway draws our attention to the way in which *BGE* 21 involves "flushing out an underlying affective state—'*the longing for "freedom of the will" in the superlative metaphysical sense*'—and hypothesizing an explanation for its genesis and persistence."¹⁴⁹ Nietzsche's claim that free will is incoherent and his psychological diagnoses of the concept's origins are interwoven, but the bulk of his psychologizing comes toward the end of the section. Here he claims:

It is almost always a symptom of what is lacking in himself when a thinker sees in every 'causal connection' and 'psychological necessity' something of constraint, need, compulsion to obey, pressure, and unfreedom; it is suspicious to have such feelings—the person betrays himself. And in general, if I have observed correctly, the 'unfreedom of the will' is regarded as a problem from two entirely opposite standpoints, but always in a profoundly personal manner: some will not give up their 'responsibility,' their belief in themselves, the personal right to their merits at any price (the vain races belong to this class). Others, on the contrary, do not wish to be answerable for anything, or blamed for anything, and owing to inward self-contempt, seek to lay the blame for themselves somewhere else. The latter, when they write books, are in the habit today of taking the side of criminals; a sort of socialist pity is their most attractive disguise (*BGE* §21).

Here Nietzsche claims that there are two psychological reasons that drive people to posit the concept of free will in the superlative metaphysical sense. They posit it so that they can affirm or deny that they have it. People *affirm* that they have freedom because it allows them to indulge their vanity. They can feel as if they are wholly responsible for who they are and what they do, and that external forces have no causal input on their behaviour. It is attractive to other people because *denying* freedom allows them to forsake responsibility for who they are. They feel contempt for themselves and embrace determinism because it allows them to avoid feeling blameworthy. Note that both parties accept the same picture of freedom, but disagree as to whether we actually have it.

These remarks are connected to another prominent psychological reason for positing free will. Namely, it allows people to hold *others* responsible for their actions, and it can be used to justify

¹⁴⁹ Janaway (2007: 115).

punishment. In *TI Errors* 7, Nietzsche claims that free will is “the shadiest trick theologians have up their sleeves for making humanity ‘responsible’ in their sense of the term... the notion of will was essentially designed with punishment in mind, which is to say the desire to *assign guilt*.” This theme receives extended treatment in the *Genealogy*. It is in the interest of some (“the priests at the head of the ancient community”) to posit free will because it makes others “*dependent on them*,” it creates new rights by granting a certain class of people the authority to judge and punish others (*TI Errors* 7). Thus, Nietzsche recognises a host of desires and interests that encourage people to posit and accept an extreme picture of freedom.

4.2.3 Third Prong: Why We Feel as If We Have Superlative Metaphysical Freedom

On the face of things, it is unusual that so many human beings are tempted by an incoherent picture of freedom.¹⁵⁰ It would seem that our psychological desire to hold people responsible would be in strong tension with our desire to make true claims. However, we happily attribute freedom to ourselves, despite the incoherence of the concept. Nietzsche recognises that one of the reasons why we are so strongly tempted to posit freedom is because we often feel as if we have it. This line of argument is bound up with Nietzsche’s remarks on the phenomenology of willing, especially in *BGE* 19.

Nietzsche begins *BGE* 19 by making some claims about willing in general as a criticism of Schopenhauer’s doctrine that the will is fundamentally simple and the only thing that is really “familiar through and through.” Nietzsche contends that willing is something “complicated” and not easily known to us. He claims that “in every act of willing” there is a plurality of feelings. Among these are feelings “away from which” and “toward which” as well as bodily feelings like the moving of muscles. In addition to these feelings there is also “thought.” Thus, he claims “in every act of willing there is a commandeering thought.” Above all of this is what Leiter calls the “meta-feeling” of the affect of command. Thus, Nietzsche seems to attribute a roughly tripartite structure to willing. First, there is the experience of bodily movement. If willing were nothing more than this then we would truly be strangers to ourselves, we would feel as if we passively observed our bodily movements. Thus, there must also a commanding thought, e.g. “go to the shelf,” “pick up the book,” “turn the page,” etc.... These two features would still not be enough for willing. If it were then we would feel as if we were predicting our actions, we would think something like “go to the shelf,” and then perhaps be surprised to observe that we actually do. Thus, there is a third element, the “affect of command.” It’s not just that we express a command, we *feel* that we are commanding

¹⁵⁰ Although the number of people actually tempted may be contentious.

something that obeys. As Leiter glosses the passage, we feel that the commandeering thought brings about the bodily movements, or we feel that the body is obeying the thought. This affect connects the commandeering thought to the feeling of bodily movement and completes Nietzsche's picture of willing.

If we construe the scope of Nietzsche's phenomenology broadly, as applying to all voluntary bodily movements, then there seem to be too many counter-example to his account of willing. Clark & Dudrick insist that in garden variety actions we do not ordinarily detect the complex of feeling that Nietzsche claims is present in willing. Neither does it seem plausible that we consciously experience an "affect of command" every time we perform even mundane actions. Clark & Dudrick address this problem by claiming that Nietzsche has a different paradigm of willing in mind, namely, actions performed in opposition to temptation.¹⁵¹ They claim that his paradigm act of will takes place in situations of psychic struggle in which a person must choose between alternatives and feels pulled in opposite directions. What interests Nietzsche here is the feeling of exercising what we might call "willpower." Thus, when Nietzsche repeatedly insists that "every" act of will has his tripartite structure, he is referring to every act within this narrower paradigm. Clark & Dudrick are right to restrict Nietzsche's paradigm in this way. Nevertheless, I believe there is a comfortable middle ground in between Leiter and Clark & Dudrick's positions. This is because *every* action, for Nietzsche, does involve psychic conflict and struggle, even if we are not consciously aware of it.¹⁵² In every action, some drives are denied satisfaction so that another may achieve it. Thus, the tripartite structure *does* occur in every instance of willing, in some instances this structure is unconscious and in others it is conscious. What Nietzsche is considering in *BGE* 19 is cases in which this struggle comes to the fore, and we consciously feel the pull of our conflicting drives. It is cases like these in which we are most likely to attribute to ourselves superlative metaphysical freedom.

Nietzsche goes on to identify "freedom of the will" in the mistaken sense with the third component of willing, namely, the "affect of command." He thinks that we falsely interpret the affect of command as the feeling of free will. This is why, in *BGE* 21, he lists "freedom" as one of the things that "we" invented. He claims in *BGE* 19:

The will is not just a complex of feeling and thinking; rather, it is fundamentally an *affect*: and specifically the affect of the command. What is called "freedom of the will" is essentially the affect of superiority with respect to something that must obey: I am free, 'it' must obey" — this consciousness lies in every will... "Freedom of the will" — that is the word

¹⁵¹ Clark and Dudrick (2009: 251).

¹⁵² *D* 115, *D* 119.

for the multi-faceted state of pleasure of one who commands and, at the same time, identifies himself with the accomplished act of willing (*BGE* 19).

Here Nietzsche seems to have the same “superlative metaphysical freedom” from *BGE* 21 in his sights. He is criticising a conception of freedom on which “willing *suffices* for action,” while other external constraints are irrelevant (*BGE* 19). Nietzsche is giving an explanation for why we feel as if willing alone can suffice for action. It is possible to feel this way because we are composed of a plurality of forces that Nietzsche calls drives. In every action there is a commanding and an obeying party, that is, one drive, or a group of drives, presents itself as stronger than the rest and they must follow in the pursuit of its aim. Thus, whenever we act, one of our drives holds the others at bay. In this sense, Nietzsche’s picture of willing in general is analogous to cases in which we resist temptation, some drives are refused satisfaction so that a stronger drive may be satisfied.

Because we are capable of holding some of our drives at bay, we are tempted to think that it is possible in principle to hold *all* of our drives at bay, and that this is what it is to act freely. To act in this way would be to act entirely without constraint and apart from inclination. This temptation is bolstered by the illusion that the “will,” or the “I,” is something separate from the drives. The temptation is to think that I can “will” contrary to all of my inclinations. This error is brought out in a discussion of what is going on when we constrain our drives in *Daybreak* 109, in which Nietzsche claims:

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

For Nietzsche, even though every action involves curtailing *some* of our drives, it is not possible to curtail *all* of them and still act. This is because what is doing the curtailing is not something over and above the drives, but another, stronger, drive. In *BGE* 19 Nietzsche describes how we identify with our strongest drive and reinterpret it by positing it as our “will” or “the synthetic concept ‘I’”, a unified entity that exists over and above the other drives (*BGE* 19). Because we interpret our strongest drive as our will, we feel as if we have won out over *all* our inclinations. In reality, the strongest inclination has won out over the weaker ones. Furthermore, because we feel that it is possible in principle to act without the influence of any drives or inclinations, we believe that superlative metaphysical freedom is possible. The metaphor of Baron Münchhausen also applies here. If someone were to hold all of their drives at bay then in order to act they would be required, like Münchhausen, to accomplish the impossible feat of pulling themselves up by the hair “from the swamp of nothingness into existence” (*BGE* 19).

4.2.3.1 Summary

This concludes the negative part of Nietzsche's account of freedom. He attacks a conception on which being free requires that the agent be the sole cause of her actions, and that external factors have no casual input. He sometimes calls this conception "superlative metaphysical freedom." Nietzsche's attack on this picture has three prongs.

First, he endeavours to show that it is incoherent. He claims that superlative metaphysical freedom requires the free agent to become a "*causa sui*." In other words, free actions must come from outside the wider causal order of things, they must be generated by the agent *ex nihilo*. For Nietzsche, acting is only possible *within* this order.

Second, he gives psychological diagnoses of the origins of the concept. He gives at least three diagnoses. First of all, he claims that people accept the picture of superlative metaphysical freedom so that they can affirm that they have it. Such people are "vain" and want to take sole responsibility for who they are. They desire to take responsibility away from chance, culture, or upbringing. Secondly, people accept the picture so that they can *deny* that they have it. Such people want to *avoid* being responsible for who they are. Thirdly, he argues that it was fabricated in order to hold *other* people responsible for their actions. In this sense, it is a means for controlling others.

Finally, he gives an explanation for why we feel *as if* it is possible to have freedom in the superlative metaphysical sense. Certain features of the phenomenology of willing, namely the "affect of command," tempt us into thinking that freedom in the superlative metaphysical sense is possible. Nietzsche does not consider whether any more moderate conceptions of metaphysical freedom are possible, and so his engagement with the debate on free will ends with his rejection of metaphysical freedom of the "superlative" kind. As I show in part two, his positive picture of freedom veers in another direction from other views within this debate.

4.3 Part Two: The Positive Project

In part two I argue that Nietzsche takes freedom to involve self-determination. I argue that *genuine* self-determination involves a change at the level of the drives. Nietzsche thinks this can be achieved via a process he calls "self-artistry." Furthermore, it is not sufficient to impose *any* value upon oneself. The values one imposes must be ones that are consistent with the conditions of one's individual flourishing. Thus, freedom involves determining oneself according to values that enable one to flourish, values that are tailored specifically to one's drives and affects. Self-artistry is the *means* by which individuals can attain freedom, which is a state in which the individual is

determined by values that promote their individual flourishing. Self-artistry is a process that turns the individual into a kind of work of art and allows them to see themselves as beautiful.

The account of Nietzschean freedom sketched above consists of two main claims. I begin by defending the claim that in order to be free, that the values one imposes on oneself must be consistent with the conditions under which one flourishes. After that, I defend the claim that “genuinely” imposing values on oneself involves a change at the level of the drives, and that this change can be achieved via a process of self-artistry.

To stake out my first claim I strike a middle position in between Robert Guay and Katsafanas’ two more extreme views. According to Guay, there are no constraints on the values we can impose upon ourselves. Thus, when he asks, “by virtue of which constraints is it possible to construe ourselves as free?” he answers that “nothing could possibly be decisive in resolving these matters. There can be no *a priori* determination of the content of freedom...”¹⁵³ Katsafanas contends that if freedom did not rule out any values, then it would be empty. He proposes that an agent is autonomous if she acts on values that have been revaluated in terms of will to power. So an agent is free if she acts on values that are consistent with will to power.¹⁵⁴ For Katsafanas, this means that freedom is inconsistent with traditional, Christian values. My view aims to capture what is right in both Guay and Katsafanas’ views. Thus, I argue that Guay is right that there can be no *a priori* determination of the content of freedom, however, *contra* Guay, that we *can* determine which values are conducive to an individual’s freedom *a posteriori*. The values that are conducive to an individual’s freedom are the ones that are consistent with the conditions of her flourishing. Katsafanas is right that freedom *does* rule out certain values, however the values it rules out will vary from person to person. On my view, freedom rules out values *for the agent*, but not *simpliciter*. The values that enable one to flourish are the one’s under which one can count as free, and everyone flourishes under at least slightly different conditions. Thus, *contra* Katsafanas, we should not categorically rule out traditional Christian values from the autonomous life.

My answer to the second question fleshes out my picture of Nietzschean freedom. I argue that genuine self-determination requires that one undergo a process of what Nietzsche calls “self-artistry” or “giving style to one’s character.” Such a process allows one to genuinely adopt values because it effects a change at the level of the *drives*.

This part of the chapter has three main sections. In section 4.3.1 I bolster a common refrain in the literature that Nietzsche does not seem interested in providing answers to traditional problems about free will. I do this by showing how his positive remarks about freedom are always about free *persons* rather than free *actions*. Nietzsche is interested in identifying a psychological type rather

¹⁵³ Guay (2002: 310)

¹⁵⁴ Katsafanas (2016: 246).

than in specifying the conditions under which an action counts as free. In sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 I flesh out my account of Nietzschean freedom. In part two I argue that Nietzschean freedom involves self-determination, and strike a middle position in between Guay and Katsafanas' accounts. In part three I argue that genuine self-determination involves self-artistry.

4.3.1 Free Persons v. Free Actions

Commentators often describe Nietzsche's aims as being different in some way from the traditional metaphysical debates about freedom of the will. One feature of his remarks on freedom that bears this out is that he rarely talks of free *actions* and almost always of free *persons*. The traditional debate is primarily concerned with the freedom to *act*, which involves, at a minimum the ability to choose how to act. Within this debate freedom involves the possibility to do otherwise, or to refrain from doing something. This kind of freedom would be threatened if the universe were physically predetermined by prior causes, as certain views about physics and causation suggest it is. If the universe in general were determined in this way it would seem that our bodies, as physical things in the universe, are also determined by prior causes. If actions involve the body then it seems that our actions are determined by prior causes as well, which would mean that we cannot act otherwise than as we do, and thus that there are no free actions. There are familiar, compatibilist, ways of resolving this problem however the fact that Nietzsche talks of free *persons* rather than free actions suggests that he is not interested in engaging with these solutions or in putting forth one of his own.

Nietzsche's discussions of freedom tend to centre on an ideal type of person. For example, from *Human, All Too Human* to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche's discussions of freedom are dominated by the figure of the "free spirit." In book II of the *Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche talks about the "sovereign individual." Sometimes Nietzsche also describes individual persons, rather than types, as free, for example, his own Zarathustra, Goethe, and in one instance, Christ (A 54, TI "Skirmishes" 40, A 40). What makes these people, or types, free isn't that their actions are free, rather it is something about how they are internally constituted, some fact about their psychology that differentiates them from other people. In what follows I will specify this fact, namely that they are determined by conditions that promote their flourishing.

4.3.2 Freedom as Self-Determination

From the *Gay Science* onward, Nietzsche begins to associate freedom with self-determination more explicitly.¹⁵⁵ For example, in book V of *The Gay Science* he says:

One could conceive of a delight and power of self-determination, a *freedom* of the will, in which the spirit takes leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, practised as it is in maintaining itself on light ropes and possibilities and dancing even beside abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence (GS 347, emphases original).

He suggests earlier in the book that strong natures can approach freedom by “being bound by but also perfected under their own law” (GS 290). Again in section 335 he claims “We, however, want to *become who we are*—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves!” In the 1886 preface to *Human, All Too Human*, he speaks of a “will to self-determination, to evaluating on one’s own account, this will to *free will*” (HH preface 3). Finally, in the *Genealogy* Nietzsche describes the “sovereign individual” as “resembling only himself, free again from the morality of custom, autonomous and supermoral (for “autonomous” and “moral” are mutually exclusive)” and as possessing his own “*standard of value*” (GM II 2). On this point, the sovereign individual harkens back to Nietzsche’s earlier conception of the free spirit. Like the free spirit, the sovereign individual is capable of regulating his own behaviour without the external influence of custom, tradition, or fear of punishment. Both figures represent a freedom *from* tradition. Neither of them blindly accepts the values they are born into. The free spirit selects her value on the basis of reasons, and the sovereign individual is likewise her own “*standard of value*.”¹⁵⁶ However, if the free individual sets her own standard, without reliance on tradition or custom, can she set *any* standard for herself? Does freedom consist in merely living up to one’s own standard?

In what follows I will argue that there *are* constraints on the values on which it is possible to construe oneself as free. Thus, one cannot simply impose *any* value upon oneself and thereby become free. The values one imposes upon oneself must be constrained by facts about one’s psychology and physiology, i.e. facts about one’s drives and affects.¹⁵⁷ These facts determine the conditions under which one flourishes.¹⁵⁸ This position comes close to Katsafanas’ view, on which values are constrained by will to power, however, Katsafanas goes wrong in claiming that the standard of will to power categorically prohibits certain values from being endorsed by the autonomous person. On his view, freedom is incompatible with selfless or Christian values. I argue that this is not the case. Freedom can result from any self-imposed value so long as the value is

¹⁵⁵ Many commentators have noted the connection between freedom and self-determination: Guay (2002), Rutherford (2011), Anderson (2013), Tubert (2015), Katsafanas (2016).

¹⁵⁶ HH 230, GM II 2.

¹⁵⁷ In other words, they are constrained by what Leiter calls a person’s “type-facts” (2002: 8-10).

¹⁵⁸ May (2009) also stresses this aspect of Nietzschean freedom: “the free person gets to know what he wants and needs in order to flourish” (2009: 90-1).

constrained by facts about the individual's drives and affects. One virtue of my view is that it accommodates Guay's thought that Nietzschean freedom is something quite radically *open*. Since different individuals can have radically different psychological profiles, and flourish under different conditions, freedom can manifest itself in many different ways. This explains why Nietzsche describes Christ as free, even though he values compassion and selflessness.¹⁵⁹ It is not insignificant that Nietzsche describes Christ, Buddha, other "ascetics" as free-spirits, and any account of Nietzschean freedom should be able to explain these apparent anomalies (A 40, GM III7).¹⁶⁰

In order to support his position that freedom rules out certain values, Katsafanas appeals to the passage quoted above in which Nietzsche describes the sovereign individual as "free again from the morality of custom, autonomous and supermoral (for "autonomous" and "moral" are mutually exclusive)". For Katsafanas, the parenthetical remark implies that freedom rules out the values of traditional morality, by which he means Christian morality. However, when Nietzsche says that "'autonomous' and 'moral' are mutually exclusive," he seems to have in mind not Christian morality, but the "morality of custom" to which he refers earlier in the sentence. Indeed, nowhere does Nietzsche claim that freedom rules out specific Christian values like compassion, benevolence, or loving kindness. It is significant that the morality of custom largely *predates* Christian morality. Nietzsche refers to it as "*prehistoric work*" that consisted of "hardness, tyranny, mindlessness, and idiocy," and that finally resulted in our capacity to promise (GM II 2). The purpose of the morality of custom was to socialise human beings, to make them "predictable" by impressing upon them simple rules. These rules were inculcated via a long and painful process, the "*mnemo-technique*" of the morality of custom follows the principle "only what does not cease to *give pain* remains in one's memory" (GM II 2).

Although the morality of custom paved the way for Christian ethics, it is evident that it is far removed from it as well. It is a hard, cruel, and tyrannical practice. Furthermore, it is precisely this hard and tyrannical practice, rather than any particular Christian values, that Nietzsche thinks is incompatible with freedom. It is clear why this is the case. The morality of custom is a socialising power that aims at conformity and the suppression of individuality. Indeed, the point of GM II 2 is to show how it is possible for the sovereign individual to emerge as the "fruit" of the morality of custom by overcoming it. It is only after mankind has undergone a long and brutal process of socialisation, which allows for the development of "conscience" and "memory," that the sovereign individual can throw off the yoke of custom and stake her conscience on her own standard of value. This matches up with what Katsafanas says elsewhere about freedom. He claims that the ordinary

¹⁵⁹ A 32, 40.

¹⁶⁰ These cases also tell against an important claim in Katsafanas' project: namely that autonomy requires being "subjected to the process of revaluation" (2016: 233).

individual must rely on “external sanctions and customs” in order to keep to an end, while the free individual is necessitated by “internal factors.”¹⁶¹ This is precisely why the morality of custom is incompatible with freedom. It uses external sanctions and customs to painstakingly inculcate five or six “I will nots” into an uncooperative populace. The free person manages to hold themselves to their own self-imposed “I will nots” without the help of external sanction.

The claim that an autonomous person cannot embrace particular values held by proponents of slave morality, like compassion or selflessness, does not follow from Nietzsche’s criticisms of slave morality. To this end, Nietzsche says in *Daybreak* 110,

It goes without saying that I do not deny—unless I am a fool—that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged—but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*.

Nietzsche does not mean to categorically prohibit actions or values that the slaves would consider moral from his ideal of flourishing. Finally, it is worth noting that there was at least one person who *was* able to genuinely determine himself according to selfless values, namely, Christ.¹⁶² In *The Anti-Christ* Nietzsche praises Christ by admiring “the exemplary character of dying in this way, the freedom, the superiority over every feeling of *ressentiment*” (A 40). Christ did *not* suffer from *ressentiment*, he was not slavish, and his values were *not* reactive, but active. Christ devised a way of life attuned to the conditions under which he flourished. It is an extreme way of life, “*Not to defend yourself, not to get angry, not to lay blame...But not to resist evil either,—to love it...*” and Nietzsche thinks it is suited to very few. Although “a life like this is *still* possible today,” in fact “the people who have been called Christian for 2,000 years, are just a psychological misunderstanding” “there was really only one Christian, and he died on the cross” (A 39). Christ was the only true Christian because he *lived* Christianity as practice. For Christ, the “truths” of his doctrine were not based on reasons, but rather on an “inner ‘light,’ inner feelings of pleasure and self-affirmation,” it was a way of life suited particularly to *him* (A 32). It is not implausible to claim that Christ achieved freedom via a process of Nietzschean self-artistry, although I will not defend this here.¹⁶³ People who, unlike Christ, *did* have strong drives, i.e. the slaves and ascetic priests, but were unable to express those drives because they were oppressed by a stronger class, seized on Christ’s way of life and prescribed it universally as a means of reining in the drives of their oppressors. It is only here that Christ’s values become *reactive* and incompatible with freedom.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Katsafanas (2016: 230-1).

¹⁶² A 40. Nietzsche also refers to “Buddha” and other “ascetics” as “free spirits” in *GM III 7*.

¹⁶³ Ridley makes this point in the introduction to *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and other writings*, p. xxv, and (2018: 143-142). For further discussion of Christ as free spirit, see chapter 6.

¹⁶⁴ I discuss Christ’s freedom further in 6.3.

I have now given a sense of the kinds of values that are compatible with freedom. I have argued that *any* value is, so long as it is compatible with the flourishing of the individual who endorses it. In the following section I look at what it means to “genuinely impose” values upon oneself. For Nietzsche, really valuing something requires more than reflectively judging that it is valuable. It involves a change at the level of the drives. This change can be effected by a process of self-artistry, or what Nietzsche would also call “giving style to one’s character” (GS 290).

4.3.3 Self-Artistry as *Genuine* Self-Determination

Nietzsche often talks about freedom in relation to a kind of skill, being free seems to require a certain kind of *mastery*. In this section I will argue that the kind of skill Nietzsche has in mind is what he calls self-artistry.¹⁶⁵ Self-artistry involves “masterly assurance” with a set of constraints, I will argue that these constraints are one’s own drives and affects. The ability to master one’s drives and to shape them into an artistic product is the means by which one can attain Nietzschean freedom. Because freedom involves skill, it can come in *degrees*, the more skilful one is the higher the degree of freedom one can attain. Nietzsche thinks that the *more* constraints one imposes on oneself, the higher the degree of freedom possible. This also makes freedom something historically variable.¹⁶⁶ Nietzsche insists that human beings have acquired more and more drives throughout their history. If this is the case then the number of constraints that the self-artist has to master in order to become free can increase over time, thereby increasing the amount of skilfulness required for her to successfully engage in self-artistry. In this way, the quality and character of freedom can vary; human beings in the 19th century were capable of much higher degrees of freedom than prehistoric humans.

Ridley points out that there are two sets of constraints at play in the process of self-artistry. On the one hand, there is the form that is imposed on oneself, and on the other, the elements of one’s character, which resist having form imposed upon them.¹⁶⁷ The second kind of constraint is the artists’ raw materials, so to speak, and consist of one’s drives and affects. One’s drives and affects constitute the “character” that needs to be informed. This is clear from an earlier passage in *Daybreak* in which Nietzsche says, “One can dispose of one’s drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis” (D 560). Here Nietzsche makes it clear that what the artist, or the

¹⁶⁵ Ridley (2007) has also drawn a connection between self-artistry and freedom (128-40).

¹⁶⁶ Richardson (2009) notes this but gives a different explanation of the phenomenon.

¹⁶⁷ Ridley (2002: 210).

gardener, depending on the metaphor,¹⁶⁸ needs to impose order and style on is the chaotic material of the drives.

Commentators have noted that Nietzsche takes certain aspects of an individual's character to be fixed and others to be mutable.¹⁶⁹ In this regard, Nietzsche compares the human being to a plant. Just as fixed natural facts about an apple tree determine the course of its development (e.g. that it will bear apples and not pears), so too do fixed facts about human beings determine the course of their development. Not everything about the tree is explained by these fixed facts, in order to explain its overall development, one would need to appeal to various aspects of its environment as well. Thus, the apple tree might either flourish or wither, grow naturally or artfully around a trellis, but it will only ever bear apples and never be 100 feet tall. Similarly, Nietzsche claims that human beings are not "*fully-developed facts*," but open-ended ones (*D* 560). Human beings have some fixed psychological and physiological characteristics that can lead to radically different outcomes depending on the environment in which it is placed. These fixed psychological facts are facts about the individual's drives. Although some of the drives are fixed in this way, it is important to note that others are mutable, drives can grow stronger, weaker, and even wither away.¹⁷⁰ In this way, one's drives, whether fixed or mutable, constrain the ways in which one's character can develop and manifest itself. In order to change one's character, one would have to do so by working with and through one's drives. But how does one change? How does the process of self-artistry *work*?

4.3.3.1 Artistry as Valuing

Nietzsche centres on self-artistry as the locus of genuine self-determination and value creation because he thinks that art in general always involves valuing. He describes the process of making art as a process of valuing, or of bestowing value onto things. In *Twilight* Nietzsche claims that "art for art's sake" is an overreaction to a moralising tendency in art (*TI* "Skirmishes" 24). Those who wish to free art from the service of morality go too far in claiming that art must have *no* purpose or aim whatsoever. Just because art need not be associated with moralising and sermonising doesn't mean that it must be divorced from *valuing* altogether. This thought leads Nietzsche to ask a series of leading questions:

What does art do? Doesn't it praise? Doesn't it dignify? Doesn't it select? Doesn't it have preferences? All of this strengthens or weakens certain value judgments... Is this just incidental? accidental? completely unconnected to the artist's instinct? Or: isn't it the presupposition for an artist to be able to...? Is the artist's most basic instinct bound up with

¹⁶⁸ Bamford (2015) has an excellent discussion of the specific dimensions of the gardener metaphor in *Daybreak*.

¹⁶⁹ Leiter (2002). Ridley (2016: 131). See: *BGE* 231; *TI* "Anti-Nature" 6.

¹⁷⁰ See: *D* 109.

art, or is it bound up much more intimately with life, which is the meaning of art? (*TI* “Skirmishes” 24).

The artist cannot avoid valuing; the praising, dignifying, and selecting are part of what make art, art. These activities are the presupposition for an artist to be able to (if we can replace Nietzsche’s second ellipsis with more definite content) engage in art-making. Nietzsche makes a similar point earlier in *The Gay Science*:

Artists constantly *glorify*—they do nothing else—and in particular all those states and things reputed to give man the occasion for once to feel good, or great, or drunk, or merry, or well and wise.... artists always lie in wait to discover such things and to draw them into the realm of art... (*GS* 85).

Nietzsche goes on to say that while the artists “are not themselves the appraisers of happiness and of the happy man” they “often *appear* to be the first to name it good and to appraise it as good. This, however... is a mistake: they are only quicker and louder than the real appraisers.—But who *are* the real appraisers?—The rich and the idle. (*GS* 85).

Nietzsche elsewhere makes the point that the artist falls short in some respect, and that we need to become “wiser” than they are. Art teaches us:

To distance oneself from things until there is much in them that one no longer sees and much that the eye must add *in order to see them at all*, or to see things around a corner and as if they were cut out and extracted from their context, or to place them so that each partially distorts the view one has of the others and allows only perspectival glimpses, or to look at them through coloured glass or in the light of the sunset, or to give them a surface and skin that is not fully transparent (*GS* 299).

However, for the artist, “this delicate power stops where art ends and life begins; *we*, however, want to be poets of our lives, starting with the smallest and most commonplace details” (*GS* 299). This marks one important difference between the artist and the *self*-artist. It is not just that the self-artist applies these artistic techniques of selecting, colouring, and tinting to *herself*, she does do this, but in doing so she also *creates new values*. The ordinary artist, on the other hand, is not a “real appraiser.” In keeping with the passage from *GS* 299 Nietzsche, somewhat uncharacteristically, rails against artists in the *Genealogy*:

In all ages they have been valets of a morality or philosophy or religion; quite apart from the fact that, unfortunately, they have often enough been the all-too-pliant courtiers of their disciples and patrons, and flatterers with a good nose for old and newly rising powers. At the very least they always need a protective armor, a backing, a previously established

authority: artists never stand by themselves, standing alone goes against their deepest instincts (*GM III 5*).

Self-artists are not open to the same charge. Indeed, they distinguish themselves precisely by *standing alone* and creating “*tables of what is good that are new*” and all their own (*GS 355*). Self-artists are more “wise” than ordinary artists in this respect, they *create* values rather than merely operating as a mouthpiece for “a previously established authority.” Nietzsche’s remark on the “rich and the idle” looks forward to the way in which Nietzsche contrasts the nobles with the slaves in the *Genealogy* when he says:

It has been ‘the good’ themselves, meaning the noble, the mighty, the high-placed and the high-minded, who saw and judged themselves and their actions as good, I mean first rate, in contrast to everything lowly, low-minded, common and plebeian. It was from this pathos of distance that they first claimed the right to create values and give these values names... (*GM I 2*).

Creating values is the prerogative of the *strong*, and since self-artistry requires above all a great deal of strength, it makes sense that creating values is the self-artist’s chief task.

Now I will show how the artist goes about creating new values. I argue that she does so by manipulating her drives. For Nietzsche, self-determination is not as simple as *telling oneself* that one is determined by a given value. One must go to work on oneself at an affective, emotive, level in order to change the way one feels about things. This is the self-artists task: to manipulate her drives in order to manipulate her attachments, and thereby her values. Self-artistry is painstaking work that requires “long practice and daily work at it” (*GS 290*). It is a prolonged process of changing how one feels about things, it is evident that such a process cannot happen overnight. We can see how the self-artist goes about doing this by looking at what happens when she applies the colouring, gilding, lighting, and staining techniques of the artist to herself.

In *D 560* this is presented as fairly precise work.¹⁷¹ The artist/gardener “selects” a drive to cultivate nurtures it in order to change her personality. However, in another gardener metaphor in *D 119*, he presents it something that is not entirely within the individual’s conscious control. Here he says:

However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of drives which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of their nutriment remain wholly unknown to him. This nutriment is therefore a work of chance: our daily experiences throw

¹⁷¹ Quoted in 4.3.3.

some prey in the way of now this, now that drive, and the drive seizes it eagerly; but the coming and going of these events as a whole stands in no rational relationship to the nutritional requirements of the totality of the drives: so that the outcome will always be twofold—the starvation and stunting of some and the overfeeding of others (*D* 119).

In this passage the “nutriment” of one’s drives is accidental and the “laws of their nutriment” remain unknown to the agent. This would seem to make it impossible for an agent to identify a particular drive and then act in ways that cultivate it. Nietzsche is ambiguous as to whether he thinks that self-artistry is something within the agent’s conscious control. Thus, it is not clear to what extent Nietzsche thinks self-artistry really is a *skill*. Elsewhere, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche re-imagines the course of his life in the following way:

Rank order of abilities; distance; the art of separating without antagonising; not mixing anything, the converse of chaos—this was the precondition, the lengthy, secret work and artistry of my instinct. Its *higher protection* manifested itself so strongly that I had absolutely no idea what was growing inside me,—and then one day all my capabilities *leapt out*, ripened to ultimate perfection (*EH* ‘Why I Am So Clever 9).

Here he presents self-artistry as the secret work of his “instinct,” operating independently of conscious awareness. Again, Nietzsche presents self-artistry not as a skill, as he does elsewhere, but as something that isn’t within the remit of reflective control. Nevertheless, it is not something that merely happens to an agent, in the sense that it is after all the agent’s *drives*, which constitute her character, that are doing the work. Ultimately, Nietzsche does not answer the question of whether engaging in self-artistry is something that is *up to us*. It may be that some people just do engage in it while others do not. It may also be that self-artistry is something that can occur in an agent without their conscious awareness. As Nietzsche describes in the passage above, things might just fall into place at the level of the drives, while the only aspect of the process that rises to consciousness is the *result*, i.e. an “ultimate perfection.”

4.3.3.1 Why Call This Freedom?

At this point, one might be moved to ask why we should call this *self*-determination, if the process is not within the individual’s reflective control. One reason for doing so is, as I said, that it is the agent’s drives that are responsible self-artistry. For Nietzsche, one’s drives constitute one’s self, so if the drives are engaging in self-artistry then, in a sense, so is one’s “self.” Another reason for doing so is that a person in the state described above is determined by the conditions of *their own* health and flourishing, rather than someone else’s. They are constrained by values that are conducive specifically to their own conditions of existence, which will inevitably be different from others’.

Whether or not engaging in artistry is within our control, the end result is a state in which one is governed by values that allow for the maximum expression of one's power.

Secondly, one might ask why we should think that a state in which one is determined by values that promote one's flourishing should be considered *freedom*. It might make more sense, it would seem, to call this a kind of "health" or "strength." To respond to this question, I note again that this state involves being determined by the conditions of *one's own* health, rather than another's. In other words, one is determined by *internal* rather than *external* influences. One of Nietzsche's most consistent complaints against traditional morality is that it is a dogmatic "one-size-fits-all" enterprise. Christian values apply unconditionally. Whether or not everyone *does* accept them, everyone *ought* to. Nietzsche thinks that the values that are good for one person will not be good for all people. Indeed, prescribing selfless or unegoistic values to *all* people harms a higher type. He claims that:

Every unegoistic morality that considers itself unconditional and is directed toward everyone does not just sin against taste: it is...a temptation and injury to precisely the higher, the rarer, the privileged (*BGE* 221).¹⁷²

On the contrary, Nietzsche thinks "Morals must be compelled from the very start to bow before *rank order*, their presumptuousness must be forced onto their conscience,—until they are finally in agreement with each other that it is *immoral* to say: 'What's right for the one is fair for the other'" (*BGE* 221). For Nietzsche, "Everything unconditional belongs to pathology" (*BGE* 154). What promotes the flourishing of some will not do so in others. Nietzsche always finds unconditionality suspicious because it can be used as a tool to keep the powerful in check.

The free person does not accept unconditionally binding values, rather they accept values that are suited particularly to them. Since Nietzsche thinks that each individual has a unique set of conditions under which they flourish optimally, everyone who is free will have at least slightly different values. For example, Goethe and Christ are both described as "free," however Goethe would wither under Christ's values and *vice versa*. To be determined by the conditions of one's own flourishing is a kind of freedom because it is to be determined not *externally*, by the conditions of others' flourishing, but *internally*, by the conditions of one's own flourishing.

4.4 Conclusion

¹⁷² Also, "What if a symptom of regression also lay in the "good"... So that precisely morality would be to blame if a *highest power and splendour* of the human type—in itself possible—were never attained?" (*GM* Preface 6).

To conclude I will sum up the chapter. In part one I outlined Nietzsche's attack on what he calls "superlative metaphysical freedom." On this conception of freedom, in order to be free, the agent must be the sole cause of her actions, and external factors must have no casual input. Nietzsche's attack on this picture has three prongs. First, he argues that it is incoherent. He claims that it requires free actions to come from outside the causal order of things, however existing *within* that order is a precondition for acting at all. On the picture provided by superlative metaphysical freedom, it makes no sense to say that we are either free or unfree. Second, Nietzsche diagnoses the origins of the concept. He claims that it was fabricated in order to hold others responsible for their actions. Third, he gives an account of the phenomenology of willing that is meant to explain why we feel *as if* we have free will. It is because we identify ourselves with an "affect of command," and take ourselves to be separate from, and have full control over, our drives and inclinations.

In part two I turned to Nietzsche's positive account of freedom. I argued that Nietzschean freedom is a kind of self-determination. More specifically, it involves determining oneself according to values that are consistent with the conditions of one's flourishing. For Nietzsche, "flourishing" is a state in which an individual can "vent its power completely and attain its maximum in the feeling of power" (*GM III 7*).

I began by arguing that any value is compatible with freedom so long as it is consistent with the conditions of an individual's flourishing. I claimed, contra Katsafanas, that even traditionally Christian values like compassion are compatible with freedom. This is evidenced by Nietzsche's claims that Christ and Buddha are free, or "free spirits." What matters is not the content of one's values, but whether or not they are consistent with the conditions of one's flourishing.

Next, I showed that *genuine* self-determination involves more than reflectively judging that something is valuable. It involves a change at the level of one's drives, and this change can be effected by a process of self-artistry. Self-artistry is the means by which Nietzsche thinks we can create new values. By altering the structure of one's drives, letting some grow and others wither, we can alter our evaluative stances toward things. Finally, I showed how Nietzsche is not clear whether he thinks that engaging in this process is something we have control over. It is possible for the self-artistry to take place unconsciously. Nevertheless, whether we have control over the process itself or not, Nietzschean freedom is a state in which one is governed by values that are consistent with the conditions of one's flourishing.

CHAPTER FIVE: NIETZSCHE ON THE AFFIRMATION OF LIFE

Introduction

In this chapter I give an account of Nietzsche's distinction between the affirmation and negation of life. I argue that this is a distinction between two kinds of willing, or two ways in which we "will power." Nietzsche disapproves of one way and approves of the other. Nietzsche disapproves of instances in which we will power in a way that tends toward the decline, or "degeneration" of life, he often refers to these as expressions of a "will to nothingness." I take such expressions of the will to power to constitute "life-negation." On the other hand, he approves of instances in which we will power in a way that tends toward the expansion or enhancement of life. I argue that affirming life *just is* willing power of the kind that Nietzsche approves, that is, the kind that tends toward the enhancement of life.

Commentators have remarked on the difficulty of extracting an account of affirmation from Nietzsche's work.¹⁷³ He seems to say substantially more about the negation of life than about its affirmation. My view helps explain Nietzsche's reticence on affirmation. If affirmation is identical to willing power in a particular way, then Nietzsche frequently talks about affirmation in virtue of talking about the will to power.

In 5.1 I situate my view within the secondary literature. Accounts of affirmation form two camps. The first claims that affirmation is primarily a kind of reflective endorsement of a state of affairs, e.g. my "life," and how it has turned out. The second claims that it is primarily an unreflective expression of one's drives, Gemes calls this "naïve affirmation."¹⁷⁴ The first interpretation is the most prevalent. I side with Gemes and argue against the more prevalent interpretation by showing that reflectively endorsing a state of affairs is not necessary for affirmation. On my interpretation, affirmation is primarily pre-reflective or "naïve," and reflective affirmation is always a symptom, or expression, of this pre-reflective state.

In section 5.2 I look at what it is that we affirm when we affirm "life," by introducing two ways in which Nietzsche uses the word. On the one hand, Nietzsche uses the term "life" in a personal sense.

¹⁷³ Gemes (forthcoming), Forster (2017: 384).

¹⁷⁴ Reflective accounts of the affirmation of life tend to favour a personal conception of the object of affirmation, i.e. of "life." Unreflective accounts are more hospitable to the biological conception.

That is, to refer to a person's lived experience and the various particular features that make up that lived experience. In other words, to refer to the interval between birth and death that constitutes an individual's life. On the other hand, he uses "life" in a biological sense to refer to the essential property, or tendency, that all living things share, namely, a "will to power." These two senses of "life" map onto the two kinds of affirmation sketched in the previous section. When we affirm life in the personal sense we do so reflectively, by reflecting on the contents of our lives and willing their eternal recurrence. When we affirm life in what I will call the "Dionysian" sense we do so unreflectively, in virtue of willing power in a certain way.

In section 5.3 I set the stage for my interpretation of Nietzschean affirmation by outlining Schopenhauer's views on the affirmation and negation of the will, and Nietzsche's reaction to them. For Schopenhauer, the affirmation/negation distinction is a distinction between willing and not willing. Nietzsche diagnoses Schopenhauerian "negation of the will" as a disguised "will to nothingness." I take the will to nothingness to be what Nietzsche refers to when he talks about negating life.

In section 5.4 I draw on my discussion of Schopenhauer in order to give my account of Nietzsche's distinction between affirmation and negation. Rather than a distinction between willing and not willing, I argue that it is a distinction between two *kinds* of willing. Negating life involves willing in such a way that one's drives and passions are "castrated," restrained, or made small. The antipode of this kind of willing is *affirmation*. For Nietzsche, affirming life involves willing in such a way that one's drives and passions are enhanced, expanded, or increased. In this way, affirmation involves willing power in such a way that life's essence, the will to power itself, is increased or enhanced.

Finally, Nietzsche insists that affirming life is a great achievement. In section 5.5 I look at two obstacles to affirmation that correspond to two conceptions of life covered in section two: Nietzsche talks about "life" in 1) a personal sense, and 2) in a biological sense to refer to life's "essence." It is difficult to affirm our lives in a personal sense because our lives contain unwanted particulars. It is difficult to affirm the life's biological "essence," the will to power, because we have internalised a "slavish" value structure in which power is condemned or negated. Finally, I show how Nietzsche thinks we can overcome these obstacles. We overcome the first through a process of "self-artistry" that allows us to see our lives as "beautiful" or "desirable," and second by rejecting the value structure that condemns power and creating new life affirming values.

5.1 Theories of Affirmation: Reflective and Unreflective

In this section I look at the two competing accounts of affirmation, the reflective account and the unreflective account. I side with the unreflective camp. On my interpretation, affirmation is primarily unreflective or “naïve,” and reflective affirmation is always a symptom of unreflective affirmation. Thus, one can affirm life in the unreflective sense without affirming it in the reflective sense, but not the other way around.

5.2.1 Reflective Affirmation

According to reflective accounts of affirmation, affirmation involves reflectively endorsing, accepting, or judging that one’s life is worth living, or worth living eternally. On Reginster’s interpretation, for example, affirmation means living in accordance with the eternal recurrence (as set out in GS 341), and for him this means coming to “regard my life as perfect, as leaving nothing to be desired.”¹⁷⁵ Thus, for Reginster, affirmation is a kind of *regard*, it is reflective attitude toward one’s life, an attitude of endorsement and satisfaction.¹⁷⁶ Nehamas also construes affirmation as “acceptance” of one’s life, and the absence of regret.¹⁷⁷ Forster’s recent interpretation also conforms to this orthodox; he claims that affirmation amounts to “a sort of reflexive judgment that is intertwined with an affectively laden attitude.”¹⁷⁸ These readings are motivated largely by GS 341, in which Nietzsche has a demon ask his readers to entertain the “thought” of eternal recurrence by saying:

“This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence...” (GS 341).

Nietzsche then addresses the reader directly to say that if this thought gained possession of you, then “the question ‘do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?’ would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight.” He closes the passage by asking the reader “how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate confirmation and seal?” (GS 341).¹⁷⁹ Most commentators take the eternal return to be a kind of psychological test, one affirms life if one responds to the demon’s thought experiment in the appropriate way. This passage offers some evidence for the claim that affirmation is reflective endorsement. For example, the eternal return of one’s life is presented as a “thought” that one

¹⁷⁵ Reginster (2006: 227).

¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Reginster claims that the antipode to affirmation, nihilism, is best characterised as a “philosophical claim” (2006: 39).

¹⁷⁷ Nehamas (1985: 157). Soll (1973) and Löwith (1997) also accept views on which affirmation involves reflective endorsement.

¹⁷⁸ Forster (2017). Reginster (2006) and Nehamas (1985) also accept that reflective endorsement is affectively laden. They take it to involve joy, satisfaction, or love.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted from Reginster (2006).

must reflectively entertain. Commentators in the reflective camp take the passage as an injunction for the reader to reflect upon the course of their life, and decide how they would hypothetically react to the demon's message. Affirmation, then, is a kind of reflective acceptance, or endorsement of life's eternal return, and an accompanying feeling of joy. I accept that Nietzsche does countenance this kind of affirmation, but I argue that it is secondary to unreflective affirmation in the sense that reflectively affirming life is not possible unless one already affirms life in the unreflective sense.

5.2.2 *Unreflective Affirmation*

According to an unreflective interpretation of life affirmation, affirmation is an affective state that need not involve reflectively endorsing a state of affairs. The life-affirmer *could* reflectively endorse the way their life has turned out, but this would only be a *symptom* of an underlying pre-reflective kind of affirmation. The presence of un-reflective life-affirmers in Nietzsche's work shows that reflection is not necessary for life-affirmation.

Ken Gemes identifies the "well-born" nobles of the first treatise of the *Genealogy* as examples of unreflective or "naïve" life-affirmers, here Nietzsche claims: "The 'well-born' simply *felt* themselves happy; they did not first have to construct their happiness....to talk themselves into it... overloaded with power and therefore necessarily active, they likewise did not know how to separate activity from happiness" (*GM I 10*).¹⁸⁰ Gemes notes that Nietzsche deliberately contrasts the naïve self-expression of the nobles with the less naïve slaves. In order for the slaves to justify their existence they had to mask the painful reality of their weakness by reinterpreting it as virtue, and this required a great deal of reflective conceptual invention and reinterpretation.¹⁸¹ The nobles did not have to "construct their happiness" in the way that the slaves did, by mediating their experience of reality with a conceptual veil. In worshipping their gods, the nobles simply worshipped personifications of themselves. Nietzsche's characterisations of Dionysus, or the Dionysian attitude, in which "the furthest limits of affirmation are achieved," also do not seem to involve reflecting on one's life, or making judgments about life (*BT 1*).¹⁸² Instead, Dionysian affirmation involves an intoxicating and overwhelming *love* and *affective embrace* of life. For the nobles, Dionysus, and those under the influence Dionysian intoxication, reflectively judging one's life to be worth living is inessential to affirming it, so long as the appropriate affective state is present one can affirm life without making judgments about it.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Quoted from Gemes (forthcoming).

¹⁸¹ Gemes (forthcoming: 21).

¹⁸² *TI Skirmishes* (49, 50), *TI Ancients 4*, *BT 1*. Arguably, Nietzsche's depiction of Goethe's affirmation in *TI Skirmishes* 49 (which he presents as Dionysian affirmation) does not involve Goethe reflectively endorsing his life.

¹⁸³ I will discuss Dionysian affirmation in detail later in the chapter.

In some cases, making reflective judgments about the value of life, or feeling the need to make such judgments, can be *hindrances* to affirmation. At times, Nietzsche suggests that the desire to raise the question of the value of life *at all* is symptomatic of life-denial. Thus, Nietzsche claims:

Judgments, judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in the end, never be true: they have value only as symptoms, they are worthy of consideration only as symptoms; in themselves such judgments are stupidities.... For a philosopher to see a problem in the value of life is thus an objection to him, a question mark concerning his wisdom, a piece of un-wisdom (TI, The Problem of Socrates, 2).

Part of Nietzsche's point here seems to be that the need to step back and reflectively evaluate one's life in the way that might seem to be called for by reflective affirmation is a need that healthy, life-affirming, beings do not have.¹⁸⁴ When one genuinely affirms life one does not see the question of its value as "a problem." To feel the need to question life's value is to have *doubts* about its value, and such doubts are symptoms of life-denial. This leads Gemes to conclude that Nietzsche presents two conflicting kinds of affirmation and so faces a "paradox of affirmation." He cannot advocate reflective and unreflective affirmation at the same time. According to Gemes:

To step back and look at one's entire life in order to will its return is to attempt a certain kind of reflection on life as a whole which no healthy being does. When things are going well one just gets on with life without raising any great existential questions. It is only when things have gone seriously wrong does one raise questions such as "Is this life worth living."¹⁸⁵

This seems rather unfair to the would-be affirmer of eternal recurrence. In Nietzsche's thought experiment in *GS* 341, one is *prompted* to reflect on one's life by a demon. So it is not only in cases in which "things have gone seriously wrong" that one reflects on one's whole life, but also cases in which one is prompted to do so by others. To say that one betrays a symptom of life denial merely by entertaining the demon's scenario sounds wrong. It is not as if one must cover one's ears and refuse to cooperate if one is to remain a life-affirmer. It seems unreflective affirmation does not completely preclude reflection on the value of life, and indeed for some this is almost unavoidable (e.g. readers of Nietzsche who come across *GS* 341). What it *does* preclude is seeing the value of life as a "problem" that can be solved by theoretical justification, in the manner of the conceptual web-spinning slaves, and reflective affirmation need not

¹⁸⁴ See Gemes (forthcoming).

¹⁸⁵ Gemes (forthcoming: 24).

involve this. It need only involve reflectively endorsing life or judging that it is valuable (perhaps together with a positive affective component).

Thus, one can be a life-affirmer and still reflect on one's life. Consider this passage in *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche claims:

All those bold lunacies of metaphysics, especially answers to the question about the *value* of existence, may always be considered first of all as symptoms of certain *bodies*; and if such world affirmations or world negations lack altogether any grain of significance when measured scientifically, they give the historian and psychologist all the more valuable hints as symptoms of the body, of its success or failure, its fullness, power and highhandedness in history, or of its frustrations, fatigues, impoverishments, its premonitions of the end, its will to an end (*GS* preface 2).

World-affirmations that take the form of answers to the question of the value of existence are not always symptoms of life-denial, indeed, they can be symptoms of the body's "success... its fullness, power and highhandedness in history." Such answers will always be *false*, or scientifically insignificant, but they may not always be symptomatic of weakness. It is possible to reflect on the contents of one's life without seeing life as "a problem," and so long as one doesn't see life as a problem, one isn't in danger of negating it. Thus, *contra* Gemes, reflective and unreflective affirmation are compatible, and Nietzsche does not face a paradox. One thing the passage above does make clear is that reflective answers to the question of the value of existence are always symptoms, or expressions, of pre-reflective physiological states. It is these states that must always come first, and that are decisive in determining whether or not an individual affirms life. Before presenting my own account of Nietzschean affirmation I will look at what Nietzsche thinks we affirm when we affirm "life."

5.2 Nietzsche on the Concept of "Life"

Nietzsche uses the word "life" in a variety of senses. John Richardson identifies five distinct uses, each with additional sub-uses.¹⁸⁶ I will argue that there are two uses that are important for our purposes. On the one hand, Nietzsche uses the term "life" in a personal sense. That is, to refer to one's lived experience and the various particular features that make up one's lived experience. On the other hand, he uses "life" in a biological sense to refer to the essential property, or tendency, that all living things share, namely, a "will to power." These two senses of "life" map onto the two

¹⁸⁶ Richardson (2013).

kinds of affirmation sketched in the previous section. When we affirm life in the personal sense we do so reflectively, by reflecting on the contents of our lives and willing their eternal recurrence. When we affirm life in the Dionysian sense we do so unreflectively, by willing power in a certain way. As I said in the previous section, unreflective affirmation must always precede reflective affirmation because the latter is a symptom or expression of the former. Affirming Nietzsche's thought of the eternal return is symptomatic of a strong will to power, and it is impossible to affirm the eternal return without having a strong will to power.

The personal sense of "life" is most pertinent to Nietzsche's discussions of eternal return and *amor fati*. This is because in these cases he asks whether his readers can affirm the particulars of their lives, i.e. "everything unspeakably small or great...even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment" (GS 341). Because of the connection to the eternal return and GS 341, commentators who endorse the reflective interpretation of affirmation tend to have the personal conception of life in mind. "Life," in this sense, refers to the particular facts of a life: one's actions, propensities and capacities, and the events that occur within it. To affirm the eternal return is to affirm life in the personal sense.

This characterisation raises some questions. It is difficult to imagine an attitude in which I took every aspect of my life to be equally desirable or good. To esteem the tedious, disgusting, or physically excruciating aspects of a life as equal to its triumphs and joys seems scarcely conceivable. If Nietzsche means for us to desire these aspects of our existence "for their own sake"¹⁸⁷ then his view risks incoherence. One could conceivably imagine a more fortuitous alternative life with fewer misfortunes such as these. Janaway addresses this problem by distinguishing between positive and negative attitudes of different orders.¹⁸⁸ We can experience the tedious or disgusting aspects of our lives with a first-order negative attitude (indeed this is what makes them tedious or disgusting), but this is compatible with a second-order positive evaluation towards one's having had those negative experiences. So Nietzsche is not asking the reader whether they can experience tedium, disgust, or humiliation positively, but rather whether they are well-disposed enough toward their lives to have a second-order desire for the bad things in addition to the good. To affirm life in the personal sense is reflectively endorse one's life, and to experience its eternal return as maximally welcome.

When Nietzsche talks about affirmation in the context of Dionysus he seems to have something different in mind. Dionysian affirmation involves an affirmation not of particular aspects of a life, but of life's *essence*. Nietzsche claims that the essence of life is "will to power,"¹⁸⁹ so to affirm one's life in this sense is to affirm the will to power, and as I will argue later, to affirm the will to power

¹⁸⁷ WP 1041.

¹⁸⁸ Janaway (2013: 262)

¹⁸⁹ GM II 12; BGE 13, BGE 186, BGE 259; WLN 14[80], 14[82].

just is to will power. Nietzsche's discussions of affirming the eternal return and Dionysian affirmation are compatible with one another, however unreflective Dionysian affirmation must always precede reflective affirmation of the eternal return.

What does Nietzsche mean when he says that the will to power is the "essence" of life? He does not mean that all living things possess psychological states like desires that aim at power, or that the only thing living creatures desire is power. Lower order living creatures like plants or bacteria do not desire power, let alone possess psychological states of any kind, and yet it seems that Nietzsche would say that such creatures will power. Furthermore, the claim that life is essentially will to power is not a metaphysical or ontological claim but rather a biological one.¹⁹⁰ Nietzsche means to identify a fundamental tendency that distinguishes living from non-living things. For Nietzsche the fundamental tendency that defines, and is essential to, life, is one towards "expansion, domination, growth, overcoming resistances, increasing strength," in "shorthand," as Hussain helpfully puts the point, towards "power."¹⁹¹ This is a tendency we can more plausibly ascribe to plants and bacteria.

To support the biological interpretation, consider that Nietzsche frequently presents will to power as an alternative to a quasi-Darwinian criterion on which living things essentially strive to survive or exist.¹⁹² On the contrary, Nietzsche thinks that striving for survival is not essential to life but merely symptomatic of a certain *kind* of declining life. The will to power manifests itself as a striving for mere existence as a last ditch attempt to preserve a degenerating kind of life form. In this way, Nietzsche takes the will to power to be explanatorily primary to the "will to life" or self-preservation. Living things essentially strive not merely to preserve themselves, for this is only an aberration or "*exception*"¹⁹³ from the norm, but to overcome themselves, to expand, increase their power and "become more". Nietzsche also observes that healthy living things will often sacrifice self-preservation in the interest of expanding their power (*GS* 349). Thus, Nietzsche takes living things to be ones that are essentially disposed toward expansion, overcoming-resistance, domination, or, in short, power.

5.3 Schopenhauer on the Affirmation and Negation of the Will

Before turning to Nietzsche's account of affirmation and negation, it is instructive to look at the philosopher who raised the issue in the first place, Arthur Schopenhauer, who also happens to be

¹⁹⁰ Richardson (2013).

¹⁹¹ Hussain (2011, pp 153). See *GM* III 7, *GS* preface 2, *BGE* 259.

¹⁹² Also attributed to Spencer *GM* II 12, Spinoza *GS* 349.

¹⁹³ *GS* 349.

Nietzsche's greatest influence. For Schopenhauer, affirmation of the will is something that proceeds automatically for living creatures. Human and non-human animals affirm the will constantly in virtue of satisfying their various needs and desires. Simply putting in the effort to maintain one's body counts as affirmation of the will to live. Thus, Schopenhauer claims:

The affirmation of the will is constant willing itself, undisturbed by cognition, as it fills the lives of human beings in general...instead of "affirmation of the will" we could also say "affirmation of the body." The basic theme of all the various acts of will is the satisfaction of needs that are inseparable from the healthy existence of the body... (*WWR* I §60).

For Schopenhauer, affirmation of the will is decidedly a *bad* thing. Willing is the source of all suffering, indeed willing *is* suffering. Schopenhauer claims:

All willing springs from need, and thus from lack, and thus from suffering.... No achieved object of willing gives lasting, unwavering satisfaction; rather it is only ever like the alms thrown to the beggar that spares his life today so that his agony can be prolonged tomorrow (*WWR* I §38).

Willing is painful, and affirmation is a cheap form of solace. It may provide fleeting relief, but for every desire satisfied, "ten are left denied." As indicated in the previous passage, most living beings, and indeed most humans, allow willing to go on "undisturbed by cognition." Nevertheless, because human beings possess a faculty of cognition, which enables them to apply concepts to experience, they are capable of checking their will to live. Cognition can intervene in willing, and "complete cognition of the world acts as a *tranquillizer* of the will and leads to resignation, the abandonment not only of life, but of the whole will to life" (*WWR* I §51). For Schopenhauer, negation of the will to live is the opposite of affirmation, and to negate one's will is the only escape to be had from the suffering of willing.

Negation of the will comes in different forms and degrees. Schopenhauer claims that we get an intimation of complete cessation of the will in aesthetic experience. According to Schopenhauer, aesthetic pleasure derives not from satisfaction of the will, but rather from cognition's deliverance from its servitude. If we view an object "removed from any relation to things outside of itself" and "do not allow our consciousness to become engrossed by abstract thinking, concepts of reasons; but... instead of all this we devote the entire power of our mind to intuition" then what we cognize is "no longer the individual thing as such, but rather the *Idea*, the eternal form" (*WWR* I §34). With a change in the object comes a change in the subject. When we take an Idea as an object:

We *lose* ourselves in this object completely, i.e. we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, the clear mirror of the object, so that it is as if the

object existed on its own, without anyone to perceive it, and we can no longer separate the intuited from the intuition, as the two have become one... (*WWR* I §34).

Using a phrase that Nietzsche occasionally cites as a target, we become the “*pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of cognition.*”¹⁹⁴ The solace provided by art is always only temporary, and maintained with difficulty. Negation of the will reaches a mystical height in ascetic resignation, the highest level of which is “death by voluntary starvation” (*WWR* I §69). In such instances Schopenhauer proclaims, at the close of the book, “what remains after it [the will] is completely abolished is certainly nothing. But conversely, for those in whom the will has turned and negated itself, this world of ours which is so very real with all its suns and galaxies is—nothing” (*WWR* I §71). In this state of near-starvation, one has not yet died, but perhaps one is nearly there. Here, objective knowledge reaches a height, the will no longer stirs one to act, and one no longer identifies with any individual being in the world. Although Schopenhauer describes the state as saintly, holy, and painless we cannot truly describe it, from our perspective as willing individuals it is always an inscrutable “transition into an empty *nothing*” (*WWR* I §71).

5.3.1 Nietzsche’s Reaction to Schopenhauer’s Account of Affirmation and Negation

For Schopenhauer, affirmation of the will involves satisfying one’s desires and maintaining one’s body, negation of the will involves acquiring knowledge of the essence of the world which then serves as a “tranquillizer” of willing. In ascetic denial of the will and self-mutilation, the will turns against itself and negates itself. Nietzsche rejects this picture of affirmation and negation, and draws the distinction along different lines. His principal reason for doing so is his rejection of Schopenhauer’s account of negation of the will. His main line of argument against Schopenhauer’s account comes in book three of the *Genealogy* in his attack on the ascetic ideal. His basic idea is that, by Schopenhauer own lights, the negation of the will in ascetic resignation is just another way in which the organism continues to will. According to Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal is a means of self-preservation that “*springs from the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life,*” far from serving as a “tranquilizer” of willing, it is actually “an artifice for the preservation of life” (*GM* III 13).¹⁹⁵

One can get a sense of why this might be so by noting the particular zeal with which Schopenhauer describes the negation of the will as something *worth having*. Despite being something of which we cannot speak, he describes the person who negates their will as “full of inner joy and true heavenly peace,” and he claims that when we behold or imagine such “imperturbable calm...and inner serenity,” “we cannot help feeling the greatest longing, since we acknowledge that this alone is in the right and infinitely superior to everything else...” (*WWR* I §68). When Schopenhauer describes

¹⁹⁴ See: *GM* III 12, *GS* 99.

¹⁹⁵ *WWR* I §51.

negation in this way he seems to think that it is *good* or *valuable*. This is a problem for Schopenhauer, since he claims that the essence of the good is “to exist only in relation to a desiring will.” The concept “good,” “designates the *suitability of an object to any particular effort of the will,*” thus “anything that is agreeable to the will in any one of its expressions, that is conducive to its purpose, is intended in the concept *good*” (*WWR* I §65). Negation of the will does not seem to fit into this picture of the good. For in such a state there is no desiring will for something good to stand in relation to, thus it seems that nothing can be “good” strictly speaking for a tranquillised will. While the satisfaction of the will can be good for someone, the absence of the willing cannot. Furthermore, since the concept “bad” also exists only in relation to willing, it seems that the state of will-lessness is something beyond goodness and badness altogether.¹⁹⁶

Nietzsche picks up on this issue at the end of the *Genealogy*. He suspects that Schopenhauer’s “negation of the will” is something much different, namely a “*will to nothingness.*” Furthermore, he suspects that this will to nothingness is actually an “artifice for the preservation of life.” How could this be so? Nietzsche claims that human beings have a need for meaning. Before the ascetic ideal was created “something *was lacking*...an enormous *void* surrounded man—he did not know how to justify, to explain, to affirm himself; he *suffered* from the problem of his meaning.” This leads to the thrust of Nietzsche’s diagnosis of the ascetic ideal: he claims that, “the meaninglessness of suffering, not suffering itself, was the curse that thus far lay stretched over humanity—and *the ascetic ideal offered it a meaning!*” (*GM* III 28). Nietzsche claims that although the ascetic ideal inflicted a great deal of new suffering, by creating inner conflict amongst the drives and interpreting the suffering thereby caused as “*guilt,*” nevertheless “man was *rescued* by it” (*GM* III 28). It “rescued” man because it gave the will “direction;” more specifically, Nietzsche claims that it directed the will toward “*nothingness.*” Despite being a will to nothingness, Nietzsche claims, “it is and remains a *will!*” It is in this way that the ascetic ideal shut the door on “suicidal nihilism,” it rescued human beings from existing “like a leaf in the wind, a plaything of nonsense” by giving the will direction. Nietzsche closes the book by noting, *contra* Schopenhauer, that “man would much rather will *nothingness* that *not* will...” (*GM* III 28). Negation of the will, in Schopenhauer’s sense, is not possible. It is merely a further instance of willing, or as Schopenhauer would say “affirming,” and what it affirms is “nothingness.” Nevertheless, Nietzsche does employ the terms affirmation and negation throughout his work. What does he mean by this distinction if he rejects Schopenhauer’s account?

¹⁹⁶ Janaway (2016: 678). See also: Janaway (1998).

5.4 Nietzsche on Affirmation and Negation

For Schopenhauer, affirmation and negation is a distinction between willing and not willing. Nietzsche rejects this distinction. In this section I argue that affirmation and negation, for Nietzsche, is a distinction between two *kinds* of willing. Affirming life means willing life, and negating it means willing nothingness. Both of these are ways of willing *power*. The first instance tends toward the ascent, or expansion or life, while the second instance tends toward its decline or degeneration. Nietzsche approves of the first instance and disapproves of the second instance. I argue that affirming life *just is* willing power in the ascending sense, the kind of which Nietzsche approves.

At first glance it might seem dubious that affirmation *just is* willing power, one might think that “affirmation” is a separate attitude that one takes toward the will to power. For example, according to the reflective account it would be an attitude of approval or endorsement of will to power, and on the unreflective account a kind of desire for it. It is instructive here to look again at the structure of Schopenhauer’s account. For Schopenhauer, affirming the will to life *just is* willing life. One affirms life in virtue of satisfying one’s various needs and desires, affirmation is not a state over and above willing, rather, it just is willing. I argue that this feature of Schopenhauer’s account carries over into Nietzsche’s. One affirms life’s essence, the will to power, simply in virtue of willing power in the appropriate way.

To establish that affirmation/negation is a distinction between two kinds of willing I will begin with some evidence from the text. First of all, consider this quote in which Nietzsche seems to explicitly draw a new distinction of this kind:

These two insights catapulted me high above any pathetic, idiot gossip about optimism contra pessimism!—I was the first to see the real opposition:—the degenerate instinct that turns against life with subterranean vindictiveness (Christianity, Schopenhauer's philosophy, and in a certain sense even Plato's philosophy, the whole of idealism as typical forms) and a formula of the highest affirmation born out of fullness, out of overfullness, an unreserved yea-saying even to suffering, even to guilt, even to everything questionable and strange about existence... (EH “*The Birth of Tragedy*” 2).¹⁹⁷

Here Nietzsche claims that the important opposition is not between “optimism” and “pessimism,” which claim, roughly, that the world is either worthy of affirmation or negation, but between a “degenerate instinct” and affirmation born from “overfullness.” As I showed earlier, Nietzsche

¹⁹⁷ The “two insights” he refers to here is 1) his purported discovery of the “Dionysian” and 2) his “innovation” of understanding morality as a symptom of decadence.

often claims that any sincere avowal of optimism or pessimism is at bottom a *symptom* of a degenerate instinct. There is no genuine answer to the question of the value of life, and any attempt to provide one is indicative of bad health.¹⁹⁸ As Nietzsche claims in other contexts, the important opposition is between *strong* and *weak wills*.¹⁹⁹ It is more important in the sense that it is primary to the question of whether we should be optimists or pessimists because it *explains* why philosophers are seduced by views like optimism or pessimism.

Nietzsche pushes this point further in the section “Morality as Anti-Nature” in *Twilight of the Idols*. In the following paragraphs the discussion moves sequentially from sections 4-6 of “Morality as Anti-Nature”. In section 4 Nietzsche claims:

—I will formulate a principle. Every naturalism in morality—which is to say: every healthy morality—is governed by an instinct of life.... But every *anti-natural* morality, on the other hand, which is to say almost every morality that has been taught, revered, preached so far, explicitly turns its back on the instinct of life,—it condemns these instincts... (*TI* “Anti-Nature” 4).

This helps to flesh out my brief formulation of what Nietzsche takes affirmation/negation to involve. To affirm life is to be “governed by an instinct of life” and to negate it is to turn ones back on those instincts. This is compatible with what Nietzsche says about negation in the *Genealogy*. Anti-natural morality does not simply involve ceasing to will altogether, rather it involves willing *nothingness*. By redirecting the will toward nothingness, anti-natural morality can eradicate certain passions and restrain desire in order to keep willing small, and it does so in the interest of its proponents’ survival. It can aid survival in two ways. Some, often “priests,” “philosophers,” and “artists,” simply cannot cope with the desires raging within them, and they endorse an anti-natural morality in order to “castrate” and curb these desires into ones with which they can live (*TI* “Anti-Nature” 1, 2). Others endorse anti-natural morality, not because they possess great desires and full-fledged passions, but because those who *do* are a threat to their physical and psychological well-being (e.g. such individuals open them up to painful feelings of *ressentiment*), their aim is to keep the strong in check.²⁰⁰

Nietzsche explicitly connects this discussion to his critique of Schopenhauer’s account of negation of the will in section 5. In a passage that is a clear descendent of Nietzsche’s remarks at the end of the *Genealogy* he decries the “futility, fallacy, absurdity, *deceitfulness*” of a rebellion against life of the kind led by Schopenhauer. These words echo Nietzsche’s claim in the *Genealogy* that denial of

¹⁹⁸ *TI* “Socrates” 2.

¹⁹⁹ *BGE* 21.

²⁰⁰ My account of the will to nothingness has affinities to the account of “affective nihilism” put forward in Creasy (2018: 40-1).

the will in Schopenhauer's sense is impossible because willing is inescapable, "denial of the will" is always only a disguised *will to nothingness*. He goes on to claim, in a key passage that I will quote at length:

A condemnation of life on the part of the living is, in the end, only the symptom of a certain type of life, and has no bearing on the question of whether or not the condemnation is justified. Even to raise the problem of the *value* of life, you would need to be both *outside* life and as familiar with life as someone, anyone, everyone who has ever lived: this is enough to tell us that the problem is inaccessible to us. When we talk about values we are under the inspiration, under the optic, of life: life itself forces us to posit values, life itself evaluates through us, when we posit values. It follows from this that even the *anti-natural morality* that understands God as the converse of life, the condemnation of life, is only a value judgment made by life—but *which* life? Which type of life is making value judgments here?—But I have already answered this: it is the judgment of a declining, weakened, exhausted, condemned life. Morality as it has been understood so far, as it was finally summed up by Schopenhauer with the formula: "negation of the will to life" - is the *instinct of decadence* making an imperative of itself: it says: "*be destroyed!*"—It is the judgment of the condemned (*TI "Anti-Nature" 5*).

I will draw three key claims from this passage. The first is that the value of life cannot be estimated. This means that affirming life is not going to involve providing a convincing argument for the claim that life is in fact valuable. Secondly, willing and valuing are inescapable: life "forces us to posit values." When Schopenhauer talks about negation of the will, he is really describing a willing and a valuing of nothingness. Thirdly, Nietzsche takes this perverse kind of willing to be caused by physiological or psychological weakness, it is the product of "a declining, weakened, exhausted, condemned life." Willing nothingness is a last-ditch attempt to salvage a life weakened either by uncontrollably strong drives within oneself, or by the imposition of others' drives from without. When Nietzsche talks about the negation of life, *this* is what he has in mind, the value judgments of a decadent form of life. Moreover, *this* is what Nietzsche takes to be contrary to the affirmation of life. In giving an account of affirmation, it is helpful to contrast it with its antipode: the process of turning against life by willing nothingness. Nietzsche does not explicitly mention affirmation in the two passages quoted above; he does do so however in the section that immediately follows.

In section 6, Nietzsche describes morality, of the kind portrayed above, as an "*idiosyncrasy of degenerates*" and a "*condemnation, without any attention to, interest in, concern for life,*" and he contrasts this with "we immoralists" who "do not negate easily, we stake our honour on being *affirmative*" (*TI "Morality" 6*). Here then, Nietzsche makes explicit the contrast between what he takes to be Christianity and Schopenhauer's condemnation, or negation, of life and his own

“immoral” affirmation of it. Now I will spell out more fully what Nietzsche takes affirmation to involve.

I have shown that willing nothingness does not involve the absence of willing, rather it involves willing in such a way that one’s drives and passions are “castrated,” restrained, or made small. The antipode of this kind of willing is *affirmation*. For Nietzsche, affirming life involves willing in such a way that one’s drives and passions are enhanced, expanded, and brought to greater levels of complexity. Why should we call this kind of willing “affirming *life*,” since the formulation makes no explicit reference to life? We should because it is precisely this tendency toward growth, expansion, domination, etc... that characterises the *essence* of life, namely the will to power. Note that this ideal is a clear antipode of Schopenhauer’s attitude toward willing. Schopenhauer rebels against willing that tends toward growth and expansion; restraining the will to the greatest possible extent is the source of all virtue, knowledge, and peace. To affirm life in Nietzsche’s sense is to completely flout the moral of Schopenhauer’s ethical thought; indeed, this is precisely why Nietzsche characterises affirmation in the terms that he does.

I have given some evidence for the claim that the affirmation/negation distinction is a distinction between two kinds of willing. I will now provide further textual evidence specifically for the claim that affirmation is a kind of willing. In some of these passages I will appeal to Nietzsche’s talk of “desiring” for support, because the will to power often manifests itself in human beings as desires. However, it is worth noting that will to power is a much broader category than desire. To see this, consider that Nietzsche takes subpersonal drives to be one of the primary bearers of will to power.²⁰¹ Because drives themselves are not agents they are not the kinds of things that can literally be said to have desires, nevertheless they still will power. They do so in the sense that their behaviour is directed toward dominating other drives, enhancing their own capabilities, and achieving their ends to the greatest possible degree.

One of Nietzsche’s most-cited passages on affirmation is one that came up earlier in the chapter, namely the passage on eternal return in *GS* 341. Nietzsche calls the eternal recurrence the “highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable” (*EH* “Zarathustra” 1). Although I do not aim to give a full account of eternal recurrence here, my account will shed some light on why Nietzsche takes it to be “the highest formula of affirmation.” In *GS* 341, Nietzsche famously asks the reader to imagine a demon stealing after them in order to tell them that their life will repeat in every detail “once again and innumerable times again.” Nietzsche says that if this thought gained possession of you, then “the question ‘do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?’ would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight.” He closes the passage by asking the reader “how well

²⁰¹ See *BGE* 6. Richardson (1996: 21-4) and Janaway (2004: 189).

disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate confirmation and seal?" (GS 341).²⁰² Most commentators take the eternal return to be a kind of psychological test, one affirms life if one responds to the demon's thought experiment in the appropriate way.²⁰³ Furthermore, most commentators take the appropriate response to be a particularly intense kind of *joy*.²⁰⁴ This approach is not quite right. Rather, the eternal return is better read as a test of one's *desires*. The wording in GS 341 is important. The "question" that lies on our actions is not whether we feel joyful at the thought of eternal return, but whether we *desire* it to be the case. Eternal return tests whether we "*crave nothing more fervently*" than for it to be true that life returns again and again. Thus, eternal return is a test of whether we desire life, and it is the *highest* formula of affirmation because it tests whether we could conceive of that desire being *eternal*. The opposite of affirmation is to desire that life *stop*, and to "gnash one's teeth" at the thought of eternal return is to betray a secret craving for nothingness.

There is an important connection to will to power here. The eternal return tests whether we could conceive of our desire being eternal, and according to Reginster's influential account of will to power, there is an important sense in which desiring, or willing, *really is* eternal, in that it is *insatiable*. As Reginster notes, the will to power "is a kind of desire that does not allow for *permanent* (once-and-for-all) satisfaction. Its pursuit, on the contrary, necessarily assumes the form of an indefinite, perpetually renewed striving."²⁰⁵ Reginster explains that the will to power will not be satisfied unless three conditions are met: there must be a desire for a first order end, resistance to the realisation to that end, and success in overcoming the resistance.²⁰⁶ But because of this structure, the conditions of the satisfaction of the will to power imply its own dissatisfaction. The overcoming of resistance eliminates resistance, but resistance is a condition of the satisfaction of the will to power, so the satisfaction of the will to power brings about its own dissatisfaction. In this sense, the will to power is insatiable and must perpetually seek out new resistances to overcome.²⁰⁷ This reveals an intimate connection between the eternal return and the will to power. If the eternal return tests whether we could conceive of desire being eternal, then it tests how well disposed we are to our essence, the will to power. On this reading, the demon is meant to draw our attention to

²⁰² Quoted from Reginster (2006).

²⁰³ Loeb (2013).

²⁰⁴ Clark (1990: 251), Reginster (2006: 224). Closer to my view is Ridley, who claims that one passes the test if one can experience eternal return as "maximally welcome," presuming that one experiences something as 'maximally welcome' when one desires it to be the case (2007: 103).

²⁰⁵ Reginster (2006: 138).

²⁰⁶ Reginster (2006: 134).

²⁰⁷ Will to power, on Reginster's interpretation, is a narrower phenomenon than the one I endorse earlier in the chapter, on which the will to power is the essence of life. Since Reginster's interpretation makes reference to desires, it is hard to see how will to power in this sense could be the essence of life *in general*, since not all living beings have desires. Thus, while I do not accept Reginster's interpretation as a correct account of will to power in general, I do take it to accurately characterise an important way in which the will to power manifests itself in human beings.

the non-hypothetical fact that we are indeed the kinds of beings for which permanent satisfaction is in principle impossible, and for which perpetual striving is a reality.

Nietzsche account of “*amor fati*” as affirmation also demonstrates a connection between affirmation and desire. In *The Gay Science* he claims he wants “to learn more and more to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them” and he calls this “*amor fati*,” or “love of fate,” proclaiming:

Amor fati: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: someday I want only to be a Yes-sayer! (GS 276)

Here Nietzsche means to draw on the connection between love and desire. He elaborates on this connection more explicitly in a fragment:

The highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence—my formula for this is *amor fati*. It is part of this state to perceive not merely the necessity of those sides of existence hitherto denied, but their desirability; and not their desirability in relation to the sides hitherto affirmed... but for their own sake...²⁰⁸

If we take loving fate to involve seeing it as desirable, as the note suggests we should, then to love fate, or existence, is to *desire* it. Thus, *amor fati*, like eternal return, seems to involve desire, and by extension, willing. The reference to Dionysus adds one further connection between affirmation and desire.

When Nietzsche introduces the Apollonian/Dionysian distinction in *The Birth of Tragedy*, it is a distinction between two *drives* (*Triebe*). I argued in 1.4 that we should understand drives as dispositions that induce affective orientations. One can also think of them as a complex kind of desire. Desires ordinarily have objects. If I desire an apple, then that is the object of my desire. When I obtain this object, my desire is satisfied and it goes away. Drives differ in that they have an aim and an object. If I have a *drive* for knowledge, then that drive could take any particular fact as its object, however once I take myself to know the fact my drive for knowledge does not go away, it merely goes off in search of the next fact. This is because it has an aim, it aims at knowledge, and this does not go away when the drive is satisfied by an object.

By connecting affirmation with the Dionysian drive, Nietzsche is again connecting affirmation to desiring and, by extension, willing. Consider a claim from *BT* that Nietzsche accepts throughout his

²⁰⁸ *WP* 1041. See also *GS* 299.

work: “The essence of the *Dionysiac*...is best conveyed by the analogy of *intoxication*. These Dionysiac stirrings... awaken...at the approach of spring when the whole of nature is pervaded by lust for life” (BT 1).²⁰⁹ Nietzsche characterises the Dionysiac state as a “*lust for life*”, one could also say that it is a state in which one is “governed by an instinct of life” (BT 1 emphasis mine, TI “Anti-Nature” 4). Dionysus, and Dionysiac intoxication, are symbols of affirmation because they are characterised by a strong *desire* for life itself.

Nietzsche returns to the image of Dionysus at the end of *Twilight of the Idols*. Here he describes the “Dionysian state” as a psychological one that expresses the “‘will of life’” (TI “Ancients” 4).²¹⁰ He claims that there is no “higher symbolism” than the Dionysian, since “it gives religious expression to the profound instinct of life, the future of life, the eternity of life,—the pathway to life, procreation, as the *holy path*.” For the Greeks, the Dionysian symbol invokes a veneration of sexuality: “all the details about the acts of procreation, pregnancy, and birth,” and it “sanctifies” pain as a necessary condition for life. The link Nietzsche draws between affirmation and sexuality and procreation, again deepens connection between affirmation and desire.

Nietzsche characterises the Dionysian state variably as governed fundamentally by the “will of life,” “lust for life,” and “instinct of life”—one could also say that the Dionysian has a *drive* or desire for life. The “Dionysian” is Nietzsche’s most consistent metaphor, or symbol, of affirmation, I take this as good textual evidence for the claim that Nietzschean affirmation is first and foremost a desire, drive, will, instinct, or lust for *life* itself. But what does this amount to? What does it mean to be governed by the “will of life”? In GS 349, Nietzsche gives us a fairly straightforward answer. It is not a will to self-preservation or survival, rather “the great and small struggle revolves everywhere around preponderance, around growth and expansion, around power and in accordance with the will to power, which is simply the will of life” (GS 349). To will, desire, lust, and indeed to *affirm* “life” is just to *will power*.

I have now given an account of Nietzschean affirmation in the unreflective sense, which I take to be primary to affirmation in the reflective sense. Affirming life in the unreflective sense just is willing power of the kind that tends toward the expansion, growth, or enhancement of life. In the following section I examine two obstacles that stand in the way of reflective and unreflective affirmation respectively. First, it is difficult to reflectively affirm life because our lives contain unwanted

²⁰⁹ See also BT “attempt” 4.

²¹⁰ Translation modified. Hollingdale translates “*Wille des Lebens*” as “will to life,” and so it appears that Nietzsche is employing a Schopenhauerianism. A look at the German shows that this is not the case. Schopenhauer’s phrase “*Wille zum Leben*” is translated as “will to life,” however Nietzsche uses the phrase “*Wille des Lebens*,” which is best translated as “will of life” (Janaway: in conversation). Nietzsche was well aware of Schopenhauer’s terminology and his departure from it here must be a deliberate choice. By saying the will to power is the will of life, Nietzsche puns on Schopenhauer’s phrasing in order to underscore his sense in which the will to power is the essence of life.

particulars. Second, it is difficult to affirm life unreflectively, by willing power in a way that enhances life, because Nietzsche claims that we are the inheritors of a value system in which the expression of power is condemned or negated. In order to unreflectively affirm life we must overcome this value system. I will now look more closely at these two obstacles.

5.5 Obstacles to Affirmation: Why Affirmation is an Achievement

5.5.1 *First Obstacle: Unwanted Particulars*

The first obstacle corresponds to the reflective, personal kind of affirmation. The obstacle is that our lives contain unwanted particulars. This comes across especially in Nietzsche's discussions of eternal return and *amor fati*. Consider this passage in which he gives "a genuine answer to the question of *how to become what you are*," which is a state where "even life's *mistakes* have their own meaning and value, the occasional side roads and wrong turns, the delays, the 'modesties,' the seriousness wasted on tasks that lie beyond *the task*" (EH "Clever" 9). Life is filled with mistakes, wrong turns, and delays. Nietzsche himself was delayed in his task by chronic illness, and he might consider his discipleship to Richard Wagner as a "mistake" or "wrong turn." Nevertheless, he envisions a point at which these things fall into place in a larger whole and acquire their own meaning and value.

Above, Nietzsche seems to be talking about unwanted *events* in a life, however elsewhere he focuses on unwanted aspects of one's character: "*One thing is needful*.—To 'give style' to one's character—a great a rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye" (GS 290). He then describes the process of giving style to one's character:

"Here a great mass of second nature has been added; there a first piece of nature removed—both through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it is reinterpreted into sublimity. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and employed for distant views..." (GS 290).

Here we get an idea as to the obstacles to reflective affirmation, and the means of overcoming them. There is much about our characters that is weak, ugly, vague, and aesthetically displeasing. These make it difficult to affirm one's life. But, Nietzsche thinks, we can "attain satisfaction" with ourselves if we learn from artists how to become "the poets of our lives" (GS 299). We can alter our

characters by adding, removing, concealing, reinterpreting, and distancing ourselves from the various traits that compose it.²¹¹

Thus, there are internal features of the self that stand as obstacles to affirmation, as well as external features of the world. Of the latter instance Nietzsche claims, “What means do we have for making things beautiful, attractive and desirable when they are not? And in themselves I think they never are!” Nietzsche thinks that the same artistic tactics that we can use to make ourselves beautiful and desirable can be used on “things” more broadly speaking to the same effect. We can learn to “see as beautiful what is necessary in things” if we can learn to:

Distance oneself from things until there is much in them that one no longer sees and much that the eye must add *in order to see them at all*, or to see things around a corner and as if they were cut out and extracted from their context, or to place them so that each partially distorts the view one has of the others and allows only perspectival glimpses, or to look at them through coloured glass or in the light of the sunset, or to give them a surface and skin that is not fully transparent... (GS 290).

By reinterpreting certain aspects of the world, shifting our evaluative responses toward them, reconceptualising them, creating emotional and perhaps physical distance from some things while moving closer to others, we can change the way we experience the world. If we can see the world as “beautiful,” then we can see it as *desirable*. As Nietzsche remarks, *contra* Schopenhauer, “*beauty*” is by no means a “redemption from the ‘will’” and from “sexuality,” it is rather “a temptation to procreate” (TI “Skirmishes” 23).²¹² For Nietzsche, beauty is closely bound up with desire. He goes on in the next section to describe the artistic activity described above as by asking:

What does art do? Doesn’t it praise? Doesn’t it dignify? Doesn’t it select? Doesn’t it have preferences? All of this *strengthens* or *weakens* certain value judgments... Is the artist’s most basic instinct bound up with art? Or is it bound up much more intimately with *life*, which is the meaning of art? Isn’t it bound up with the *desirability of life*?—Art is the great stimulus to life... (TI “Skirmishes” 24).

The artistic selecting, colouring, distorting, and distancing described in the previous two passages is designed to strengthen or weaken value judgments in a way that allows us to see life as beautiful, and more specifically, to see it as *desirable*.

²¹¹ See also D 560.

²¹² See also: GM III 6.

5.5.2 *Second Obstacle: Unwanted Essence*

Dionysian affirmation involves desiring life's *essence*, which Nietzsche takes to be will to power. It may be difficult to see at first glance how affirming life's essence can be an achievement; one might naturally ask how a living thing could or would rebel against its own essence. Nietzsche thinks that it is possible, and that turning against life's essence has indeed become the *norm*. In this section I explain why Nietzsche thinks this has happened and by what means he thinks at least some individuals can overcome this norm and affirm the will to power.

First of all, it is important to note that affirmation cannot *simply* be identical to willing power, because the negation of the will is also an expression of the will to power. As I explained above, the will to nothingness is an artifice for the preservation of life, the will to power assumes the form of a will to nothingness as a means to preserve a degenerate form of life. So if affirmation were simply identical to willing power then even this form of the will to power would count as affirmation, and this is an undesirable result.

Nevertheless, as other commentators have noted, Nietzsche does not invariably approve of all instances of willing power, it can take both good and bad forms. For example, Simon May argues that although the slave morality is an means for attaining power it is not a means for what he calls "life-enhancement."²¹³ Janaway also notes that "Will to power may manifest itself in healthy or unhealthy ways..."²¹⁴ The ascetic ideal propounded by the ascetics in the *Genealogy*, or the "will to nothingness" exemplified in Schopenhauer's philosophy, are instances of an unhealthy will to power.²¹⁵ But what makes something a healthy or unhealthy instance of will to power, and how does this relate to affirmation?

To establish that there are unhealthy instances of willing power I will consider some examples from the text. In *The Anti-Christ*, for example, Nietzsche claims that he wants to "wage war on this theologian's instinct" and that when theologians reach for power what "is really taking place" is "the will to an end, the *nihilistic* will willing power..." (A 9). Part of Nietzsche's point here seems to be that the quality of the power being expressed depends on the quality of the will that is expressing it. When an unhealthy, or "*nihilistic*" will wills power, this affects the quality of the power. The nihilistic will wills power *badly* in some sense. To press this point further it is also important to turn to Nietzsche's account of the slave revolt in morality in the *Genealogy*. As others have noted, Nietzsche's account of the slave revolt is the story of a "successful exercise of will to power,"²¹⁶

²¹³ May (1999: 45-46).

²¹⁴ Janaway (2007: 146).

²¹⁵ See also Forster (2017: 386-7). See *GM* III 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*."

²¹⁶ Janaway (2007: 147).

indeed “the whole point of ‘slave morality’ is that it is a successful formula for attaining power.”²¹⁷ The *Genealogy* itself is a study of how the will to power, when manifested in “slavish” or weak individuals who cannot exert power over their environments, can generate value judgments in which precisely the will to power, the essential tendency for expansion and domination that defines life, is condemned or “negated.”²¹⁸ Again, the quality of the will affects the quality of the power it expresses. Nietzsche claims that “The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values” (*GM* I 10). As in the passage quoted above from *Anti-Christ*, we could say that a “*nihilistic*” will wills power here.²¹⁹ The origin is important, and we need ask “in every case,” “is it hunger or superabundance that have become creative here?” (*GS* 370).

Power can manifest itself in good and bad ways, but what are the qualitative features of a bad instance? As I have shown, Nietzsche does not think that power can cancel itself out, so a bad instance cannot be one in which the will to power negates itself out of existence. This is clear from *GM* III 13, where Nietzsche claims that the contradiction expressed by the ascetic ideal, “life *against* life,” “can only be apparent,” since it expresses an impossibility. Earlier, I explained how the ascetic ideal can be an artifice for the preservation of a degenerating kind of life. The ascetic priest “belongs to the very great *conserving* and *yes-creating* forces of life,” but this conservative force only applies to a *particular kind* of life (*GM* III 13). The ascetic priest does not conserve the strong, or healthy, indeed Nietzsche claims “the sick are the greatest danger to the healthy” (*GM* III 14). Nietzsche repeatedly remarks on how this conserving force can at the same time be “the danger of dangers” (*GM* preface 6). It is a “danger” because while it preserves the weak, it does so at the expense of the strong. This is what I take life negation to involve. It is not a cancelling out of life, this is impossible, rather it is a will to power that conspires to keep life *small*. By creating conditions that favour the weak, the ascetic ideal levels down the healthy. In this way, life negation does not eliminate life, instead it causes decline, “degeneration,” it reduces the healthy to the lowest common denominator. I take this downward tendency to be characteristic of “bad” power, of the kind expressed by the ascetic priest or the slavish masses. “Bad” power, the “will to nothingness” expressed in the ascetic ideal, keeps life safe and comfortable for the herd at the expense of growth, expansion, and domination; nevertheless, it is still an expression of power, still a will.

One might think that the “bad” power described above is an extreme case and an exception to the norm, ordinarily, people do not “negate life” or “will nothingness.” Such strange valuations are confined perhaps to Schopenhauer’s philosophy, or ascetic self-mutilation, and do not seep into everyday life. This would suggest that affirming life is not an achievement, but rather the ordinary state of things. Nietzsche claims insistently that this is not the case. Although Schopenhauer is

²¹⁷ May (1999: 46).

²¹⁸ See Hussain (2011: 164) and *GM* III 131.

²¹⁹ Also: “Where can it not be found, this will to power of precisely the weakest!” (*GM* III 14).

uniquely explicit, he merely “summed up” “morality as it had been understood so far” (*TI* Anti-Nature 5). Schopenhauer went a long way toward revealing the fundamental tendency toward life-negation that was implicit in earlier moral/religious systems. Nietzsche claims that the ascetic ideal “is not inscribed into the history of humankind as an exception and curiosity: it is one of the broadest and longest facts there is,” indeed, it “has been the only meaning... there has been thus far” (*GM* III 11, 28).²²⁰ The will to nothingness is not a strange aberration, but a pervasive feature of modern life and culture.

If the ascetic ideal is so pervasive, how is it to be overcome? Nietzsche thinks that we shouldn't put too much stock in individual effort, rather he tells a story in the *Genealogy* about how the ascetic ideal *overcomes itself*. The key player in this story is modern science. One might think that science has moved beyond the ascetic ideal, since it has dispensed with “God, the beyond, and virtues that negate,” however Nietzsche claims that it is rather the ascetic ideal's “*most recent and noblest form*,” because its proponents “*still believe in truth*” (*GM* III 23, 24). Unconditional honest atheism is not a break from the ascetic ideal, and not even a “remnant,” but rather “*its core*” (*GM* III 27). What compels one to believe in truth is “*the belief in the ascetic ideal itself*... it is the belief in a *metaphysical* value, a value *in itself of truth*.” In this way, modern science “*affirms another world* than that of life, nature, and history,” and “*we*” honest atheists “*still take our fire from that great fire that was ignited by a thousand-year old belief... that God is truth, that truth is divine*” (*GM* III 24). Nevertheless, the ascetic ideal contains the seed of its own self-overcoming. The “*unconditional will to truth*” embodied in the ascetic ideal not only “*forbids itself the lie involved in belief in God*” it also compels one to question the value of truth itself. Nietzsche claims that “*Christianity as dogma* perished of its own morality; in this manner *Christianity as morality* must also now perish.” The will to truth killed *Christian dogma*, however *Christian morality* must perish under its own hand in “*an act of self-cancellation*,” the unconditional will to truth must inevitably *call itself* into question (*GM* III 27).

This opens up a void that can be filled by the creation of life-affirming values. These new life affirming values will not be the same for everyone, and some will still be driven, by necessity, to posit life-negating values. While the ability to create life-affirming values will only be open to a select, “higher” type, ideally life-affirmation will no longer be matter of chance, confined merely to “*strokes of luck*,” but a live possibility to those able to achieve it. Nietzsche doesn't inform his readers what the contents of these new values will be, partially because they will be *individual*, and vary from person to person. Rather than prescribing values for us, Nietzsche advocates the

²²⁰See also *TI* Anti-Nature 4: “*anti-natural* morality... which is to say, almost every morality that has been taught, revered, preached so far, explicitly turns its back on the instincts of life.” He might except Greek morality here.

“creation of tables of what is good that are new and all our own” (GS 335). He claims, in a similar vein:

And how could there ever be a “common good”! The term is self-contradictory: whatever can be common will never have much value. In the end, it has to be as it is and has always been: great things are left for the great, abysses for the profound, delicacy and trembling for the subtle, and, all in all, everything rare for those who are rare themselves (*BGE 43*).

And finally:

For it is selfish to consider one’s own judgment a universal law, and this selfishness is blind, petty, and simple because it shows that you haven’t yet discovered for yourself or created for yourself an ideal of your very own—for this could never be someone else’s, let alone... everyone’s! (*GS 335*).

Thus, because any new life affirming values will have to be “unique,” Nietzsche does not give us much by way of explicit guidance regarding their contents. Nevertheless, he does not leave the would-be life affirmer completely in the dark. In lieu of positive criteria, he tends to provide guidance via negative ones.

An exhaustive list of negative criteria would need to take into account the vast breadth of Nietzsche’s critique of traditional morality, and so I will not attempt this here. Rather, I will quickly sketch some of them in order to give a sense of the space into which Nietzsche’s new life affirming values are to fit. Consider the following possible criteria: a life affirming mode of valuation, unlike the slavish mode, will not be motivated by a reactive drive to control others. Similarly, it will not apply a single criterion of value across all human beings but allow for variation amongst individuals or types. Unlike Schopenhauer, and others, it will not regard suffering as absolutely bad for human beings, and so will also not regard all human drives or desires as intrinsically worthy of suppression. Finally, it will not establish its values upon belief in a world other than that of “life, nature, and history,” that is, in any supernatural or non-empirical world.²²¹ The list can go on, my intention here is to sketch the basic outline into which any new, “unique” table of values must fit in order to count as life affirming. It is likely that new values will need to be tested on a case by case basis, any table of values that fits Nietzsche’s negative strictures has a good chance of counting as life affirming.

5.6 Conclusion

²²¹ This list has benefitted from Janaway’s helpful, and more extensive, list of negative criteria in (2007: 253).

I have argued that affirming life is identical to willing power of the kind that Nietzsche approves. That is, in a way that tends toward the growth, expansion, or enhancement of life. I began by outlining two interpretive camps. According to the reflective interpretation of affirmation, affirmation is a kind of reflective endorsement of a state of affairs. According to the unreflective interpretation, reflection is not necessary for affirmation. I endorsed a version of the latter interpretation. Whether or not someone wills power in the appropriate way is decisive in determining whether they affirm life, reflective endorsements of life are possible, but they will always be expressions of an unreflective state.

To set the stage for my view I looked at Schopenhauer's conception of the affirmation and negation of the will. For Schopenhauer, affirmation of the will is the default setting for living creatures. It involves satisfying one's desires and maintaining one's body. Negation of the will involves acquiring knowledge of the essence of the world which then serves as a "tranquillizer" of willing.

Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer's distinction between affirmation and negation of the will. Negation of the will, in Schopenhauer's sense, is not possible. It is merely a further instance of willing, or as Schopenhauer would say "affirming," and what it affirms is "nothingness." Schopenhauer's so-called "negation of the will" is really a disguised "*will to nothingness*." Nietzsche redraws Schopenhauer's distinction along different lines.

I argued that affirmation and negation, for Nietzsche, is a distinction between two *kinds* of willing. Affirming life means willing life, and negating it means willing nothingness. Both are ways of willing *power*. The first instance tends toward the ascent, or expansion or life, while the second instance tends toward its decline or degeneration. Nietzsche approves of the first instance and disapproves of the second instance. I concluded that affirming life *just is* willing power in the ascending sense, the kind of which Nietzsche approves. For Schopenhauer, affirming the will to life does not involve anything other than simply *willing* life, this important feature of Schopenhauer's account carries over into Nietzsche's.

Finally, Nietzsche contends that affirming life in either the reflective or unreflective sense is a difficult achievement. In section five I looked at two obstacles to affirmation that make this the case. The first is that our lives in the personal sense contain unwanted particulars. Our lives contain mistakes, wrong turns, and delays that make it difficult to affirm the whole. Nietzsche encourages us to use artistic methods to shift our evaluative responses to the world in way that allows us to our lives as beautiful. Seeing life as beautiful is equivalent to seeing it as *desirable*.

The second is that we have an unwanted *essence*, namely the will to power. Nietzsche explains why it is difficult to affirm life's essence in his account of the slave revolt in morality in the *Genealogy*. We are the inheritors of a value structure that condemns the expression of power, and we need to

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overcome this in order to affirm life. I showed that, in a sense, it is not *we* who overcome morality, but morality that overcomes *itself*. Morality's self-overcoming opens up a void that can be filled with new life affirming values. Nietzsche does not provide us with these new values because they will be "unique" and vary from person to person. I provided some negative criteria in order to map the space in which any new table of values must fit in order to count as life affirming. That is, in order for them to be expressive of, and conducive to, the growth and enhancement of life.

CHAPTER SIX: LAUGHTER, A CASE STUDY

The affects have played a prominent role throughout this thesis. In this chapter, I take one particular affect as a case study in order to elucidate their general importance. The affect I will use is one that is expressed by a special kind of laughter that Nietzsche sometimes calls “higher laughter.” The affect itself is complex and many-faceted; thus, sometimes Nietzsche refers to by naming a string of affects: “a new and barely describable type of light, happiness, relief, amusement, encouragement, dawn,” but most often he refers to it by making recourse to its most characteristic *expression*, laughter (GS 343). Laughter plays a role in all three of the topics covered so far, namely, knowledge, freedom, and affirmation. This chapter has four sections. In 6.1 I bring Nietzsche’s higher laughter down to earth by showing how it possesses features contained in the three main general theories of laughter. Although Nietzsche does not mean to offer a general theory of laughter, this section is meant to draw out the similarities between higher laughter and ordinary, human, all too human laughter. In the following three sections I elucidate the theme of laughter by showing the role it plays in the three topics covered in this thesis. An upshot of this discussion is that looking at laughter reveals some important interrelationships between these three topics.

I will briefly sketch these interrelationships here. First, laughter is an expression of the affirmation of life. Importantly, for Nietzsche, the *autonomous* person can lack the ability to laugh. This shows that affirmation and freedom come apart. This is most clearly demonstrated in the figure of Christ. Christ was “free,” but he could not laugh, and so was not affirmative. Finally, I show how affirmation, and affirmation’s affective accoutrements, laughter and gaiety, can make us better enquirers.

6.1 Higher Laughter and Laughter in General

In this section I look at how Nietzschean “higher” laughter relates to ordinary laughter. Despite being *inhuman* and new, it is nevertheless similar to ordinary, all too human laughter. Although Nietzsche does not mean to advance a general theory, higher laughter does manifests features

pointed out by all three of the most prominent theories of laughter, namely, the incongruity, superiority, and relief theories.²²²

According to the incongruity theory, advanced by Kant and Schopenhauer, we laugh when we experience something that violates our expectations. For Schopenhauer, laughter results from a mismatch between our concepts and the empirical instantiations of those concepts. We laugh when two very different things are subsumed under the same concept; from one perspective, the concept fits, but from another, it is highly unsuitable.²²³

Higher laughter is also directed at an incongruity. For example, Nietzsche endeavours to strip our highest values, like compassion or abstention from retaliation, of their virtuous clothing. He reinterprets them as historically contingent attitudes rooted in the same kind of cruelty they decry, and further, not as positive *deed* or *merit* but as self-deceived powerlessness, “the prudence of the lowest order” (*GM I* 13). And this is a kind of incongruity, a supposedly timeless good is found to be a contingent attitude that has its origins precisely in its “evil” opposite.²²⁴ At times Nietzsche expresses disgust at the enormity of this self-deception,²²⁵ but at other times the sudden realization of the contingency of these values, expressed in the death of God, leads to laughter, cheerfulness, and a kind of light-hearted giddiness.

On superiority theories, laughter expresses a feeling of superiority over others. The most well-known proponent of this theory is Hobbes, who claims that laughter is caused by, “a sudden glory arising from some conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly.”²²⁶ Higher laughter can certainly be seen as expressing a feeling of superiority. It can express a superiority over others, as when the Gods mock our holy rites: “Gods enjoy mockery: it seems they cannot suppress their laughter even during holy rights (*BGE*)” §294. Or when “Cesare Borgia and his contemporaries” find in our “modern ‘virtues’” “a comedy at which they could have laughed themselves to death” (*TI* “Skirmishes” 37). However, it can also express a feeling of superiority over (as Hobbes also suggested) *oneself*, as when Zarathustra encourages the higher men by saying:

What does it matter that you didn’t turn out well? How much is still possible! *Learn* to laugh over and past yourselves! Lift up your hearts, you good dancers, high! higher! And don’t forget good laughter either! This crown of the laughing one, this rose-wreath crown: to

²²² Nietzsche’s talk about a laughter of the “herd” has similarities to Bergson’s theory of laughter as a form of social control. I will not talk about either of these things here, but there are helpful discussions in both Gunter (1968), and Lippitt (1992).

²²³ *WWR I* §13. See Lewis (2005) and Weeks (2004) for further discussion.

²²⁴ Include *BGE* quote

²²⁵ *GM I* 15.

²²⁶ Hobbes. *Leviathan I*, 6.

you, my brothers, I throw this crown! I pronounced laughter holy; you higher men, *learn—to laugh!*” (On the Higher Man).

Thus, higher laughter can express *self-overcoming*, a feeling of superiority over a former version of oneself that “didn’t turn out well.”

Finally, according to relief theories, endorsed by Herbert Spencer and later by Freud, laughter involves relieving nervous tension.²²⁷ According to Spencer, our emotions take the form of nervous energy, and nervous energy causes physical action. For example, if an emotion of fear reaches a certain level it will cause us to flee, similarly anger can cause aggressive behaviour. Laughter differs from these other emotions in that it doesn’t lead to practical behaviour, its physical manifestation is nothing more than a release of energy. Thus, laughter occurs when we experience an emotion like fear which is then revealed to be ungrounded. Perhaps we sense a tiger lurking in the dark, and it turns out to be a mouse. Since the fear cannot express itself in its characteristic behavioural responses like flight, we release the pent-up energy by laughing.

The early Nietzsche sketches a theory quite like this one in *Human, All Too, Human*:

If one considers that man was for many hundreds of thousands of years an animal in the highest degree accessible to fear and that everything sudden and unexpected bade him prepare to fight and perhaps to die; that even later on, indeed, in social relationships all security depended on the expected and traditional in opinion and action; then none cannot be surprised if whenever something sudden and unexpected in word and deed happens without occasioning danger or injury man becomes wanton, passes over into the opposite of fear: the anxious, crouching creature springs up, greatly expands—man laughs. This transition from momentary anxiety to short-lived exuberance is called the comic (*HH* 169).²²⁸

For Nietzsche in *HH*, ordinary laughter is caused by the release of pent up emotion, it is a pleasant kind of relief. This aspect of ordinary laughter carries over into his later conception of higher laughter. Nietzsche often describes the process of overcoming selfless morality as a *dangerous* thing. It is a tightrope act over the abyss of nihilism that requires light feet, skill, and perhaps a bit of luck. When one succeeds in leaving behind the comforts of traditional morality and the ascetic ideal, one laughs as if one has narrowly escaped the incident with one’s life. After all, higher laughter takes place in *the heights*, one is always in danger of falling down, of succumbing to the “spirit of gravity.”²²⁹

²²⁷ This discussion of Spencer is aided by John Morreall’s in “A New Theory of Laughter” (1981).

²²⁸ Unlike in the later works, here Nietzsche *does* engage in some brief theorising about laughter in general.

²²⁹ *Zarathustra* “On Reading and Writing.”

6.2 Laughter and Affirmation

In the previous chapter on affirmation, I noted that the main obstacle to affirming life is that we have inherited a system of values that condemns power. In order to affirm life we must overcome this value system. I contend that Nietzsche means to enlist laughter in the service of his battle against slave morality and the ascetic ideal. Laughter is not a trivial or inconsequential image in Nietzsche's writing. It is tied up with his highest ideals and goals and presented as a consummate reward toward which the "higher men" of *Zarathustra* are to strive.

Nietzsche sometimes presents laughter as the means and/or result of overcoming slavish, selfless, or ascetic morality.²³⁰ Consider some examples: Zarathustra proclaims: "Not by wrath does one kill but by laughter. Come, let us kill the spirit of gravity! (Z "On Reading and Writing"). The spirit of gravity represents Zarathustra's worry about being bogged down by despair at the thought of eternal return, it stands for weakness and life-negation. Laughter here is presented as a means of overcoming life-negation and despair as represented by the spirit of gravity.

Consider further Nietzsche's discussion of the "teachers of the purpose of existence" in the first section of *The Gay Science*, whose job is to periodically "promote the life of the species by promoting the faith in life." These teachers provide ethical or religious reasons to believe that life or existence as a whole has meaning and purpose. The teacher of a purpose demands that we do not "laugh at existence, or at ourselves—or at him," presumably because if we were to do so, their teaching would be drained of authority. Nietzsche continues:

There is no denying that in the long run each of these great teachers of a purpose was vanquished by laughter, reason, and nature: the brief tragedy always changed and returned into the eternal comedy of existence...Despite all this corrective laughter, human nature...*has acquired one additional need*, the need for the repeated appearance of such teachers and such teachings of a 'purpose'... And ever and again the human race will from time to time decree: 'There is something one is absolutely forbidden henceforth to laugh at' (GS 1).

Thus, laughter poses a threat to these "teachings of a purpose," enough laughter can vanquish a morality or religion, and this is why these things demand *seriousness*. Along similar lines, he claims in *Ecce Homo* that *Twilight of the Idols* is "a demon that laughs...an exception among books: nothing has greater substance or independence, nothing is more liable to overthrow,—nothing is more evil"

²³⁰ Higgins (2000: 47-9) has a nice discussion of this aspect of Nietzschean laughter.

(EH “Why I Write Such Good Books” *TI* 1). Here Nietzsche associates laughter with the destruction of “idols,” or “the old truth,” again emphasizing laughter’s destructive power and its capacity to kill or vanquish established truths by mocking them or not taking them seriously.

What gives laughter this particular power is the affective dimension it possesses. One kind of laughter is directed at things that we do not take seriously. We laugh at values that seem silly, outmoded, or naïve, and we experience it as an affront when others laugh at our deepest commitments. Indeed, hearty laughter at our commitments and projects is liable to make us feel as if they are of little to no value. But, one might ask, why should we care about such laughter, since our faith in the value of our projects is presumably buoyed up by *reasons* as well? Consider that Nietzsche takes conventional religious and moral beliefs to be primarily post-hoc rationalizations of unconscious drive states. Because of this, his attack on these beliefs is two pronged. He certainly attacks the rationalizations themselves, for example, by arguing that the concept of the thing in itself is incoherent, or by attacking certain conceptions of free will. But he also endeavours to undermine the affective foundations on which these rationalizations rest, and from which they spring forth. He does this by mocking them, or by revealing to us their cruel, weak, and generally unsavoury origins. His efforts on this score are meant to loosen our affective attachment to these values. For Nietzsche, the second prong of the attack is as important as the first. Nietzsche’s affective jibes may be even more dangerous to morality and religion than considered argument. One can always play with the rationalizations for a view in order to avoid objections, undermine its affective foundations and it will be forgotten like an outdated social convention.

The richest example of laughter serving as a symbol for, or manifestation of, overcoming slave morality comes in Zarathustra’s parable of the shepherd at the beginning of Book III of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In *Zarathustra* laughter takes on its highest significance, and indeed Zarathustra consecrates it, sanctifies it, and pronounces it holy (*Z on the higher men* 18, 19, 20).

Before turning to the parable of the shepherd, it is helpful to look at another instance of laughter at the end of Book II. Here Zarathustra is approached in a dream by his “*stillest hour*” (*Z “The Stillest Hour”*). He has become discouraged by those who mocked him for “walking in his own path” and has lost confidence in his ability to command. He says that he is “ashamed” of his failure. His stillest hour implores, “You must yet become a child and without shame,” and Zarathustra replies, “I will not.” He then reports how “laughter broke out all around me” and “tore at my entrails and cut open my heart.” The section ends with Zarathustra going back to his cave alone and weeping. At this point in the narrative Zarathustra has not yet learned how to laugh at himself, he is ashamed of his failures and because of the “pride of youth” he cannot see himself as foolish (*Z “The Stillest Hour”*). In Book III Zarathustra does learn to laugh. This is foreshadowed by the epigraph to that Book, which talks about an “elevated” laughter:

You look up when you long for elevation. And I look down because I am elevated.

Who among you can laugh and be elevated at the same time?

Whoever climbs on the highest mountains laughs at all tragic plays and tragic seriousness
(Z “*On Reading and Writing*”).

This sets the stage for the parable in the section, “On the Vision and the Riddle,” at the beginning of Book III.

In this parable Zarathustra describes his encounter with a young shepherd choking on a “heavy black snake” that has bitten into the back of his throat. Zarathustra tries unsuccessfully to remove the snake until he cries out (or “it cries out of him”) to bite off its head. The shepherd listens to Zarathustra’s advice and bites off the head and spits it away. After doing so he becomes: “no longer a shepherd, no longer man—a transfigured being, radiant, *laughing!*” Zarathustra continues:

Never yet on earth has a man laughed as *he* laughed! O my brothers, I heard a laughter which was no human laughter—and now a thirst gnaws at me, a longing that is never stilled. My longing for that laughter gnaws at me: oh how can I yet bear to live! And how could I bear to die now!” (Z *On the Vision and the Riddle*).

Nietzsche does not return to this riddle until the end of the third book in a section called “The Convalescent.” Here Zarathustra suggests that *he* is the shepherd, and this resonates with his earlier claim that the riddle is a “parable” and a “premonition,” i.e. a premonition of a transformation that would later happen to *him*.²³¹ His cry to “bite!” came involuntarily because the shepherd was really Zarathustra himself coming to realize what he had to do. At the beginning of “The Convalescent,” Zarathustra is awoken by his “most abysmal thought” (i.e. the thought of the eternal return)²³² and after confronting it promptly falls “like a dead man, and long remained as one dead.” After lying in this way for seven days he raises himself and “convalesces” amongst his animals who talk about the eternal return. Zarathustra replies:

How well you know what had to be fulfilled in seven days:—

—and how that monster crept into my throat and choked me!

But I bit off its head and spat it away from me... But now I lie here, still exhausted with that biting and spitting-away, still sick with my own redemption (Z “The Convalescent”).

The shepherd then is Zarathustra himself: but what about the snake? Zarathustra continues, “the great disgust with man—*it* choked me and had crept into my throat...the greatest all-too small!—

²³¹ Or, from the perspective of the eternal return, a transformation that has *already* happened to him.

²³² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* “On the Vision and the Riddle” (2).

that was my disgust at man! And the eternal recurrence even of the smallest!—that was my disgust at all existence!” (Z “The Convalescent”).

With our characters fleshed out the parable begins to come into focus: Zarathustra is oppressed by his disgust for even “the greatest” human beings, and at some point during his seven day illness he was “redeemed” from and “consoled” against this disgust.²³³ But what is the nature of this redemption? It seems to involve a kind of acceptance; Zarathustra overcame his disgust at existence by taking a positive attitude of acceptance toward those disgusting things.²³⁴ However Nietzsche needs to be careful about the kind of acceptance that he endorses. Is it an unqualifiedly positive attitude of uncritical acceptance, or does it leave room for criticism and negation? If he endorses the former, he may be in danger of unwittingly parroting the “omni-satisfaction” of the braying ass who says “Yea-Yuh” to everything and is never dissatisfied by the way things are. If Nietzsche means to uphold his critical stance on Christian values, then he needs to make space for a kind of redemptive acceptance that allows for such criticism. Nietzsche’s comments in *Ecce Homo* on the above passage from *Zarathustra* are instructive, here he says:

The psychological problem apparent in the Zarathustra type is how someone who to an unprecedented degree says no and *does* no to everything everyone has said yes to so far,— how somebody like this can nevertheless be the opposite of a no-saying spirit... how someone with the hardest, the most terrible insight into reality, who has thought ‘the most abysmal thought’, can nonetheless see it *not* as an objection to existence, not even to its eternal return,—but instead find one more reason in it for *himself to be* the eternal yes to all things... (*EH Zarathustra* 6).

The psychological problem is that Zarathustra “*does* no to everything everyone has said yes to so far” and at the same time “is *affirmative* to the point of justification, to the point of salvation, even for everything past” (*EH* 7, 8). Here Nietzsche intimates that Zarathustra’s acceptance of “the most abysmal thought” is of a kind that allows for no-doing and no-saying. In what follows I will try to draw out the nature of this acceptance.

The structure of this accepting attitude that also involves no-saying mirrors the structure of the “elevated” laughter that “laughs at all... tragic seriousness” (Z “On Reading and Writing”). This elevated laughter involves recognition of the terrible features of the tragedy, as well as a positive, laughing, attitude of acceptance toward them. Nietzsche endorses a similarly paradoxical-sounding attitude in a short aphorism in *GS*: he says, “Laughter means: being *Schadenfroh* but with a good

²³³ See also: Loeb (2010: 151).

²³⁴ Similarly, May describes the “redemption” of Z II 20 ‘On Redemption,’ as a redemption, not in the old religious sense as a redemption from time-boundedness, but as a redemption from *resentment against* time-boundedness (2009: 97). So it is here that Zarathustra’s redemption is not from the object of his disgust, but from his disgust itself.

conscience" (GS 200). Again, Nietzsche presents an attitude that involves enjoying suffering, and tragedy, without seeing them as objections to existence, and so enjoying them "with a good conscience." Similarly, Nietzsche describes Zarathustra's "Dionysian task" as requiring "the hardness of a hammer" and "the joy even in destruction" (EH Zarathustra 8). As he says in *Zarathustra*: "Oh, you humans, I see an image lying asleep in the stone, the image of images!... Now my hammer pounds on its prison with fury and cruelty. Pieces chip away from the stone: what do I care!" (Z "On the Blissful Islands"). Thus, in a number of different ways, Nietzsche hints toward a kind of accepting, affirming, attitude that incorporates an attitude of destruction, negation, or no-saying. It is this kind of attitude that Zarathustra adopts toward the most abysmal thought, the eternal return.²³⁵

One might see a tension, or even a contradiction, in the notion of an accepting attitude that incorporates a destructive one. There are two ways of dealing with this tension. The first is to deny that affirmation is a kind of reflective conscious endorsement. If affirmation involves conscious endorsement of life as a whole, then this might seem incompatible with taking an attitude of disapproval toward what is small and weak in oneself, which are features of life as a whole. In other words, one cannot "say-yes" and "say-no" to the same thing at the same time. Thus, the practitioner of "affirmation through negation" would fail to affirm life. However, as I showed in chapter five, Nietzsche's primary notion of affirmation does not involve conscious avowal. Rather, one affirms life simply in virtue of willing power in the appropriate way. Willing power in a way that tends toward the expansion of life is compatible with taking an attitude of disapproval or negation toward certain aspects of life. Indeed, since those small and weak aspects of ourselves inhibit willing power in this way, such an attitude may be a necessary one for affirming life.

However, we need not take this route. There is another way to resolve the tension on which even reflective affirmation is compatible with negation or destruction. To see this, it is helpful to point out that "endorsement" is an ambiguous term. Endorsing something, in the sense of welcoming it, being happy that it exists, or even loving it, is compatible with taking an attitude that negates or destroys that same thing. Nietzsche suggests that he thinks love and destruction are compatible attitudes in his talk of the birds of prey in the *Genealogy*:

And when the lambs say among themselves "these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is as little as possible a bird of prey but rather its opposite, a lamb,—isn't he good?" there is nothing to criticise in this setting up of an ideal, even if the birds of prey should look on this a little mockingly and perhaps say to themselves: "we do not feel any anger towards them,

²³⁵ Hatab (1988) and Pippin (2009) also attempt to characterise an attitude that incorporates both affirmation and negation.

these good lambs, as a matter of fact, we love them: nothing is more tasty than a tender lamb.”— (*GM I 13*).

The birds of prey *love* the lambs, and they affirm and endorse the lambs’ existence even as they destroy them. The attitude that the birds of prey express toward the lambs is analogous to the attitude that the life-affirmer takes toward that which is small in herself. Although she endeavours to root these things out and destroy, or negate them, she can welcome them as a source of resistance to overcome, and in overcoming them they are integrated into the narrative of her self-becoming, of who she is. Thus, it is possible to welcome something, and to affirm it consciously, and at the same time to negate, destroy, or eliminate it through overcoming. Indeed, if this were not possible then it seems the will to power could *never* be affirmative, since willing power involves precisely welcoming resistances to be overcome or negated.²³⁶

For Nietzsche, the will to power involves destruction, because it involves overcoming, or eliminating, resistances in the pursuit of first order ends. Thus, he claims that “negation and destruction are conditions of affirmation” (*EH “Destiny” 4*).²³⁷ He often associates destruction with Dionysus, claiming again in *Ecce Homo*: “The affirmation of passing away and destruction that is crucial for a Dionysian philosophy, saying yes to opposition and war, becoming along with a radical rejection of the very concept of ‘being’—all these are more closely related to me than anything else people have thought so far” (*EH Destiny “The Birth of Tragedy” 2*). And in a passage in *The Gay Science*:

Dionysian god and man, can allow himself not only the sight of what is terrible and questionable but also the terrible deed and every luxury of destruction, decomposition, negation; in his case, what is evil, nonsensical, and ugly almost seems acceptable because of an overflow in procreating, fertilizing forces capable of turning any desert into bountiful farmland (*GS 370*).²³⁸

And later on in the same passage:

The desire for *destruction*, for change and for becoming can be the expression of an overflowing energy pregnant with the future (my term for this is, as is known, ‘Dionysian’); but it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, deprived, and underprivileged one who

²³⁶ See discussion of will to power in 5.4.

²³⁷ See also *EH “Destiny” 2*: “I know the joy of destruction to a degree proportionate to my *strength* for destruction,—In both cases I obey my Dionysian nature, which does not know how to separate doing no from saying yes.” Also *Z*, Part Two, “Of Self-Overcoming”:—and whoever wants to be a creator in good and evil has to be a destroyer and smash values. // Thus the highest evil is part of the highest good: but this is the creative good.”

²³⁸ This passage was also adapted for “We Antipodes” in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*.

destroys and *must* destroy because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes him. To understand this feeling, take a close look at our anarchists (GS 370).

Here Nietzsche makes clear that a destructive attitude is compatible with both a descending kind of life, represented in the anarchist, and an ascending kind of life, represented in the Dionysian "God and man." For the anarchist, destruction is a means for keeping the will small, of willing nothingness, for the Dionysian it is a product of an overflow of procreative forces. For the Dionysian individual, destruction and negation by no means hinder affirmation, on the contrary, they are an *expression* of it.

Finally, in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche claims that:

To talk of 'just' and 'unjust' *as such* is meaningless, an act of injury, violence, exploitation or destruction cannot be 'unjust' *as such*, because life functions *essentially* in an injurious, violent, exploitative and destructive manner, or at least these are its fundamental processes and it cannot be thought of without these characteristics (GM II 11).

Life is "*essentially*" a destructive and exploitative enterprise. This is perhaps part of what Nietzsche was getting at when he claimed later in *Ecce Homo* that "negation and destruction are conditions of affirmation" (EH "Destiny" 4). If willing power involves overcoming resistance in the pursuit of an end, then willing power must also involve negating or destroying that resistance. Furthermore, if will to power is the essence of life, then life essentially involves destruction, or the exploitation of some resistance as a means to increasing one's power. Finally, if *affirmation* involves willing power in a way that enhances life, then affirmation too must involve the negation of a resistance that one overcomes in the pursuit of a first order aim.

Thus, higher laughter is a symbol and expression of the will to power itself, it is a positive attitude of acceptance toward ugly or otherwise unwelcome resistances. And since laughter involves the destruction of these things *with a good conscience*, it is also a symbol of affirmation, of willing power in a way that tends toward the expansion of life. However, laughter is importantly a *physical* phenomenon as well, and so it also a physical manifestation, or symptom, of affirmation. Higher laughter results from a loosening of the affective ties that bind an individual to life denying values. As I showed in 2.4, valuing something is a matter of having a *drive* toward something. Drives, for Nietzsche, are physiological phenomena and so values are, in part, physiological phenomena as well.²³⁹ As Richardson puts it, our most important values are "built into our bodies."²⁴⁰ Because of this, changes in one's values are liable to induce physiological responses, and higher laughter is one

²³⁹ See GM 1 17: "Every table of values, every 'thou shalt,' of which history and ethnological research is aware, needs *physiological* illumination and interpretation first of all."

²⁴⁰ Richardson (2004: 74).

such response. Higher laughter results from a pleasant shift from life-denying, unconditional, one-size-fits-all structure of Christian values to values that are more individual, tolerant of variety, and life-affirming.

6.3 Laughter and Freedom

Looking at laughter helps reveal the interrelationship between freedom and affirmation. It does so because on a number of occasions, Nietzsche states that autonomous persons can lack the ability to laugh, and laughter is the definitive symbol and expression of affirmation. Although freedom and affirmation often go hand in hand, the two can pull apart. Thus, *contra* Simon May's contention, it is *not* necessary that, "to be free one must also achieve a fundamental reckoning with, and overcoming of, the will to nothingness as the will that runs through Platonic—late Jewish—Christian history and that makes it the true history of nihilism."²⁴¹ Such a reckoning may be necessary for affirming life, but it is not necessary for freedom.

The most important case in which freedom and affirmation pull apart, and a compelling counterexample to May's point, is the figure of Christ, who Nietzsche describes as free. Christ certainly did not engage in a fundamental reckoning with, and overcoming of, the will to nothingness, but he is described as free. Although Nietzsche praises Christ's "freedom," he also qualifies this by saying that "Jesus could be called a 'free spirit', using the phrase somewhat loosely..." (A 40, 32). Christ can only be considered a free spirit in a loose sense because while the ordinary free spirit rejects the dogma of his day in favour of a set of practices more suited to him on the basis of *reasons*, Christ rejected "every type of word, formula, law, faith, or dogma" on the basis of an "inner light" (A 32). Christ certainly thought differently from those of his time, he was an apostate, who rebelled against Jewish law and the culture of Rome. In this sense he fits neatly into one of Nietzsche's characterisations of the free spirit: "He is called a free spirit who thinks differently from what, on the basis of his origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the basis of the dominant views of the age, would have been expected of him" (HH 225). Nevertheless, for Christ, the whole of reality only had value as a symbol for what was inside him, his "inner feelings of pleasure and self-affirmation." Christ lived completely in accordance with this "inner light," he was unable to object to any dogma that opposed him on the basis of reasons because "he accepted only *inner* realities as realities, as 'truths;' he could only "feel deeply sympathetic and grieve" over his belief that those who disagreed with him were not guided by the same "inner light" (A 32, 34). And in this sense, Christ pulls apart from the free spirit, who "demands reasons" while "the rest

²⁴¹ May (2009: 106).

demand faith" (HH 225). Unlike the free spirit: "The fettered spirit takes up his position, not for reasons, but out of habit" (HH 226). Christ, like the fettered spirit, did not take up his position on the basis of reasons. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Christ is a free spirit: he practiced a way of life that was entirely proper to him. The conditions of Christ's flourishing called for a complete rejection of reality and "flight into the 'unimaginable,' into the 'inconceivable'... a world that has broken off contact with every type of reality, a world that has become completely internal, a true world, an eternal world. . . 'The kingdom of God is *in each of you*'. . . (A 29). Although Nietzsche takes issue with the contents of Christ's values, he does not doubt that they are suited to the conditions of his flourishing.²⁴² Thus, Christ rejected the dogma of his day in favour of one more suited to him, not on the basis of reasons, but on the basis of faith.

While Christ was a free spirit in a loose sense, Nietzsche certainly did *not* take him to be a life affirmer. He was governed by "an instinct of hatred for *every* reality," he "did not care for solid things:... everything solid kills," and as we saw, his way of life is characterised by a complete retreat from the outside world into an internal one of feelings and inner lights. Thus, there are marginal cases in which freedom and the affirmation of life do not go hand in hand.

As I argued in 4.3, freedom involves determining oneself according to values that enable one to flourish, values that are tailored specifically to one's drives and affects, via a process of self-artistry. And in 5.4, I argued that affirming life involves willing power in a way that enhances or expands life. Christ's values did indeed enable him to flourish, in a sense, in that they enabled him to live in the world at all. However, in Christ:

The polar opposite of struggle, of any feeling of doing-battle, has become instinct here: an incapacity for resistance has become morality here ('resist not evil,' the most profound saying of the Gospels, the key to their meaning in a certain sense), blessedness in peace, in gentleness, in an *inability* to be an enemy (A 29).

Christ's way of life is characterized first and foremost by inability, not-doing, and the complete absence of struggle and overcoming. He did not will power in a way that enhanced life, because it can hardly be said that he willed power at all. Willing power involves overcoming obstacles in the pursuit of first-order ends. Christ devised a way of life for himself that disposed of worldly desire as much as possible, perhaps altogether. In this way, Christ was free but *not* affirmative.

Thus, it is apt that Nietzsche insists that Christ did *not* laugh. As Nietzsche claims in *Zarathustra*:

What has so far been the greatest sin here on earth? Was it not the word of him who said: "Woe to them who laugh here!" Did he himself find no reasons on earth for laughter? Then

²⁴² GS 335.

he sought badly. Even a child finds reasons here. He—did not love enough: otherwise he would have loved us who laugh! But he hated and jeered at us, he promised us wailing and gnashing of teeth.... This crown of laughter, this rose garland crown: I cast this crown to you my brothers! I have consecrated laughter; you higher men, *learn—to laugh!*” (Z “On the Higher Man” 16).

Christ could not laugh because he did not *love* enough. There is a connection to the conscious kind of affirmation expressed in *amor fati* here, or love of fate. In GS 276, Nietzsche exclaims: “*Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: someday I want only to be a Yes-sayer!” In a way Nietzsche desires that his love be greater than Christ’s. As noted in the previous section, the all-embracing love expressed in *amor fati* does not imply an uncritical embrace of everything, it is compatible with the destructive attitude. And this destructive, Dionysian attitude is precisely what Christ lacked. Christ’s love was not great enough to destroy, and so not great enough to create.

6.4 Laughter and Enquiry

Nietzsche also talks about laughter in context of knowledge (*Erkenntniss*), or enquiry. He often claims that laughter and good enquiry go hand in hand. Since laughter is a symptom of affirmation, one reason why Nietzsche associates laughter with knowledge is because affirmation can make us better enquirers. So in this section I’ll try to show both that affirmation and laughter can benefit enquiry.

One of the defining features of Nietzsche’s idea of a “Gay Science” (besides cheerfulness, gaiety, and laughter), is that it characterizes knowledge as a kind of striving, conquest, activity, or *willing power*, rather than as a static end-state or goal. One notable example of this is in GS 324:

No, life has not disappointed me. Rather, I find it truer, more desirable and mysterious every year—ever since the day the great liberator overcame me: the thought that life could be an experiment for the knowledge-seeker—not a duty, not a disaster, not a deception! And knowledge (*Erkenntniss*) itself: let it be something else to others, like a bed to rest on or the way to one, or a diversion or a form of idleness; to me it is a world of dangers and victories in which heroic feelings also have their dance—and playgrounds (GS 324).

Here Nietzsche associates knowledge and enquiry with themes characteristically associated with the will to power. Knowledge is not a kind of idleness or peacefulness, but struggle and activity for

which danger, victory, and heroism are possibilities.²⁴³ We seek knowledge for the same reason we seek anything else, because we are motivated to do so by various drives.²⁴⁴ Nietzsche reprimands Spinoza and other philosophers for neglecting this truth, and for thinking that the best kind of enquiry is divorced from unconscious drive processes:

Indeed, there may be many hidden instances for *heroism* in our warring depths, but certainly nothing divine, eternally resting in itself, as Spinoza supposed. *Conscious* thought, especially that of the philosopher, is the least vigorous and therefore also the relatively mildest and calmest type of thought; and thus precisely philosophers are most easily led astray about the nature of knowledge (GS 333).

Conscious thought is only apparently perspicuous; it is stable, familiar, and “calm.” Nietzsche diagnoses this preference for conscious thought as a symptom of a need for the familiar. But for Nietzsche, the genuine seeker of knowledge desires to encounter what is strange and *unfamiliar*. He claims that philosophers have thus far agreed that the familiar is what is known, or at least is what is easiest to know, and counters:

The familiar is what we are used to, and what we are used to is the most difficult to 'know'—that is, to view as a problem, to see as strange, as distant, as 'outside us' ... The great certainty of the natural sciences in comparison with psychology and the critique of the elements of consciousness—with the *unnatural* sciences, one might almost say—rests precisely on the fact that they take the *strange* as their object, while it is nearly contradictory and absurd even to *want* to take the not-strange as one's object ... (GS 355).

Psychology, and the “*unnatural* sciences,” take the strange as their object, opening up to the enquirer a world of “warring depths,” where danger, victory, and struggle have their place (GS 355, 333). It is clear that enquiry of this sort is an instance of willing power. If affirming life is a way in which we will power, then we can affirm life by pursuing knowledge. Furthermore, the kind of enquiry of which Nietzsche approves sees life as “mysterious,” “unfamiliar,” “*strange*,” and as a result, as “*desirable*.”²⁴⁵ And as I showed in chapter five, to desire life, or to will life, is just to will *power*, which is the essence of life. As Nietzsche says in GS 349: “the great and small struggle revolves everywhere around preponderance, around growth and expansion, around power and in accordance with the will to power, which is simply the will of life” (GS 349).²⁴⁶ A “gay science” is

²⁴³ In GS 283 Nietzsche also associates the pursuit of knowledge with heroism, war, struggle, and conquest. See also GS 110, 343.

²⁴⁴ Although, Nietzsche contends, our pursuit of knowledge is not motivated first and foremost by a “drive for knowledge,” rather, other drives use knowledge “merely as a tool” in pursuit of their various aims (BGE 6).

²⁴⁵ GS 355, 324 (emphasis mine).

²⁴⁶ As noted in 5.4, I have altered Hollingdale's translation of “*Wille des Lebens*” as “will to life” to “will of life” (GS 349).

one characterized by preponderance, growth, expansion, and the struggle for power; it takes an unknown and mysterious world as its object and charts a heroic course through its landscape.

So far I have argued that enquiry is a way in which we will power, and since affirming life is a kind of willing power, that we can affirm life in virtue of enquiring in a particular way. A “gay science” is an affirmative mode of enquiry. Its defining characteristics revolve around notions related to power: activity, struggle, victory, and desire. But these are not its only defining characteristics, a gay science is, of course, *gay*, cheerful, light-hearted, and prone to *laughter*.

Nietzsche often associates laughter with good philosophy or good thinking. Most notably in *Beyond Good and Evil*, when he says “I should actually risk an order of rank among philosophers depending on the rank of their laughter—all the way up to those capable of *golden* laughter” (§293). In *The Gay Science*, he associates laughter with “good thinking”:

Taking Seriously.—In the great majority, the intellect is a clumsy, gloomy, creaking machine that is difficult to start. They call it “taking the matter *seriously*” when they want to work with this machine and think well. How burdensome they must find good thinking! The lovely human beast always seems to lose its good spirits when it thinks well; it becomes “serious.” And “where laughter and gaiety are found, thinking does not amount to anything”: that is a prejudice of this serious beast against all “gay science.”—Well then, let us prove that this is a prejudice (327).

A likely candidate for the “serious beast” referred to here is the “ascetic ideal” of the *Genealogy*, because its spokesman, the ascetic priest, is “the true *representative of seriousness* itself” (*GM* III 11). Laughter is important to Nietzsche’s notion of a gay science because he means to contrast it with the seriousness of the kind of enquiry motivated by the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche explicitly contrasts an ascetic mode of enquiry to a gay one in the preface to the *Genealogy*:

That cheerfulness, in fact, or to put it into my parlance, that *gay science*—Is a reward: a reward for a long, brave, diligent, subterranean seriousness for which, admittedly, not everyone is suited. The day we can say, with conviction: ‘Forwards! even our old morality would make a *comedy*!’ we shall have discovered a new twist and possible outcome for the Dionysian drama of the ‘fate of the soul’ —: and he’ll make good use of it, we can bet, he, the grand old eternal writer of the comedy of our existence! . . . (*GM* preface 7).

Although the *Genealogy* was written after the *Gay Science*, the latter is a reward for the preliminary work of the former. And in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche does insist that the *Genealogy* is foreground and preparatory work (*EH* “Genealogy”). The *Genealogy*, to a large extent, works within the framework

provided by the ascetic ideal.²⁴⁷ It is a “polemical” work that draws on the genealogical enquiries of Paul Rée in order to “turn so sharp and disinterested an eye in a better direction, the direction of the real history of morality” (*GM* preface 7). A gay science is a mode of enquiry that fills the gap that the ascetic ideal leaves when it overcomes itself and cancels itself out by calling the unconditional value of truth into question.

Although the ascetic ideal pursues truth at any price, at its core, for Nietzsche, is a highly questionable claim, the unconditional value of truth. Once the ascetic ideal calls the value of truth into question, it negates itself. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s alternative to the ascetic ideal does not abandon truth altogether, on the contrary, he desires to justify our pursuit of it in the aftermath of the collapse of the ascetic ideal.²⁴⁸ His justification is that knowledge can be a means of enhancing life, of expanding the will to power. Nietzsche means to pursue knowledge in the service of life, and affirmation, rather than at the expense of life. This not only leads to a healthier kind of enquiry, it is also practically necessary. The collapse of the ascetic ideal threatens enquiry altogether, once the unconditional value of truth is called into question, it might seem that there is no reason to pursue knowledge at all, but for Nietzsche this is not the case. The pursuit of knowledge is justified by its capacity to enhance life. However, Nietzsche also states things the other way round, not knowledge as a means to life, but: “‘*Life as a means to knowledge*’—with this principle in one’s heart one can not only live bravely but also *live gaily and laugh gaily!*” (*GS* 324). By affirming life, by willing power, we see the world as strange, unknown, and desirable, and we are spurred on to enquire into it. In this way, affirming life is an impetus to enquiry, and life can become a means to knowledge.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined what laughter means for Nietzsche and the role that it plays as part of the affective dimension of his positive philosophising. I began by illustrating the similarities between laughter in Nietzsche’s works and the features of laughter drawn out by the three main theories of laughter in the history of philosophy. I showed how Nietzsche’s laughter contains elements of all three of these theories. Then I looked at the role that laughter plays in affirmation, freedom, and knowledge.

In 6.2. I argued that laughter is a symbol and physiological expression of the affirmation of life. Nietzsche characterises laughter both as a destructive force that one can enlist in process of overcoming slave morality, and as the result of shifting from life-denying values, to life-enhancing

²⁴⁷ Janaway (2007: 237-9).

²⁴⁸ *GM* III 24.

ones. Furthermore, I argue that laughter is a symbol for a kind of affirmation that allows for a destructive element.

In 6.3 I use laughter to illustrate the relationship between affirmation and freedom. Laughter shows that affirmation and freedom do not always go hand in hand. It does so because Nietzsche claims that at least one free person, Christ, was incapable of laughter because he did not affirm life. Although Christ was *free*, he did not affirm life in Nietzsche's sense, and so, found "no reasons on earth for laughter" (Z "On the Higher Man" 16).

In 6.4 I argue that affirmation and laughter can improve enquiry. I begin by showing how knowledge [*Erkenntniss*] is a way in which we will power. Since affirmation is a way in which we will power, we can affirm life by enquiring in a particular way; a "gay science" is an affirmative mode of enquiry. I argue that laughter is an important element in Nietzsche's ideal of a gay science because he means to contrast this ideal with the "seriousness" of kind of enquiry bound up with the ascetic ideal.

CONCLUSION: NIETZSCHE'S JOKES

In this thesis I have traced the course of the drives and affects through three of Nietzsche's main philosophical concerns. In chapter 3 I showed how cognition always operates in the service of the drives. This thought, together with the thought that drives issue in affective orientations, leads Nietzsche to diagnose certain philosophical positions, for example, Schopenhauer's account of will-less objectivity, as symptoms of underlying affective states. Furthermore, it leads him to the claim that the affects can be used to enhance cognition. In chapter 4 I argued that freedom involves engaging in self-artistry at the level of the drives. Freedom requires being determined by values that are conducive to one's flourishing. In chapter 5 I argued that affirmation primarily involves willing power in a particular way, rather than reflective endorsement of a state of affairs. Reflective endorsement is unnecessary for affirmation and is always a symptom of *unreflective* affirmation. Thus, affirmation takes place at the level of the drives and affects, rather than at the level of conscious reflection. In the final chapter, chapter 6, I looked at one particular affect, gaiety or laughter, and showed how it is important for Nietzsche's accounts of knowledge, freedom, and affirmation.

In this conclusion, instead of summarising my arguments for these views, as I did in the introduction, I'll reflect further on humour in Nietzsche's work. In chapter 3 I briefly discussed how Nietzsche uses humour in his parable of the lambs and birds of prey to reveal and cultivate ambiguity in our moral feelings.²⁴⁹ Here I'll consider further the ways in which Nietzsche uses humour as a rhetorical device to work toward his philosophical ends. I argue that Nietzsche's humour performs at least two main functions. Firstly, humour plays a role in Nietzsche's *ad hominem* attacks on philosophers, religions, and traditional morality. In short, Nietzsche ridicules and humiliates in order to undermine our affective attachments to his various targets. Secondly, his humour is meant to foster a community of insiders, those who "get" Nietzsche's jokes and share in his sense of humour. This is part of Nietzsche's broader project of using his style to find the appropriate readers for his works. I'll look at these two functions in turn.

²⁴⁹ See section 3.4.2.2.

Nietzsche ad hominem

Nietzsche often thought of himself as a psychologist, diagnosing the unreflective mental states that inevitably give rise to certain philosophical or moral views. One of his diagnostic strategies is the ad hominem, an attack on the affects, drives, and emotions of his opponent rather than on their arguments as such.²⁵⁰ Furthermore, Nietzsche's ad hominem arguments are often humorous, whether mocking and playful, or cruel and biting. The ad hominem is ordinarily considered to be an informal fallacy, and so an unacceptable move in debate. However, as Solomon points out, ad hominem arguments do not always count as fallacies, and they can provide good grounds for dismissing, or at least being suspicious of a person's views.²⁵¹

The main problem with ad hominem arguments is that they can lead one to dismiss a good argument on the basis of its promulgator's flaws; however, this need not be the case. For example, when a lawyer attacks a witness on the basis of their moral failings, they do so ad hominem, but these failings can provide good grounds for dismissing the witness' testimony. The same can be true, in certain circumstances, for philosophical views. According to Solomon, ad hominem arguments can expand, rather than limit, the field of argument, by focusing not just on the soundness of premises and validity of arguments, but also on the motivations, intentions, and circumstances that gave rise to the view under scrutiny.²⁵² Nietzsche does both of these things, often attacking arguments and their promulgator's character in a single breath. For fields of inquiry in which there are no obvious truths or proofs, subjects like religion and morality, ad hominem argument can be useful for digging up and attacking the motivations behind certain claims.

Nietzsche's ad hominem arguments are often aimed at philosophers. One humorous example is directed at Schopenhauer. In *BGE* 186, Nietzsche quotes what Schopenhauer calls the "*actual* foundation of ethics," namely, his claim (originally in Latin): "Harm no one, but rather help everyone as much as you can."²⁵³ Nietzsche responds to this with vitriol and playfulness in equal measure:

And anyone who has ever truly felt how inanely false and sentimental this claim is in a world whose essence is will to power—, they might recall that Schopenhauer, pessimism notwithstanding, *actually*—played the flute . . . every day, after dinner. You can read it in his biography. And just out of curiosity: a pessimist who negates both God and world but *stops* before morality,—who affirms morality and plays his flute, affirms *laede neminem* morality: excuse me? is this really—a pessimist? (*BGE* 186)

²⁵⁰ Solomon (2004).

²⁵¹ Solomon (2004: 26-7).

²⁵² Solomon (2004: 30).

²⁵³ Schopenhauer, "On the Basis of Morality" (II §7).

Nietzsche does not take the time to refute Schopenhauer's claim about the foundation of ethics, instead he cruelly dismisses it as "inane false" and "sentimental." Furthermore, instead of presenting arguments against Schopenhauer's pessimism by looking at his claim that the thing in itself is will, he questions the sincerity of Schopenhauer's beliefs. Nietzsche paints a comic portrait of the stern philosopher, who presumably found so little to value in this world, relaxing after dinner by practicing the flute (presumably, beloved poodle at his side). Nietzsche heightens the pitch of his mockery by adding that Schopenhauer "*actually*" played the flute, in fact, he did so "every day," and he had the bad sense not to hide this pastime from biographers. Could Schopenhauer *really* believe that the world was bereft of value if he played the flute and affirmed morality? Indeed, he seems to have found plenty to value. And while Schopenhauer would retort that music and morality have value only in virtue of their capacity to negate the will to life, Nietzsche would respond by pointing out that this seems frankly insincere in light of his behaviour. By pointing and laughing at Schopenhauer's personality and interests, he inclines those tempted by Schopenhauer's pessimism to take a distrustful step back from his extreme claims.

In *TI "Skirmishes"* 29, Nietzsche mocks Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism in a miniature dialogue, presented as "*Excerpts from a doctoral exam*":

—'What is the task of all higher schooling?' To turn men into machines.—'What method is used?'—They have to learn to be bored.—'How is this done?'—Through the concept of duty.—'Who is the model for this?'—The philologist: he teaches you how to grind away at your work.—'Who is the perfect human?'—The civil servant.—'What philosophy gives the highest formula for the civil servant?'—Kant's: the civil servant as thing-in-itself set to judge over the civil servant as phenomenon.—

Here Nietzsche sweeps Kant's rigorous argumentation aside with a few jokes: Kant is a boring, civil servant's philosopher. Again, Nietzsche means to question Kant's motives and circumstances. The forces that gave rise to Kantianism were at work elsewhere in German society. Nietzsche casts Kant's philosophy in the light of a new capitalistic valorisation of work as an end in itself, and the mechanisation of human beings in an industrial society. These forces brought about the 19th century man-as-civil-servant, and also, the civil servant's philosopher, Kant, who glorified dutiful, boring, work-grinding behaviour by casting it in, as Nietzsche elsewhere mocks, "majestic moral structures" (*D* preface 3).²⁵⁴ Nietzsche playfully considers the possibility that Kant's philosophy is not a sublimely independent work of his intellect, but rather something that developed in order to justify the mechanistic, boring, and grinding daily life of the German civil servant. Nietzsche's joking urges

²⁵⁴ *Critique of Pure Reason* B 375.

Conclusion: Nietzsche's Jokes

us to question the societal structure and material circumstances under which Kant's developed his ideas, something philosophers might not ordinarily be inclined to do.

Nietzsche often launches ad hominem attacks against philosophers and artists on the basis of their nationality. These are often sweeping generalisations about a national culture, however Nietzsche usually qualifies them to a particular eras, centuries, or movements of thought. This is not always the case with the Germans, who he often unqualifiedly castigates.²⁵⁵ When he must praise a German thinker or artist, he often separates them from their German-ness by referring to them as "European."²⁵⁶ The Germans and the English are Nietzsche's favourite ad hominem targets, but the French get a few nudges as well.²⁵⁷

For example, Nietzsche often appeals to the Englishness of utilitarianism's more well-known advocates in order to criticise the view. In a more memorable ad hominem, he claims: "people *don't* strive for happiness, only the English do" (*TI* "Arrows" 12). Here Nietzsche mocks the purported universality of the utilitarian claim that all human beings strive for happiness, by presenting it as a national idiosyncrasy instead. We see here again Nietzsche's use of ad hominem to reveal the pretensions of bold claims to universality, and knock them down a peg. Nietzsche anticipates the claim in *TI* with another, less pithy, ad hominem:

Ultimately, they all want *English* morality to be given its dues: since it is best for humanity, for the "general utility" or "the happiness of the majority"—no! the happiness of *England*. They want, with all the strength they can muster, to prove to themselves that striving for English happiness, I mean for comfort and fashion (and, at the highest level, for a seat in Parliament) (*BGE* 228).

While Kant's ethics is the ethics of the civil servant, utilitarianism is the ethics of the Parliamentarian. What drives it is a desire for comfort, fashion, and herd happiness. In this way, Nietzsche disputes the universal pretensions of Kantian and utilitarian ethics by rooting them in a particular time and place, and by postulating possible motivations for them: a valuation of hard-work and drudgery, for Kant, and a valuation of comfort and ease, for utilitarianism. Nietzsche often jabs at these theories, which purport to be interested in the well-being of everyone, by claiming that they are selfish. Thus, the utilitarian is interested in "the happiness of *England*," and, in

²⁵⁵ See *EH* "Wagner" 4: "It is even my ambition to be considered the despiser of the Germans *par excellence*."

²⁵⁶ See, *TI* "Skirmishes" 49: "*Goethe*—not a German event but a European one..." and *TI* "Skirmishes" 19: "Schopenhauer, the last German who was worthy of consideration (—who was a European event like Goethe, like Hegel, like Heinrich Heine, and not just a local event, a 'national' one)." Wagner is a complicated case, he was certainly *German*; however, in spite of this Nietzsche cannot help but praise him at times.

²⁵⁷ For Nietzsche on the French see: *TI* "Skirmishes" 2, 6; *BGE* 254.

Nietzsche's eyes, certainly not his own happiness. He makes a similar accusation of selfishness against Kant:

What? You admire the categorical imperative within you? This 'firmness' of your so-called moral judgement? This absoluteness of the feeling, 'here everyone must judge as I do'? Rather admire your *selfishness* here! And the blindness, pettiness, and simplicity of your selfishness! For it is selfish to consider one's own judgement a universal law, and this selfishness is blind, petty, and simple... (GS 335).

Again, Nietzsche casts doubt on philosophers' supposedly disinterested motivations by considering ways in which their philosophies might serve to prop up their own personal prejudices and nationally rooted values.

Nietzsche's ad hominem arguments are not bald character assassination, they have a point, and they can direct us toward the truth. They call into question the pretensions of their targets and urge us to adopt a standpoint of suspicion. For Nietzsche, philosophical positions are, as Solomon says, "steeped in and constitutive of the character of the person in question."²⁵⁸ And so, Nietzsche attends not only to arguments but to their source. Because we cannot assume that philosophical works spring forth entirely independently of the cultural, material, and psychological contingencies that surround their creation, we need to have a look at these things as well.

Nietzsche's Community of Taste

In Nietzsche's earliest writings, he endorses the romantic thought that mythology is the core of a genuine culture, and the further thought that a new, self-consciously constructed mythology was necessary in the modern world. He thought that Wagner's music dramas could provide the mythic core that would launch a general rebirth of German culture. In *The Birth of Tragedy* he charts the rise and fall of Greek tragedy, and envisages a reinvigoration of the spirit of the genre in Wagner's music. At his most romantically optimistic, he claims:

Let no one believe that the German spirit has lost its mythical homeland forever when it still clearly understands the voice of the bird that speaks of that homeland. One day it will awake in the morning freshness from a deep sleep. Then it will kill the dragon, destroy the malicious dwarf, and awaken Brünnhilde—and even Wotan's spear will not block its path (BT 24).

²⁵⁸ Solomon (2004: 43).

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His hopes on this score were bitterly dashed. Wagner's inaugural Bayreuth festival was an uninspiring event attended by bourgeois spectators more interested in socialising than in the music itself. In his later work, he set his sights on a more modest aim. Not for an elevated, and general, *German* culture, but a higher (non-national) culture open to an elite few.²⁵⁹ Through his writings, Nietzsche aimed to wake up and encourage those who were capable to strive for freedom, affirmation, and greatness. He believed that if he could find suitable readers with ears to hear then his writing could inspire them to struggle against slave morality and create great works of culture.

Thus, we often see Nietzsche preoccupied with finding the right kind of audience. These preoccupations abound in his prefaces. He begins his preface to *The Anti-Christ* by claiming: "This book belongs to the very few. Perhaps none of them are even alive yet... My day won't come until the day after tomorrow. Some people are born posthumously" (*A* preface 1). In his preface to *Daybreak* he asks with some trepidation, "But do you not understand me?"²⁶⁰ and closes with an injunction: "My patient friends, this book desires for itself only perfect readers and philologists: *learn to read me well*" (*D* preface 2, 5). Nietzsche places high demands on his ideal audience, and he tries to foster intimacy with them, his "patient friends," who may not even be alive yet. Again in the preface to the *Genealogy* he places further demands upon his readers: "If this book is unintelligible to anyone and hard on the ears, the fault, as I see it, does not necessarily lie with me" (*GM* preface 1). He presupposes that his readers have knowledge of his earlier writings, and that they have "not spared some effort in the process" as "these are in fact not easily accessible." He then heightens his demands further:

As far as my *Zarathustra* is concerned, for example, I count no one as an authority who has not at sometime been deeply wounded and at sometime deeply delighted by each of its words: for only then may he enjoy the privilege of reverent participation in the halcyon element out of which the work was born" (*G* preface 8).

Nietzsche demands above all, a deep emotional involvement with his writings. There is an element of perspectivism here. We must engage with *Zarathustra* and experience *each* of its words from painful and wounding perspective, and then we must shift perspective and reread each word joyfully. Nietzsche invites the reader to get under his skin and "participate" in the "halcyon element" out of which he created it. The reader must digest his "fare," and "ruminate," slowly, attending to the different ways in which it makes them feel (*GS* prelude 1, *GM* preface 8).²⁶¹

One way in which he attempts to coax out his ideal reader is by fostering intimacy with them through his sense of humour. Ted Cohen remarks in his book on jokes that joking has the capacity

²⁵⁹ Gemes and Sykes (2004).

²⁶⁰ This question becomes a frequent refrain. See *EH* "Destiny" 3, 7, 8, 9.

²⁶¹ See Higgins (1992) for an in depth look at the humorous elements of *Zarathustra* specifically.

to cultivate the intimacy of a shared sense of community. This seems to be one of the things that Nietzsche tries to achieve with his jokes. Cohen claims that this kind of community has two constituents. The first is a shared set of beliefs, dispositions, prejudices, or points of view on the world, and the second is a shared feeling, or response to something. Cohen claims that both of these things can be fostered without jokes, but that jokes can use the second constituent to amplify the first.²⁶² Cohen notes that we are disappointed when others don't get our jokes, and that when they do, it satisfies a deep human longing, namely to know that "we are enough like one another to sense one another, and to live together."²⁶³ A joke does not compel its conclusion in the way that an argument does. When one person finds a joke amusing, and tells it to another, and the recipient does not find it funny, it's not necessarily because they don't understand the joke, rather it's because there's some part of them that is unlike the teller. Some aspect of the teller allows them to be amused by the joke, and this aspect is lacking in the recipient. When a joke succeeds, and both parties laugh together, there is a shared sense of community, they are similar in some way, and they enjoy a feeling of intimacy. Cohen's vision of jokes is largely egalitarian, for him, when another laughs at my joke I am reassured "that this something inside me, the something that is tickled by a joke, is indeed something that constitutes an element of my humanity."²⁶⁴ Nietzsche's jokes, on the other hand, are often made at the expense of egalitarian values, and are often meant to appeal to our ambivalences about them.

Nietzsche's jokes are designed to draw in his ideal readers, those who share his tastes in a broad sense. He is trying to both foster, and draw out already existing feelings of misgiving against the targets of his jokes. They are meant to resonate with those who, for example, have misgivings about slave morality in its various forms. His ideal readers will be amused by his barbed remarks about English comfort and herd happiness, and about German drudgery and its un-aristocratic valuation of work as an end in itself. His jokes are meant to appeal to those with certain philosophical and aesthetic sensibilities, those sensibilities that he thinks are conducive to greatness. Nietzsche does not envisage his ideal readers as a coterie of like-minded thinkers, with identical views to himself, rather, he means to inspire those with certain character traits to seek out their own independence. Nietzsche is looking for readers who share that part of himself that finds certain things funny, or certain people and views worthy of mockery.

Nevertheless, one can of course have ambivalences about slave morality, and so enjoy Nietzsche's jokes, without having these noble capacities. One thing Cohen's theory does not countenance is our capacity to laugh and joke about ourselves. Nietzsche values this capacity, and tries to cultivate it in his readers with humour. He uses jokes to encourage his readers to take a step back from their

²⁶² Cohen (1999: 28).

²⁶³ Cohen (1999: 29).

²⁶⁴ Cohen (1999: 31).

Conclusion: Nietzsche's Jokes

values and laugh at them. In this way, humour affords a critical distance that can serve as a standpoint from which we can call our values into question. Thus, even if one does not share Nietzsche's aristocratic values, it does seem possible to share in his laughter, so long as one has the capacity to take a critical step back from one's values.

One thing Nietzsche does in the "Skirmishes" section of *Twilight* is give rapid sketches of his aesthetic and philosophical tastes. He offers his opinions and feelings about so many thinkers and artists that one would be hard pressed to find anyone who agreed with all of them, but that is not the point. Nietzsche is displaying his tastes to provide the reader with a self-portrait, telling them his likes and dislikes in order to make an example of himself. He tries to carve out a noble, aristocratic taste by disdaining anything he deems common, vulgar, mediocre, or plebeian.²⁶⁵ He charges this self-portrait with jokes in order to foster intimacy with a hypothetical community of others who share his capacity to produce great works. He calls *Twilight* a "declaration of war" and in it he challenges anything that to him remotely smells of "ideality" or slave morality (*TI* preface). The "Skirmishes" section abounds with barbed jokes meant both to foster certain sensibilities by challenging figures in the history of art and thought, and to resonate with his (perhaps unborn) ideal readers' already existing sensibilities. The first section of "Skirmishes" contains a flurry of ad hominem jokes directed at Seneca, Rousseau, Schiller, Dante, Kant, Hugo, Liszt, Sand, Michelet, Carlyle, Mill, and Zola. Nietzsche uses a shotgun tactic to sketch out his aristocratic sensibilities and his antipathy toward "'Modern ideas,'" bad psychology, pessimism, and romanticism (*EH* "Twilight" 2).

What kind of sensibilities is Nietzsche trying to appeal to in section one of "Skirmishes"? For one, a taste for the light, affirmative, aristocratic, and courtly poetry of the Provençal troubadour to his successor, "*Dante: or the hyena who writes poetry in tombs*" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 1). A taste for Stendhal's "psychologist's eye and grasp of the facts" over "*Zola: or 'the joy of stinking,'*" and more generally, the "Parisian novelist" who "cannot put three sentences together without it hurting your eye, the *psychologists eye*" (*EH* "Clever" 3, *TI* "Skirmishes" 1, 7). Nietzsche also envied Stendhal's sense of humour: "He beat me to the best atheism joke, just the sort of thing that I would say: 'God's only excuse is that he doesn't exist'" (*EH* "Clever" 3). Stendhal is evidently part of Nietzsche's community of taste. A taste also for Goethe's "return to nature" over Rousseau's. Goethe returned to nature "by coming *toward* the naturalness of the Renaissance," a "high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness," whereas Rousseau wanted to return to the supposed original equality of nature (*TI* "Skirmishes" 49, 48). Accordingly, Nietzsche quips: "*Rousseau: or the return to nature in impuris naturalibus*" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 1).²⁶⁶ Finally, a taste for his own withholding and easily misunderstood

²⁶⁵ *TI* "Germans" 6, "Skirmishes" 3, 45, 48.

²⁶⁶ "In natural dirtiness."

style, full of detours, ambiguities, masks, and misdirection to John Stuart Mill's "insulting clarity" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 1). In this way, Nietzsche tries to root out, and perhaps to create, his ideal readers by drafting a standard of taste. And he tries to win readers over to his standard by fostering intimacy through his sense of humour. In Cohen's terms Nietzsche's jokes create a shared feeling of amusement that serves to amplify the reader's existing beliefs or prejudices against the joke's target. It also seems true that a well-placed joke can kindle a belief where none existed before, or amplify an unconscious prejudice into a firmly held and conscious distaste.

Nietzsche's jokes make up an important part of his attempt to engage his readers' affects. At one level they work as ad hominem arguments in order to arouse feelings of suspicion against their targets. At another level they work to create a feeling of intimacy between Nietzsche and his readers. Nietzsche is not looking for ordinary readers, but "patient friends," and so he at times addresses them as such (*D* preface 5). Nevertheless, the way in which Nietzsche affects us is often challenging and confrontational, and the same can be said for his jokes. He tests our integrity and honesty by calling for us to reckon with our deepest feelings in our attempts to enquire into ourselves and our values. Since most of his readers are inheritors of what Nietzsche calls slave morality, his sallies against it can be provocative and unsettling. Similarly, when Nietzsche creates a space where ambivalence about our values can grow, he encourages us to probe that ambivalence. By making the reader look at the ways in which they are attracted and repelled by certain values, he fosters the capacity to postpone judgment, and to look at the matter of enquiry from multiple sides.²⁶⁷ Nietzsche proscribes a relentless self-scrutiny of one's feelings in way that implies that philosophical enquiry, in Nietzsche's sense of the word, never admits of a definite end.

²⁶⁷ *TI* "Improving" 6.

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