Rehabilitating positive freedom:

An exploration of the value and relevance of Nietzsche's conception of freedom

by

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Abbreviations of Nietzsche's works and a note on the texts used

Abbreviations for Nietzsche's works used throughout this dissertation are as follows:

A – The Antichrist

BGE – Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future

D – Daybreak (also translated as Dawn)

EH – Ecce Homo

GM – On the Genealogy of Morals (also translated as On the Genealogy of Morality)

GS – The Gay Science (also translated as The Joyful Science)

HAH – Human, All Too Human

NCW – Nietzsche Contra Wagner

PT – Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's

TI – Twilight of the Idols

UM – Untimely Meditations (also translated as Unfashionable Investigations)

Z – Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One

TPN – The Portable Nietzsche (ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann).

BWN – The Basic Writings of Nietzsche (ed. and trans. W. Kaufman).

Nietzsche's other works have been excluded because their contents are outside the relevant scope of this dissertation. The Will to Power is excluded on account of the fact that Nietzsche never intended any of its contents for publication, and because of the role his sister played in gathering and editing the content of the book to suit her own political agenda. We judge Aristotle on his notes only because we do not have access to his 'published' manuscripts, but this is not the case with Nietzsche. Nietzsche was a meticulous editor of his own work, and put a great deal of effort to refine and hone his thought before considering it worthy for publication. The Will to Power would not have met Nietzsche's own standard of accuracy, and it is for the sake of maintaining as much accuracy as possible that I exclude this work from my dissertation.

All other secondary texts are referenced through the traditional Harvard method, and included in the bibliography along with the primary sources.

Chapter 1:

Nietzsche and the traditional question of freedom

> *"At the city gate and by your fireside I have seen you prostrate yourself and worship your own freedom,*
> *Even as slaves humble themselves before a tyrant and praise him though he slays them.*
> *Ay, in the grove of the temple and in the shadow of the citadel I have seen the freest among you wear their freedom as a yoke and a handcuff."*
>
> -Kahlil Gibran

This dissertation investigates the philosophical question of human freedom. Broadly speaking, 'freedom' is one of the most exhaustively treated questions in Western intellectual history, and also one of the most controversially contested. I focus on one particular and often neglected philosophical position: the peculiar positive freedom of Friedrich Nietzsche. This introductory chapter will show that philosophical arguments about the meaning and nature of human freedom have concrete implications for many significant elements of everyday human life. These implications, far from being merely the objects of academic curiosity, continue to shape the foundations of our contemporary socio-political context. It is my contention that Nietzsche's ideas on freedom, which have been largely dismissed within the established historical debate, contain valuable resources for philosophical reflection on freedom and are especially relevant in our contemporary intellectual context of growing globalisation, value-pluralism, and scientific explanations of reality.

This introductory chapter's primary function is to establish the particular scope and limitations of this inquiry. I begin with an exposition of Isiah Berlin's celebrated article 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (1958), which provides a well balanced overview of the historical debate and intellectual background of freedom as it has been philosophised through the ages. This is followed by a provisional sketch of Nietzsche's conception of freedom, which is contrasted to the two main positions discussed by Berlin. Finally, I give an outline of the chapters to follow.

1.1. Negative and positive freedom: two major historical types

Berlin (1958: 2) begins his discussion by noting the various meanings and degrees of importance that have been attached to the concept of freedom:

> To coerce a man is to deprive him of freedom – freedom from what? Almost every moralist in human history has praised freedom. Like happiness and goodness, like nature and reality, it is a term whose meaning is so porous that there is little interpretation that it seems able to resist.

Rather than attempt the impossible task of discussing the over two hundred recorded meanings given to 'freedom' throughout our history, Berlin focuses on only two types. These two types, however, represent the most historically significant trends in philosophical reflection on freedom: the positive and negative conceptions. (*ibid.*).

The negative conception views freedom as freedom *from* (from external constraints, or the interference of others). It assumes freedom for the individual in an absolute sense, and holds this freedom (its promotion and protection for all) as the highest end of society and human life. The positive conception moves in another direction. Under the positive conception, freedom is freedom *for* (for the attainment of a particular end, freedom *to* live a certain life or strive after certain goals). Freedom here is not an end in itself, or the highest value of human life, but a tool and a means toward another, more absolute value or end. Our social and political history has for a long time been influenced by the tense interaction – in conflict and compromise – between these two opposed conceptions of liberty.

As with most great philosophers, the full force of Nietzsche's ideas are best revealed in contrast to the philosophical positions they opposed. The most direct target of Nietzsche's critical negative[1] account of what freedom *is not* can be found in the early liberal account of freedom as *freedom from* external constraint. On the surface, Nietzsche's account of freedom has more in common with the traditional positive conception as discussed by Berlin.

[1] A terminological clarification: Throughout this dissertation, I often refer to the traditional 'negative' and 'positive' approaches to freedom, as well as Nietzsche's negative and positive accounts of truth, selfhood, and freedom. The former refer to the established historical trends of the philosophical tradition as discussed through Berlin in this chapter. The latter refer respectively to Nietzsche's negative critical accounts of the problems in traditional philosophy and his positive proposed alternatives. The particular sense in which they are used at various places should be obvious from the context, but it is important to keep this distinction in mind. For instance, Nietzsche's negative accounts of truth, selfhood, and freedom as they have appeared in the tradition apply to both the negative and positive conceptions of freedom discussed by Berlin. Nietzsche's positive alternative accounts of truth and selfhood result in a positive (alternative, revised) account of freedom which is also 'positive' rather than 'negative' insofar as it is a 'freedom *for*' and not a 'freedom *from*'.

Nevertheless, we shall see that Nietzsche's particular notion of positive liberty is as opposed to the underlying assumptions of the traditional positive conception as it is to those of the traditional negative conception.

But before we discuss Nietzsche, let us first turn to Berlin's account of the negative conception, and the historically older conception of positive liberty.

1.1.1. Negative liberty: freedom *from*

According to Berlin (1958: 3) the negative conception of freedom found its earliest clear expression in the work of the classical English political philosophers, many of whom played a formative role in establishing the Western liberal tradition. These philosophers understood freedom as 'freedom *from* the *interference* of *others'*. "If I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree; and if this area is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved" (*ibid.*).

This qualification distinguishes the political dimension of negative freedom from its physical, intellectual or economic counterparts. If I am unable to run because I was born without the use of my legs, this may be a limitation to my physical freedom. If I am unable to understand the intricacies of a discourse due to insufficient training, education, or talent, this may be a limitation on my intellectual freedom. If I am unable to afford bread and housing due to a lack of financial means, this may be a limitation on my economic freedom. (*ibid.*). But in none of these cases would I be 'enslaved' or 'coerced', *unless* I understood these limitations as resulting directly from the actions of others:

> The criterion of oppression is the part that I believe to be played by other human beings, directly or indirectly, with or without the intention of doing so, in frustrating my wishes. By being free in this sense I mean not being interfered with by others. The wider the area of non-interference, the wider my freedom (*ibid.*).

In light of this, the early liberal negative conception requires that all individuals be given an area of inviolable non-interference from others. This area could not be unlimited, for they recognised that the freedoms of different individuals do not automatically harmonise, and the

unlimited freedom of some would inevitably encroach on the freedom of others; for instance the freedom of the strong to dominate the weak. Nor could the area be non-existent, for much the same reasons. Depending on their particular convictions, these thinkers also placed a high value on other ends; justice, happiness, culture, security, various degrees of equality, and so on. They realised that individual freedom would have to be curtailed to some extent, not only for the sake of these other values, but also for the sake of freedom itself; the freedom to articulate and pursue values. Thus the area of individual free action should be limited by law. At the same time, liberals such as Mill, Locke, Constant and Tocqueville held that some minimum area of completely inviolable personal freedom must be guaranteed; else it would not be possible for men to pursue or even conceive of the various other values they hold dear. (Berlin, 1958: 3-4).

From this:

> [i]t follows that a frontier must be drawn between the area of private life and that of public authority. Where it is to be drawn is a matter of argument, indeed of haggling. Men are largely interdependent, and no man's activity is so completely private as never to obstruct the lives of others in any way. 'Freedom for the pike is death for the minnows'; the liberty of some must depend on the restraint of others. (Berlin, 1958: 4).

From this tension, the now commonplace division of society into the public and private spheres first emerged. The public-political sphere requires the sacrifice of some freedoms for the sake of ensuring other freedoms. This takes the form of obedience to some overarching code of behaviour or set of laws, justified in various ways (for example, Rousseau's 'sanctity of the social contract' or Kant's 'Duty'). The liberty sacrificed in the public sphere guarantees the sanctity of the personal-private sphere, which usually takes the form of inviolable basic rights (to life, property, equality, freedom of religion, speech, self-expression, and so on). (Berlin, 1958: 4-5).

This inviolable frontier of freedom *from* is what allows one to bring various accounts of freedom, selfhood and politics together under the umbrella of the liberal tradition. These liberal thinkers put forward often opposed descriptions of human selfhood and agency, underpinned by very different epistemologies and very different metaphysical convictions. But all advocated political freedom in this negative sense of a minimum frontier of non-interference.

> For Constant, Mill, Tocqueville, and the liberal tradition to which they belong, no society is free unless it is governed by at any rate two interrelated principles: first, that no power, but only rights, can be regarded as absolute, so that all men, whatever power governs them, have an absolute right to refuse to behave inhumanely; and, second, that there are frontiers, not artificially drawn, within which men should be inviolable, these frontiers being defined in terms of rules so long and widely accepted that their observance has entered into the very conception of what it is to be a normal human being, and, therefore, also of what it is to act inhumanely or insanely. (Berlin, 1958: 28).

But how wide should this area be? Which rights should be regarded as absolute? Which particular values have persisted for so long to now have their observance equated with 'human nature'? Historically, the liberal tradition answered these questions according to various principles, but for Berlin (*ibid.*) they all amount to the recognition of certain rules so historically entrenched and widespread as to be virtually 'universal' (or at least not merely subjective):

> When I speak of a man as being normal, a part of what I mean is that he could not break these rules easily, without a qualm or revulsion. It is such rules as these that are broken when a man is declared guilty without trial, or punished under retroactive law; when children are ordered to denounce their parents, friends to betray one another, soldiers to use methods of barbarism; when men are tortured or murdered, or minorities are massacred because they irritate a majority or a tyrant. Such acts, even if they are made legal by the sovereign, cause horror even in these days, and this springs from the recognition of the moral validity – irrespective of laws – of some absolute barriers to the imposition of one man's will on another. The freedom of a society, or a class or a group, in this sense of freedom, is measured by the strength of these barriers, and the number and importance of the paths which they keep open for their members – if not for all, for at any rate a great number of them.

This sense of liberty is thus also tied up with the other values of liberal morality, such as justice and equality. These thinkers understood that freedom is only valuable under conditions sufficient to allow for its use. "It is true that to offer political rights, or safeguards against intervention by the State, to men who are half-naked, illiterate, underfed and diseased is to mock their condition; they need medical help or education before they can understand, or make use of, an increase of freedom" (Berlin, 1958: 4).

But Berlin (*ibid.*) notes that although the freedom sought by individuals will differ according to their particular social, economic, or political conditions, this fact does not constitute the primary source of trouble for the liberal conscience. Rather, it is the recognition that the small minority who have gained their freedom did so, for the most part, only by exploiting (or at

best, ignoring) the vast majority who have not. If individual liberty is the highest (albeit not the only) end of human life, none should be deprived of it or allowed to enjoy it at the expense of others.

> Equality of liberty; not to treat others as I should not wish them to treat me; repayment of my debt to those who alone have made possible my liberty or prosperity or enlightenment; justice, in its simplest and most universal sense – these are the foundations of liberal morality. Liberty is not the only goal of men (*ibid.*).

This association of liberty, equality and justice can become problematic, insofar as these thinkers assumed that such values harmoniously imply each other. Berlin (1958: 5) warns that to equate liberty, justice and equality is to fall into a dangerous error. "Everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience." Far from harmoniously implying each other, these traditionally 'liberal' values are often in tension. Equality and justice must often be bought at the cost of individual liberty, and though such transactions may improve the conditions of society, it does not necessarily make the individuals of that society more free. On the surface, the liberal tradition seems to advocate a harmonious compromise between these competing values by assigning priority to individual freedom.

Individual liberty is made primary not because it is intrinsically the most valuable, but because it is considered a precondition for the expression and pursuit of all other values. Yet liberty, for these very reasons, is given primary importance; it is not clear how one can justify curtailing liberty for the sake of other values when these other values supposedly rely on liberty. The inherent tension between these different values shows that such compromises, while relatively easy to theorise, can become problematic in practice. Despite this tension, these liberal values are amongst the most widespread in our contemporary world, and the large majority of Westerners hold these values as self-evident. Given the unprecedented global scale of their entrenchment, it is quite surprising to consider the relative youth of this doctrine.

Berlin (1958: 6-7) points out that there is hardly any mention of 'individual liberty' in the ancient world. The notion of individual rights is nowhere to be found in the legal frameworks of the Greeks and Romans, and the same holds for Jewish, Chinese, and all other ancient

civilisations. Even in the recent history of the West, this doctrine has been the exception rather than the rule, and it has rarely been a rallying cry for the majority of humanity.

> The desire not to be impinged upon, to be left to oneself, has been a mark of high civilization on the part of both individuals and communities. The sense of privacy itself, of the area of personal relationships as something sacred in its own right, derives from a conception of freedom which, for all its religious roots, is scarcely older, in its developed state, than the Renaissance or the Reformation. (*ibid.*).

The association of the liberal negative conception of freedom with the political practice of democracy is another commonplace contemporary assumption, and certainly seems to hold true in practice. However, Berlin (1958: 26) points out that to see this association as a logical commitment rather than an empirical coincidence is to confuse the negative conception with the much older positive conception. The drive for equal political representation and democratic self-governance following the French Revolution was an eruption of the positive conception of freedom *for* self-direction, rather than the negative conception of freedom *from* interference.

In recognising that individual negative liberty is not identical to democratic authority, the key difference between the positive and negative conceptions comes to light. The negative, as we have seen, is concerned with limiting the scope of authority *as such*; whether society is democratic or despotic, negative freedom requires only that individuals are given some measure of inviolable protection from whatever authority is governing society. The positive conception, in contrast, is concerned with the location, nature, and possession of authority:

> The answer to the question 'Who governs me?' is logically distinct from the question 'How far does government interfere with me?' It is in this difference that the great contrast between the two concepts of negative and positive liberty, in the end, consists. For the 'positive' sense of liberty comes to light if we try to answer the question, not 'What am I free to do or be?', but 'By whom am I ruled?' or 'Who is to say what I am not, to be or do?' (Berlin, 1958: 8).

Like the questions they ask, these two conceptions of liberty are not easily separated in practice. Nevertheless, they aim at two distinct and by no means compatible ends. Berlin (*ibid.*) holds their difference (and the failure to recognise it) to be so significant that it leads to the great clash of ideologies that dominate our contemporary world. "For it is this, the 'positive' conception of liberty, not freedom from, but freedom to – to lead one prescribed form of life – which adherents of the negative notion represent as being, at times, no better than a specious disguise for brutal tyranny." (*ibid.*).

1.1.2. Positive liberty: freedom *for*

According to Berlin (1958: 8) the positive notion of liberty

> [...] derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I feel free to the degree that I believe this to be true, and enslaved to the degree that I am made to realise that it is not.

This definition highlights the personal character of positive freedom as 'self mastery', and interestingly implies that this notion of freedom is at least in part founded on personal belief and experience. On this positive definition, one is free to the extent that one believes oneself so, and enslaved to the extent that this belief is revealed as a fiction. But enslaved by what?

The answer to this question constitutes another key distinction between the positive and negative conceptions. As we saw above, the negative conception regards coercion and enslavement as resulting exclusively from the interference of *other people*. Enslavement under the positive conception is possible under a far greater variety of sources, both external and internal:

> [...] but may I not (as Platonists or Hegelians tend to say) be a slave to nature? Or to my own 'unbridled passions'? Are these not so many species of the identical genus 'slave' – some political or legal, others moral or spiritual? Have not men had the experience of liberating themselves from spiritual slavery, or slavery to nature, and do they not in the course of it become aware, on the one hand, of a self which dominates, and, on the other, of something that is brought to heel? (*ibid.*).

Through this division of the human self into a higher part which dominates and a lower part that must be made to obey, the positive conception promotes the idea that human freedom is not, as the negative conception holds, hindered only by the interference of other humans. One could be enslaved by genes, or upbringing, or impulses, and a multitude of other conditions, both internal and external, most beyond individual control or choice.

If a smoker is too addicted to quit, yet deeply wishes to do so, then the act of someone else preventing the smoker from smoking does not impede the smoker's freedom but actually helps to enforce it. Many people unwittingly employ the positive conception in their everyday lives; the experience of having opposed desires, some of which are identified as one's *true* desires and the rest as *base* desires which must be resisted lest the latter impede the former.

Many students have (or so is the hope) resisted the baser desire to go out and carouse the night before the exam; not because they didn't desire to carouse, but because they identified themselves more with the desire to pass their exam. By identifying themselves with the desire of passing the exam over that of carousing, they come to regard the desire for the former as originating from their 'true self'.

Such explanations implicitly depend on the positive conception of freedom, and its splitting of the self into two: a *higher, truer, better* part which dominates (or *ought to*, at least), and a *lower, falser, worse* part which much be brought to heel lest it prevent one from reaching the full splendour of one's *true* nature. (Berlin, 1958: 8-9).

This 'true self' has been given various definitions by various schools of thought. The 'Form' of man under Plato, the 'autonomous' self of Kant, and the 'soul' of Christianity are but a few historical examples. What these held in common was the conviction that this part, and not any other, constitutes the '*true*' self, the self at its best. This is contrasted with the '*lower'* self of irrational instinct, immediate pleasures, or one's base nature; forever being swept away on the winds of impulse. This lower self must be disciplined by and made subordinate to the higher self if one is to be truly free (*ibid.*).

While this division makes intuitive sense on the level of everyday personal experience, its political enlargement runs a significant danger of promoting the most insidious tyranny[2]. The content and definition of the true self can become reified on an organic level; the true self of a tribe, or nation, or state, or class, or particular ideal. "This entity is then identified as being the 'true' self which, by imposing its collective, or 'organic', single will upon its recalcitrant 'members', achieves its own, and therefore their, 'higher' freedom" (Berlin, 1958: 9).

Though Berlin (1958:10) admits that such a dangerous enlargement is by no means impossible under the negative conception, he still regards the positive conception of freedom as having a greater tendency towards such abuses:

> But the 'positive' conception of freedom as self-mastery, with its suggestion of a man divided against himself, has in fact, and as a matter of history, of doctrine and of practice, lent itself more easily to this splitting of the personality in two: the transcendent, dominant controller, and the empirical bundle of desires and passions to be disciplined and brought to heel. It is this historical fact that has

[2] A version of Nietzsche's 'error of Cornarism' discussed in Chapter 4.

> been influential. This demonstrates (if demonstration of so obvious a truth is needed) that *conceptions of freedom directly derive from views of what constitutes a self, a person, a man. Enough manipulation of the definition of man, and freedom can be made to mean whatever the manipulator wishes.* Recent history has made it only too clear that the issue is not merely academic. (*ibid.*) [My emphasis].

Berlin is right to point out the obviousness of the direct relation between interpretations of freedom and interpretations of selfhood. What it means to be free depends on what it means to be a human being, which again depends on particular understandings of reality, the good, human purpose, and an innumerable variety of other values. But as is often the case in philosophy, this truth is so obvious as to be frequently overlooked. 'Freedom' is not a rigidly fixed concept with its own independent content, but rather an empty designation that acquires its content from whatever values and assumptions underpin it. This explains the multitude of often opposed historical definitions, yet most of these thinkers wrote as if they were to supply the final and *correct* definition. Perhaps they would have been more humble if they took the above-mentioned truth to heart, not just as an ever-present bit of everyday obviousness, but as a significant insight which has direct implications on one's thinking. We shall see later that Nietzsche's positive conception works slightly differently, because he rejects the absolute notion of a 'true' self and focuses only on the possibilities of particular 'empirical bundles of desires and passions'.

To better illustrate the significance and complexity of this interrelation between freedom, human nature, and knowledge, I turn to Berlin's description of the two main historical forms the positive conception has taken: freedom as self-abnegation through ascetic withdrawal, and freedom as self-realisation through complete subjugation to reason. This discussion also reveals the rationalist foundation common to both.

Berlin (1958: 10) analyses the psychology behind the positive conception of freedom as self-abnegation as follows: the individual human self possesses reason and will, through which it conceives of ends and desires to pursue them. It may, however, be prevented from pursuing these ends (by the laws of nature, or accident, or the interference of others, or the often unintended effects of human institutions), at which point it no longer feels itself to be free. Such forces may lie beyond the self's ability to overcome, leaving the self with only one course of action by which to avoid being crushed by them. Rather than engaging in futile attempts to overcome impossible constraints, the self determines to rid itself not of the

constraint but of the very desire to overcome. In short, the self retreats to an 'inner' space of complete independence by extirpating all desires whose attainment depend on factors beyond its complete control; not by increasing its liberty to a point of sufficient power to become master of these external vicissitudes, but by contracting its liberty to a point where it desires only the freedom to pursue those ends which it can be certain of attaining.

A notable example of this view and the reasoning behind it can be found in the work of Kant, who is perhaps the greatest advocate of individual autonomy in the history of Western thought. Kant's metaphysical assumptions led him to regard all human beings as essentially autonomous agents in possession of a free and rational will. This is why he regarded autonomy as the highest value, and the failure to recognise it as the greatest possible crime against freedom. (Berlin, 1958: 11). The problems of assuming autonomy as the absolute and indisputable highest value of human life notwithstanding, the price of this limited freedom outweighs its reward:

> It is as if I have performed a strategic retreat into an inner citadel – my reason, my soul, my 'noumenal' self – which, do what they may, neither external blind force, nor human malice, can touch. I have withdrawn into myself; there, and there alone am I secure. It is as if I were to say: 'I have a wound in my leg. There are two methods of freeing myself from pain. One is to heal the wound. But if the cure is too difficult or uncertain, there is another method. I can get rid of the wound by cutting off my leg. If I train myself to want nothing to which the possession of my leg is indispensable, I shall not feel the lack of it.' (Berlin, 1958: 10).

This 'retreat to the inner citadel' involves a level of ascetic self-denial that goes well beyond a healthy recognition of one's limitations. When put in such a way, this practice of self-abnegation seems laughable, yet it forms the beating heart of the liberal humanist tradition that grew from Kant and Rousseau. For Berlin (1958: 13), the conviction that I must train myself not to want that which I cannot have, and that resisting or eliminating a desire is just as good as satisfying it, amounts to little more than a refined version of the 'doctrine of sour grapes'. Rather than overcome the obstacles to their desires, followers of this conception of positive freedom come to resent the very desires they initially strove for. This freedom *for* is freedom only for that which is not too difficult, too risky, or too uncertain.

This form of the positive conception has historically flourished most under especially harsh and restrictive external conditions (for instance, the 'stoic ideal' in ancient Greece as a means of coping with the loss of independent democratic rule under Macedonian autocracy, or in

Rome after the fall of the Republic, or the harsh conditions of 17th century Germany following the Thirty Years War). (Berlin, 1958: 12-13). Some element of it exists in every tradition of ascetic self-emancipation from Buddhism to Christianity, as well as every instance of political isolationism, economic autarky, or any other obsessive quest for absolute independence. (Berlin, 1958: 10-11).

On the one hand, it cannot be denied that such independence through self-abnegation is a sort of liberty (an almost negative freedom from frustration in the face of impossible desires). On the other, it is clear that this is only one of many possible degrees of freedom, and a particularly limited one at that. Despite these shortcomings, this doctrine persists to this day, and according to Berlin (1958: 12) it "enters into the tradition of liberal individualism at least as deeply as the 'negative' concept of freedom."

There is another historically significant manifestation of the positive conception, with an even more far-reaching political legacy; and one far more threatening to the 'negative' freedom of the liberal tradition. This is the positive conception of liberty as self-realisation through *reason*. It is also in Berlin's discussion of this positive conception that the rationalist undercurrent common to *both* the positive and negative conceptions is exposed.

According to Berlin (1958:14), this positive notion of liberty as self-realisation regards the use of critical reason – that is, an understanding of what is necessary and what is contingent – as the only method for attaining true freedom.

Here already we can see this idea at play in both the negative conception of freedom from constraint and the positive conception of freedom as independence through self-abnegation. Without rational criteria by which to distinguish the necessary (what is unchangeable and must be accepted) from the contingent (what is changeable), the positive conception of freedom as self-abnegation would be unable to distinguish between those desires that are attainable and those that must be resisted due to being necessarily unattainable. Similarly, the negative conception of freedom requires such rational criteria to determine the scope of the necessary minimal area of non-interference, and distinguish it from the public area of permissible interference with merely 'contingent' freedoms.

Under this positive conception of freedom as self-realisation, one's degree of freedom is equivalent to one's degree of knowledge on the 'true' nature of reality. Just as novice musicians or mathematicians initially experience the conventions of their traditions as obstacles and limitations, but with time come to grasp and appreciate their necessity, so the 'true self' of this positive conception comes to surrender itself to reason. (*ibid.*). This movement of assimilation and surrender to reason, which may initially feel like oppression but eventually reveals itself as liberation, has played a significant role in shaping almost all philosophical and political reflection on liberty since the Enlightenment:

> What applied to music or mathematics must, we are told, in principle apply to all other obstacles which present themselves as so many lumps of external stuff blocking self-development. This is the programme of enlightened rationalism from Spinoza to the latest (at times unconscious) disciples of Hegel. *Sapere aude*. What you know, that of which you understand the necessity – the rational necessity – you cannot, while remaining rational, want otherwise. For to want something to be other than it must be is, given the premises – the necessities that govern the world – to be *pro tanto* either ignorant or irrational. (*ibid.*).

To be free, in this view, involves not that you eliminate as many external constraints as possible, but that you recognise which constraints are necessary and thus not eliminable. Should you have a desire to overcome such necessary obstacles, then the fault lies not with the obstacle but with your desire to overcome it; if you cannot free yourself from the obstacle, then you must free yourself from the desire to be free of the obstacle. The core of this view is captured succinctly in the old proverb: 'Give me the strength to change what I cannot accept, and the wisdom to accept what I cannot change,' and its influence on the doctrine of self-abnegation is clear.

This positive conception of liberty found its clearest early expression in the rationalist metaphysics of thinkers like Kant and Spinoza, but (again surprisingly) can be traced through the 18th century scientific determinists to Herder, Hegel and Marx, and all the way to our contemporary political ideologies.

It seems peculiar to say that the hard causal determinists of the 18th century were motivated by this positive notion of liberty, but it can be made to make sense under this conception of freedom as self-mastery. If one could apply the scientific methods used to study nature in order to better understand society, then this would make the distinction between necessary and contingent constraints transparently clear. A scientific distinction of the necessary and

contingent aspects of reality would allow individuals to recognise the (rationally) necessary *for themselves*, and so liberate themselves through an understanding of the necessary limitations of their liberty. (*ibid.*). These mechanical explanations of nature were not intended to prove that freedom is merely an illusion, but to delineate the proper scope and boundary of freedom. 18th Century scientific determinism differed from the Enlightenment rationalism only insofar as it rejected metaphysical rationalism in favour of more empirical and causal explanations as the proper method of understanding the nature of reality (of what is *necessary*), but it understood freedom according to this distinction in basically the same way.

According to Berlin (1958: 14), this positive conception can also be seen in the thought of Herder, Hegel and Marx, who "substituted their own vitalistic models of social life for the older, mechanical ones, but believed, no less than their opponents, that to understand the world is to be freed." Though these thinkers differed from their earlier opponents by placing a far greater emphasis on the role of change and growth in constituting our idea of what a 'human being' or the true nature of reality *is*, they still believed that liberty is best attained through such a distinction between necessity and contingency. They regarded the mechanical models of the 18th Century scientific determinists as too static for a proper understanding of social life, and instead stressed a historical understanding of the dynamic movements of growth and conflict which govern the interplay of individuals and groups with one another and with nature. For these thinkers, the scientific determinists and the Enlightenment rationalists that preceded them fell into the error of ignoring the movements of history, and in so doing fallaciously assumed that human nature is static and unchanging. For Hegel, these errors occurred due to a misunderstanding of the rationally intelligible laws which govern the creation and transformation of institutions. Marx explained the inevitability of such errors through social and economic hypotheses, emphasising that many of the constraints we consider necessary are in fact the result of historical forces and human interactions. (Berlin, 1958: 14-15).

What is significant about Berlin's discussion here is that it reveals a common foundation in a variety of philosophical and political positions which, due to their superficial differences, are commonly considered to be opposed to one another. Though the Enlightenment rationalists, the 18th century scientific determinists and positivists, and the historical/dialectical thought of Hegel and Marx produced very different and often incompatible answers to the question of human liberty, all departed from the core conviction that freedom *is* a proper understanding

of the world; that is, a justified and certain demarcation of what is necessary and what is contingent. Freedom is gained through the cultivation of this understanding, and increases by degrees as one's understanding deepens. Far from being an inviolable frontier, freedom under this positive conception becomes a self-imposed subjugation to necessity:

> We are enslaved by despots – institutions or beliefs or neuroses – which can be removed only by being analysed and understood. We are imprisoned by evil spirits which we have ourselves – albeit not consciously – created, and can exorcise them only by becoming conscious and acting appropriately: indeed, for Marx understanding *is* appropriate action. I am free if, and only if, I plan my life in accordance with my own will; plans entail rules; a rule does not oppress me or enslave me if I impose it on myself consciously, or accept it freely, having understood it, whether it was invented by me or by others, provided that it is rational, that is to say, conforms to the necessities of things. (Berlin, 1958: 15).

Though proponents of this positive conception have long argued over what constitutes the *true* criteria for this demarcation, all shared in the quest for the sort of freedom made possible through it and the belief that such an absolute demarcation *could be found*. Though the rationalist philosophical tradition is usually associated with liberalism and the negative conception of freedom, Berlin (*ibid.*) exposes its true positive colours:

> To understand why things must be as they must be is to will them to be so. Knowledge liberates not by offering us more open possibilities amongst which we can make our choice, but by preserving us from the frustration of attempting the impossible. To want necessary laws to be other than they are is to be prey to an irrational desire – a desire that what must be X must also be not-X. To go further, and to believe these laws to be other than what they necessarily are, is to be insane. That is the metaphysical heart of rationalism. The notion of liberty contained in it is not the 'negative' conception of a field (ideally) without obstacles, a vacuum in which nothing obstructs me, but the notion of self-direction and self-control. This is the positive doctrine of liberation by reason. Socialized forms of it, widely disparate and opposed to each other as they are, are at the heart of many of the nationalist, communist, authoritarian, and totalitarian creeds of our day. It may, in the course of its evolution, have wandered far from its rationalist moorings. Nevertheless, it is this freedom that, in democracies and in dictatorships, is argued about, and fought for, in many parts of the earth today.

The legacy of this rationalist undercurrent is remarkably far-reaching. Its implicit positive conception of freedom as self-direction and self-mastery has entered into the most disparate range of political and philosophical positions. As self-abnegation, it has shaped the liberal tradition as least as significantly as the negative conception. As self-mastery, it has been used to defend the greatest historical opponents of liberalism. Such inherent vagueness must point to a contradiction in the core assumptions of the rationalist legacy, and it is in this contradiction that Berlin locates its greatest danger.

1.1.3. The quest for a final solution: freedom's fatal flaw

The problems of this positive conception, and its inherent tension with the negative conception, became evident to both its proponents and opponents as soon as they began to consider how it would apply not only to the inner life of the individual but to the individual's relations to others and society at large. According to Berlin (1958: 16) "[e]ven the most individualistic among them – and Rousseau, Kant and Fichte certainly began as individualists – came at some point to ask themselves whether a rational life not only for the individual, but also for society, was possible, and if so, how was it to be achieved?"

The answer, predictably, is through the application of reason to develop and institute a rational society.

> Thinkers of this type argued that if moral and political problems were genuine – as surely they are – they must in principle be soluble; that is to say, there must exist one and only one true solution to any problem. All truths could in principle be discovered by any rational thinker, and demonstrated so clearly that all other rational men could not but accept them; indeed, this was already to a large extent the case in the new natural sciences. On this assumption the problem of political liberty was soluble by establishing a just order that would give each man all the freedom to which a rational being was entitled. My claim to unfettered freedom can prima facie at times not be reconciled with your equally unqualified claim; but the rational solution of one problem cannot collide with the equally true solution of another, for two truths cannot logically be incompatible; therefore a just order must in principle be discoverable – an order of which the rules make possible correct solutions to all problems that could arise in it. (Berlin, 1958: 16).

The appeal of this view is obvious: it allows for the possibility, at least in theory, of creating a perfect utopian society free of all conflict, dispute, oppression, and all other social problems. It does this by allowing, at least in theory, for the discovery of *one* ultimate, absolute, universal and perfect principle by which humanity can be defined and regulated. Such promise explains its widespread popularity and resultant dissemination: in Christianity, the ideal state was conceived as a Garden of Eden, from which we were expelled but long to recreate, and may one day return to if we reach Heaven. For Plato, utopia is found in the world of the Forms, which we 'forget' upon being thrust into the world of appearance, but strive to 'remember' through our reason. In Hegel and Marx this ideal was seen as "a golden age still before us, in which men, having become rational, will no longer be 'other-directed', nor 'alienate' or frustrate one another." (*ibid*).

The danger of this view becomes apparent once it is extrapolated from the process of individual rational self-liberation to the fundamental principles for the elaboration and institution of a rational society. It justifies coercive imposition of a particular form of life in the present, for the sake of an ideal (and so impossible) future utopia where such coercion will no longer be necessary:

> The common assumption of these thinkers is that the rational ends of our 'true' natures must coincide, or be made to coincide, however violently our poor, ignorant, desire-ridden, passionate, empirical selves may cry out against this process. Freedom is not freedom to do what is irrational, or stupid, or wrong. To force empirical selves into the right pattern is no tyranny, but liberation. Liberty, so far from being incompatible with authority, becomes virtually identical with it. This is the thought and language of all the declarations of the rights of man in the eighteenth century, and of all those who look upon society as a design constructed according to the rational laws of the wise lawgiver, or of nature, or of history, or of the Supreme Being [...] If the underlying assumptions had been correct – if the method of solving social problems resembled the way in which solutions to the problems of the natural sciences are found, and if reason were what rationalists said that it was – all this would perhaps follow. In the ideal case, liberty coincides with law: autonomy with authority [...] Only one social movement was bold enough to render this assumption quite explicit and accept its consequences – that of the anarchists. But all forms of liberalism founded on a rationalist metaphysics are less or more watered down versions of this creed (Berlin, 1958: 16-17).

One could conclude, from the variety of opposed liberal positions, that the belief in a single solution to the problems of politics is likely mistaken. Such an absolute imposition of the positive conception of freedom can easily overturn the supposedly absolute inviolable freedoms emphasised under the negative conception. The belief that freedom and reason must be identical in all humans is continually challenged by the empirical plurality of desires and values found in any society, but under this view these empirical desires are considered mere contingencies. Thus far, such political thinkers argued about what the true solution is, each thinking that their solution is the true one while that of their opponents is misguided; a misunderstanding in need of correction. Could it perhaps be that the problem lies not with the fact that we have not yet managed to discover the true rational solution, but in the fact that no single absolute solution is possible?

According to Berlin (1958: 21-22), this view of positive freedom as self-realisation and its implicit notion of a final solution relies on several metaphysical assumptions: firstly, that all men have only one true purpose; that of rational self-direction. Secondly, that the ends of all rational beings must be compatible with a single, harmonious, universal pattern, and that

some men are more capable of identifying this pattern than others, and so should be given appropriate authority. Thirdly, that all forms of conflict, tragedy, and social disharmony results from the clash of reason with the irrational and insufficiently rational – and therefore such clashes are in principle avoidable (and not only avoidable, but necessarily *impossible* in a fully rational society). Finally, that once society is made fully rational, all men will obey the identical laws of their rational natures, and so all will be absolutely law-abiding but also absolutely free; no longer needing to be coerced, but freely subjugating themselves to their 'true rational nature'.

Should all these assumptions be in fact true, then one would be justified in believing that the *true* solution to political and social problems is in principle possible, even if it has not yet been reached in practice. This would also mean that *any* coercive measures, no matter how violent or forceful or despotic, are justified insofar as they act to advance the coming of a utopia where no such measures will ever again be necessary. But should these assumptions be mistaken, then all the historical atrocities hitherto justified by this quest for a final solution are just that; meaningless and pointless atrocities. In fact, Berlin places the brunt of responsibility for our greatest historical atrocities precisely on this mistaken belief:

> One belief, more than any other, is responsible for the slaughter of individuals on the altars of the great historical ideals – justice or progress or the happiness of future generations, or the sacred mission or emancipation of a nation or race or class, or even liberty itself, which demands the sacrifice of individuals for the freedom of society. This is the belief that somewhere, in the past or in the future, in divine revelation or in the mind of an individual thinker, in the pronouncements of history or science, or in the simple heart of an uncorrupted good man, there is a final solution. This ancient faith rests on the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail one another [...] But is this true? It is a commonplace that neither political equality nor efficient organisation nor social justice is compatible with more than a modicum of individual liberty, and certainly not with unrestricted *laissez-faire*; that justice and generosity, public and private loyalties, the demands of genius and the claims of society can conflict violently with each other. And it is no great way from that to the generalisation that not all good things are compatible, still less all the ideals of mankind. (Berlin, 1958: 29)

Despite the contrary picture painted by the empirical facts, this belief in an absolute and final solution continues to persist. The thinkers who advocated it and committed to it could not let it go, for without the belief in this final harmony they would have to abandon the long treasured notion of total human fulfilment:

> But somewhere, we shall be told, and in some way, it must be possible for all these values to live together, for unless this is so, the universe is not a cosmos, not a harmony; unless this is so, conflicts of values may be an intrinsic, irremovable element in human life. To admit that the fulfilment of some of our ideals may in principle make the fulfilment of others impossible is to say that the notion of total human fulfilment is a formal contradiction, a metaphysical chimera. For every rationalist metaphysician, from Plato to the last disciples of Hegel or Marx, this abandonment of the notion of a final harmony in which all riddles are solved, all contradictions reconciled, is a piece of crude empiricism, abdication before brute facts, intolerable bankruptcy of reason before things as they are, failure to explain and justify, to reduce everything to a system, which 'reason' indignantly rejects. (*ibid.*).

The acceptance of the impossibility of absolute truth, eternal certainty, or harmonious finality has become quite commonplace in our contemporary intellectual world. Post-metaphysical discourse has been highly critical of the absolutist assumptions common in our intellectual past, and the very idea of such unqualified certainty nowadays no longer even provokes anger; only laughter. Nietzsche, as will be shown, certainly would not allow for such absolute assumptions, and this scepticism is echoed by Berlin (1950: 22):

> Can it be that Socrates and the creators of the central Western tradition in ethics and politics who followed him have been mistaken, for more than two millennia, that virtue is not knowledge, nor freedom identical with either? That despite the fact that it rules the lives of more men than ever before in its long history, not one of the basic assumptions of this famous view is demonstrable, or, perhaps, even true?

It is this core question that we consider next: how should freedom be considered if one suspends this belief, and instead depart from the assumption that human desires are necessarily plural, and the conflict between them inevitable? Berlin does provide an answer, but Nietzsche may provide a better one.

1.1.4. Pluralist negative freedom: Berlin's suggestion

Actual political practices have historically tended to use the positive and negative conceptions of liberty in conjunction with one another. Berlin's discussion of negative liberty showed it to rely on certain implicit assumptions (on 'human nature') justified and articulated through the positive conception. Both the positive conceptions of freedom as self-abnegation and self-realisation (as well as the negative conception, insofar as it is influenced by the positive) were shown to be founded on the core convictions of Rationalism.

For example, we have seen that Kant promotes a negative conception of liberty which demarcates and ensures the inviolable frontier of non-interference through a code of lawful conduct (Duty) which rests on a higher-than-human authority. This, however, is justified by the assumption that all human beings are autonomous agents, and that the freedom given by this autonomy (that of individual liberty) is the highest end of human life. These assumptions, in turn, rest on metaphysical convictions (i.e. the 'noumenal self'), which are considered certain. Their status of certainty again rests on certain epistemological assumptions (on the possibility of absolute knowledge through reason). And the assumption that such knowledge is possible derives from the positive conception of freedom as it emerged from Rationalism.

Despite oppositions and differences, this Rationalist undercurrent can be traced through the evolution of political thought from the Enlightenment through Kant, Hegel, and Marx, all the way to our various contemporary political positions from Liberalism, democracy and capitalism to socialism, communism, fascism and totalitarianism. For Berlin, this odd state of affairs is testament to the vagueness of the concept of liberty, and the problem of containing it in a single and absolute definition. Should one for a moment suspend the Rationalist assumption that the universe is a compatible harmony, the negative and positive conceptions are revealed not as 'two sides of the same coin' in the process of being made truly compatible, but as aiming at two different, opposed, incompatible, yet equally unqualified and justified ends.

Recall that the negative conception, through its conviction that individual liberty is the highest goal of human life, regards any authority to be the antithesis of freedom. Thus its proponents seek to curb authority as such, and consider freedom to be what remains in its absence. Their *modus operandi* is to set up a society in which maximal individual liberty *for all* is made compatible with the minimum demands of social co-existence. In such a society, authority is removed from human hands, made as small as possible, and only used to curb those individual freedoms which impinge upon the freedoms of others. For Berlin (1958: 28-29), this negative way of conceiving, measuring and ensuring liberty is incompatible with the positive notion, thereby accounting for the manifold problems, contradictions and controversies that have resulted from the widespread historical tendency to combine them in practice:

> This [negative conception] is almost at the opposite pole from the purposes of those who believe in liberty in the 'positive' – self-directive – sense. The former want to curb authority as such. The latter want it placed in their own hands. That is a cardinal issue. These are not two different interpretations of a single concept, but two profoundly divergent and irreconcilable attitudes to the ends of life. It is as well to recognise this, even if in practice it is often necessary to strike a compromise between them. For each of them makes absolute claims. These claims cannot both be fully satisfied. But it is a profound lack of social and moral understanding not to recognise that the satisfaction that each of them seeks is an ultimate value which, both historically and morally, has an equal right to be classed among the deepest interests of mankind.

Every positive conception of freedom *for* rests on a positive value (freedom *for* self-determination, or justice, or equality) that it regards as absolute. Similarly, the negative conception rests on a positive value (individual freedom) which it regards as absolute. In practice, the positive conception seeks to impose its particular value absolutely by dominating other equally legitimate positive values. The negative conception imposes its positive value absolutely by creating an inviolable frontier of individual freedom immune from the imposition of all other equally legitimate positive values. These different conceptions of freedom have rarely been practiced in isolation from one another, and are commonly combined in various degrees. The problems and conflicts that resulted from the clash between these two absolute yet incompatible claims has been historically dismissed as contingent side-effects of reason unfolding itself, all of which will cease once this unfolding is complete. Our contemporary suspicion for such absolute beliefs now confronts us with the realisation that complete human fulfilment may indeed be impossible, and that some sort of practical compromise must be made between competing sets of absolute values.

This is why Berlin favours the negative conception over the positive. Once we accept that we are without any certain guarantee that a final harmony of absolute values can be found, we are left only with empirical fact of needing to choose between the values available. We have no absolute standard by which to adjudicate between these values, and no way to deny their equally legitimate claims, but also no way in which to affirm some without thereby denying others. This state of uncertainty is what gives individual freedom of choice its central importance. Were the universe as the Rationalist tradition believed, there would be no need for the burden of choice:

> The world we encounter in ordinary experience is one in which we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realisation of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others.

> Indeed, it is because this is their situation that men place such immense value upon the freedom to choose; for if they had assurance that in some perfect state, realisable by men on earth, no ends pursued by them would ever be in conflict, the necessity and agony of choice would disappear, and with it the central importance of the freedom to choose. (Berlin, 1958: 30)

Berlin (*ibid.*) does not completely reject the positive conception. He has tried to show that the positive conception lies at the heart of some of our most morally just movements and political demands of our time. What he does reject is the tendency of this conception to lead to a belief in a final harmony, and advocates the negative conception primarily because it gives primacy to individual liberty. The negative conception is more open to a compromise between competing values, and more capable of discarding the belief in a single 'true' value which, once given absolute primacy, will harmonise all conflicts. Once the assumption of a final harmony is discarded, the value of individual choice defended by the negative conception becomes tantamount:

> But equally it seems to me that the belief that some single formula can in principle be found whereby all the diverse ends of men can be harmoniously realised is demonstrably false. If, as I believe, the ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other, then the possibility of conflict – and of tragedy – can never wholly be eliminated from human life, either personal or social. The necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition. This gives its value to freedom as Acton conceived of it – as an end in itself, and not as a temporary need, arising out of our confused notions and irrational and disordered lives, a predicament which a panacea could one day put right. (*ibid.*).

Nor does Berlin advocate the primacy of individual liberty in the objective sense of the traditional liberal negative conception. He recognises individual liberty as one of many important and legitimate values, all of which have emerged historically and none of which are justifiable in isolation from the movements of historical assumptions that animate them (*ibid.*). For Berlin, a proper recognition of pluralism requires recognition of the central importance to choose, but also recognition of the legitimacy to choose other values which may conflict with individual freedom. This attaches a significant importance to individual freedom in the negative sense, without which such choice would be impossible. The negative conception, for Berlin, is more capable of accommodating a society characterised by value-pluralism. The positive conception is less capable of discarding the conviction of a final solution, which for Berlin (1958: 31) makes such a pluralist leaning towards the negative conception both truer and more humane:

> Pluralism, with the measure of 'negative' liberty it entails, seems to me a truer and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of 'positive' self-mastery by classes, or peoples, or the whole of mankind. It is truer, because it does, at least, recognise the fact that human goals are many, not all of them commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another [...] To say that in some ultimate, all reconciling, yet realisable synthesis duty *is* interest, or individual freedom *is* pure democracy or an authoritarian State, is to throw a metaphysical blanket over either self-deceit or deliberate hypocrisy. It is more humane because it does not (as the system-builders do) deprive men, in the name of some remote, or incoherent, ideal, of much that they have found to be indispensible to their life as unpredictably self-transforming human beings.

Berlin proposes this pluralist negative freedom on its practical merits[3] rather than seeking to give it absolute or metaphysical justification. To attempt such would be to fall once again into the trap of the 'metaphysical' need, and start the dangerous search for a final solution.

> It may be that the ideal of freedom to choose ends without claiming eternal validity for them and the pluralism of values connected with this, is only the late fruit of our declining capitalist civilization [...] This may be so; but no sceptical conclusions seem to me to follow. Principles are not less sacred because their duration cannot be guaranteed. Indeed, the very desire for guarantees that our values are eternal and secure in some objective heaven is perhaps only a craving for the certainties of childhood or the absolute values of our primitive past (Berlin, 1958: 32).

Through Berlin's analysis we see that the intellectual and political history of 'freedom' is best understood as a conflict between two incompatible yet equally legitimate conceptions, the positive freedom *for* self-mastery and the negative freedom *from* interference. Berlin's discussion revealed problems, dangers and shortcomings in both the negative and positive conceptions; often exacerbated rather than diminished by compromising between the two conceptions. His pluralist alternative is not given absolute or eternal validity, but is proposed as the best (most true and humane) option humanity has yet produced. It affirms the 'quasi-absolute' value of individual freedom over other human values, but not because of absolute metaphysical assumptions. Rather, the value of individual freedom is established through recognition of the irreducible plurality of human values.

When it comes to the political implementation of freedom, the negative account creates an inviolable frontier of private life in which individuals are free to choose between and adopt whatever positive values they desire. They are even free to hold other values above that of

[3] Ricard Rorty's political pragmatism is another very strong example of this approach.

their individual freedom. But should any group seek to impose their adopted value upon non-consenting members of society, the negative conception curtails this imposition whereas the positive conception could all too easily justify it. Thus, Berlin's proposed measure of negative liberty ensures that no particular value can be given absolute authority, not even that of individual liberty, but also ensures that all values are granted equal opportunity for expression so long as their expression does not infringe upon the same right of any other values. In this sense, its ultimate value is the promotion of value-pluralism, which results not in a harmony of all human values but a tolerance for opposed values.

But are other alternative modes of promoting and protecting value-pluralism possible? Berlin must surely allow for this; he invites challenge and the proposal of alternatives insofar as he denies the final or absolute validity of his solution. Berlin's liberal pluralism endorses a negative conception of freedom that is a great improvement on the traditional liberal negative conception (which makes an absolute claim to the value of individual freedom over other positive values) and the traditional positive conception (which makes an absolute claim to some or another positive value above that of individual freedom, based on rationalist assumptions of a harmonious universe). More than either of these, Berlin's liberal pluralism recognises the no longer deniable fact of a perpetual and irreducible plurality of human values. Nevertheless, Berlin's liberal pluralism still uses the resources and insights of the traditional positive and negative conceptions, and revises them in light of the recognition of pluralism. Could different resources perhaps do a better job? Could there be a conception of freedom, knowledge, human nature and morality based fundamentally on the conviction of pluralism, rather than on pluralistically revised versions of the rationalist or empiricist traditions of the past? And if so, would it not be more effective and suited to thinking freedom in our contemporary context?

It is my contention that such a conception of freedom can be found in the work of Nietzsche. Like Berlin's, my proposed alternative is by no means founded on absolute or eternal claims of validity, and not intended as *the* final solution. Rather, I wish to show that Nietzsche's understanding of freedom, selfhood, truth and morality are better suited to our contemporary world of post-metaphysical uncertainty and irreducible value pluralism. Berlin's suggestion still requires human beings to be inherently and equally free, however much he revises his justification in the face of pluralism. Not only does Nietzsche's thought give us good reason to be suspicious of these revised assumptions, but it also provides an alternative account of

freedom that reflects Berlin's pluralist ideals more effectively. Unlike many of the thinkers Berlin draws on, Nietzsche started from the assumption that absolute truth, eternal certainty, or essential subjectivity are mistaken illusions. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's account is positive, and leaves one with a very uncompromising but more honest picture of reality, human freedom, selfhood, and truth.

1.2. Nietzsche's freedom: a provisional sketch

Early in his essay, Berlin highlights the concrete importance of philosophy as a discipline of critical engagement with ideas. Ideas are not neutral or inert objects of abstract knowledge safely confined within universities, put powerful forces that influence human development on almost every level.

> Over a hundred years ago, the German poet Heine warned the French not to underestimate the power of ideas: philosophical concepts nurtured in the stillness of a professor's study could destroy a civilization. He spoke of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as the sword with which German deism had been decapitated, and described the works of Rousseau as the blood-stained weapon which, in the hands of Robespierre, had destroyed the old regime. (Berlin, 1958: 1).

If unchecked and neglected by those trained to engage with them critically (that is, by philosophers), ideas can pick up the kind of momentum that grows too violent to be affected by rational criticisms (*ibid.*). Without critical philosophical engagement, ideas are all too easily transformed into monstrous ideologies. 'Freedom', as Berlin's discussion revealed, is perhaps the most powerful of all political ideas, and has under different and often incommensurable formulations been heralded as the highest end of politics in both democratic and totalitarian regimes, and of economics in both communist and capitalist societies. This paradoxical state of affairs is testament to the diversity of historical accounts, misunderstandings, appropriations and perversions of the concept – and to its immense power; a concrete power that reaches far beyond the armchair of abstract philosophical ponderings.

Nietzsche's work too has been susceptible to such ideological misappropriation, and was for too long perverted into a support of German anti-Semitism and proto-Nazi nationalism.[4] Some of Nietzsche's central concepts, such as the 'will to power' and the 'overman', as well as his frequently violent and militaristic polemic, made it all too easy to appropriate him as a prophet of Nazism. The relationship of the Nazi party with Nietzsche's sister and her staunch party-member husband also helped to entrench this misperception; she assumed full custody of his unpublished writings and notes during the last decade of his life, following his mental collapse in 1889. This custody resulted in the controversial *Will to Power*, a collection of Nietzsche's notes and writings never intended by him for publication but arranged and edited by his sister to advance her own political ends[5].

Despite the politicised manoeuvres of his sister, Nietzsche himself was strongly against anti-Semitism, and so would presumably also be against its political institutionalisation under the Nazi party some three decades later. This opposition is clearly expressed in a letter to his sister, written in 1887, which showcases his outrage at her anti-Semitic associations:

> You have committed one of the greatest stupidities – for yourself and for me! Your association with an anti-Semitic chief expresses a foreignness to my whole way of life which fills me again and again with ire or melancholy. It is a matter of honour with me to be absolutely clean and unequivocal in relation to anti-Semitism, namely *opposed* to it, as I am in my writings. (TPN: 456-457)

Also, in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, Nietzsche indicates that Wagner's anti-Semitism was one of the reasons for their break:

> By the summer of 1876 [...] I said farewell to Wagner in my heart. I suffer no ambiguity; and since Wagner had moved to Germany, he had condescended step by step to everything I despise – even to anti-Semitism. (NCW, 'How I Broke Away from Wagner', 1).

The accusations levelled against Nietzsche as a proto-Nazi, pseudo-philosopher and anti-moralist have been diffused to some extent by eminent Nietzsche scholars of recent times[6]. Only with relatively recent proper translations has the widespread English misperception of Nietzsche – as a fascist, anti-philosopher, advocate of egoistic immorality and cruelty, or

[4]Which helps to explain why his work has till recently been largely neglected.
[5]For this reason, any parts of it that are not reflected in Nietzsche's published works are avoided in this dissertation.
[6]See, for example, the introduction of Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* or *What Nietzsche Really Said* by Solomon and Higgins. (Included in the bibliography)

easily dismissible syphilitic madman – been seriously called into question. Recent scholarship has exposed Anglophone philosophers to a very different Nietzsche, and debunked many of the myths and controversies surrounding him. Nevertheless, Hitler succeeded for a long time in misinterpreting Nietzsche's powerful philosophy as a justification for Aryan domination. This sad fact, and the happy fact of its recent refutation, is an example in action of Berlin's (1958: 1) contention that ideas allowed to run unchecked can only be diffused and disarmed by other thinkers (rather than political authorities, which tend to exploit them). As we shall see, Nazism represents an absolutised form of the traditional positive conception which the negative conception is right to fear, but Nietzsche's account of positive freedom would not justify either the traditional positive or negative accounts.

Another popular misrepresentation of Nietzsche's work has occurred amongst the more contemporary postmodern philosophers; one that I wish to challenge. The contemporary tendency is to regard Nietzsche as a prophet of postmodern scepticism, and *the* prime opponent of unity and certainty. The interpretation of Nietzsche defended here is one that understands him as a bridge, perhaps the final and most significant bridge, between the hegemonic certainty of Modernism and the loss of absolute foundation which yet haunts our contemporary world of globalisation and value-pluralism. This places Nietzsche in an especially apt position for ushering freedom across the schism that divides these two intellectual paradigms.

This interpretation is shared by at least one eminent contemporary Nietzsche scholar, Ken Gemes, who agrees that Nietzsche is all too quickly misunderstood as a 'prophet of postmodernism':

> Nietzsche's perspectivism, his suspicion of metaphysics (ultimate ontology), his radical scepticism and interrogation of conventional notions of truth, have been taken to mark him as an agent of dissolution, of polyphony, a practitioner of the hermeneutics of suspicion. Nietzsche is cited as a model of deconstruction; for instance his genealogical endeavours are held-up as a paradigm of disclosing the origin on opposites, the unmasking of a facade of unity that hides a congery of mixed motives. In this vein the name Nietzsche travels in the company of Barthes, De Man, Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida. Yet Nietzsche was careful to describe himself as an affirmative spirit, one who says Yes and Yes again to Life, an opponent of Nihilism, a would-be architect of the future. In his affirmative mode Nietzsche typically stresses the importance of finding a unitary voice, of finding a means to retell history as a pathway to one's own constructed self. (Gemes, 2001: 337-338).

Nietzsche's critical interrogation and rejection of metaphysically justified autonomous agency, essentialist subjectivity, and absolutist notions of truth or morality are often mistaken for a blanket rejection of freedom, selfhood, and knowledge as such. But Nietzschean freedom – as well as the accounts of selfhood and knowledge that underpin it – allows neither for the fully *causa sui*[7] sort of 'free will' or the fully determined sort of 'unfree will':

> Suppose someone were thus to see through the boorish simplicity of this celebrated concept of "free will" and put it out of his head altogether, I beg him to carry his "enlightenment" a step further, and also put out of his head the contrary of this monstrous conception of "free will": I mean "unfree will," which amounts to a misuse of cause and effect. (BGE 21).

Traditionally the 'free will' debate has been articulated as a tension between the opposed poles of 'freedom' and 'determinism', but Nietzsche argues against both the Enlightenment liberals and the scientific determinists of his age. Nietzsche's conception of freedom lies outside the freedom/determinism/compatibilism distinction drawn like a battle line in the established debate. In order to understand the complexities of Nietzsche's freedom, one must first understand what underpins it: his controversial accounts of epistemology and subjectivity. A chapter is dedicated to each of these dimensions, which include an explication of their relation to Nietzsche's understanding of freedom.

As will be shown, Nietzsche's critiques of morality, freedom, selfhood and truth are but stepping stones to his proposed alternative, which seeks to establish and maintain an internal unity against an external plurality without thereby reducing it to a system or founding it on absolute truths. To put it differently, Nietzsche does not so much object to the possibility of a sovereign subject capable of freedom which can be held responsible for its actions. Rather, he objects to the idea that these attributes are innate human capacities rather than potential human achievements. He objects to the way in which freedom has been understood (in for instance Christianity, liberalism, and rationalism), and seeks to provide a more honest conception of freedom rather than do away with freedom completely.

For Nietzsche, our mistake is to think that we *are* all already and equally free, unified selves making our self-determined way through life, when in fact these capacities are rare achievements of great difficulty and distinction, developed through a lifetime of perpetual

[7]Self-caused, somehow extricated from the preceding causal sequence. Nietzsche's various reasons for rejecting such a boundless freedom are discussed throughout this dissertation, but most explicitly in Chapter 4.

work and effort; capacities which are by no means *guaranteed*. It is unsettling enough to consider the possibility that freedom does not exist, and that our experience of it is merely an illusion. But Nietzsche takes it a step further: how much more unsettling is it to consider that freedom *does* exist, but that you yourself do not possess it? (Gemes, 2007: 38).

Nietzsche's freedom resembles the positive traditional conception more than negative, insofar as he clearly endorses a 'freedom *for*' over a 'freedom *from*':

> You call yourself free? Your dominant thought I want to hear, and not that you have escaped from a yoke. Are you one of those who had the *right* to escape from a yoke? There are some who threw away their last value when they threw away their servitude. Free *from* what? As if that mattered to Zarathustra! But your eyes should tell me brightly: free *for* what? (Z I, 'On the Way of the Creator').

Yet this positive freedom is different from the positive conception discussed by Berlin. Unlike that positive conception, Nietzsche's freedom is not tied to a single absolute value, nor does it rely on dogmatic rationalist convictions such as the possibility of certain knowledge or a harmonious universe. For Nietzsche, the metaphysical need for certainty is just that, an *all too human* need. We should not take the claims it makes more seriously than we would any other human invention, but also not kid ourselves into thinking that we could survive without such deception:

> Behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stands valuations or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life. For example, that the definite should be worth more than the indefinite, and mere appearance worth less than "truth" – such estimates might be, in spite of their regulative importance for *us*, nevertheless mere foreground estimates, a certain kind of *niaiserie* [*stupidity*] which may be necessary for the preservation of just such beings as we are. Supposing, that is, that not just man is the "measure of all things". (BGE 4).

Nietzsche does not deny the importance of our metaphysical need for certainty. Indeed, he regards it as one of a great many useful yet delusions techniques essential for the maintenance of human life. What he does deny is that the truths and certainties derived from this need deserve a superhuman or ultimate authority. Nietzsche's epistemology is rooted in human physiology, and understood as a tool to promote the flourishing of the species. This means that the value of a judgement does not depend on its truth or falsity, but on its ability to promote or encumber human life. His perspectivist notion of truth accounts for the various traditional epistemologies, their mistakes, and their value.

This peculiar epistemology results in an equally peculiar account of subjectivity. For Nietzsche, the human being is a bundle of drives and affects, most of which operate below consciousness. We are not the simple empirical self of the negative conception, nor the duality of higher and lower selves of the positive conception. Rather, we are each of us composed of manifold drives (which may be provisionally understood as 'proto-selves'), each with its own values and ends, all in perpetual conflict with one another. A unitary self, such as that assumed by traditional accounts, is not impossible but neither is it innate. Such a self must be constructed by each individual. We all begin as 'dividuals', and only a rare few manage to turn this disparate natural and cultural inheritance into a proper self.

As Berlin noted, one's conception of freedom is largely dependent on one's conception of the self, and Nietzsche is no exception. For Nietzsche, there are many degrees of freedom which manifest across many degrees of selfhood. No one is entirely without selfhood or freedom, but neither does one start with an absolutely free and unitary self. For Nietzsche, the process of establishing the self is inseparable from the process of increasing one's freedom. We are not free to create ourselves, but *become* free *by* creating ourselves. Where Descartes said 'I think therefore I am', Nietzsche might say 'I do, therefore I become'.

Nietzsche's strange accounts of knowledge, selfhood and freedom are discussed in detail in the chapters to follow, and I contend that the resulting philosophical position is more suited to our currently prevalent philosophical climate than those contemporary alternatives that grew from the established tradition.

1.3. Conclusion and chapter outlines: framing the argument

Berlin's liberal pluralism and his emphasis on negative individual liberty still rely on the assumptions of the liberal tradition insofar as it takes the following for granted: That human beings are so constituted as to be equally capable of a free choice between competing values, that human beings are agents capable of conscious volition. Can such an essential 'human nature' be universally assumed (or even conditionally assumed, as with Berlin's historically constituted notion of 'normal')? In other words, the 'near-absolute' practical value Berlin places on the freedom to choose between values requires some belief, however modified, in

the *causa sui* doctrine of free will. His defence of the negative conception as the most capable of accommodating pluralism certainly makes sense on the political level, but leaves the individual few resources through which to determine themselves on the private level (other than the purely negative freedom to do so). It is this shortcoming that I believe can be rectified by Nietzsche's positive freedom.

This 'freedom of will' (whether in its self-evident empirical or rationally metaphysical form), and the traditional assumptions about human subjectivity that make it possible, constitute Nietzsche's primary targets for revision. Nietzsche's accounts of freedom and subjectivity which I propose as alternatives must be able to both account for the errors of the tradition and provide viable alternatives revised in light of these errors. That is, they will need to account for the negative conception of freedom found in the liberal account, as well as the positive conception of freedom, and show these freedoms to be a necessary part of the historical process by which human beings become free, but are by themselves insufficient. Nietzsche's alternative must then also rectify these insufficiencies by identifying the sort of freedom lacking in previous accounts. In the concluding chapter, I will evaluate my proposed account of Nietzsche's freedom against these criteria.

Chapter 1: Nietzsche on the traditional question of freedom

As we have seen, this introductory chapter began with an overview of the key points of the established debate surrounding human freedom with reference to the work of Isiah Berlin. Berlin's analysis of negative and positive liberty reveals the concrete importance and the complex difficulties of philosophical reflection on freedom, as well as its direct relation to philosophical convictions in epistemology, subjectivity and morality. Our traditional approaches to this question are rooted in the epistemological assumptions of the Enlightenment, and become increasingly problematic in the face of our contemporary intellectual climate of post-metaphysical uncertainty and value-pluralism. It was argued that the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, which vehemently opposes these absolute epistemological assumptions and anticipates a remarkable amount of our contemporary postmodern scepticism, provides an account of human freedom, selfhood, knowledge and morality more suited to our contemporary context. I choose to focus on Nietzsche's thought for precisely this reason, and seek to show that his conception of freedom creates a framework for further reflection; one superior to the problematic framework of the liberal tradition and the established 'free will vs. determinism' debate.

Chapter 2: Nietzsche on what we think we know, do know, and could know

In the second chapter, I investigate Nietzsche's radical epistemological account. Nietzsche's account of knowledge and his distinction between truth and falsity are shown to vehemently oppose the empiricist assumptions, rationalist convictions and absolutist claims employed by both the negative and positive conceptions of freedom discussed by Berlin. Nietzsche, like Berlin, defends a pluralist notion of truth and recognises the need for scepticism toward absolutist systems and dogmatic convictions. His critique of both innate reason and empirical sense-perception as the true source of knowledge gives strong philosophical reasons to reject such absolutism in favour of pluralism. I then discuss Nietzsche's positive epistemological account of truth-perspectivism, a view entirely unique to Nietzsche. The type of 'self' and 'freedom' implied by this perspectivist epistemology, as well as this perspectivism itself, is by no means free of problems. Its advantage, however, stems from the fact that its originality allows it to avoid many of the seemingly unsolvable problems found in the traditional negative and positive conceptions. Its own problems are perhaps novel enough to open novel solutions. Above all, Nietzsche's perspectivism is one of the earliest epistemologies to fully affirm and revel in the fact that absolutely certain and eternally valid truths are by necessity beyond the reach of human beings. Because it underpins the rest of his philosophy, it renders his accounts of selfhood and freedom far more applicable to our post-metaphysical intellectual climate than the revised versions of traditional accounts that until recently fought tooth and nail to preserve the possibility of absolute truth.

Chapter 3: Nietzsche on what we think we are, really are, and could become

In the third chapter, I turn to Nietzsche's account of human subjectivity. Nietzsche's conception of a human subject as a historically and biologically constituted bundle of drives and impulses stands in stark contrast to the *causa sui* autonomous selfhood found in the negative accounts, and the various absolute articulations of the 'higher' self found in the positive accounts. Nevertheless, I argue that this Nietzschean account of selfhood can account for and allow for all the different conceptions of selfhood across the positive and negative conceptions of freedom, as well as a near infinite variety of other possible 'subjectivities', and yet do so in a way that still allows one to qualitatively adjudicate between all of these competing conceptions. The chapter focuses first on Nietzsche's views regarding conscious

volition, and shows that he, to a significant extent, dismisses consciousness as 'epiphenomenal'. This is in strong opposition to the traditional view of consciousness, which holds it as of primary importance for freedom and selfhood. Next, Nietzsche's peculiar alternative account of a self as a collection of biologically constituted interacting forces is outlined. Here again Nietzsche opposes the tradition, and his picture of the self is shown to be incompatible with freedom and responsibility in their traditional senses. The chapter concludes by comparing Nietzsche's account of selfhood and consciousness to the work of eminent contemporary neuroscientist Antonio Damasio. This comparison reveals a remarkable compatibility between Nietzsche's speculative hypotheses and the empirical evidence of contemporary evolutionary biology. Nietzsche's positive account of freedom is thus shown to be based on an account of selfhood compatible with the sort of contemporary scientific evidence commonly taken to support determinism. At the very least this comparison shows that Nietzsche's account is far more capable of engaging with contemporary science than the self and freedom of the traditional liberal account.

Chapter 4: Nietzsche on how free we think we are, really are, and could become

The fourth chapter begins with a discussion of Nietzsche's negative account of freedom; his rejection of traditional 'free will' and the problems this dismissal raises with regards to ascribing responsibility for actions. Next, I return to the problems raised by Nietzsche's account of selfhood for the sort of will that allows for the justifiable ascription of moral responsibility. It is already clear that Nietzsche's self is entirely incompatible with traditional 'metaphysical' freedom, but does it leave room for a will that may still be meaningfully considered 'free'? In order to answer this question, I turn to Nietzsche's famous discussion of 'willing' in BGE 19, and two readings of this section by eminent contemporary Nietzsche scholars, i.e. the 'naturalistic' reading of Brian Leiter, and the 'normative' reading of Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick. I argue that Clark and Dudrick are right to criticise Leiter's reading, and further that their normative reading reveals a possibility for freedom (in the sense of a qualified volitional will as 'willpower') of a sort compatible with Nietzsche's naturalised account of selfhood. This is followed by an investigation of Nietzsche's positive account of freedom, a description of the 'higher types' of freedom he endorses (exemplified in GM in the figure of the 'sovereign individual'). In order to clarify the degree and sort of responsibility this positive Nietzschean freedom allows for, I return to the work of Ken Gemes. Gemes shows that while Nietzsche (rightly) rejects traditional responsibility in the

sense of 'punishment and reward' for one's actions ('*deserts* responsibility'), he does endorse a sort of '*agency* responsibility'. The sort of freedom and responsibility that Nietzsche does endorse is thereby shown to be at once vehemently opposed to traditional notions and also sufficiently meaningful to be properly called 'freedom' and 'responsibility'. Before the chapter concludes, I attempt the difficult task of describing *how* Nietzsche thinks we humans can *become* free.

Chapter 5: Nietzsche on the contemporary question of freedom

In this concluding chapter, I return to the problems posed in the first chapter, having now discussed Nietzsche's account of freedom sufficiently to argue that his positive account of freedom can overcome many of these problems. Through this, I show the contemporary value and relevance of Nietzsche's positive freedom, and so support my claim that Nietzsche's account of freedom deserves at least as much respect and consideration as any other contemporary account, if not more. Here Nietzsche's positive account of freedom is also positioned within the contemporary intellectual landscape. I begin with a recounting of the most important parts of the preceding chapters by summarising Nietzsche's 'journey to freedom' through an outline provided by his discussion of the 'Three Metamorphoses of the Spirit' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The summarised version of his positive account of freedom is then shown to go against both the traditional negative and positive conceptions discussed by Berlin. On the one hand, Nietzsche gives us good reason to dismiss pure negative freedom as 'empty', and necessarily reliant on at least some metaphysical assumptions that cannot be justified in a post-metaphysical intellectual context. On the other hand, Nietzsche's positive freedom is shown to be based on a theory of knowledge and subjectivity that would not allow for the sort of tyrannous perversions that have saddled positive freedom with such a barbaric and deservedly unacceptable legacy. I then turn to the merits of Nietzsche's positive freedom over Berlin's proposed suggestion of a pluralist negative freedom justified on practical grounds. Finally, I point to some remaining questions in Nietzsche's positive freedom (such as its relation to his concept of the Overman), as well as some useful and valuable resources provided by other thinkers. Though these works are beyond the scope of this dissertation, they do point towards the possible political and ethical applications of Nietzsche's account. Finally, I conclude with what I regard to be the true value of Nietzsche's contemporary account: his philosophical approach of 'creative criticism'.

Chapter 2:

Nietzsche on what we think we know, do know, and could know

> *"Whenever its name has been anything but a jest, philosophy has been haunted by a subterranean question: what if knowledge were a means to deepen unknowing? It is this thought alone that has differentiated it from the shallow things of the earth. Yet the glory and the indignity of philosophy is to have sought the end of knowing, and no more."*
>
> -Nick Land[8]

Before we can properly appreciate Nietzsche's accounts of human freedom and selfhood, an outline of his epistemological views and core assumptions must be given. At first glance, and in marked contrast to preceding accounts in the philosophical mainstream, Nietzsche's theory of the self and its attendant brand of freedom seem downright peculiar. This is as it should be, as Nietzsche's perspective is truly unique. In order to understand how and why Nietzsche justifies his untraditional claims about freedom and selfhood we must first explore his highly untraditional claims about justification and truth.

This chapter begins by examining Nietzsche's critique of traditional epistemologies through an analysis of his most famous essay on the origin of truth and lies. Through this analysis, Nietzsche is shown to oppose all those epistemological convictions that regard truth as something absolute, certain, fixed, or easily within reach of 'all-too-human' beings. Next I turn to what remains of 'truth' in the wake of Nietzsche's devastating critiques by outlining his positive account of truth-perspectivism. This perspectivism is shown to have its fair share of problems, but also shown to be far more appropriate to our contemporary intellectual climate. Finally, the implications of Nietzsche's epistemological convictions on freedom are explicated before concluding with a summary of the chapter.

2.1. Setting knowledge free: Nietzsche's physiological 'truth'

Many of Nietzsche's arguments against traditional accounts of selfhood and freedom only make sense or seem justified when considered from the perspective of his account of truth.

[8] From his essay 'Shamanic Nietzsche' in *Nietzsche: A Critical Reader* (included in the bibliography).

Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge are strikingly original and often strangely intuitive in their counter-intuitiveness. These epistemological convictions must be accounted for if the arguments in this dissertation are to make sense.

The following quotation shows just how different Nietzsche's approach to truth is:

> The falseness of a judgement is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgement; in this respect our new language may sound strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgements [...] are the most indispensible for us; that without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical, without constant falsification of the world by means of numbers, man could not live – that renouncing these false judgements would mean renouncing life and a denial of life. To recognise untruth as a condition for life – that certainly means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way [...] (BGE 4).

This view of truth as a necessary falsification that sustains human life, and as originating from the naturalistic process of life itself, involves a radical departure from virtually all conventional understandings of truth. Despite its peculiarity, understanding Nietzsche's views on truth are essential to understanding his views on selfhood and freedom. Toward this end, I now provide an overview of Nietzsche's epistemology through an analysis of his posthumously published essay 'On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense'. This essay begins by putting our human capacity for knowledge in perspective:

> Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowledge. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of 'world history', but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die. – One might invent such a fable, and...still would not have adequately illustrated how miserable, how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature. There were eternities in which it did not exist. And when it is all over with the human intellect, nothing would have happened. For this intellect has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life. Rather, it is human, and only its possessor and begetter takes it so solemnly – as though the world's axis turned within it.
> (PT IV 1).

2.1.1. The origin of truth and lie: of simulation and dissimulation

Nietzsche begins by exposing the inherent *arrogance* of human knowledge, which upon being placed within the larger picture of existence clearly lacks the kind of merit that might justify our relentless devotion. We deceive ourselves into believing that our limited and 'all too human' perspective on reality is equivalent to an accurate depiction of reality itself:

> It is remarkable that this [arrogance] was brought about by the intellect, which was certainly allotted to these most unfortunate, delicate, and ephemeral [human] beings merely as a device for detaining them a minute within existence. For without this addition they would have every reason to flee this existence as quickly as Lessing's son. The pride connected with knowing and sensing lies like a blinding fog over the eyes and senses of men, thus deceiving them concerning the value of existence. For this pride contains within itself the most flattering estimation of the value of knowing. Deception is the most general effect of such pride, but even its most particular effects contain within themselves something of the same deceitful character. (*ibid.*).

This deceptive capacity of 'knowing' has, since Socrates, been edified as humanity's highest good, when in fact it is only an invented strategy of coping with the overwhelmingly vast and indifferent chaos of reality. Without this veil under which we hide from the brute indifference of existence, we would be incapable of living meaningfully within such an existence and instead opt for following the example of Lessing's son, who died during birth because "he understood the world so well that he left it at the first opportunity".[9] Nietzsche clearly regards all forms of knowledge to involve some degree of deception, yet interestingly he also recognises these deceptions as necessary preconditions of human life. But how does this incredible capacity for self-deception come about? For Nietzsche, it slowly grew from one of our most basic[10] instincts: the drive for self-preservation.

> As a means for the preserving of the individual, the intellect unfolds its principle powers in dissimulation, which is the means by which weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves – since they have been denied the chance to wage the battle for existence with horns or with the sharp teeth of beasts of prey. This art of dissimulation reaches its peak in man. (*ibid.*).

An example of dissimulation from the animal kingdom would be that of the Atlas moth, whose wingtips are camouflaged to resemble the head of a cobra. Just as the Atlas moth fools predators into thinking that it is far more formidable than it actually is, so humans fool

[9]From a letter in which Lessing relates the premature death of his son.
[10] In the next chapter we shall see that Nietzsche identifies another drive as the *most* primal, a drive he calls the 'will to power' (see page 77-78).

themselves and each other with 'knowledge'. Through this practice of dissimulation, we arrive at a false understanding of truth (i.e. universal/absolute/eternal truth, or truth as accurate correspondence to reality), but for Nietzsche this overreaching sort of truth is simply a delusion based on a fundamental human error:

> They [humans] are deeply immersed in illusions and in dream images; their eyes merely glide over the surface of things and see 'forms'. Their senses nowhere lead to truth; on the contrary, they are content to receive stimuli and, as it were, to engage in a groping game on the backs of things. (*ibid.*).

Nietzsche's perspectival phenomenalist account of human perception will be more fully discussed in the next chapter, but from the above we can see that he does not put much stock in either empiricist or rationalist epistemologies. Furthermore, he sneers at any account of true knowledge as abstraction to universals, exemplified in Plato's doctrine of the Forms. Here we can already see that Nietzsche's positive freedom is founded on a notion of truth that directly opposes that of the rationalist positive conception discussed by Berlin.

Rather than a fixed Archimedean point of metaphysical certainty, Nietzsche's philosophical point of departure is that of *life* itself, in a firmly naturalist sense. He considers all human knowledge, value, selfhood and culture to be rooted in human physiology. This originally biological dissimulating power of knowledge causes human beings to forget their biological origins and instead think of themselves as capable of an independent 'God's eye view' from which they can know themselves and the world. Nietzsche clearly regards this as an error:

> Is he [man], indeed, ever able to perceive himself completely, as if laid out in a lighted display case? Does nature not conceal most things from him – even concerning his own body – in order to confine and lock within a proud, deceptive consciousness, aloof from the coils of the bowels, the rapid flow of the blood stream, the intricate quivering of the fibers! She threw away the key. And woe to that fatal curiosity which might one day have the power to peer out and down through a crack in the chamber of consciousness and then suspect that man is sustained in the indifference of his ignorance by that which is pitiless, greedy, insatiable, and murderous - as if hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger. Given this situation, where in the world could the drive for truth have come from? (*ibid.*).

For Nietzsche, this physiological approach comes closer to what we might honestly call truth than our knowledge of ourselves and the world gained through dissimulation. As we shall see in the third and fourth chapters, acquiring a proper understanding of one's physiological constitution is for Nietzsche an important part of orchestrating an authentic self capable of freedom.

The 'woe' of that 'fatal curiosity' that may one day attempt such a task is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing in the sense that it allows for the creation of an authentic and free self, but it is a curse insofar as facing up to and then overcoming one's finite physiological reality and biological heritage is a very dangerous process. For Nietzsche,

> [m]an is a rope, tied between beast and overman – a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping. (Z I 4).

There is a good reason our 'knowledge' tries to conceal this physiological dimension from us, because acknowledging it requires an honest acceptance of those more primal drives that society has long sought to suppress: cruelty, dominance, predation, and other expressions of brute natural strength[11]. All our inventions of knowledge that seek to hide this primal heritage are rooted in the very things they seek to conceal. Nietzsche is thus right to ask how the drive for truth could have arisen from this paradoxical situation, and his answer constitutes a remarkable psychological insight:

> Insofar as the individual wants to maintain himself against other individuals, he will under natural circumstances employ the intellect mainly for dissimulation. But at the same time, from boredom and necessity, man wishes to exist socially and with the herd; therefore, he needs to make peace and strives accordingly to banish from his world at least the most flagrant *bellum omni contra omnes* [war of all against all]. This peace treaty brings in its wake something which appears to be the first step toward acquiring that puzzling truth drive: to wit, *that* which shall count as 'truth' from now on is established. That is to say, a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things, and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first laws of truth. For the contrast between truth and lies arises here for the first time. (PT IV 1).

In a pre-societal 'state of nature', which Hobbes described as a 'brutish war of all against all', each human being seeks to win out over competitors. The intellect's power of dissimulation initially evolved under such conditions, allowing the physically weaker members of the species to win out against the stronger by fooling them. If this is successful for long enough, the deception of the weak starts to extend to the weak themselves, and they begin to attribute to themselves those powers which they merely give the appearance of in order to survive.

[11] The reasons that society seeks to suppress these drives, as well as the relation of this process of 'civilization' to freedom, are more comprehensively discussed in Chapter 4.

However, with the establishment of stable societies, where the weaker (and also larger) part of humanity realised that the struggle for existence becomes easier if they work and live together in peace, the distinction between 'truth' and 'lie' becomes intelligible for the first time. In order to peacefully co-exist, these humans had to establish a general code of conduct for all to follow. Such a code would designate socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, which if followed by all would in theory result in harmonious co-existence and mutually beneficial prosperity. However, for these social laws to be codified, these humans must first codify a language in which to express them, in a way intelligible to all members of the society. This legislation of language, which is at bottom merely an arbitrarily established 'uniformly valid and binding' system of designating things, provides the first standards by which humanity began to measure 'truth'.

Here the intellect, which was previously engaged only in dissimulation, now becomes capable of simulation:

> The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real. He says, for example, 'I am rich', when the proper designation for his conditions would be 'poor'. He misuses the fixed conventions by means of arbitrary substitutions or even reversals of names. If he does this in a selfish and moreover harmful manner, society will cease to trust him and will thereby exclude him. (*ibid.*).

The distinction between dissimulation and simulation is subtle, but interesting. In dissimulation, one conceals the truth. In simulation, one intentionally gives a false appearance. A popular and useful example is that of the difference between a poker hustler and a braggart playing poker. The hustler is a very skilled poker player, but lures her opponents into a false sense of confidence by concealing the truth of her ability. The hustler is not so much 'giving the false appearance' of being an unskilled player as she is merely concealing the truth of her skill, just like the Atlas moth is not so much 'giving the false appearance' of being a scary cobra as it is concealing the truth that it is a tasty moth. Both the hustler and the moth are practicing dissimulation; rather than intentionally misusing fixed conventions of designation, they simply conceal or omit certain realities about themselves. Dissimulation works to conceal the 'truth of the matter', even in the absence of any fixed conventions of designation.

Simulation, on the other hand, only becomes possible after such fixed conventions of designation (i.e. language and uniform codes of conduct) have *already* been established. In

contrast to the poker hustler, a braggart practices simulation. He presents himself, through words and manner, as something he is not. In this case the braggart is in fact a terrible poker player, and knows this to be the case, but abuses the fixed conventions by calling himself an expert poker player. This may successfully deceive both the braggart and everyone else at the poker table, but only until the braggart is actually called to play a game. He is not merely concealing the truth of his own incompetence at poker, as one might when one strives to avoid situations where such incompetence would be publically displayed, but actively displaying a *false* competence. The truth is not merely concealed but inverted, distorted and falsified. The braggart can only do this under conditions where established designations of 'competence' and 'incompetence' (such as 'terrible' and 'expert') already exist; simulation of reality is only possible once what counts as 'reality' has been linguistically established and uniformly agreed upon. Only then can such designations be abused.

Dissimulation can occur independently of such linguistic conventions, because it functions within an unfixed and mutable relation to the fluid 'truths' of phenomenal perception and accumulated experience. Simulation can only function in relation to the fixed 'truths' of established linguistic convention. When we dissimulate, we take advantage of the unfixed fluidity of reality by obscuring it. When we simulate, we take advantage of the fixed conventions of language by misusing them in order to appear as something we are not.

Nietzsche here allows us to better understand what we mean when we speak of 'lies' in everyday life. We may be tempted by this to simply define truth as its opposite, 'that which is not a lie', but Nietzsche warns against this. Such a definition of truth is unacceptable, because it does not distinguish between truth and lie but rather only between 'beneficial' and 'harmful' lies.

> What men avoid by excluding the liar is not so much being defrauded as it is being harmed by means of fraud. Thus, even at this stage, what they hate is basically not deception itself, but rather the unpleasant, hated consequences of certain types of deception. It is in a similarly restricted sense that man now wants nothing but truth: he desires the pleasant, life preserving consequences of truth. He is indifferent towards pure knowledge which has no consequences; toward those truths which are possibly harmful and destructive he is even hostilely inclined. (*ibid.*).

An established convention of linguistic designations does not so much *discover* a standard for truth, but rather codifies a complex list of lies that are only 'true' insofar as all members of

the society are expected to accept them as the 'valid designations'. In such a society, the 'truth' consists of those lies which have been deemed beneficial to continued stability and prosperity (for example, the lie that 'all are equal', or that 'all deserve respect', or that 'it is wrong to benefit oneself at the expense of others'). 'Lies', in this context, are essentially no different to 'truths', insofar as both are false in the sense of being mere linguistic conventions. When one tells 'the truth', one is lying by using the linguistic conventions in an *acceptable* way because the consequences of one's lies benefit society. When one tells 'a lie', one is lying by using the linguistic conventions in an *unacceptable* way because the consequences of one's lies are detrimental to society. 'Lies' are instances of simulation that profit the liar at the expense of others, and 'truths' are instances of simulation that profit social cohesion (frequently at the personal expense of the 'truth-teller'), but *both* originally emerge from our capacity for dissimulation. This early expression of 'truth' is clearly not truth in the pure and absolute sense, independent of consequence. It can be seen in the epistemological foundations of the classical English political philosophers, and their more empirical approach to negative liberty.

But what of the more absolute truth claims of the positive conception? Is such absolute truth possible for humanity? Can it ever be captured in language? As already indicated in the previous chapter, Nietzsche does not think so:

> And besides, what about these linguistic conventions themselves? Are they perhaps products of knowledge, that is, of the sense of truth? Are designations congruent with things? Is language the adequate expression of all realities? If truth alone had been the deciding factor in the genesis of language, and if the standpoint of certainty had been decisive for designations, then how could we still dare to say 'the stone is hard', as if 'hard' were something otherwise familiar to us, and not merely a totally subjective stimulation! [...] How far this oversteps the canons of certainty! [...] What arbitrary differentiations! What one-sided preferences, first for this, then for that property of a thing! The various languages placed side by side show that with words it is never a question of truth, never a question of adequate expression; otherwise, there would not be so many languages. The 'thing in itself' (which is precisely what pure truth, apart from any of its consequences, would be) is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language and something not in the least worth striving for. This creator only designates the relations of things to men, and for expressing these relations he lays hold of the boldest metaphors. To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated by a sound: second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one [...] It is this way with all of us concerning language: we believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colours, snow, and flowers;

> and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things – metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities. (*ibid.*).

The human drive to truth is not some innate impulse that motivates us to strive toward pure truth, absolute certainty or infallible knowledge. It is not, as Plato held, a process of slowly remembering the 'truth' of the forms which we forgot upon being thrust at birth into the word of mere appearance. Nor is it, as Kant held, a process of filtering sense-perception through 'noumenal' categories. Rather, like all drives[12], it emerges historically, originating in our basic biological drive for self-preservation. Developing first into the capacity for dissimulation (through which the weak preserve themselves in the state of nature), and then into simulation (under the denaturalising effects of prolonged social order and stability), the drive to truth is at bottom only a human *strategy* for survival. 'Truth' and the languages we use to express it are but a few of the latest consequences of a complex historical and evolutionary process. We tell ourselves that 'truth' is absolute and ahistorical, something higher, purer, and greater than a useful set of fictions with advantageous consequences. But we do this out of practicality; without regarding it as some sort of supra-human reflection of a higher order, we could not justify condemning the lair, and social cohesion would come under threat.

We invent a division of reality into the spheres of 'truth' and 'falsehood', but this invention does not change the fact that both are at bottom mere perspectives on the same thing; a thing we can never 'know' without first filtering it through our own perspectives. But unlike Kant's categories, any single perspective excludes much more than it can include, and consequently we can never know anything completely. Our linguistic prejudice leads us to mistake metaphor and highly mediated representation for reality as such, but it is precisely the limitations of language that make any direct access to reality impossible.

What we regard as 'pure truth' is nothing more than fictitious abstraction, not an accurate reflection of reality. In this sense, 'pure truth' (such as may be found in Kant's noumenal

[12]Nietzsche regards human beings as 'bundles of drives', and the values of those drives are what motivate human behaviour. A more comprehensive discussion of Nietzsche's account of human selfhood according to drives, as well as a more rigorous description of the drives, is given in the next chapter. For now it need only be noted that Nietzsche sees drives as the primary explanatory mechanisms of reality, and that the plurality of drives and drive-relations that compose reality are so many manifestations, refinements, and permutations of the drive to life, the *will to power*, which evolve under different conditions and over long periods of time.

reality of 'things-in-themselves', or Plato's world of 'Forms', or through Descartes' 'Archimedean point of indubitable certainty') is an invented fiction through which we forget the inherent arbitrariness of language and the translational mediations of metaphor.

> Thus the genesis of language does not proceed logically in any case, and all the material within and with which the man of truth, the scientist, and the philosopher later work and build, if not derived from never-never land, is at least not derived from the essence of things. (*ibid.*).

2.1.2. Evolving deceptions: from language to concept

Next, Nietzsche turns to an analysis of how these linguistic prejudices lead to the formation of 'concepts'. It is through this reliance on concepts that language, philosophy, and science become still more incapable of accurately representing 'truth' or reality.

> Every word instantly becomes a concept precisely insofar as it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of the unique and entirely individual original experience to which it owes its origin; but rather, a word becomes a concept insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases – which means, purely and simply, cases which are never equal and thus altogether unequal. Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things. (*ibid.*).

Nietzsche illustrates his point through the example of the concept 'leaf', but the point holds for any concept. If one considers the abstracted concept 'river', two things are revealed. Firstly, that no one river is ever identical to another river. Secondly, that we arrive at the concept 'river' by *arbitrarily* discarding the differences, by forgetting and veiling the particularities of all the different perceptual phenomena we designate as 'river'. This forgetting awakens a false belief that *in addition* to all these particular instances, there exist somewhere a perfect and absolute 'river', *the* river, a sort of supernatural blueprint according to which all the particular instances of rivers are shaped, but imperfectly and by 'incompetent hands'. We tell ourselves that their differences are only a result of this incompetence and so are mere 'variables' of little significance, rather than the inevitable result of irreducible particularity. The same holds for concepts like 'honesty':

> We call a person 'honest', and then ask 'why has he behaved so honestly today?' Our usual answer is, 'on account of his honesty'. Honesty! This in turn means that the leaf is the cause of the leaves [or *the* river the cause of rivers]. We know nothing whatsoever about an essential quality called 'honesty'; but we do know of countless individualised and consequently unequal actions which we equate by omitting the aspects in which they are unequal and which we now designate as 'honest' actions. Finally, we formulate from them a *qualitas occulta* which has

> the name 'honesty'. We obtain the concept, as we do the form, by overlooking what is individual and actual; whereas nature is acquainted with no forms and no concepts, and likewise with no species, but only with an X which remains inaccessible and indefinable for us. For even our contrast between individual and species is something anthropomorphic and does not originate in the essence of things; although we should not presume to claim that this contrast does not correspond to the essence of things: that would of course be a dogmatic assertion and, as such, would be just as indemonstrable as its opposite. (*ibid.*).

Concepts are thus no more than 'occult qualities' distilled through a process of intellectual alchemy, and will never be able to contain the full plural particularity of actual reality; *what is* always exceeds what can be experienced or expressed in conceptual language, and so also exceeds what *can* be known by human beings. Nietzsche does not take this to mean that no human knowledge-statement could ever correspond to the unknowable truth of reality, but rather that we can never be justifiably certain that it does, or that it does so absolutely and completely. If a human knowledge statement does correspond, it is by coincidence and not because 'knowledge' is the only or most perfect means through which reality is revealed.

2.1.3. An erroneous pile-up: from concepts to logic

Our intellect developed out of a natural capacity for dissimulation, which in turn sprouted from the biologically universal drive to self-preservation. Under the denaturalisation of social existence, the intellect established language, which developed into concepts. These concepts then gave rise to another development long mistaken for an absolute benchmark of truth: logic.

> Thus the genesis of language does not proceed logically in any case, and all the material within and with which the man of truth, the scientist, and the philosopher later work and build, if not derived from never-never land, is at least not derived from the essence of things. (*ibid.*).

According to Nietzsche, language and concepts come to be edified as logic because humanity forgets the chaotic origins of their 'drive to truth':

> We still do not yet know where the drive for truth comes from. For so far we have heard only of the duty which society imposes in order to exist: to be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors. Thus, to express it morally, this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone. Now man of course forgets that this is the way things stand for him. Thus he lies in the manner indicated, unconsciously and in accordance with habits which are centuries old; and precisely *by means of this*

> *unconsciousness* and forgetfulness he arrives at his sense of truth. From the sense that one is obliged to designate one thing as 'red', another as 'cold', and a third as 'mute', there arises a moral impulse in regard to truth. The venerability, reliability, and utility of truth is something which a person demonstrates for himself from the contrast with the lair, whom no one trusts and everyone excludes. (*ibid.*).

Truth in this sense is a regulatory code of lying that allows one to function and live in a society. 'Truth' amounts to little more than those lies shared by a society, and its utility amounts to little more than a means of being accepted in such a society. But after enough time has passed under such stable societal conditions, humans forget that their lies *are* lies, and that their truth is no more than a constructed and widely accepted set of particularly useful lies. These lies go from being considered useful to being considered right, and so 'truth' gains a moral dimension through which the liar can be condemned as immoral.

But how does morality result in 'logic'? We usually understand logic as a remedy for moral superstitions, but for Nietzsche our logic is itself just another form of morality:

> As a 'rational' being, he now places his behaviour under the control of abstractions. He will no longer tolerate being carried away by sudden impressions, by intuitions. First he universalises all these impressions into less colourful, cooler concepts, so that he can entrust the guidance of his life and conduct to them. Everything which distinguishes man from the animals depends upon this ability to volatize perceptual metaphors in a schema, and thus to dissolve an image into a concept. For something is possible in the realm of these schemata which could never be achieved with the vivid first impressions: the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries – a new world, one which now confronts that other vivid world of first impressions as more solid, more universal, better known, and more human than the immediately perceived world. Whereas perceptual metaphor is individual and without equals and is therefore able to elude all classification, the great edifice of concepts...exhales in logic that strength and coolness which is characteristic of mathematics. (*ibid.*).

This invention of a fictitious otherworld superimposed over the world of phenomenal experience, and the human capacity for unconscious self-deception which allows us to forget that this world is a fiction, play a fundamental role in Nietzsche's account of freedom. As we shall see in the fourth chapter, these same capacities which allow us to falsify and obscure reality (capacities of 'forgetting' and 'remembering') can be turned back on themselves and used to overcome their own limitations. These 'all too human' capacities are both a precondition for and a limitation to human freedom; we remain trapped in the limits of

absolutism as long as we 'remember' to 'forget' the actual origins of our oh-so-certain truths, but the limitation can be overcome once we forget to remember to forget, and *thus remember* the origins of our drive to truth.

This stage of the evolution of our drive to truth can be seen clearly in the positive conception of freedom as self-abnegation, and its 'self-imposed' subjugation to reason. As Nietzsche mentions, this first makes possible the construction of an ordered society with clear boundaries, and in this sense it plays an undeniably important role in the evolutionary unfolding of the drive to truth. The process of recognising it for what it is, remembering that it is merely a human invention superimposed on chaotic phenomenal experience – while being essential to Nietzsche's conception of freedom – is by no means inevitable or even likely:

> Anyone who has felt this cool breath [of logic] will hardly believe that even the concept – which is as bony, foursquare, and transposable as a die – is nevertheless merely the *residue of a metaphor*, and the illusion which is involved in the artistic transference of a nerve stimulus into images is, if not the mother, then the grandmother of all concepts. (*ibid.*).

Nietzsche (*ibid.*) admires the humans who flourished under this stage of knowledge as 'geniuses of construction', "who succeed in piling up an infinitely complicated dome of concepts upon an unstable foundation, and, as it where, on running water." Throughout this dissertation, the link between our capacities for construction and the nature of our freedom will become clear, but here already it allows one to distinguish between degrees of freedom. For Nietzsche, there is a significant difference between constructing a cohesive unity upon unstable foundations by forgetting that the foundations are unstable and constructing a foundation that remains cohesive and integrated in the face of recognising that it is founded on the chaotic and bottomless 'running water' of existence. The latter can be considered significantly freer than the former, as it has overcome the limitations of its own self-deception.

In this sense, humanity's capacity for constructing truth is admirable and impressive, but upon forgetting that truth is a human construction, we come to find it impressive for other, distinctly unimpressive, reasons:

> As a genius of construction man raises himself far above the bee in the following way: whereas the bee builds with wax that he gathers from nature, man builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture

> from himself. In this he is to be greatly admired, but not on account of his drive for truth or for pure knowledge of things. When someone hides something behind a bush and looks for it again in the same place and finds it there as well, there is not much to praise in such seeking and finding. Yet this is how matters stand regarding seeking and finding 'truth' within the realm of reason. If I make up the definition of a mammal, and then, after inspecting a camel, declare 'look, a mammal', I have indeed brought a truth to light in this way, but it is a truth of limited value. That is to say, it is a thoroughly anthropomorphic truth which contains not a single point which would be 'true in itself' or really and universally valid apart from man. (*ibid.*).

Rather than rightfully admiring ourselves as exceptional creatures of construction, we admire the delusion of our invented reason as something higher and purer than mere human invention. Far from being a drive to understand and express the *true* nature of reality, Nietzsche exposes the true motivation behind the quest for pure or absolute truth:

> At bottom, what the investigator of such truths is seeking is only the metamorphosis of the world into man. He strives to understand the world as something analogous to man, and at best he achieves by his struggles the feeling of assimilation. His method is to treat man as the measure of all things, but in doing so he again proceeds from the error of believing that he has these things [which he intends to measure] immediately before him as mere objects. He forgets that the original perceptual metaphors are metaphors and takes them to be the things themselves. Only by forgetting this primitive world of metaphor can one live with any repose, security, and consistency: only by means of the petrification and coagulation of a mass of images which originally streamed from the primal faculty of human imagination like a fiery liquid, only in the invincible faith that *this* sun, *this* window, *this* table is a truth in itself, in short, only by forgetting that he himself is an *artistically creating* subject does man live with any repose, security, and consistency. But if for an instant he could escape from the prison walls of this faith, his 'self consciousness' would be immediately destroyed. (*ibid.*).

2.1.4. Cleaning the board: what 'truth' is not

This evolving deception culminates in self-consciousness, and so is a necessary precondition for the emergence of human selfhood and agency, but at the same time over-inflates the significance of this self-consciousness. This is because we forget the metaphorical origins of our proud rational consciousness. We forget that it is a tool we use to divide existence into manageable chunks. If we come to remember this origin, we would have to confront the fact that there is no absolute criterion that makes our perspective more 'true' than the very different perspective of an insect or animal or foreigner. Such truth requires a criterion to act

as an absolute standard for 'correct perception', and for Nietzsche such a criterion is simply not available to humans.

> But in any case it seems that 'the correct perception' – which would mean 'the adequate expression of an object in the subject' – is a contradictory impossibility. For between two absolutely different spheres, as between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, and no expression; there is, at most, an *aesthetic* relation: I mean, a suggestive transference, a stammering translation into a completely foreign tongue – for which there is required, in any case, a freely inventive intermediate sphere and mediating force. (*ibid.*).

Nietzsche's account of truth seems to rule out both a rationalist and empiricist epistemology, as our reason is a human construction and our perception is distorted and mediated by our human perspective. It also rules out a correspondence account of truth (as we can never access reality in a direct enough way to establish correspondence with any certainty), as well as a coherence account of truth (as coherence would merely be the result of our conceptual prejudice, of 'finding something where we ourselves have hidden it'). This gives us a good idea of what Nietzsche does not regard as truth (his negative epistemological account), but his positive account of what truth actually *is* remains vague:

> What then is truth? A moveable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusion; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins. (*ibid.*).

It seems that Nietzsche does not leave us with much after his scathingly critical account of traditional epistemologies. His blanket rejection of traditional notions of truth clearly include the epistemological assumptions on which the traditional positive and negative conceptions of freedom were shown to rely in the previous chapter, but this should not lead one to think that Nietzsche entirely rejects truth, or freedom. His notion of 'truth', while radically different to traditional epistemology, constitutes one of the earliest attempts to conceive of truth removed from the delusional certainty of metaphysics and religion. But what are we to do with this 'moveable host' of embellished expressions, and what does it mean for freedom?

2.2. Nietzsche's 'truth': a matter of perspective

What are we to make of this radical account of truth? In order to understand how Nietzsche's arguments proceed from it, a better understanding of his positive account of truth is needed. This account, unique to Nietzsche, has often been called perspectival truth. To say that Nietzsche's account of truth is unique and unprecedented might seem overenthusiastic, but the following point from Welshon (2004: 98) drives the point home.

> In two millennia of thinking about truth, philosophers have proposed many varieties of truth: objective truth; absolute truth; contingent truth; universal truth; logical truth; necessary truth; scientific truth; personal truth; relative truth; pragmatic truth – the list goes on and on. But for all the ink that has been spilled defending this or that kind of truth, they are all easily distilled into two basic kinds: correspondence truth and coherence truth. There is one exception, and that one exception is Nietzsche.

As a result of this radical originality, Nietzsche is often misread as a denier of truth. One mistakenly thinks that because he rejects correspondence truth, coherence truth, even pragmatic truth, relative and subjective truth – basically every traditional notion of truth – he must thus reject the possibility of truth as such. But this is not the case. Nietzsche does develop an epistemological position, but like most of his philosophy it is so radically original and unprecedented that it often gets dismissed without due consideration. Nietzsche's notion of 'perspectivist truth' is one of the earliest attempts to move beyond the exclusionary binary of objective, absolute, certain truth and relative, contingent, uncertain truth found in both the positive and negative conceptions of freedom discussed in the previous chapter. And as we shall see in the chapters to follow, this is one of the reasons why Nietzsche's account of freedom is able to move beyond the binary of 'free will' or 'determinism'.

Insofar as any philosopher cannot help but react to what came before, Nietzsche proposes his perspectivism as an alternative to absolutist truth. According to the absolutist account of truth, some statements are considered 'true' because they hold true across *all* perspectives. According to perspectivist truth, on the other hand, any statement may be true in some perspectives while being false in others. This means that if two people occupy two incompatible perspectives, a statement may be true for the one person and false for the other. (Welshon, 2004: 102). This certainly smells of relativism, but only if one misunderstands Nietzsche as equating a 'perspective' to a 'collection of core personal beliefs'. Though this is one dimension of a 'perspective', it is by no means the only or primary one:

> Here is one way to appreciate the problem: are there only supra-individual perspectives (for example, scientific or social perspectives), or are there also inter-individual perspectives (for example, the perspectives of individuals with shared visual input at the same time), individual perspectives (for example, how ice cream tastes to me), and perhaps even intra-individual perspectives (for example, the point of view of a drive)? (Welshon, 2005: 103).

Nietzsche never provides a clear definition of 'perspectives', nor does he restrict them to any one of the above-quoted scopes, because perspectives may be constituted by any of the above and more. All drives have their own unique perspectives. All humans are bundles of drives that combine into new perspectives. These bundled perspectives can become entrenched and enlarged to a supra-individual level over time (as they do in the various articulations of the 'true self' under the positive conception). But perspectives are not mere beliefs. Nietzsche does not equate a statement *being* true with a statement being *believed* true, as would be the case if he regarded perspectives as belief. Though perspectivism is concerned with the truth of linguistic expressions (rather than the truth of objects in themselves, which Nietzsche rejects as impossible), it is not concerned with the believability of truth statements but with their actual truth value (i.e. what they reveal and conceal about reality). Their actual truth value, however, can only be determined from a perspective and so will be true or false only within that perspective. There is no position outside or beyond perspectives where truth as such can be determined, and thus no objective or absolute standard for truth is possible. (Welshon, 2004: 103-104).

This can be illustrated by considering the following statement from the position of perspectivism: 'Without absolute standards of truth, the only recourse we have is relativism'.

This statement would certainly hold true within the absolutist perspective, and the absolutist might well *believe* that on the basis of this it must also be true in *all* perspectives, but the truth perspectivist has the option of considering such a statement to be true in some perspectives and false in others. It would be true in both the absolutist perspective and the relativist perspective. Though they move in opposite directions, relative truth only makes sense in opposition to absolute truth, and vice versa. Yet this statement could be false from any perspective that does not share this conviction of incompatibility. A truth perspectivist is able to affirm that any statement is true in some perspectives and false in others, true to a certain degree and false to a certain degree, because truth perspectivism affirms that no notion of truth or falsity can exist independent of some or another perspective.

Anyone familiar with the critique of relativism should notice that for all its novelty and appeal, truth perspectivism may be open to the same problem of self-referential contradiction so often used to oppose relativism.

> A simple version of the argument is this: if perspectivism is itself a perspective, then there are perspectives in which perspectivism is false; if on the other hand perspectivism is not a perspective, then not *every* statement is true in some perspectives and false in others. In short, either perspectivism applies to itself, in which case it is not universally true, or it does not apply to itself, in which case it is not universally true. Either way, it is false. (Welshon, 2004: 105).

But it is false only in the sense that it cannot be universally true. That is to say, it is only false if one defines falsehood against an absolute notion of truth. Nietzsche's point here is not so much to devalue truth as it is to refine it. Perspectivism is capable of functioning outside the binary opposition of objectivism and relativism, because it need not deny the limitation of its own perspective to affirm its truth. Nietzsche's point is precisely that 'truth' as such always exceeds what can be captured in a single perspective, and so he does not advocate taking perspectivism as the only acceptable perspective. Rather, he advocates it as a means to recognise that there are many different perspectives, each capable of revealing some aspects of reality while concealing others. 'Truth' is something one gets closer to not by mastering one particular perspective and reifying it above all others, but by learning to see the world from as many different perspectives as possible. 'Truth' becomes less distorted by degrees the more perspectives one manages to incorporate and integrate, but no amount or combination of perspectives can ever give one absolute truth or complete certainty. The drive for such absolute truth stems from the metaphysical need for certainty, which Nietzsche regards as chimerical.

This discussion of Nietzsche's perspectival account of truth is supplemented by the work discussed in the next chapter. In the following chapter, the relations between perceptual experience, consciousness, the drives, and perspectives are further explicated. In the fourth chapter, freedom is shown to be proportionate to how many perspectives (of various drives) a human being can successfully order under a single, persistent 'will' (which amounts to how many drives can be brought under the dominion of a single ordered set of drives, for Nietzsche holds that there is no 'self' independent of the drives). For now, it is enough for us to acknowledge that Nietzsche's perspectival account of truth does have its share of problems, but that it at the same time shows itself to be no less problematic than any other

account of truth. What acts in its favour is that it is one of the first accounts of truth that sought not to 'fix' or 'solve' its problems, but instead departs from the recognition that 'truth' in whatever form is inherently problematic.

2.3. The implications: perspectivist freedom and selfhood

Because of Nietzsche's perspectivism, which is focused on the complex relation between human experience and its expression through language, one must recognise that freedom as an activity or practice or experience is different to freedom as a word, term or concept. Nietzsche's account of the historical emergence of the intellect and language also shows that these are not fixed, constant or innate human capacities. They emerge under particular historical conditions and continue to evolve and change over time. The same is true for freedom in Nietzsche – freedom emerges, evolves over time, and has its own history. According to Richardson (2009: 130), this is a very important point because "[...] the cumulative character of this history is the reason historical things are indefinable. And [...] freedom, as an evolving ability, incorporates and builds on its earlier stages, so that the simpler kinds of freedom are components of the later ones."

Richardson also emphasises that for Nietzsche this preservation of the old into the new is *partial*. In the fourth chapter, Nietzsche's account of the historical evolution of freedom is discussed in detail. For now, we can conclude from the above discussion that Nietzsche understands freedom as an idea that accumulates a vast amount of historical baggage. Both the concept and the practice of freedom feed into one another during this evolutionary process, and freedom changes dramatically as this process unfolds. It retains some of its past, but rejects more. Most importantly, it will continue to change and evolve, and our ways of thinking about freedom in the present will significantly shape and steer the as yet undiscovered and unknowable future possibilities of freedom. The concept and the practice inform one another, and both inform and are informed by the historical context; all of which is perpetually changing as time marches onward, and so any understanding of freedom is at best a provisional one. Any attempt to contain it in an absolute definition disregards both its complex evolutionary past and its potential future possibilities.

However, just as Nietzsche's epistemological approach improves upon others insofar as it takes into account the fluidity of historical evolution, so too does his account of freedom have the advantage of recognising itself from the outset as provisional. The recognition of freedom's perpetual and dynamic evolution is built into Nietzsche's account, which has a valuable consequence: rather than seeking to reach a fixed and 'truthful' definition of freedom, Nietzsche's account is focused on advancing our present understanding of freedom in a way that improves the qualitative possibilities of future expressions of freedom. Were most thinkers proceeding from an epistemological position of coherence or correspondence, and so can be likened to short game players who ignore the past and future in favour of precision and clarity in the present, Nietzsche plays the long game and tries to explicate what we can do in the present to advance a future filled with presently unimaginable possibilities.

2.4. Conclusion: knowledge and the self

This chapter has outlined Nietzsche's peculiar and ingenious account of truth and knowledge, both negative and positive. We have seen that Nietzsche starts from a physiological and genealogical affirmation of the impossibility of absolute truth or certainty, rather than the metaphysical, rationalist or empiricist foundations of traditional accounts that are forever questing after such impossibilities. This results in an epistemology far more capable of dealing with our contemporary post-metaphysical scepticism, lack of objective standards for truth, and irreducible value-plurality. By departing from the conviction that truth is inherently incomplete, uncertain, and irremovable from particular perspectives, Nietzsche's account avoids the pitfalls stemming from the rationalist undercurrent of the traditional positive and negative conceptions of freedom discussed by Berlin. At the same time, his genealogical description of the evolutionary emergence of the drive to truth can account for the existence and persistence of all these erroneous conceptions as stages in an ongoing evolutionary process.

In this sense, Nietzsche does not reject these earlier conceptions as *false* (for this falsehood is only possible under absolutist epistemology), but rather as preliminary and incomplete but still vitally important stages in the evolution of the human intellect. Just as we may consider humans as superior to monkeys and apes without having to judge these evolutionary

precursors as 'wrong' or 'false', Nietzsche's perspectivism can account for the existence, persistence, and value of traditional precursory accounts while still improving upon their limitations and exposing their mistakes. His problem with traditional epistemologies has more to do with the fact that they insist on affirming themselves as the absolute truth, to the exclusion of all other possibilities, than it does with objections to their content. But Nietzsche does not 'blame' these traditional philosophers for their shortcomings, for he sees this tendency to absolutise and this metaphysical *need* for certainty as yet another consequence of the fundamental drives that compose humanity. In BGE 6, Nietzsche explains that every philosophy is the expression of a particular rank-ordering of the philosopher's drives, and, being drives,

> [...] every single one of them would like only all too well to represent just *itself* as the ultimate purpose of existence and the legitimate *master* of all the other drives. For every drive wants to be master, and it attempts to philosophize in *that spirit*.

A conception of freedom founded on such a perspectivist epistemology need not rely on the empirically derived convictions on 'human nature' found in the negative conception and Berlin's 'normal' human being, nor on the rationalist convictions on the nature of the 'true self' found in the positive conception. In this way, it can produce a positive conception of freedom that avoids the biggest pitfall (according to the negative conception) of the traditional positive conceptions: the dangerous assumption of a harmonious universe and its implication of a final solution. Rather, the epistemological foundation of Nietzsche's positive conception of freedom contains a built-in recognition of the impossibility of absolute truth, and so inherently protects and promotes pluralism rather than threatening it.

In the next chapter, I turn to the Nietzsche's account of selfhood and subjectivity built upon this perspectivist epistemology. Like his thought on truth, Nietzsche's thought on selfhood seeks to both account for and improve on its precursors. And again, like his notion of truth, Nietzsche's ideas on selfhood and consciousness depart from a physiological understanding of the human being as a biologically constituted and still ongoing evolutionary process.

Chapter 3:

Nietzsche on what we think we are, really are, and could become

> "*Our intuition tells us that the mercurial, fleeting business of the mind lacks physical extension. I believe this intuition is false and attributable to the limitations of the unaided self. I see no reason to give to it more credence than to previously evident and powerful intuitions such as the pre-Copernican view of what the sun does to the earth or, for that matter, the view that the mind resides in the heart. Things are not always what they seem. White light is a composite of the colors of the rainbow, although that is not apparent to the naked eye*."
>
> -Antonio Damasio[13]

This chapter provides an outline of Nietzsche's peculiar account of human selfhood and subjectivity. In understanding how Nietzsche thinks human beings are constituted, one will be better equipped to understand what sort of freedom he thinks such human beings would be capable of. Recall Berlin's important point from the first chapter: that one's conception of freedom will directly depend on how one understands what it means to be human. The positive conception of freedom defines 'human' in terms of the rigidly predetermined 'true self', imposed on to the empirical selves of a populace. In the negative conception, the self is derived empirically from the actual desires of a populace, which leaves it less prone to tyranny but also more empty and hollow: such a self is constituted by an acceptance of reality and human constitution as it currently *appears*, and neglects the possibilities of what it could become. The self of the positive conception is constituted as a future potential or past loss to be regained, a self as it *could be* or could be *again*, an ideal self seeking to escape the limitations of its brute empirical facts. This chapter will show that Nietzsche's self is neither of these, yet can account for both.

Like freedom and truth, the philosophical question of selfhood is an ancient one; their three-way interrelation is no coincidence. The philosophical question of subjectivity has grown into a significant discourse, and the substantive question of human selfhood has traditionally been regarded for the most part as philosophical. In recent times, however, philosophy's sovereign authority on these matters has started to become threatened by the sciences, and is seeing competition from the sciences over how to best understand and investigate human nature and constitution. Recent scientific evidence, specifically in the biological fields of

[13]From his latest work, *Self Comes to Mind* (included in the bibliography). This contemporary neuroscientific account of the emergence of the self is compared to Nietzsche's at the end of this chapter.

psychophysiology and neuroscience, call many of our most ancient and dearly held beliefs on selfhood and consciousness into question. This evidence is most often taken to support determinism, mainly because traditional liberal philosophical accounts[14] of selfhood seem entirely incompatible with the results of these fields and what they tell us about the self, mind and brain. In light of this, Nietzsche's account becomes especially valuable. Nietzsche was one of the first thinkers to place the self *in* nature, and the mind *in* the body. Though he did not have access to the highly advanced and quickly advancing scientific methods or technologies used today, his anticipation of recent scientific findings is, as we shall see, quite remarkable. But this chapter is interested not only in the academic investigation of selfhood, but also in the way in which people experience the phenomenon in their day-to-day lives.

Everyday people take this idea of selfhood for granted, viewing themselves as distinct and separate individual entities, capable of autonomous choice and agency. This commonsense assumption has a great deal of intuitive force behind it. It makes sense to think of yourself 'as yourself', rather than as someone else. The first-person perspective of an 'I' is our most natural mode of relation to the world, and our *experience* of the power of our own conscious volition seems intuitive. Yet virtually every philosophical attempt to explicate the intricate details of this supposedly 'self-evident' individuality and agency – even the very successful ones – show that our assumed subjectivity and identity are much more complex than is supposed by our intuitive experience. Nietzsche's account is no exception, and perhaps the greatest example; appreciating it requires that one put aside many deeply held convictions that have been entrenched through centuries of habit-forming tradition.

As was shown in the previous chapter, such unwarranted certainty about one's self and one's relation as a subject to a world of objects results for Nietzsche from the distorting seductions of language and knowledge. He takes up the point again in BGE 16.

> There are still harmless self-observers who believe that there are "immediate certainties"; for example, "I think," or as the superstition of Schopenhauer out it, "I will"; as though knowledge here got hold of its object purely and nakedly as "the thing in itself," without any falsification on the part of either the subject or the object. But that "immediate certainty," as well as "absolute knowledge" and the "thing in itself," involve a *contradiction in adjecto*, I shall repeat it a hundred times; we really ought to free ourselves from the seduction of words! (BGE 16).

[14] Including the traditional positive and negative accounts of liberty discussed by Berlin.

Like most of the rest of his philosophy, Nietzsche's account of subjectivity diverges significantly from its predecessors. Atkins (2005: 71) illustrates this point succinctly:

> For Nietzsche, there is no soul, no rational 'thinking thing'. For him, 'life' is the all-important concept, and consciousness is only ever at the service of life. Under the influence of Nietzsche, subjectivity becomes 'decentred' as self-consciousness is shaken from its sovereign certainty by its organic underbelly.

Nietzsche often delights in exposing the contradictions and errors of traditional accounts; most notably he rejects the notion of a unified 'I' capable of conscious volition, on which the largest part of the tradition relies. Although Nietzsche spent a great deal of time and effort exposing the shortcomings of other positions on these questions, he cannot be accused of mere pathological scepticism; he does provide his own views on and solutions to the question. The first part of this chapter focuses on Nietzsche's negative account, while the second part focuses on his positive account.

Like every account of human subjectivity, Nietzsche's has its own set of problems. One thing that counts in his favour – at least for the purposes of this inquiry into freedom – is that the problems with his thinking on the matter are refreshingly *new*. These unique insights and problems stem from the fact that he was one of the earliest thinkers to reject substance dualism and attempt to root consciousness in physiology. He was also one of the first to regard human beings as being entirely constituted by nature and the all pervasive forces of biological *life*. This strong naturalism led him to almost entirely reject the causal potency of reflective consciousness, especially as a traditional prerequisite for freedom, but, significantly, without rejecting freedom along with it.

This chapter begins with an exploration of Nietzsche's very interesting approach to human selfhood. His analysis is part biological, part historical, and part psychological. First, Nietzsche's views on human consciousness are investigated. This investigation begins with his account of conscious perception and its historically accumulated errors, and then turns to the problems of self-consciousness and sovereign conscious volition as they have been traditionally understood. Nietzsche's negative account, in the sense of what he rejects in traditional accounts of subjectivity, results in the subject being stripped of many capacities traditionally regarded as essential to free will and the ascription of responsibility. Secondly, I turn to Nietzsche's positive alternative account of subjectivity. After briefly looking at his disagreements with traditional accounts, Nietzsche's interesting bundle-theory of a self as a

multiplicity of competing drives is outlined. This bundle-theory, at once deflationary and rehabilitative, produces a philosophical account of selfhood that overcomes many of the long-standing problems of traditional accounts – but at a price. Nietzsche's subject leaves us with a picture of ourselves that many would find a bitter pill to swallow. We are robbed of many of the elements by which humanity has traditionally defined itself as superior to mere animals, and Nietzsche forces us to recognise just how much of the animal still remains in humanity. Thirdly, the chapter considers the remarkable fit between Nietzsche's account of the emergence of the conscious self and the recent results of neuroscientific research. This is done both to elucidate Nietzsche's otherwise vague and speculative explanatory mechanisms (the drives) in the language of contemporary neuroscience, and to highlight the value and relevance of Nietzsche's account as a philosophical perspective able to deal with the mounting biological evidence that increasingly contradicts the traditional liberal philosophical accounts of the self and its freedom.

3.1. The first psychologist: Nietzsche contra conscious sovereignty

This first section of the chapter investigates how Nietzsche understands our subjective relation to the external world, in terms of our conscious thoughts and perceptions. Nietzsche departs radically from traditional accounts by dethroning consciousness from its privileged position within traditional philosophical accounts of subjectivity. This section also contributes to and fleshes out Nietzsche's perspectival epistemology explored in the previous chapter, showing that the prejudices of language not only distort our conceptual knowledge but also the conscious perceptual experiences on which much of this knowledge relies. Finally, the problems that emerge for freedom from Nietzsche's radical stance on the causal impotency of consciousness are explicated, with focus on the relation between freedom and the legitimate imputation of responsibility.

3.1.1. Conscious perception: distortion and embellishment

In *Daybreak 119,* Nietzsche makes a claim, shared by many other thinkers, that our conscious experience is both an *incomplete* and an *overabundant* interpretation of reality. He writes:

> What then are our experiences? Much *more* that which we put into them than that which they already contain! Or must we go so far as to say: in themselves they contain nothing? To experience is to invent?

Nietzsche further claims that all of our sensory experiences (conscious or otherwise) are never an accurate reflection of 'the real world', but are rather interpretations and fabrications inescapably determined by our varying perspectives. In the previous chapter we saw that, for Nietzsche, our linguistic and intellectual prejudices originate from an evolutionary biological process that is inescapably tied to the internal and often unconscious value-perspectives of our drives. Here the same is shown to be true of our conscious perceptions.

In *Daybreak 117* Nietzsche compares the conscious experiences we access through our senses to a prison. Each of our senses encloses us within a limited radius of experience: we can only see, feel, hear, smell or taste so much, and these limitations vary across organisms. This perspectival limitation extends to all things capable of sensory experience, since "[a]round every being there is described a similar concentric circle, which has a mid point and is peculiar to him."(*ibid.*). This boundary is not one of mere subjective preference, but inextricably bound up with one's physiological constitution. For Nietzsche, all human evaluation, judgement and knowledge is confined to and limited by these perspectives and their horizons, as 'it is by these horizons, within which each of us encloses his senses as if behind prison walls, that we *measure* the world.' (*ibid*).

Though we frequently deceive ourselves into believing that we attain some degree of 'objective' knowledge of the world through our conscious experience, this is simply not possible. The perspective is everything:

> If our eyes were a hundredfold sharper, man would appear to us tremendously tall; it is possible, indeed, to imagine organs by virtue of which he would be felt as immeasurable. On the other hand, organs could be so constituted that whole solar systems were viewed contracted and packed together like a single cell: and to beings of an opposite constitution a cell of the human body could present itself, in motion, construction and harmony, as a solar system. (*ibid*).

If it were possible to somehow rise above our sensory limitations then we would be privy to a much broader, almost infinite variety of perspectives. Our subjective interpretations of our sensory experience fabricate our conscious experience of 'the real world' through sensory input which is *first mentally processed*. Thus, a single absolute perspective that provides direct perceptual access to reality is not possible for us 'all too human' beings – and least of

all the perspectiveless, absolutely 'objective' and independent 'view from nowhere' traditionally attributed to God and, more recently, to science:

> The habits of our senses have woven us into lies and deception of sensation: these again are the basis of all our judgements and 'knowledge' – there is absolutely no escape, no backway or bypath into the *real world*! We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we can catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught in precisely *our* net. (*ibid*).

Thus, for Nietzsche, our conscious access to the world is mediated by multiple layers of structured mediation and interpretation. It involves reception of stimuli from an independent external world, but this reception is far from being passive or direct. Every perception goes through various active processes of interpretation and translation before appearing to us as a 'conscious perception', and these processes tend to distort and embellish rather than accurately mirror the object of perception.

Welshon (2004: 138) points out a rather remarkable anticipation of contemporary scientific evidence in Nietzsche's account of conscious perception:

> Contemporary science supports Nietzsche's speculative hypotheses. Contemporary theories of perception have revealed that perception is largely a matter of unconscious and preconscious causal mechanisms that transmit data from the environment to various locations in the brain. At these locations, representations of objects are worked up and translated into our conscious experience of a unified field of perception. Nietzsche is aware, if not of the details of this largely unconscious set of perceptual mechanisms, at least that they must be there.

We have already seen in the previous chapter that Nietzsche rejects both the rationalist and empiricist approaches to truth. While the reason his epistemological perspectivism opposes the absolutising tendencies of rationalism was already made clear, this discussion of Nietzsche's account of conscious perception elucidates why he also rejects strict empiricism. But Nietzsche's problems with the notion of conscious volition amount to far more than a concern that the perceptions on which we base our decisions may be prone to error. The very experience of conscious control is itself no less erroneous.

3.1.2. Unconscious residue: consciousness as epiphenomenal

Not only are our conscious perceptions subject to gross reinterpretation and embellishment as they pass through manifold layers of unconscious processes of mediation, but our conscious

thoughts, decisions and deliberations are themselves no more than the after-effects of these unconscious interactions between our drives. In other words, our conscious volition is illusory because our conscious states are epiphenomenal[15]. This has significantly problematic implications for traditional accounts of freedom, as well as Nietzsche's own positive freedom, because it undermines the link between freedom and the legitimate imputation of responsibility.

Freedom, at least under the negative conception's focus on individual choice, is generally measured according to the 'rule of alternate possibilities'. If, when we perform a specific action, we can imagine having done otherwise, or when we are aware of multiple trajectories of action which we analyse and deliberate about, make judgements on, etc. then we can say that we are *freely choosing*, based on our own criteria, to perform a specific action rather than another. If only one course of action is possible, and no alternatives are open, we cannot be said to have 'chosen' that action, and so generally cannot be held responsible for it (cannot be praised or blamed for it). Thus the causal potency of consciousness appears to be an essential precondition to free will; one must first be *conscious* of one's thoughts and possible alternatives in order to *choose* between them, and this choice itself is only *yours* insofar as it is conscious. In this view, the conscious choice causes the action, and so must have causal potency. Nietzsche's analysis of the structures of consciousness do not allow for such a causal potency. He clearly indicates that reflective conscious states are epiphenomenal. (Welshon, 2004: 139).

In *The Gay Science 354*, Nietzsche claims that consciousness (the 'genius of the species'), is little more than a causally terminal phenomenon which is limited to no more than mirroring only the most extreme highlights of the internal struggle between our drives. Not only is it merely a reflection of the unconscious interactions of biologically constituted forces still in a process of dynamic evolution (the drives, all of which are rooted in the will to power[16]), but consciousness itself has a biologically constituted origin. It is the result of our still evolving drives to communication and socialisation, which have developed across a wide variety of very particular historical circumstances. Like human knowledge, consciousness is limited and distorted by language, and Nietzsche's account of consciousness and its limitations reveal it

[15] Epiphenomena are themselves caused, but carry no further causal consequence. They are considered causal cul-de-sacs or dead-ends.
[16] A more rigorous explication of the 'drives' and their relation to the 'will to power' is given later in this chapter.

to be far less potent than the sort on which traditional liberal accounts of freedom depend.

Nietzsche begins his inquiry into consciousness by attempting a naturalistic account of its origins:

> The problem of consciousness (more precisely, of becoming conscious of something) confronts us only when we begin to comprehend how we could dispense with it; and now physiology and the history of animals place us at the beginning of such comprehension [...] For if we could think, feel, will, and remember, and we could also 'act' in every sense of that word, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness' (as one says metaphorically). The whole of life would be possible without, as it were, seeing itself in a mirror. Even now, for that matter, by far the greatest portion of our life actually takes place without this mirror effect; and this is true even of our thinking, feeling, and willing life, however offensive this may sound to older philosophers. (GS 354)

'Older philosophers', the exponents of traditional accounts of self and will who place the primacy of consciousness at the centre of their theories, would certainly be offended if it could be shown that all the capacities we usually attribute to our consciousness would (and in fact most often do) function perfectly well without it, and also *precede* it. In this sense, Nietzsche's attempt at rooting our psychology in our physiology goes against older views that would be horrified at the idea of explaining any form of human behaviour, let alone most of them, in terms of unconscious instincts and drives. Solomon (2003: 74-76) notes that for a long period of intellectual history it was precisely by virtue of our 'sovereign' conscious control that we were seen as superior to mere instinctually driven animals.

But Nietzsche here contends that all of these capacities (thinking, feeling, willing, remembering, which are necessary for identity, agency, and freedom) can now be accounted for in naturalistic terms and explained through biological evolution. Nietzsche himself spent a great amount of effort on just such accounts (for example, the naturalistic origins of language, knowledge and reason discussed in the previous chapter).

On Nietzsche's account of consciousness, the largely unconscious internal processes that determine the vast majority of our behaviour, perceptions, moods, and emotions, are merely *reflected* in our consciousness. Stated over-simplistically, Nietzsche inverts the traditional view of consciousness. This view claims that consciousness is the originator, controller, and cause of thinking, feeling and willing – the 'seat of the self', so to speak. Nietzsche holds that thinking, willing and feeling result from the unconscious internal struggle between the drives,

which in turn are merely reflected in (and in this sense 'cause') consciousness. This leaves consciousness with almost no discernible function or purpose, yet the existence of consciousness (at least as we commonly experience it) is undeniable, so Nietzsche is right to ask: "*For what purpose*, then, any consciousness at all when it is in the main *superfluous*? (GS 354)" Or asked differently, how and why would something so useless manifest so universally across human beings?

Nietzsche's answer, again, comes in the form a genealogical investigation of the drives and historical circumstances that could have given rise to the phenomenon of human consciousness. According to Nietzsche, the power and degree of refinement of consciousness is proportionate to an animal's capacity for communication, which in turn is proportionate to its *need* for communication. He is not here speaking of the development of consciousness on the individual level, but on the level of the human species across numerous generations, though it is strongly implied that consciousness on the individual level, as well as self-consciousness, are but the most recent results of this larger process. (*ibid.*).

Based on this, Nietzsche can now elucidate the conditions under which the phenomenon of consciousness developed, and also show that, far from being a metaphysical or 'otherworldly' capacity, consciousness is an imperfect, 'all too human' invention:

> Supposing that this observation is correct, I may now proceed to the surmise that *consciousness has developed only under the pressure of the need for communication*; that from the start it was needed and useful only between human beings (particularly between those who commanded and those who obeyed[17]); and that it also has developed only in proportion to the degree of this utility. Consciousness is really only a net of communication between human beings; it is only as such that it had to develop; a solitary human being who lived like a beast of prey would not have needed it. (*ibid*).

In this sense, consciousness was a necessary side-effect of our increased need to communicate, as our species became increasingly socially dependent for survival. If we had taken a more solitary route, consciousness may never have appeared on the scene. Consciousness is not the source and authority behind our thinking, willing, feeling, and acting; rather, its function is to reflect, symbolise and make communicable the *results of* our thinking, willing, feeling and acting. Consciousness is not the seat of selfhood or freedom or responsibility, only communication and representation. The fact that impressions appear in

[17] As we shall see in the next chapter, the affects of 'command' and 'obedience' are central to Nietzsche's understanding of the will.

our consciousness comes down to a historically constituted habit – necessary for a long time to the survival of the species – which has become entrenched across many generations. Because of this entrenchment and habituation, we have forgotten that consciousness is really a useful tool geared toward survival and mistaken it for our essence and our direct window to reality (much like we have forgotten that language is but a tool and mistaken it for truth):

> That our actions, thoughts, feelings, and movements enter our consciousness – at least a part of them – that is the result of a 'must' that for a terribly long time lorded over man. As the most endangered animal, he *needed* to 'know' what he thought. For, to say it once more: Man, like every living being, thinks continually without knowing it; the thinking that rises to *consciousness* is only the smallest part of all this – the most superficial and worst part – for only this conscious thinking *takes the form of words, which is to say signs of communication*, and this fact uncovers the origin of consciousness.

Indeed, Nietzsche holds that the development of language, knowledge and logic[18] is closely tied to the development of consciousness, and that both of these developed under conditions of increasing social stability:

> In brief, the development of language and the development of consciousness (not of reason but merely of the way reason enters consciousness) go hand in hand [...] The emergence of our sense impressions into our own consciousness, the ability to fix them, and, as it were, exhibit them externally, increased proportionately with the need to communicate them to *others* by means of signs. The human being inventing signs is at the same time the human being who becomes most keenly conscious of himself. It was only as a social animal that man acquired self-consciousness – which he is still in the process of doing, more and more. (*ibid.*).

The final sentence of the above quotation seems to at least suggest the possibility that consciousness has not yet reached its full potential, and may become more refined and powerful in time, but Nietzsche nevertheless rejects traditional views of consciousness as primary. Unlike most traditional accounts, Nietzsche does not approach consciousness from the perspective of individual self-consciousness, and so comes to very different conclusions:

> My idea is, as you see, that consciousness does not really belong to man's individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature; that, as follows from this, it has developed subtlety only insofar as this was required for social or herd utility. Consequently, given the best will in the world to understand ourselves as individually as possible, 'to know ourselves,' each of us will always succeed in becoming conscious only of what is not individual but 'average.' Our thoughts themselves are continually governed by the character of consciousness – by the 'genius of the species' that commands it – and translated back into the perspective of the herd. Fundamentally, all our actions are altogether incomparably personal, unique, and infinitely individual; there is no doubt of that. But as soon as we

[18] See Chapter 2

> translate them into consciousness *they no longer seem to be.* (*ibid.*).

Far from being the most direct source of self-knowledge (as the tradition contends), Nietzsche understands consciousness as something that by its very nature provides only the most unreliable knowledge. Much like words in language reduce a plurality of particular and unique instances to a single, fixed definition (in Nietzsche's terms, equating what is essentially unequal), and thereby distorts the original meanings it intended to represent by combining all of them into a single unit which does not accurately reflect any one of them, so too does consciousness mislead us into forgetting the incomparably unique parts of our experience and reducing them to the 'common', 'average', 'herd' experience. And in both cases, we forget over time that language and consciousness were intended to represent and translate 'truth' into something communicable, and end up mistaking them for truth itself.

Nietzsche's alternative amounts to a naturalised perpectivist-phenomenalist account of human consciousness:

> This is the essence of phenomenalism and perspectivism as *I* understand them: Owing to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface- and sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, herd signal; all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalizations. (*ibid.*).

Some elements of Nietzsche's phenomenalism are by no means novel or unique. According to Welshon (2004: 136-138), the distinction between the passive reception of raw sensory stimuli from an external and independent reality, and the active (yet unconscious) processes through which these inputs are translated into consciousness are common to Nietzsche, Kant and Leibniz to name but a few. Both Kant and Leibniz also share Nietzsche's recognition of the irreducible uniqueness of each actual experience and the paradoxically pervasive generality and sameness of conscious experience. What distinguishes Nietzsche's phenomenalism from these is the inclusion of his unique perspectivism.

Unlike Kant (who held that the structures that mediate our experiences are universal categories, and hence our conscious experience is, if not a direct window to reality, at least the most reliable and objective one we have), Nietzsche sees these mediating processes as deeply influenced by the various and often opposed value-perspectives of the plurality of

drives that compose us. These drives differ significantly from person to person, as do their power-relations to one another within individuals who may accidently happen to have the same drives. Thus, like traditional phenomenal accounts, Nietzsche recognises an insurmountable gap between reality and our conscious experience thereof, but unlike traditional phenomenalist accounts who then regard conscious experience as the most reliable source of knowledge, Nietzsche concludes from this that our conscious experience is by far the most unreliable.

To summarise Nietzsche's views on consciousness: we catch only watered down glimpses of the intricate inner workings of our psyche, and rather than consciousness being the main determining force behind our behaviour or the 'seat of the self', it only allows us to lightly pull and prod at the direction of our lives. Under Nietzsche's influence, consciousness is robbed of the power and privilege it has enjoyed for so long.

But if the self does not reside in consciousness, where and how does it exist? If it is not our consciousness that causes our thoughts, actions, and behaviour, then what is the cause? So far we have seen that Nietzsche rejects the sort of subject that is considered sovereign and autonomous by virtue of causally potent self-consciousness (most common in, but by no means limited to, the liberal tradition). This prevents him from using the greater part of the historically accumulated philosophical thought on the subject as a resource for his alternative account. If not the subject as most widely understood, what sort of thing does Nietzsche take human beings to be? And is this subject, stripped of the sort of consciousness on which freedom and responsibility traditionally depend, still capable of any meaningful freedom or responsibility? In order to attempt an answer at some of these questions, I turn next to an analysis of Nietzsche's peculiar 'naturalised self'.

3.2. Bundles of drives: denying the doer behind the deed

Considering his views on consciousness, Nietzsche's subject would not be capable of freedom in the traditional sense of conscious volition. If his subject is capable of freedom at all, it would look and work very differently. In this section, I outline his peculiar account of

subjectivity and argue that Nietzsche's intentions are rehabilitative rather than dismissive and sceptical.

Nietzsche's account of subjectivity is firmly naturalised; grounded in physiology rather than metaphysical, rational or religious convictions. Many take this to mean that Nietzsche rejects the self entirely, but the following quotation suggests that he seeks to rehabilitate the concept rather than simply dismiss it:

> One must, however, go still further, and also declare war, relentless war unto death, against the 'atomistic need' which still leads a dangerous afterlife in places where no one suspects it, just like the more celebrated 'metaphysical need': one must also, first of all, give the finishing stroke to that other and more calamitous atomism which Christianity has taught best and longest, the *soul* atomism. Let it be permitted to designate by this expression the belief which regards the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*: this belief ought to be expelled from science! Between ourselves, it is not at all necessary to get rid of "the soul" at the same time, and thus to renounce one of the most ancient and venerable hypotheses – as happens frequently to clumsy naturalists who can hardly touch on "the soul" without immediately losing it. But the way is open for new versions and refinements of the soul hypothesis; and such conceptions as "mortal soul", and "soul as subjective multiplicity", and "soul as social structure of the drives and affects", want henceforth to have citizen's rights in science. (BGE 12).

Philosophically, one can understand the 'self' as a secularised version of the soul, that thing by virtue of which human beings can be said to have individuality or identity: that unique something by which we differentiate ourselves from each other[19]. Traditionally, the self has been thought of as a substance; something unitary and singular, considered eternal in most religions and largely immutable (at least during the span of one's life) by more secular thinkers. Nietzsche, from the above, clearly rejects such everlasting notions of the self, as well as the belief that it is composed of an 'otherworldly' substance. He further denies that it is unitary and indivisible, immutable, or that it is something that can, so to speak, *be found*. This does not mean, however, that we must do away with the idea of a self all together. His primary problem is not with the possibility of selfhood as such, but with the traditional accounts of selfhood as an 'otherworldly' or pre-given capacity. For Nietzsche, such accounts are driven by the 'atomistic need' just as traditional accounts of knowledge were driven by the 'metaphysical need'. But he also calls the soul the 'most ancient and venerable

[19] For this reason, the terms 'soul' and 'self' are used interchangeably in this chapter, but wherever possible 'self' is given preference, as this secularized term better reflects Nietzsche's rejection of the religious conception of the soul as 'otherworldly' or 'immortal'.

hypothesis', and clearly does not regard the reductive approach of 'clumsy naturalism' as a viable alternative. Instead of a naturalistic 'debunking' of the soul, Nietzsche seeks to conduct a naturalistic 'rehabilitation' that allows for new formulations of the soul as 'mortal' rather than immortal, divided rather than unitary, and based in nature rather than some religious or metaphysical 'otherworld'.

This naturalised account suggested above, of the self as a temporally finite subjective multiplicity, constituted by a social structure of drives and affects, leads Nietzsche to develop an interesting bundle-theory of self. This philosophical approach to explaining the phenomenon of selfhood is usually associated with Hume, but where Hume saw human beings as 'bundles of impressions', a sort of aggregate of conscious sensory experience amassed over time, Nietzsche conceptualises human subjectivity in terms of a dynamic and agonistic bundle of 'drives'. Hume himself was a compatibilist, and regarded an action as free when the action stems from one's character, which he vaguely defines as one's 'deeper dispositions'. 'Character' in Hume simply comes down to those accumulated impressions that are most firmly internalised. (Gemes, 2009: 38-39).

According to Gemes, Nietzsche may be seen as offering a similar account of freedom and subjectivity, but with the important difference of providing a much more robust and comprehensive account of character. "To have a character is to have a stable, unified, and integrated hierarchy of drives." (Gemes, 2009: 38). Though all human beings, just like everything else in Nietzsche, are at bottom composed of drives, this is not to say that all or even most human beings have character. Rather, possessing a proper self, the sort that has freedom in this sense of having character, is a rare and difficult practical accomplishment. For Nietzsche, these rare and extraordinary 'choice human beings' establish their characters by distancing themselves from the common majority:

> Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority – where he may forget "men who are the rule," being their exception. (BGE 26).

One could speculate, considering his views on herd-consciousness, that such human beings also refine their consciousness to something beyond that of the reductive and limiting consciousness of man 'writ large'. It is precisely by establishing character, which in Nietzsche amounts to orchestrating a coherent and persistent rank-ordering of drives, that one establishes a self with sufficient continuity to become capable of willing. As was mentioned

above, one's drives filter one's experience of phenomena. Thus, establishing a coherent hierarchy among them allows for a continuity of perspective and sense of identity: "If one has character one also has one's typical experience, which recurs repeatedly" (BGE 70). For most of us, this consciousness and identity are herd-consciousness and herd-identity, but for one who can 'establish proper character' a more meaningful and 'proper' freedom may be possible.

The details of what it means to establish 'character' for Nietzsche will be more rigorously investigated in the next chapter, where Nietzsche's positive account of freedom is explored. There, the process of establishing freedom will be shown to be inseparable from the process of establishing a proper self (i.e. character). This chapter, however, is more concerned with investigating how Nietzsche understands the constitution of human beings in a more general sense: his account of the constitution of a 'self' that *might* attain character, the sort of 'self' that any human being could lay claim to. All human beings are composed of drives, but only a rare few can turn these drives into a coherent hierarchy capable of willing. Here I focus on Nietzsche's notion of selves as bundles of drives, which applies to the most and least free humans alike. In the following chapter, Nietzsche's freedom is shown to amount to an establishing of character which allows for will and responsibility, and the process through which this is accomplished will be discussed in greater detail there.

3.2.1. The drives: reality as a 'force-field'

If human beings are bundles of drives, how are we to understand the parts that form our wholes? What is a drive? It can be provisionally likened to a sort of natural, instinctual force, as Nietzsche often uses the terms 'drive' and 'instinct' interchangeably. This terminological strategy can be misleading, but nevertheless contributes to fleshing out the vague definition of 'natural force'. Instincts are commonly regarded as originally biological 'forces' that affect behaviour, for example the instinct of self-preservation which manifests as a fight or flight behavioural reaction.

Although Nietzsche tends to use the terms 'drive' and 'instinct' interchangeably, distinguishing between them could help in further unveiling what he means when speaking of drives. According to Solomon (2003: 76) the term 'drive' is more appropriate to Nietzsche's

physiological psychology, because 'instinct', properly defined, carries a sense of innate or inherited (rather than acquired) behaviour, whereas 'drive' is less encumbered by such genetic and hereditary baggage. "Drives can be acquired as well as inherited. Drives can vary from individual to individual as well as being common to a species. And whereas the purposiveness of an instinct is ambiguous [...] the very notion of 'drive' carries with it the idea of a direction and an aim." (*ibid.*).

The terms 'direction' and 'aim' should not be interpreted as the equivalent of some higher purpose, however. Such misunderstandings are what allow the traditional positive conception to justify its tyranny. A better, more personal term would be 'goal', and the goal of every drive is to express and discharge itself. The form and content of this expression will be particular to every drive, and even within a particular drive it would grow, change and evolve.

A brief note must also be made on the difference between Nietzsche's understanding of drives and the 'hydraulic' model of drives popularised by Freud. Solomon (2003:74-75) notes that Nietzsche's theory of drives is frequently expressed in terms of irrational forces, with a recurring metaphor of 'raging torrents' that stream and surge with overwhelming power. Freud adopts this hydraulic imagery in his descriptions of "[...] 'the psychic apparatus' in terms of volume and pressure, damming and flow, channelling and sublimation [...]" (*ibid.*), but Solomon warns that an emphasis of this hydraulic understanding of drives in Nietzsche can be misleading. Though Nietzsche certainly does describe drives in terms of relentless forces that must be channelled or suppressed but cannot be gotten rid of altogether, his metaphorical descriptions of drives are not all 'hydraulic' but also frequently biological, physiological and psychological. Raging torrents may have direction, but entail no goal or aim and are entirely mindless. Nietzsche's more biological metaphors imply a (very qualified) sense of teleology. It is necessary to recognise that for Nietzsche drives embody value-driven goals; functions and ends that tend to be neglected when the hydraulic understanding popularised by Freud is overemphasised.

This quote from Welshon (2004:146-147) gives a sample of the sheer multiplicity of drives that Nietzsche designates in his works:

> The first thing to admit is that Nietzsche's list of the components of the self, namely drives and instincts, is really peculiar. Along with the obvious, such as sex, hunger and preservation, there are drives to doubt, to negate, collect and dissolve (GS 113); to laugh, lament and curse (GS 333); for truth (WP 585); for

> curiosity, dialectical investigation and contradiction (UM III 6); for distinction (D 113); for beauty (WP 800); for pride, joy, health, love of the sexes, enmity and war, beautiful gestures and manners, strong will, high spirituality, discipline, gratitude to the earth and life, beneficence and transfiguration (WP 1033); for compassion, anger and revenge (WP 929); for magnanimity and heroism (WP 388); for decadence (WP 401); for the herd (GS 50); for weakness (GS 347); for hatred, envy and covetousness (BGE 23); for enterprising spirit, foolhardiness, vengefulness, craftiness, rapacity and lust for rule (BGE 201); for sentimentality, nature-idolatry, the anti-historical, the idealistic, the unreal and the revolutionary (TI IX 49); and, of course, for power (WP 720). One thing that cannot be said about this list is that its members are all merely *affective*. Drives for dialectical investigation, for the revolutionary, for negation and for doubting are all drives with significant *cognitive* content. They may originate from internalised and redirected drives of a more primitive nature that are not themselves cognitive, but they have developed in such a way that they are now much more complex than them.

For Nietzsche, there is an innumerable variety of possible drives. Some can be clearly traced to more primal drives such as self-preservation, while others have distinctly cognitive content and could only come about under certain conditions such as prolonged social stability. It was noted above, however, that for Nietzsche all of these drives are so many permutations of the 'will to power'[20]. Welshon's last observation implies that drives develop over time, and some *evolve* greater degrees of cognitive efficacy. This means that drives may evolve in such a way that the conscious efficacy of some drives could become less epiphenomenal than others. It also means that any conscious attempt at understanding our drives can only occur through some such cognitively refined drive (and not through an autonomous and independent self or 'I'), but the sort of drives capable of this have evolved far beyond the complexity of more primal drives from which they may have originated – so far, in fact, that they may be seen as 'proto-selves' of a sort.

It was noted earlier that Nietzsche's naturalised approach to subjectivity does have a very significant consequence: our conscious experience, sense of self, decisions, and behaviour are no more than a result of the interaction between our drives. Nietzsche gets away with this move because each drive is capable of accounting for all the functions of a traditional subject. This is because each drive intrinsically *values*, in the sense that it seeks certain goods and requires certain conditions for attaining these goods. Furthermore, cognition, perception and conscious experience always occur from the perspective of a drive, according to what that drive values. (May, 2003: 90).

[20] The reasons for this are discussed below in section 3.2.2.

This means that each of these drives is capable of fulfilling all the functions of a traditional subject considered to be minimal requirements for freedom (willing and valuating), as well as a more limited sense of the volition traditionally associated with the subject. If we were each composed of but a single drive, then Nietzsche's account would look far more like those of the tradition, but for Nietzsche what 'we' are is a complex result of a dynamic process of interaction between the innumerable drives that compose us. Despite the difficulties that emerge for freedom from this denial of an autonomous subject independent of the drives, Nietzsche's self does have many advantages over traditional accounts.

In conceptualising human motivation in terms of drives and instincts, Nietzsche seeks to root our psychology in our physiology. This makes ideas of 'the independent mind' and the whole range of problems arising from Cartesian mind-body dualism irrelevant. Put simply, for Nietzsche there is no clear-cut distinction between mental and physical, between 'material' and 'immaterial' substances, and therefore no highly problematic need to specify the causal relationship between the two. Based on Nietzsche's thoughts regarding the limits of language and knowledge discussed in the previous chapter, we may assume that the distinction between 'mental' and 'physical' is at most purely conceptual; two different perspectives on the same thing: life. As Welshon (2004: 143) puts it, Nietzsche holds that:

> [T]he mental is not different from the physical. Nor is he saying, as contemporary reductionists would have it, that the mental is *identical* to the physical or that the mental *emerges* from the physical. Nietzsche is suggesting that the terms "mental" and "physical" do not refer to distinct ontological realms at all, but refer instead to the *same* category of entity; namely, collective forces of willing, feeling and thinking.

This description of 'collective forces' further elucidates how Nietzsche understands drives. For Nietzsche, the whole of reality, nature, and every object in existence are constituted at their most basic level by such a force-field of interacting drives. But how could all of reality, including you, me, and everyone else, be composed of 'collective forces of willing, feeling and thinking? For Nietzsche's explanation, I turn to an analysis of BGE 36, one of his most extensive discussions of what he regards to be the most basic and primal drive: 'the will to power'.

3.2.2. Neither material nor immaterial: existence as the will to power

> Suppose nothing else were "given" as real except our world of desires and passions, and we could not get down, or up, to any other "reality" besides the reality of our drives – for thinking is merely a relation of these drives to each other: is it not permitted to make the experiment and ask whether this "given" would not be *sufficient* for also understanding on the basis of this kind of thing the so-called mechanistic (or "material") world? I mean, not as a deception, as "mere appearance", an "idea" (in the sense of Berkeley and Schopenhauer) but as holding the same rank of reality as our affect – as a more primitive form of the world of affects in which everything still lies contained in a powerful unity before it undergoes ramifications and developments in the organic process (and, as is only fair, also becomes tenderer and weaker) – as a kind of instinctive life in which all organic functions are still synthetically intertwined along with self-regulation, assimilation, nourishment, excretion, and metabolism – as a *pre-form* of life. (BGE 36).

Here Nietzsche again points toward the fact that the very thinking we use to understand reality essentially results from a power-relation amongst our drives. Starting from this single 'given', the reality of the drives, Nietzsche experiments with the permissibility of this fact as a primary explanatory mechanism. Nietzsche continues by stating that the conscience of his naturalistic method not only permits this experiment, but demands it. Where traditionally the causality of the will is separated from the mechanistically causal laws that constitute the material world, Nietzsche here proposes that we first consider the explanatory power of 'will' to its most extreme possibilities. (*ibid.*).

Causal determinism usually views material causality as primary, and often denies the causal potency of will as being no more than an illusion produced by the rigidly determined mechanical laws of nature. The opposed liberal view holds that the casual potency of the will is such that it can initiate a new causal sequence without this being itself the effect of a preceding cause. Such *causa sui* convictions on the causal potency of the will seek to remove the will entirely from the natural causal order, placing it in a position of complete sovereignty over and above natural causality. The deterministic view seeks to remove the will entirely from the equation, and understands human behaviour as no more than the inevitable result of an ongoing causal process driving all of existence. In this section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche departs from both of these convictions by positing 'will' as the primary underlying cause of reality, but not will as the human will (i.e. a volitional capacity of a conscious subject).

> The question is in the end whether we really recognise the will as [causally] *efficient*, whether we believe in the causality of the will: if we do – and at bottom our faith is nothing less than a faith in causality itself – then we have to make the experiment of positing the causality of the will hypothetically as the only one. "Will," of course, can affect only "will" – and not "matter" (not "nerves," for example). In short, one has to risk the hypothesis whether will does not affect will wherever "effects" are recognised – and whether all mechanical occurrences are not, insofar as a force is active in them, will force, effects of will. (*ibid.*).

This is not a case of the material world being determined by the human mind and its will, as with metaphysical idealism[21]. Nor is it a case of the human mind and will being determined by the natural causal process of the material world, as with causal determinism. Significantly, it does not constitute a case of the mental and the physical being distinct substances, where the mind exists somehow above the material world, affecting it without being affected by it, as with accounts of subjectivity in the dualist and rationalist traditions, either. Rather, all of existence, whether considered as mental or physical, is underpinned by the interactions between, and power-relations that emerge from, the conflicting 'wills' of the drives. This distinguished the ontological foundations of Nietzsche's account from those of the tradition, and especially from the traditional negative and positive accounts of liberty discussed by Berlin. For Nietzsche, the self can hardly be distinguished from the world, let alone be somehow independent of it.

Reality, for Nietzsche, is neither material nor immaterial, nor is it some sort of composite of the two; it is a force-field of drive interactions, and our knowledge of it is limited by the perspectival interpretations of those drives that compose us. In this way Nietzsche avoids the solipsistic dangers of idealism, the reductive tendency of causal determinism, and the highly problematic need of justifying the existence of a *causa sui* will found in liberal accounts. He also negates the need to establish the relation between the mental and physical which has for so long plagued the dualist tradition, as any interaction is at bottom an interaction between entities of the same substance: the drives.

At the end of the section, Nietzsche refines his radical hypothesis by identifying what he takes to be the most primary sort of will, from which all of existence takes its cue: the will to power. For Nietzsche, the will to power ought to constitute the primary explanatory mechanism for existence.

[21] For more detail on Nietzsche's rejection of idealism, see BGE 15.

> Suppose, finally, we succeed in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will – namely, of the will to power, as *my* proposition has it; suppose all organic functions could be traced back to this will to power and one could also find in it the solution to the problem of procreation and nourishment – it is *one* problem – then one would have gained the right to determine *all* efficient force univocally as – *will to power*. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its "intelligible character" – it would be "will to power" and nothing else. (*ibid.*).

Nietzsche does not here mean the basic biological instinct for self-preservation, and does not here endorse a Social Darwinist biological determinism where all human behaviour can be explained as some manifestation of this drive to self-preservation. The will to power is something even more primal and primary, and embodies not self-preservation but a discharge of force. Self-preservation may be temporarily necessary to allow for such a desired discharge of force, but self-preservation is a means rather than an end in itself.

> Physiologists should think before putting down the instinct for self-preservation as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength – life itself is *will to power*; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent results. (BGE 13).

3.2.3. Driverless driving: the components of the self

If all of existence (including human beings) is composed of drives and drive-interactions, all at bottom guided by the will to power, then a self with character which is capable of freedom would be nothing more than a very particular organisation of drives within a human organism. This makes an understanding of the drives essential for an understanding of Nietzsche's accounts of selfhood and freedom. Nietzsche warns, however, that understanding and defining the drives is notoriously difficult. The accumulated linguistic and intellectual biases of humanity make a proper understanding of the drives all but impossible. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche affirms the difficulty of this task when he writes:

> 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 the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of their *nutriment* remain wholly unknown to him. (D 119).

He alludes to why this is in a slightly earlier section on the 'so-called ego', where our linguistic prejudices and the consciousness that results from them are shown to be especially misleading when confronted with our inner constitution:

> Language and the prejudices upon which language is based are a manifold hindrance to us when we want to explain inner processes and drives: because of the fact, for example, that words exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes and drives; and where words are lacking, we are accustomed to abandon exact observation because exact thinking there becomes painful; indeed, in earlier times one involuntarily concluded that where the realm of words ceased the realm of existence ceased also. (D115).

Those inner states of which we become conscious, which we thereby linguistically reduce and make communicable, are only extreme outburst. We remain entirely unconscious of the far more subtle, complex and numerous processes, yet it is precisely these that most significantly steer our lives and "weave the web of our character and our destiny". (*ibid.*).

It is only when there is a particularly extreme outburst of drive-force that consciousness comes into play, and then still just as a reflection and representation:

> These extreme outbursts – and even the most moderate *conscious* pleasure or displeasure, while eating food or hearing a note, is perhaps, rightly understood, and extreme outburst – very often rend the web apart, and then they constitute violent exceptions, no doubt usually consequent on built up congestions: – and, as such, how easy it is for them to mislead the observer! No less easy than it is for them to mislead the person in whom they occur. (*ibid.*).

Traditionally consciousness is regarded as the pre-eminent source of knowledge on the self, but for Nietzsche it allows only superficial glimpses of an immensely intricate process. The last part of the above quote shows that consciousness misleads both in the empirical sense of observing and explaining the behaviour of a person and the rationalist sense explaining one's own behaviour through self-conscious introspection. From this Nietzsche concludes that what we *are* is not our consciousness, but rather that it is through our consciousness that we most easily misunderstand ourselves. In this next quotation he also signifies an awareness of the relation between the imputation of responsibility and the sort of understanding of consciousness he is rejecting:

> *We are none of us* that which we appear to be in accordance with the states for which alone we have words, and consequently praise and blame; those cruder outbursts of which alone we are aware make us *misunderstand* ourselves, we draw a conclusion on the basis of data in which the exceptions outweigh the rule, we misread ourselves in this apparently most intelligible handwriting on the nature of our self. (*ibid.*).

Far from being synonymous with the 'self', consciousness provides at best only a highly selective and erroneous picture of what we truly are. But this consciousness is itself the product of drive interactions, and so over time may evolve to play a bigger and bigger role in the internal processes which compose us[22]. Nietzsche recognises this at the end of this section:

> *Our opinion of ourself*, however, which we have arrived at by this erroneous path, the so-called 'ego', is thenceforth a fellow worker in the construction of our character and our destiny. (*ibid.*).

Despite the above difficulties with establishing a clear understanding of the drives through consciousness, language, or knowledge, some attempt at explicating them is essential to the project of understanding Nietzsche's positive freedom. The problems mentioned above should not deter one from the attempt, but rather should act as a warning that the results of any such attempts will always be tentative, incomplete, and open to future revision.

These considerations rule out the possibility of any complete understanding of one's inner drives, as well as any complete control over them. For such 'understanding' or 'control' (in the senses traditionally attributed to an autonomous subject) to be possible, there would have to be an independent 'self' which has 'drives', and can distance itself from these drives enough to analyse them. Such a self can be seen in the positive conception of freedom and its higher and lower selves. Though this conception can recognise that there are forces at play within each person that do not necessarily harmonise, it still regards the 'self' as separate and independent of these forces, capable of evaluating them and, based on this, decide which to allow and which to reject.

For Nietzsche, the self *is* its drives: there is no 'self' independent over and above drives, and so there is no 'perspective' from which the drives can be evaluated that is not *itself already* constituted by the drives. No matter how abstract and general one tries to be in describing what drives are, any description is always conducted through the value-laden perspective of a particular set of drives. Thus, a single strict definition or rigorous account of the drives is impossible. Nietzsche's own descriptions are essentially the self-descriptions of his own dominant drives, and what follows is a further interpretation of Nietzsche's description from

[22] A point that will be returned to later in this chapter, as well as in the following chapter.

the perspective of the author's own dominant drives, adulterated by the manifold perspectives of various secondary sources, which will be reinterpreted again by the dominant drives of the reader.

To illustrate this point, I turn to BGE 6, where Nietzsche writes:

> Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir; also that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constituted the real germ of life from which the whole plant had grown [...] But anyone who considers the basic drives of man to see to what extent they may have been at play just here as *inspiring* spirits (or demons and kobolds) will find that all of them have done philosophy at some time – and that every single one of them, would like only too well to represent just *itself* as the ultimate purpose of existence and the legitimate *master* of all the other drives. For every drive wants to be master – and it attempts to philosophise in *that spirit*.

Far from being the 'absolute' truth, every great philosophy has simply represented itself as such because it was motivated and guided by unconscious drives. These drives, which evolved from the 'will to power', each seeks to present itself as 'the legitimate master of all others', because such a position is accompanied by the pleasurable sensation of an increase of power. But even those traditional accounts that admit to the existence of unconscious forces present in human beings still consider these forces as *belonging to* a sovereign subject that can consciously choose to resist or allow them. The traditional tendency is to oppose the rational, reflective, conscious self to the animalistic, unconscious, instinctive drives, but Nietzsche seeks to move beyond this simplistic duality.

In BGE 3 he claims that even philosophical reflection, which is commonly regarded as an entirely conscious and reflective activity that demands the suppression of instinctual or unconscious biases, is deeply influenced by the unconscious drives. Consciousness, far from being the opposite of what is instinctual, is in fact but one of many tools through which our strongest drives seek to express themselves:

> After having looked long enough between the philosopher's lines and fingers, I say to myself: by far the greater part of conscious thinking must still be included among the instinctive activities, and that goes even for philosophical thinking. We have to relearn here, as one has had to relearn about heredity and what is 'innate.' As the act of birth deserves no consideration in the whole process and procedure of heredity, so 'being conscious' is not in any decisive sense the *opposite* of what is instinctive: most of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts.

Also, as we shall see in the next chapter, the description of a self that manages to orchestrate a particular organisation of its drives and thereby attain proper selfhood and freedom may be misleading. If the drives pull together in a hierarchy they do so under the influence of a particular drive or set of drives, and not under the influence of an independent subject. This means that even the most well-orchestrated self never exists *over and above* the drives, controlling and regulating them.

Any control and regulation of the drives happens only on the level of the drives themselves, as is shown in the concluding part of D 109. Most of this section is concerned with describing the six methods Nietzsche identifies for combating the vehemence of one's drives. The six methods themselves are less relevant to the question of freedom than the ending, which shows clearly that for Nietzsche it is never an independent 'I' that consciously decides which drives to combat and which to encourage, or that plays any active or direct role in this combating or encouraging. It is only drives effecting drives:

> Thus: avoiding opportunities, implanting regularity into the drive, engendering satiety and disgust with it and associating it with a painful idea (such as that of disgrace, evil consequences or offended pride), then dislocation of forces and finally a general weakening and exhaustion – these are the six methods: *that* one *desires* to combat the vehemence of a drive at all, however, does not stand within our own power; nor does the choice of any particular method; nor does the success or failure of this method. What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of another 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 section reveals a subject capable of a much more limited scope of freedom than is usually assumed in traditional accounts that regard the subject as sovereign and self-conscious. The very last sentence, where Nietzsche speaks of our intellect 'taking sides', seems to imply that 'we' do have some very limited ability to influence the outcome, but not remotely as much as that of a sovereign subject capable of *causa sui* conscious volition. The extent of this influence is clarified in the next chapter, where Nietzsche's view of the will as 'willpower' is presented.

The more important question is whether or not this influence is sufficient for the sort of freedom that could ground the prescription of responsibility. If one considers Nietzsche's stance on the epiphenomenality of consciousness and the naturalistic constitution of the human self as a bundle of drives, an unqualified 'yes' to these questions becomes all but impossible. This point is illustrated very succinctly in Welshon's summary of Nietzsche's account of the self:

> Together with his other commitments about consciousness and the will, Nietzsche's views on the kind of thing we are and our psychological dimensions reveal a self that is thoroughly de-deified and de-reified. The Nietzschean self is a bundle of drives, some of which dominate, some of which are subservient, some of which are strong, some of which are weak, some of which are reflectively conscious, and most of which are reflectively unconscious. All the 'higher' purposes that philosophers and theologians have thought we strive for, all the divine and non-natural properties that they have tried to attribute to us, all the certainty they have assured us we are entitled to when it comes to knowledge of ourselves, all of it is, if Nietzsche is right, chimerical. (Welshon, 2004: 156).

These questions are returned to in the next chapter. The rest of this chapter seeks to show how remarkably 'right' Nietzsche may well have been by comparing his account of the self to that of a contemporary neuroscientist.

3.3. Nietzsche and neuroscience: an emergent self

Before concluding this chapter and moving on to Nietzsche's positive account of freedom, I wish to point out the remarkable similarities between Nietzsche's accounts of consciousness and selfhood and the work of eminent contemporary neuroscientist and author Antonio Damasio. This section uses a comparison between these two accounts to, firstly, elucidate further what Nietzsche might mean by drives and how these may be understood from a neuroscientific perspective, and, secondly, to argue that Nietzsche's mostly speculative account is supported by at least some contemporary neuroscientific evidence.

3.3.1. Damasio's account: the emergent, evolving, dynamic self

It must be noted from the outset that what follows is the account of one particular contemporary neuroscientist, as presented in one particular book of his. There are many other contemporary positions that draw very opposed conclusions from the same evidence base[23].

In his book *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (2010), Antonio Damasio presents his neuroscientific and evolutionary account of the biological origins of human consciousness and our sense of self. To say that Damasio is an eminent contemporary neuroscientist requires little embellishment; he is a university professor, Dornsife Professor of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Neurology, and director of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California. He is also a fellow of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, and his numerous publications have earned him several distinguished international awards; most recently *Self Comes to Mind* won the *Corine* International Book Award in 2011.

In addition to relying on the account of a single, albeit highly distinguished, neuroscientist, the overview that follows is of selected parts of his larger work, and in no way represents a thorough or exhaustive investigation. To fully appreciate the compatibility between Nietzsche and Damasio on selfhood, the reader is encouraged to read Damasio's book in its entirety. In this concluding part of the chapter, I wish only to focus on two of the most significant and striking similarities in order to show that Nietzsche's account, while radically peculiar, is not so far off from at least one of our most highly regarded contemporary accounts.

The first of these significant parallels allow us to better understand what Nietzsche may have meant by the 'drives' from the perspective of evolutionary biology, while the second helps us to make biological sense of Nietzsche's notion of the 'will to power' and of the drives as 'valuating'.

[23] For example Brian Leiter's naturalistic reading of BGE 19 via the work of Libett and Wegner, discussed in the next chapter. Wegner in particular takes the evidence of contemporary neuroscience as a denial of conscious willing, and regards the conscious subject as an illusion.

3.3.1.1. *Drives as Single Cells: From Naturalism to Neuroscience*

Damasio's position can be shown to resonate with Nietzsche's account of the limitations of consciousness, as well as his notion that the more primal and unconscious forces driving the majority of our behaviour existed long before consciousness appeared on the scene, and the fact that most of our essential functions are capable of getting along just fine without consciousness:

> The notion that hidden underneath conscious minds there are unconscious mind processes is hardly news. This idea was first aired more than a century ago[24], when the public greeted it with some surprise, but today the notion is commonplace. What is not commonly appreciated, although it is well known, is that long before living creatures had minds, they exhibited efficient and adaptive behaviours that for all intents and purposes resemble those that arise in mindful, conscious creatures. Of necessity, those behaviours were *not* caused by minds, let alone consciousness. In brief, it is not just that conscious and nonconscious processes coexist but rather that nonconscious processes that are relevant to maintaining life can exist without their conscious counterparts. (Damasio, 2010: 31).

A little further on, Damasio (*ibid.*) makes a further claim that not only echoes Nietzsche's approach of explaining consciousness and selfhood through its more primal and originary precursors (the drives, in Nietzsche's terminology), but also begins to provide a potential biological explanation of the workings and origins of these drives. The end of this quote also echoes Nietzsche's conviction that such a 'proper' account of selfhood needs must go against our most entrenched and heartfelt traditional assumptions :

> But the surprises do not end with the notion that in the absence of mind and consciousness brains can produce respectable behaviours. It turns out that living creatures without any brain at all, down to single cells, exhibit seemingly intelligent and purposeful behaviour as well [...] In fact, if we are to find out the rhymes and reasons behind conscious brains, we need to get closer to the beginnings of life. And here once again we come to notions that not only are surprising but undermine commonly held assumptions about the contributions of brains, minds and consciousness to the management of life. (Damasio, 2010: 32).

According to Damasio, research on single cells (the most basic organic building-blocks of our physiology) has shown that even these simple proto-organisms (devoid of brains and nervous-systems, let alone consciousness and a sense of self) exhibit a decisive will or desire to persist until the genetic command to expire is released. (Damasio, 2010: 35).

[24] With Nietzsche being one of its earliest exponents.

Damasio's description of this most basic 'will' possessed by a single-cell organism better explains what Nietzsche may have meant in describing 'drives' as capable of performing all the functions of a traditional subject (the idea of drives as proto-selves), as well as clarifying how this primitive 'will' or dispositional attitude is different from that of a conscious human self:

> I know it is difficult to imagine that the notions of 'desire' and 'will' are applicable to a single lonely cell. How can attitudes and intentions that we associate with the conscious human mind, and that we intuit to result from the workings of big human brains, be present at such an elementary level? But they are, by whatever name you may wish to call those features of the cell's behaviour. Deprived of conscious knowledge [...] the single cell seems to have an attitude: it wants to live out its prescribed genetic allowance. Strange as it may seem, the want, and all that is necessary to implement it, *precedes* explicit knowledge and deliberation regarding life conditions, since the cell clearly has neither. (*ibid.*).

From this recognition of the largely insignificant role of consciousness and the paradoxical conscious experience of ourselves which misleads us to its significance, Damasio again makes a conclusion very similar to Nietzsche's: that the function of consciousness is not to control and regulate the organism, nor is it the source of our cognitive content (such as attitudes and intentions), but it is experienced in such a way that it easily misleads us to just the contrary mistaken conclusion.

> We commonly fall into the trap of regarding our big brains and complex conscious minds as the originators of the attitudes, intentions, and strategies behind our sophisticated life management [...] The reality, however, is that the conscious mind has merely made the basic life-management know-how, well, *knowable*. (Damasio, 2010: 35-36).

This claim on the purpose of consciousness echoes Nietzsche's notion that consciousness is primarily concerned with mirroring and representing the highlights of our inner processes, and making them 'knowable' through linguistic reduction and simplification. But does Damasio, in the style of Nietzsche's much berated 'clumsy naturalist,' fall into the error of therefore dismissing the self entirely? The following quotation suggests otherwise:

> I am not downgrading consciousness but am most certainly upgrading nonconscious life management and suggesting that it constitutes the blueprint for attitudes and intentions of conscious minds [...] I am reversing the narrative sequence of the traditional account of consciousness by having covert knowledge of life management *precede* the conscious experience of any such knowledge. I am also saying that the covert knowledge is quite sophisticated and should not be regarded as primitive. Its complexity is huge and its seeming intelligence remarkable. Every cell in our body has the kind of nonconscious attitude I have just described. (Damasio, 2010: 36).

Like Nietzsche, Damasio's intention is to rehabilitate our concept of the self in light of naturalistic evidence, and not to dismiss the notion entirely. And like Nietzsche, though to a much stronger and more explicit degree, Damasio suggests the possibility that something resembling our intuitive but consciously sovereign self may eventually result from this ongoing evolutionary process. Even Damasio's line of argument, which involves inverting rather than merely dismissing the traditional view, has been seen in Nietzsche time and time again throughout this chapter. This leads Damasio to phrase a question in a way that so uncannily reflects Nietzsche's convictions on the self as a bundle of drives that it may easily be mistaken as penned by Nietzsche himself:

> Could it be that our very human conscious desire to live, our will to prevail, began as an aggregate of the inchoate wills of all the cells in our body, a collective voice set free in a song of affirmation? (*ibid.*).

Throughout the rest of his book, Damasio argues that the correct answer to this question is 'yes', but the details of this complex argument are beyond the scope and interests of this chapter. The above comparison between Nietzsche and Damasio reveals a striking similarity between Nietzsche's notion of the drives and the contemporary neuroscientific account of single cells. This not only strengthens Nietzsche's speculative position, but also allows us to use the perspective and terminology of contemporary neuroscience to better understand the very central yet very vague Nietzschean notion of drives. But even with this enhanced clarity it does not seem immediately obvious how such contemporary evidence could account for Nietzsche's more radical idea of the drives as being capable of 'valuing and evaluating', or how such drives could have evolved from the 'will to power'. To try and clarify this, I explore one final element of Damasio's account: his notion of 'Biological Value'.

3.3.1.2. *Damasio's 'Natural Will': 'Will to Power' as 'Biological Value'*

Nietzsche's contention that man is *the* valuating animal[25], and the emphasis he places on our capacity to create values (and, more importantly, revaluate them), seems to require a level of conscious cognitive power beyond what his naturalised account of the self would allow for. He overcomes this problem by claiming that our drives themselves are what engage in

[25] See, for example, Nietzsche's account of language and knowledge discussed in the previous chapter.

valuing and evaluating. But how, especially in a way that remains compatible with more recent evidence, could such capacities evolve in and belong to natural biological forces? Damasio, who like Nietzsche regards human beings fundamentally as 'valuating animals', suggests an answer in his discussion of 'biological value':

> The notion of biological value is ubiquitous in modern thinking about brain and mind. We all have an idea, or perhaps several ideas, of what the word *value* means, but what about *biological value?* Let us consider some other questions: Why do we take virtually everything that surrounds us [...] and assign value to it? Why does everyone spend so much time calculating gains and losses related to those items? Why do items carry a price tag? Why this incessant valuation? And what are the yardsticks against which value is measured? At first glance these questions might seem to have no place in a conversation about brain, mind and consciousness. But in fact they do, and [...] the notion of value is central to our understanding of brain evolution, brain development, and actual, moment-to-moment brain activity. (Damasio, 2010: 46).

Damasio's provisional answer is relatively simple: things are valued in proportion to how much they are *needed*. But needed for what? On its most basic level, Damasio views our needs as those things and conditions required for the maintenance of life:

> Why we assign value in the first place, however, or the choice of yardstick we use in the assignment, requires an acknowledgement of the problem of maintaining life and its requisite needs [...] Value relates directly or indirectly to survival. In the case of humans in particular, value also relates to the *quality* of that survival in the form of *well-being* [...] I see value as indelibly tied to need, and need as tied to life. The valuations we establish in everyday social and cultural activities have a direct or indirect connection with homeostasis. That connection explains why human brain circuitry has been so extravagantly dedicated to the prediction and detection of gains and losses, not to mention the promotion of gains and the fear of losses. It explains, in other words, the human obsession with assignation of value. (Damasio, 2010: 47-48).

Though human beings may well have evolved to value things beyond their utility for survival, Damasio (2010:48) holds that:

> [...] the paramount value for organisms consists of healthy survival to an age compatible with reproductive success. Natural selection has perfected the machinery of homeostasis to permit precisely that. Accordingly, the physiological state of a living organism's tissues, within an optimal homeostatic range, is the deepest origin of biological value and valuations. The statement applies equally to multicellular organisms and to those whose living 'tissue' is confined to one cell.

This is not so far off from Nietzsche's description of the will to power as a force seeking to discharge itself, and the various drives as embodying a multitude of different strategies through which to successfully do so. It agrees with the notion that value and valuations have

a primal, nonconscious origin, which can be traced back to a single if very general 'base value', which Nietzsche calls the 'will to power' and Damasio calls 'biological value'.

In the next chapter, many of Nietzsche's ideas on morality show him to regard what is good primarily as what is *healthy*, and bad as *sickly* or *decadent*. What is 'good' (healthy) for one may be 'bad' (unhealthy) for another, depending on the particular constitution of the person and the particular context within which the person is situated. This sort of contextually particular valuation based on originally instinctive biological impulses to survival and procreation have a strong resonance with Damasio's hypothesis:

> My hypothesis is that objects and processes we confront in our daily lives acquire their assigned value by reference to this primitive of naturally selected organism value. The values that humans attribute to objects and activities would bear some relation, no matter how indirect or remote, to the two following conditions: first, the general maintenance of living tissue within the homeostatic range suitable to its current context; second, the particular regulation required for the process to operate within the sector or the homeostatic range associated with well-being relative to the current context. (Damasio, 2010: 49).

From this, Damasio draws two further claims that are uncannily similar to Nietzsche's account. The first shows how our human ability to evaluate and judge, predict, and respond to the external are a direct result of and fully dependent on these primal nonconscious elements rather than a consciously sovereign subject:

> For whole organisms, then the primitive of value is *the physiological state of living tissue within a survivable, homeostatic range.* The continuous representations of chemical parameters within the brain allows nonconscious brain devices to *detect and measure* departures from the homeostatic range and thus act as sensors for the degree of internal need. In turn, the measured departure from homeostatic range allows yet other brain devices to command corrective actions and even to promote *incentive* or *disincentive* for corrections, depending on the urgency of response. A simple record of such proceedings is the basis of the *prediction* of future conditions. (*ibid.*).

The above takes place in human and simplistic (brainless, mindless, consciousnessless) organisms alike, and in no way requires the sort of elaborate self-consciousness found in humans. This brings us to the second point of agreement, where Damasio describes the function of consciousness added to this process:

> In brains capable of representing internal states in the form of maps, and potentially having minds and consciousness, the parameters associated with homeostatic range correspond, at conscious levels of processing, to the *experiences* of pain and pleasure. Subsequently, in brains capable of language,

> those experiences can be assigned specific linguistic labels and called by their *names* – pleasure, well-being, discomfort, pain. (*ibid.*).

Damasio, like Nietzsche, sees consciousness and language as essentially concerned with representing and making 'knowable' or 'communicable' or 'recordable' the most immediately important parts of a vast and complex internal process which is primarily unconscious but plays a far greater role than consciousness in regulating and controlling the organism in question.

3.3.2. Nietzsche's naturalism: a neuroscientific prophesy

If the claims of similarity I make here hold, then Damasio's contemporary neuroscientific picture of selfhood and consciousness both reinforces and elucidates Nietzsche's very radical and original speculative naturalistic account of the self. On the one hand, it allows us to better understand Nietzsche's highly speculative and inevitably vague explanatory mechanisms through their more empirically underpinned and contemporary counterparts (the drives and their respective wills as inherent in single cells, the 'will to power' as 'biological value', and the 'epiphenomenal mirror of consciousness' as the conscious representation of mapped and recorded internal states that reflect the parts of our internal process most pertinent to maintaining homeostatic range within a particular context).

On the other, it highlights the value of Nietzsche's philosophical account of selfhood over many contemporary accounts which evolved from the traditional accounts rejected by Nietzsche (such as contemporary Liberal accounts which still require a subject capable of *causa sui* conscious volition for the imputation of responsibility). Unlike most of these accounts that still rely on the primacy of consciousness, Nietzsche's account is not only capable of including the mounting contemporary scientific evidence against such a view of consciousness, but in fact anticipates this evidence in a way so uncanny that it seems almost prophetic (though Nietzsche would no doubt dismiss such an otherworldly explanation). Nevertheless, if my comparison here is valid, it lends a whole new meaning to Nietzsche's contention of himself as a *posthumous* man.

3.4. Conclusion: what remains of freedom?

This chapter aimed at investigating the most important dimensions of Nietzsche's account of human selfhood. I began with an exposition of Nietzsche's views on human consciousness, which for the most part rejects traditional accounts and strips consciousness of its sovereignty. For Nietzsche, our conscious perceptions are by no means a reliable source of knowledge, and even less so our conscious experience of ourselves or our own volition. For Nietzsche, consciousness is causally epiphenomenal; the result of our developing need for communication and representation, which itself is but part of a larger evolutionary process of the drives from the will to power. The notion of consciousness Nietzsche leaves us with is far more constrained and qualified than in traditional accounts, and the problems this might hold for the imputation of responsibility were mentioned.

Next, Nietzsche's alternative and rehabilitative account of the self was explored. In Nietzsche's view, human beings and all of existence are at bottom composed of conflicting biological forces; the drives. These drives, far from being simplistic, possess a sort of proto-will and capacity to valuate. Each drive embodies its value and seeks conditions in which it can be expressed and discharged, and each seeks this for itself against others. It is from this force-field of competitive conflict between the drives that the macro-phenomena of life emerge, and Nietzsche traces the drives back to a primal ancestor; a sort of ur-drive, the 'will to power'. Far from the unified, immutable, autonomous selves possessing sovereign conscious volition common to traditional accounts, Nietzsche's 'dividual' self is a bundle of drives. This must not be misinterpreted as a pre-existing self struggling with its drives, or at their mercy, but still somehow *separate* from the drives: for Nietzsche, there is no 'self' apart from the drives. In other words, if the self could be rid of all its drives, there would not be some remaining 'thing' we could call the self; there would be nothing.

Traditionally, the self was regarded as a sort of 'supreme dictator' in absolute control of its mind and body. Nietzsche sees the self more as a locus of perpetual rivalry between the drives, where different drives or collections of drives temporarily gain power and subordinate the rest, but these power-relations are never permanent or stable. Like his views on consciousness, Nietzsche's account of the self as a bundle of drives creates many problems for traditional notions of freedom and responsibility.

Lastly, Nietzsche's account was compared to that of an eminent contemporary neuroscientist. Though Nietzsche took a firmly naturalistic approach to the self (rather than the traditional metaphysical approach), he nevertheless relied far more on psychological insights and physiological speculations than any sort of hard empirical data. In a stunningly peculiar move, Nietzsche goes so far as to take the very capacities of selfhood that the tradition has sought to separate from and lord over our physical constitution and ascribes them to the entire process of life that both preceded and produces us. His description of drives as having 'wills' or engaging in 'valuating' are easily taken as mythological anthropomorphisms made necessary by the comparatively ignorant science of his day, much like one regards ancient animistic ideas of spirits driving all things. This last part of the chapter showed that this is in no way the case, and that Nietzsche's more than century-old speculations anticipated the empirical results of contemporary neuroscience in a remarkable way. Many of his central explanatory mechanisms are echoed in and evinced by the evolutionary biological explanations of contemporary science.

Despite the deflationary implications of Nietzsche's account on our most firmly entrenched and dearly held traditional convictions of ourselves and our freedom, viewing the self philosophically as a bundle of naturally constituted drives has distinct advantages. Although many of these were pointed out by Nietzsche himself, traditional accounts are riddled with problematic metaphysical reliance on unjustifiable concepts and capacities (such as conscious volition, self-evident autonomy and volition, *causa sui* freedom of will, substance dualism, noumenal worlds, transcendental reason, etc.). At the cost of deflating the excessively arrogant, grandiose, over-inflated sovereign supremacy of the traditional subject, Nietzsche's account resolves or avoids virtually all the conventional problems associated with philosophical accounts of selfhood.

In addition, Nietzsche is able to recognise and account for the emergence and persistence of these traditional errors; not through logical exclusion from his account but as inevitable stages of the genealogical process he describes. In Nietzsche's view, all the different 'selves' of traditional accounts are simply particular organisations of drives that dominated in particular historical conditions, all of which formed part of an ongoing and dynamic evolutionary process. It is simply because these types of selves (i.e. rank-orderings of drives) dominated during particular periods of history that people living in those periods mistook them as 'absolute'.

Nietzsche's account gains further value and relevance for our particular contemporary context, due to its remarkable compatibility with the evidence of contemporary biological science. I have mentioned that the contemporary tendency is to view the relation between biological and philosophical accounts of the self as belonging to either side of the 'freedom vs. determinism' dichotomy. Because biological evidence seems to contradict the traditional view we have of ourselves as consciously sovereign and autonomous agents, it is invariably taken as evidence to support determinism. It should be clear from Damasio's account of the biological emergence of selfhood and consciousness that traditional accounts which take consciousness as primary or somehow independent of biology appear increasingly untenable in the face of this evidence. In Nietzsche's account, we have a non-deterministic philosophical theory of the self compatible with contemporary biological science, and so it becomes uniquely valuable to our contemporary understanding of selfhood.

To say that Nietzsche's account overcomes the majority of problems found in the tradition is not to also say that Nietzsche's account is devoid of problems. While novel and particular to Nietzsche, his views are by no means 'unproblematic'. Many of these problems are internal to the drive-bundle account itself[26], but most significant are the implications such a self holds for freedom and responsibility in any meaningful sense. Nietzsche may not be a determinist in the way it is commonly understood, but whatever sort of freedom he allows in his drive-bundle subject would be far more limited and qualified than most people could accept. Is Nietzsche's freedom so limited that he may as well be thrown in the determinist camp, or is his peculiar notion of positive freedom sufficiently meaningful to count as a rehabilitation, and not an unqualified refutation, of our dearly long-held assumptions?

I turn to these questions in the next chapter, where Nietzsche's account of freedom is outlined. This account of freedom is shown to be compatible with his accounts of epistemology and subjectivity discussed so far, while still allowing for a sort of freedom and 'will' that allows for the imputation of a sort of responsibility. Though both this freedom and responsibility are clearly different to those of tradition, they are certainly meaningful and significant enough to clear Nietzsche of any charges of determinism.

[26] The details of these internal problems are beyond the scope and interest of this chapter. For a lucid account of the most significant problems internal to Nietzsche's account, see Welshon, 2004: 148-156.

Chapter 4:

Nietzsche on how free we think we are, really are, and could become

> *"Verily all things move within your being in constant half-embrace, the desired and the dreaded, the repugnant and the cherished, the pursued and that which you would escape.*
> *These things move within you as lights and shadows in pairs that cling.*
> *And when the shadow fades and is no more, the light that lingers becomes a shadow to another light.*
> *And thus your freedom when it loses its fetters becomes itself the fetter of a greater freedom."*
>
> -Kahlil Gibran

This important and penultimate chapter uses the foundations laid in the previous two chapters to outline Nietzsche's account of human freedom. Like his accounts of knowledge and selfhood, Nietzsche's account of freedom involves both the negative critique of traditional accounts and the positive suggestion of an alternative account. Now that Nietzsche's peculiar account of human selfhood has been explored, we must consider how something like freedom might manifest in such a bundle of drives. For Nietzsche's positive account of freedom to be successful, his description of this freedom must be compatible with his understanding of what a human being is, and the description must be compatible with what human knowledge is. Nietzsche's account of the self and the world in terms of the drives constitutes a significant core of his philosophy, and in a direct sense both his epistemological convictions and his account of freedom flow from this account of existence and human beings as a fluid force-field of drives. Due to the strong relation between one's account of subjectivity and one's account of freedom, the sort of freedom possible for Nietzsche's 'bundles of drives' would look as different from the traditional accounts as his account of selfhood does, and his justification would be as different to the tradition as his account of epistemology is.

The philosophical tradition has tended to approach freedom as a metaphysical problem, and so attempted to justify and describe it as 'otherworldly capacity'. This approach is exemplified in Kant, but Nietzsche expresses only sarcastic derision at such a metaphysical 'hunt' for 'faculties'.[27] Rather, Nietzsche approaches the question of freedom from his trademark perspective of naturalistic and genealogical explanation. Again, like our other traditionally 'otherworldly' capacities (e.g. knowledge, language, consciousness), Nietzsche

[27] See BGE 11

understands freedom as resulting from a long and dynamic historical evolutionary process. It is naturalistic in origin, and results from a particular accumulation of particular organisations of drives which come to dominate under particular conditions. Like the rest of his philosophy, Nietzsche's freedom is firmly *historical* and *natural*, unlike the freedom of traditional accounts, which tended to be regarded as *ahistorical* and *supranatural* (for example, the *causa sui* will, which is posited above the natural causal order).

According to Richardson, Nietzsche's account of the historical emergence of freedom can be divided into different phases. Each of these phases involves a particular type of freedom (in the sense of a technique at the disposal of the drives, and not the 'faculty' of an autonomous subject), and each constitutes a different type of drive-self with its own idea of itself as 'free'.[28] These different types of freedom evolve under different external circumstances and under the influence of different selective forces, meaning that they are not only different types of freedom but different techniques aimed at fulfilling different ends. Furthermore, these phases cannot be neatly separated, because together they compose a single evolutionary process; every phase alters the possibilities of freedom, and the techniques of earlier phases can carry over and be refined by later ones. (Richardson, 2009: 132). I will discuss some of these different phases and types of selves throughout this chapter, and also show that they are not distinct or disjointed, but all form part of a dynamic evolutionary process resulting in the sorts of selves and freedoms we have today.

The drives within the average human being are in constant conflict with one another. Each drive is a sort of simulacrum of a traditional subject; although drives cannot be said to have agency, they do have a sort of will. Each drive values, and seeks to discharge itself based on what it values. The collections of drives that constitute a human being are like organs with their own agendas, each competing for control over the organism's behaviour. Richardson (2009: 133) suggests that we think of Nietzsche's drives as

> [...] a set of forces of various strengths, pushing for various goals. By the relation between their goals, they tend to further or hinder one another. And by the relation between their strengths, they tend to either command or obey one another. So, we may say, by their vectors and strengths, they stand at any moment in a certain 'power-structure' with one another, a system of oppositions and alliances, forcings and compulsions. But further, we must imagine this structure as fluctuating drastically through time, as particular drives strengthen (perhaps stimulated by the situation) or weaken (perhaps when sated).

[28] Which, of course, is subject to the distortions of the value-laden perspective of the particular drives involved.

Through this we see that drives are not isolated from one another, but actively engaged in a dynamic process of agonistic interaction. The drives of a single living organism inevitably coalesce, merely by virtue of being housed in one body, into such a 'power-structure', and this composite whole is equivalent to the most basic notion of 'selfhood' in Nietzsche's account. At this most basic level of combination the temporary alliances and overall goals of the organism are primarily determined by interaction with the external environment aimed at maximising success. 'Success' is defined according to the value of whichever drives dominate at a given moment, but any sort of stable persistence is rare due to the unstable and ever shifting nature of the internal power struggle.

Based on this, we can imagine Nietzsche's idea of freedom as a vast spectrum of degrees. On the one end, one can imagine the least free person as an extreme case of the unstable and composite unification described above. Such a person, at the whim of an ever-changing internal authority, may easily be mistaken for having multiple personalities[29]. On the other end of the spectrum, one might imagine the sort of freedom possessed by Nietzsche's highest type, the *Overman*. Such a person would have orchestrated the disparate drives into a stable and efficient power-structure capable of the sort of agency and culpability required for responsibility. In between these 'weakest' and 'strongest' wills lie innumerable degrees and permutations of drive power-structures maintaining various degrees of stability, each manifesting a unique and *different* degree of 'freedom'.

The established debate, as I have mentioned, has been traditionally articulated as a mutually exclusive opposition between liberal 'free will' and determinist 'unfree will', where both sides hold their position to be true, and therefore to refute the position of the opposition. If we are free, we necessarily *cannot be* determined, and *vice versa*. Neither the determinist's absolute unqualified denial of freedom or the liberal's absolute unqualified affirmation of freedom are possible on Nietzsche's spectrum, but the reductive biases of language lead us to distil the plurality of unique and unequal degrees of freedom to no more than these two extreme and absolute definitions: either *free* or *unfree*! For Nietzsche, even the weakest composite of drives that qualifies as human would not be absolutely unfree. He expresses this rejection of both the traditional metaphysical 'free will' and the traditional determinist 'unfree

[29] Such a person would, for Nietzsche, in a real sense *be someone else* each time a new drive or set of drives rise to dominance.

will' clearly in BGE 21, which merits quoting at length.

First Nietzsche dismisses the idea of absolute freedom in terms of a *causa sui* will:

> The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far, it is a sort of rape and perversion of logic; but the extravagant pride of man has managed to entangle itself profoundly and frightfully with just this nonsense. The desire for 'freedom of the will' in the superlative metaphysical sense, which still holds sway, unfortunately, in the minds of the half-educated; the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui* and [...] to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness.

And immediately thereafter dismisses its traditional contrary of determinism:

> Suppose someone were thus to see through the boorish simplicity of this celebrated concept of 'free will' and put it out of his head altogether, I beg of him to carry his 'enlightenment' a step further, and also put out of his head the contrary of this monstrous conception of 'free will': I mean 'unfree will,' which amounts to a misuse of cause and effect. One should not wrongly reify 'cause' and 'effect,' as the natural scientist do (and whoever, like them, now 'naturalizes' in his thinking), according to the prevailing mechanical doltishness which makes the cause press and push until it 'effects' its end; one should use 'cause' and 'effect' only as pure concepts, that is to say, as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and communication – *not* for explanation. (*ibid.*).

This quotation shows Nietzsche's dismissal of *causa sui* freedom of the will in the 'metaphysically superlative sense', as well as his dismissal of determinism (at least in the sense of causal or mechanical determinism). His description of cause and effect harks back to his critique of traditional 'concepts' as being primarily, like the knowledge and language from which they arise, means to communication and representation rather than to 'truth' or explanation.

From this, Nietzsche clearly dismisses the basic assumptions on which the entire established 'free will vs. determinism' debate relies[30]. But he also accounts for the existence and persistence of this age-old philosophical battle as perfectly natural considering the basic nature of life as 'will to power', as the will to overcome inherent in every drive (and so in every philosophy):

> It is certainly not the least charm of a theory that it is refutable; it is precisely thereby that it attracts subtler minds. It seems that the hundred-times-refuted theory of a 'free will' owes its persistence to this charm alone; again and again

[30] See, for instance, the 'Rule of Alternate Possibilities' mentioned in the introductory chapter and further discussed in the previous chapter.

someone comes along who feels he is strong enough to refute it. (BGE 18).

I begin the chapter with a discussion of Nietzsche's negative account; his rejection of traditional 'free will' and the problems this dismissal raises with regards to ascribing responsibility for actions. Next, I return to the problems raised by Nietzsche's account of selfhood for the sort of will that allows for the justifiable ascription of moral responsibility. It is already clear that Nietzsche's self is entirely incompatible with traditional 'metaphysical' freedom, but does it leave room for a will that may still be meaningfully considered 'free'? In order to answer this question, I turn to Nietzsche's famous discussion of 'willing' in BGE 19, and two readings of this section by eminent contemporary Nietzsche scholars, i.e. the determinist 'naturalistic' reading of Brian Leiter, and the 'normative' reading of Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick. I argue that Clark and Dudrick are right to criticise Leiter's reading, and further that their normative reading reveals a possibility for freedom (in the sense of a qualified volitional will as 'willpower') of a sort compatible with Nietzsche's naturalised account of selfhood. This is followed by an investigation of Nietzsche's positive account of freedom, a description of the 'higher types' of freedom he endorses (exemplified in GM in the figure of the 'sovereign individual'). In order to clarify the degree and sort of responsibility this positive Nietzschean freedom allows for, I return to the work of Ken Gemes. Gemes shows that while Nietzsche (rightly) rejects traditional responsibility in the sense of 'punishment and reward' for one's actions ('*deserts* responsibility'), he does endorse a sort of '*agency* responsibility'. The sort of freedom and responsibility that Nietzsche does endorse is thereby shown to be at once vehemently opposed to traditional notions and also sufficiently meaningful to be properly called 'freedom' and 'responsibility'. Before the chapter concludes, I attempt the difficult task of describing *how* Nietzsche thinks we humans can *become* free.

4.1. Predator and prey: the illusion of 'just deserts'

In GM I 13, Nietzsche employs a parable of little lambs and birds of prey to expose the origins of our conventions of reward and punishment. At its start, Nietzsche describes the contrary psychological perspectives of the rare, noble, strong, but exceptional predator-type and the common, weak, herd-like, but far more numerous prey-type.

> That lambs dislike great birds of prey does not seem strange: only it gives no ground for reproaching these birds of prey for bearing off little lambs. And if the lambs say among themselves: "these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb – would he not be good?" there is no reason to find fault with this institution of an ideal, except perhaps that the birds of prey might view it a little ironically and say: "*we* don't dislike them at all, these good little lambs; we even love them: nothing is more tasty than a tender lamb."

This excerpt illustrates Nietzsche's keen grasp on the three-way philosophical entanglement between 'freedom', 'responsibility', and 'morality' in relation to our practices of reward and punishment. Traditionally, the relation looks something like this: morality determines which actions are 'good' and which are 'evil', and usually does this with absolute, metaphysically justified, certainty. Such morality also relies on – and therefore endorses with just as much metaphysical certainty – a *causa sui* free will. Because *we* can choose a number of different courses of action (some of which are morally good, and some evil), or at least choose not to act at all, we are thus *responsible* for our actions. But for Nietzsche this absolute moral distinction between 'good and evil' is nothing more than a perspective born from the weak and strengthened by the conditions the weak tend to find themselves in. What is 'good and evil' for the lamb is not the same for the bird of prey; far from being absolute truths, these 'goods' are only two of a great many possible perspectives (that is, two of a great many possible rank-orderings of particular drives). It only makes sense for the lambs to regard the birds as 'evil' under the sort of absolute certainty of metaphysically founded morality and its attached *causa sui* will (both of which Nietzsche utterly rejects). This way in which the weak lambs define their 'good' is further testament to their weakness. It is not a positive account of the good (which I will argue Nietzsche does endorse), but a negative derivation of what is 'good' (i.e. weak) from what is 'evil' (i.e. strong). The 'good' of the lambs is merely the opposite of their 'evil', which is defined prior to their 'good'.

If, on the other hand, we had no such *causa sui* freedom or absolute certainty of right and wrong, we could not justifiably be rewarded for our good actions or punished for our evil ones. If we had no *choice* in which actions we undertake, we could not be said to have undertaken this or that action freely, and so could not justly be saddled with responsibility. But it is this seemingly deterministic state of affairs that Nietzsche makes claim to next:

> To demand of strength that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome, a desire to throw down, a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs, is just as absurd as to demand of

> weakness that it should express itself as strength. A quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect – more, it is nothing other than precisely this very driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it) which conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned on something that causes effects, by a 'subject,' can it appear otherwise. For just as the popular mind separates the lightning from the flash and takes the latter for an *action*, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was *free* to express strength or not to do so. But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind the doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed; when it sees the lightning flash, it is the deed of a deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect. (*ibid*.).

This quotation clearly echoes many of Nietzsche's controversial views of subjectivity and consciousness discussed in the previous chapter, and like the conclusions of his account of subjectivity this denial of a 'doer behind the deed' strikes one as deterministic in its agenda. Nietzsche, who was perhaps aware that his reader may here be prone to such a conclusion, immediately points out after this that he regards scientific determinism as resulting from a more elaborate version of the precisely same error of 'doubling the deed' committed by the common man. At bottom, whether in the scientific or popular mind, this belief in a doer behind the deed is motivated by vengefulness; the weak seeking revenge on the strong. It is a fiction made valuable and believed in precisely because it allows the weak to 'justifiably'[31] apportion praise and blame:

> Scientists do no better when they say 'force moves,' 'force causes,' and the like – all its coolness, its freedom from emotion notwithstanding, our entire science still lies under the misleading influence of language and has not disposed of that little changeling, the 'subject' (the atom, for example, is such a changeling, as is the Kantian 'thing-in-itself'); no wonder if the submerged, darkly glowering emotions of vengefulness and hatred exploit this belief for their own ends and in fact maintain no belief more ardently than the belief that *the strong man is free* to be weak and the bird of prey to be a lamb – for thus they gain the right to make the bird of prey *accountable* for being a bird of prey. (*ibid*.).

Through this, Nietzsche accounts for the widespread and persistent belief in metaphysical free will and morality (in Christianity, Kantianism, and even the vehement rejections thereof by the various manifestations of 'scientism' through the ages) by providing a genealogical explanation of the conditions under which our customs of deserts arose. What we mistake for

[31] To echo Nietzsche, I hope you here understand its right to quotation marks.

truth (about freedom and morality) is actually no more than a particular set of beliefs that arose among a particular type of people (that is, among particular bundles of drives) under particular historical conditions in order to accomplish a particular end within those conditions.

In this case the weak-willed (those who suffer from the tyranny of their disparate drives), are suffering under and also jealous of the strong-willed (those who can orchestrate a measure of unity among their drives, and so take pleasure in their discharge rather than suffering from it). The drives that compose both types all stem from the will to power, which seeks to discharge, master, overcome; but the weak-willed lack the strength to enact and express those drives while the strong take pleasure in expressing those drives upon the weak. Thus the weak, to ease and give meaning to their suffering, 'invent' morality in order to judge their lot as 'good' and the lot of the strong as 'evil'. But morality alone is not enough; if the strong are not capable of choosing to be good (weak) instead, the weak cannot justifiably *blame* them for their actions however much they might abhor those actions. Thus the inclusion of *causa sui* free will becomes necessary, whereby the weak can now not only judge their actions as good and those of the strong as evil, but *praise* themselves for being good while *blaming* the strong for being evil, because all of us supposedly have a *free choice* between one or the other.

Although Nietzsche hereby explains the origin and persistence of our errors regarding free will, morality, and responsibility, he also gives us good cause to reject these erroneous assumptions. Supposing that the metaphysical certainty of the weak is indeed merely a single and limited perspective with particular historical and contextual origins, the very same arguments used by the weak reveal just how malicious and petty the roots of these metaphysical assumptions really are:

> When the oppressed, downtrodden, outraged exhort one another with the vengeful cunning of impotence: "let us be different from evil, namely good! And he is good who does not outrage, who harms nobody, who does not attack, who does not requite, who leaves revenge to God, who keeps himself hidden as we do, who avoids evil and desires little from life, like us, the patient, humble, and just" – this, listened to calmly and without previous bias, really amounts to no more than: "we weak ones are, after all, weak; it would be good if we did nothing *for which we are not strong enough*"; but this dry matter of fact, this prudence of the lowest order which even insects possess (posing as dead, when in great danger, so as not to do 'too much'), has, thanks to the counterfeit and self-deception of impotence, clad itself in the ostentatious garb of the virtue of quiet, calm resignation, just as if the weakness of the weak – that is to say, their *essence*, their effects, their sole ineluctable, irremovable reality – were a voluntary achievement, willed, chosen, a

> *deed*, a *meritorious* act. (*ibid.*).

At the end of the section, Nietzsche again affirms the inextricable entanglement of freedom and subjectivity. His genealogical account of the historically persistent errors of metaphysical morality or metaphysical free will also accounts for the persistence of the erroneous metaphysical subject he was shown to reject in the previous chapter:

> This type of man [the weak-willed man] *needs* to believe in a neutral independent 'subject,' prompted by an instinct for self-preservation and self-affirmation in which every lie is sanctified. The subject (or, to use a more popular expression, the *soul*) has perhaps been believed in hitherto more firmly than anything else on earth because it makes possible to the majority of mortals, the weak and oppressed of every kind, the sublime self-deception that interprets weakness as freedom, and their being thus-and-thus as a *merit.* (*ibid*.).

Here again Nietzsche's genealogical arguments based on the naturalised principle of the will to power is at once capable of explaining the origins, persistence, and even the value of our self-deceptive errors while at the same time exposing them as errors. This means that their very existence is in a way further evidence for Nietzsche's own account (being explainable as the results of drive-interactions pushed by the will to power). Despite accounting for these errors, he also gives us very good reason to reject traditional notions of 'free will', 'responsibility', 'subjectivity', and long-entrenched social conventions of reward and punishment by exposing their weak and resentful origins. In fact, the beginning of this section of GM links this entire discussion to the concept of *ressentiment*, which Nietzsche, we shall see later, identifies as one of the largest impediments that must be overcome if humanity is to have a chance at ever reaching proper freedom. The section just discussed begins as follows:

> But, let us return: the problem of the *other* origin of the "good," of the good as conceived by the man of *ressentiment*, demands its solution. (*ibid.*).

But what remains of freedom when all of these traditionally essential elements have been rejected? If he is not a simple determinist, what kind of freedom would Nietzsche allow for those who have a 'strong will'? He clearly regards them as 'more free' than the weak-willed, but also certainly not as possessing any metaphysically superlative freedom or subjectivity. The above discussion, along with his convictions on selfhood and consciousness discussed in the previous chapter, seem more and more to paint Nietzsche as a determinist, yet in his more positive passages he frequently makes demands[32] of his readers which would make little sense absent any degree of personal responsibility. In order to answer these questions and

[32] See, for example, almost any part of his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

tensions inherent in Nietzsche's account, I turn next to one of his famous discussions of the will.

4.2. A 'willing' bundle of drives: Nietzsche and self-sovereignty

It was mentioned previously that Nietzsche sees freedom as something manifested in a bundle of drives to a degree proportionate to the level of orchestrated 'stability' of the power-relations among the drives. Above it was shown that such orchestration requires a rare and exceptional *strength*, but even those who possess such strength do not constitute a case of an independent subject consciously integrating the drives. There is no subject independent of the largely unconscious drives, and so any 'stability' achieved would be achieved by nothing other than the drives themselves. In this sense, and as implied by Nietzsche's rejection of deserts responsibility above, we also cannot blame the weak for not becoming strong. Is freedom, for Nietzsche, something one either has (as the rare few strong ones do) or have not (as the majority of weak humanity has not)? Not in the sense that the strong are absolutely free (for then they would be free to be weak), or that the weak are absolutely determined, but in the sense that the weak majority of humanity is 'fated' to be stuck with an erroneous and limited version of freedom while only a rare few are fortunate enough to 'inherit' the strength needed for proper freedom. In other words, would Nietzsche allow for the possibility that we are *free to become free*?

Becoming free in this sense would involve establishing character, orchestrating a stable rank-ordering among the drives. According to Richardson (2009: 135), this orchestration of the drives is one way of considering what Nietzsche means by health:

> He thinks of health as a capacity to achieve and sustain such a stable synthesis, making the organism more effective in turn. This capacity does not belong to some pre-existing self, but to the collection of drives itself. A healthy organism is simply a set of drives that is able to settle into such a stable structure; it has a self, only by achieving that synthesis.

This sort of healthy wholeness for the most part comes naturally to animals and parts of pre-civilised humankind, but not for modern humanity. (*ibid.*). For Nietzsche, this integrated unity is a rare achievement for modern mankind, as most moderns content themselves with

false 'freedom of will' discussed above. I shall return to the question of health and sickness in Nietzsche later in this chapter, where increasing one's freedom is shown to be a process of 'returning to health' and modern man more than anything else is shown to be the 'sick animal' *par excellence*.

Although drives are Nietzsche's principal explainers of human behaviour, they are not his sole explainers. Richardson (2009: 136) holds that '[i]n the end [Nietzsche] means not to dismiss consciousness and deliberation, but to naturalise and demoralise them.' [33] For Nietzsche, consciousness and deliberation are not acquired genetically or environmentally, but from a social matrix that developed over time. These capacities, whilst highly prone to error and originally highly epiphenomenal, have become part of human being and are still evolving. Nietzsche criticises the way in which we are conscious and the erroneous assumptions and powers we attach to our understanding of consciousness, but he also advocates other (in his view 'better') ways of being conscious. This would make little sense if consciousness and deliberation were purely epiphenomenal. (Richardson, 2009: 136).

These capacities of consciousness, deliberation, and language can together be called 'agency', a capacity of personal volition that is traditionally regarded as a cornerstone of freedom (in that it makes personal responsibility for the consequences of one's actions and one's future behaviour justifiable). In naturalising the notion of agency, Nietzsche seeks to correct many of the misunderstood powers attributed to agency because of our self-imposed ignorance of its animal origins. Some of these errors have already been discussed in this and the previous chapters, such as the idea of a sovereign consciousness, an independent and autonomous self, a *causa sui* will, a stable and immutable identity, and other assumptions founded on otherworldly or metaphysical speculation. But if Nietzsche's notion of agency dispenses with these traditionally indispensable assumptions, how are we to understand his naturalised account of agency and its attached sense of responsibility? His naturalised account of the 'will' is a good place to start.

[33] This claim is further reinforced by Gemes (see page 134-135 below).

4.2.1. The natural will: Nietzsche and self-volition

The will is generally regarded as that capacity through which a self expresses and realises its freedom. Conceptually, it connects the substantive question of human constitution to the descriptive question of human freedom[34].

Recall that traditional liberal accounts regard the will as an innate capacity capable of escaping the order of natural causality. Such a will seems impossible for Nietzsche, given his description of the self as a bundle of drives and his rejection of *causa sui* willing. There is no essential self that possesses a will, and what will there may be would be composed of the various 'underwills' of the drives rather than the singular will of an independent self, so freedom in the sense of autonomous conscious volition becomes highly problematic.

The main opposing view to the traditional liberal view is that of causal determinism. Mostly due to the evidence of the natural sciences, such determinists reject the will entirely as an illusion, and regard human beings as fully and inescapably caught in the natural causal order. Yet we all have the common *experience* of willing as conscious volition, and this experience must at least be accounted for if one wishes to dismiss the will entirely. There is little doubt that Nietzsche rejects the traditional liberal account, but would this mean that he must then be a determinist? Despite Nietzsche's numerous derisive remarks on reductive scientism, at least one eminent scholar seems to think so.

After providing my own overview of the section in question, I begin with Brian Leiter's deterministic reading of BGE 19, which argues that Nietzsche here provides an analysis not of the will itself, but of the phenomenological experience of willing, and then goes on to show that our actions and behaviour in fact come from a different source that is casually unconnected to the phenomenological experience of willing. In other words, Leiter distinguishes between Nietzsche's description of the *experience of willing* (which is an experience we all share, yet that is illusory in the sense that it does not *cause* our actions). By first showing that our experience of willing is insufficient evidence from which to assume an inherent capacity for willing, and then providing an alternative Nietzschean account of the

[34] One's understanding of how human beings are constituted (account of subjectivity) will determine what sort of will one is capable of (account of agency) which in turn informs the descriptive account of the sort of freedom (and hence the sort of responsibility) that can be ascribed to human beings.

true source of our actions and behaviours, Leiter makes a strong case for Nietzsche as determinist. (Leiter, 2009: 107-108).

This naturalistic reading of BGE 19 is opposed by the normative reading of Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick (2009: 247-249). They contend that BGE 19 is not primarily concerned with debunking the causal potency of the will or aimed at showing the discontinuity between the phenomenological experience of willing and the actual processes that result in actions and behaviours. In other words, Nietzsche is not just describing what 'to will' feels like in this passage, but at a point begins to actually make claims on what the will *is.* This normative interpretation holds more promise for reconciling Nietzsche's substantive descriptions of human beings as bundles of drives with his often prescriptive descriptions of human potential (e.g. 'to become who you are').

This section of the chapter investigates this controversial section of BGE, as well as the merits of the naturalistic (Leiter) and normative (Clark and Dudrick) readings thereof, in an attempt to resolve some of the tension between Nietzsche's accounts of selfhood and freedom as well as to show that Nietzsche's highly naturalised subject is capable of at least some measure of *willed* freedom and responsibility (i.e. that Nietzsche does not take the hard determinist position).

4.2.1.1. *BGE 19: Nietzsche's rehabilitation of the will*

Nietzsche begins section 19 of *Beyond Good and Evil* by rejecting the simplistic and self-evident understanding of the will found in traditional philosophy, particularly that of Schopenhauer. (BGE 19). Far from being simple or transparent, Nietzsche regards the will as part of nature, and therefore irreducibly complex and dynamic.

> Willing seems to me to be above all something *complicated*, something that is a unit only as a word – and it is precisely in this one word that the popular prejudice lurks, which has defeated the always inadequate caution of philosophers. (*ibid.*).

This particular line of Nietzsche's argument should be familiar by now. Again, the reductive and simplifying tendencies of linguistic prejudice mislead us into the traditional misunderstanding of the will as a unitary concept, innate capacity, or transparent object of

investigation. Just as there is no absolute 'leaf' but only an innumerable plurality of particular leaves, we arrive at our concept of 'will' by forgetting or ignoring the differences between all the actual particular manifestations of willing and distil these into a stable, static, unitary, and vastly inaccurate 'concept'.

Nietzsche then gives a phenomenological description of the experience of willing, in order to show that even our already limited conscious experience of it reveals it to be far more complex and nuanced than the prejudices of language would have us believe:

> So let us for once be more cautious, let us be 'unphilosophical': let us say that in all willing there is, first, a plurality of sensations, namely, the sensation of the state '*away from which,*' the sensation of the state *'towards which,'* the sensations of this '*from*' and '*towards*' themselves, and then also an accompanying muscular sensation, which, even without our putting into motion 'arms and legs,' begins its action by force of habit as soon as we 'will' anything. (*ibid.*).

Firstly, Nietzsche claims above that these various sensations, which have been largely neglected by the tradition, must be recognized as 'ingredients of the will'. To this he adds, secondly, that thinking too must be so recognised. "[...] in every act of will there is a ruling thought – let us not imagine it possible to sever this thought from the 'willing,' as if any will would then remain over! (*ibid.*)"

To these two commonly neglected ingredients of the will, Nietzsche adds thirdly that willing is not only a complex of sensation and thinking but also, and most importantly, and *affect* (in particular the 'affect of command'). This becomes clear especially when the will is considered as the 'free will':

> That which is termed 'freedom of the will' is essentially the affect of superiority in relation to him who must obey: 'I am free, 'he' must obey' – this consciousness is inherent in every will; and equally so the straining of the attention, the straight look that fixes itself exclusively on one aim, the unconditional evaluation that 'this and nothing else is necessary now,' the inward certainty that obedience will be rendered – and whatever else belongs to the position of the commander. A man who *wills* commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience. (*ibid.*).

This third ingredient of the will, the 'affect of command', makes sense when one considers Nietzsche's account of human selfhood. As discussed in the previous chapter, Nietzsche holds that we are composed of a plurality of competing drives and identify ourselves with the drive or set of drives that currently dominates the internal struggle. Thus, when I will something, it

is not 'I' that is doing the willing; both the 'I' and the will emerge from my dominant drive or set of drives. These drives 'command' the rest, and because they are the strongest at the time the weaker drives obey. Because there is no 'self' over and above the drives, it is not 'I' who wills something and 'my body' that obeys. Rather, the strongest drives will something, and the more numerous weaker ones obey, while the conscious experience of willing which I identify myself with is no more than the epiphenomenal residue of this internal power-relation exercising itself. It is not 'I' who commands and something *else* that obeys. The commander and commanded are one and the same, the drives.

> But let us now notice what is strangest about the will – this manifold thing for which the people have only one word: inasmuch as in the given circumstances we are at the same time the commanding *and* the obeying parties, and as the obeying party we know the sensations of constraint, impulsion, pressure, resistance, and motion, which usually begin immediately after the act of will; inasmuch as, on the other hand, we are accustomed to disregard this duality, and to deceive ourselves about it by means of the synthetic concept 'I,' a whole series of erroneous conclusions, and consequently false evaluations of the will itself, has become attached to the act of willing – to such a degree that he who wills believes sincerely that willing *suffices* for action. (*ibid.*).

Here Nietzsche again accounts for the traditional misunderstandings of the will as causally potent, and especially as *causa sui*. These erroneous conclusions draw evidence primarily from the phenomenal experience of willing (which recognises and identifies only with those drives which command). Because we identify far more strongly with the affect of command exuded by our dominant drives, we tend to disregard the affect of obedience exuded by our weaker drives, due to the fact that the sensations attached to the affect of command are more pleasurable than those attached to the affect of obedience. Because the conscious experience of willing (which is the epiphenomenal after-effect of the discharge of our dominant drives) most often coincides with the initiation of the willed action or behaviour, we come to mistake the conscious 'willing' as the *cause* of the action, when in fact the conscious experience of willing and the resultant action or behaviour are both caused by the internal power-struggle between the drives, and do not stand in any direct causal relationship to one another.

According to Nietzsche (*ibid.*), in the great majority of cases the experience of willing coincides with the successful enactment of what is willed. In a somewhat Humean move, Nietzsche holds that we here conflate regularity with necessity, and come to the mistaken conclusions that it is the will itself that is responsible for the successful carrying out of what

is willed, because "the appearance has translated itself into the feeling as if there were *a necessity of effect*."

> In short, he who wills believes with a fair amount of certainty that will and action are one; he ascribes the success, the carrying out of the willing, to the will itself, and thereby enjoys an increase of the sensation of power which accompanies all success. (*ibid.*).

This enjoyable feeling of the increase of power is inherent in every drive, as all drives evolve from the 'will to power', the urge to discharge, to express, to overcome. It is in order to maximise these enjoyable sensations that we tend to disregard those drives that obey and identify with those that command. This results in our illusory belief in the 'I', and the potent causal power of conscious volition, through which we come to regard the will as a *causa sui* capacity under the full conscious control of an agent. Rather, the experiences from which we draw these grand yet erroneous conclusions are in fact only the conscious echoes of a largely unconscious struggle for authority between the drives.

> 'Freedom of the will' – that is the expression for the complex state of delight of the person exercising volition, who commands and at the same time identifies himself with the executor of the order – who, as such, enjoys also the triumph over obstacles, but thinks within himself that it was really his will itself that overcame them. (*ibid.*).

For Nietzsche, our great error is that we equate the will to this complex state of delight (itself only a part of the more complex process of willing) which we experience when willing and successfully enacting what is willed. Through this, we mistake ourselves and our wills as something unitary, independent, and autonomous. According to Nietzsche, this can be likened to an internal version of something that frequently occurs even in today's in real-world politics: it is only natural for the legitimate authority of a state to take credit for and view itself as the cause of the successful actions and behaviours of the state's citizens, while disregarding the fact that it is merely responsible for the order while its success depended on the participation of innumerable smaller parts. As the 'governing class' loses sight of the complex system of dependencies and relations on which their fragile position of authority depends, so we lose sight of the social structure of 'under-souls and under-wills' within us by identifying exclusively with our inner 'governing class'.

> In this way the person exercising volition adds the feelings of delight of his successful executive instruments, the useful 'under-wills' or under-souls – indeed, our body is but a social structure composed of many souls – to his feelings of delight as commander. *L'effet c'est moi* [*I* am the effect]: what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth; namely, the

> governing class identifies itself with the success of the commonwealth. In all willing it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as already said, of a social structure composed of many 'souls'. (*ibid.*).

Similarly, this can be compared to taking the brain as the cause for the successful continued survival of the organism. The brain certainly plays an important role in maintaining the organism, but it is primarily a role of regulation and control, of sending the right signals (orders) to the right organs at the right time. The brain itself is only another organ (albeit a very important one), and not the organism itself. The successful enactment of its orders depends on the successful participation of every other organ in the body. To claim that the will is the *cause* of successful willing is to claim that the leader *is* the state or that the brain *is* the organism. Such a view disregards all the lesser parts involved in realising what is willed, and mistakes the giving of an order for its actual execution.

From this discussion of BGE 19, we can conclude that Nietzsche departs from traditional accounts of willing, and explains the mistakes of these accounts as resulting from erroneous conclusions drawn from the phenomenological experience of willing. Furthermore, Nietzsche clearly seeks to give a naturalised account of the will as resulting from the power-struggle and internal relations of authority between the drives that compose us.

Yet it remains unclear how much of the will Nietzsche leaves intact. Does he here wish to debunk the will entirely as a fiction covering up the naturally determined nature of human, or is he seeking to rehabilitate and refine the will in light of naturalism[35]? Does Nietzsche allow for a qualified sort of will; one very different, more limited, and more complex than those of traditional accounts, but a type of will nonetheless? Or does he seek to dismiss the will entirely as an error to be recognised, dismissed, and then forgotten? If he does not reject the will entirely, what parts of the traditional accounts does he reject? And how much does he leave intact? If he does reject it entirely, what does this mean for freedom and the prescription of responsibility, especially of the sort Nietzsche commends in his positive account of freedom? In order to answer some of these questions, I now turn respectively to the naturalistic and normative readings of BGE 19.

[35] As he seeks to 'rehabilitate the soul' and make room for new soul-hypotheses, such as the naturalized 'soul as multiplicity of the drives and affects', discussed earlier in this chapter.

4.2.1.2. *The Naturalistic Reading: BGE 19 á la Leiter*

In his article 'Nietzsche's Theory of the Will', Brian Leiter makes an unabashed case for Nietzsche as determinist. As we shall see, Leiter holds that BGE 19 is primarily a phenomenological description of the experience of willing, and primarily intended to show that this experience is misleading. So misleading, in fact, that it hides from us our true deterministic nature. Leiter also gives an account of the true origins of actions according to Nietzsche, which further reinforces his deterministic reading of this section.

If his reading of Nietzsche is correct, Leiter (2009: 107) holds that Nietzsche's position lends argumentative support to the new wave of non-libertarian incompatibilism ("the view that free will is incompatible with 'determinism' and that there is no credible account of free will outside the causal order") defended by Derk Perboom and Galen Strawson, and finds support in the recent evidence of empirical psychology (particularly the deflationary view of free will articulated by Daniel Wegner). The details of this are beyond the interest of this dissertation, for they make sense only when attempting to position Nietzsche within the established 'free will vs. determinism' debate and its inherent assumptions about the mutual exclusivity of freedom and determinism, and I shall argue Nietzsche both rejects and seeks to go beyond such absolute distinctions. Nevertheless, Leiter's interpretation will also be criticised on its own merits, primarily through the work of Clark and Dudrick. These criticisms notwithstanding, Leiter does provide a very lucid and convincing account of the deterministic elements that are undeniably present in Nietzsche's work. How Leiter accounts for Nietzsche's equally present flat-out denials of the 'unfree' will remains unclear.

Considering Nietzsche's views on selfhood, consciousness, freedom, and responsibility so far discussed, and especially his rejection of the *causa sui* will, it is easy to see why Leiter would read Nietzsche as deterministic. Leiter finds further support for his reading in *Daybreak*, where Nietzsche clearly gives a dismissing description of willing:

> *What is willing!* – We laugh at him who steps out of his room at the moment when the sun steps out of its room, and then says: '*I will* that the sun shall rise'; and at him who cannot stop a wheel, and says: '*I will* that it shall roll'; and at him who is thrown down in wrestling, and says: 'here I lie, but *I will* lie here!' But all laughter aside, are we ourselves ever acting differently whenever we employ the expression: '*I will*'? (D 124).

Leiter then proceeds with an investigation of BGE 19, but reads it according to an important statement Nietzsche makes a few sections earlier:

> With regards to the superstitions of the logicians, I shall never tire of emphasizing a small terse fact, which these superstitious minds hate to concede – namely, that a thought comes when 'it' wishes, and not when 'I' wish, so that it is a falsification of the facts of the case to say that the subject 'I' is the condition of the predicate 'think'. *It* thinks; but that this 'it' is precisely the famous old 'ego' is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an 'immediate certainty.' After all, one has even gone too far with this 'it thinks' – even the 'it' contains an *interpretation* of the process, and does not belong to the process itself. One infers here according to the grammatical habit: "Thinking is an activity; every activity requires an agent; consequently –" (BGE 17).

This section makes sense in light of Nietzsche's views on the prejudices of language, the epiphenomenality of conscious reflection, and the self as a bundle of drives. 'Thoughts' come to consciousness as reflections of peak moments within the largely unconscious internal power-struggle between the drives; they result from a dynamic process of competition and interaction. Because of the seductions of language and conscious experience, we mistake the origin of thoughts to be something unitary and autonomous (an 'I') or at the very least misinterpret and embellish the origin (an 'it'). There is no such 'I' or 'it' for Nietzsche, only the ongoing agon between the drives.

Leiter takes this insight in BGE 17 (that a thought is not under the conscious control or beck and call of an autonomous subject, but emerges unpredictably from a complex internal process which is largely unconscious and beyond personal control) and applies it to Nietzsche's claim in BGE 19 that all willing involves, among other things, a *commandeering thought.* Leiter's main claim is that Nietzsche's deflationary account of the will in BGE 19 is such that it does not allow for the sort of free will sufficient for the ascription of moral responsibility.

> Notice the rather clever structure of this argument, for its critique is entirely *internal* to the perspective of the agent who takes himself to possess a will. For what Nietzsche does is point out that the criterion of willing that agents themselves treat as reliable guides to a causal relationship – namely, the phenomenology [of willing] [...] – is, in fact, entirely absent in the case of thoughts (or, at least, in the case of the thought that starts an inferential chain of thinking which involves the experience of willing). As an introspective matter, it seems to me Nietzsche is plainly correct about this point. But if we do not experience our thoughts as willed, then it follows that the actions that follow upon our experience of willing (which includes those thoughts) are not caused in a way sufficient to underwrite ascriptions of moral responsibility. (Leiter, 2009: 113).

According to Leiter (*ibid.*), Nietzsche is here arguing that our phenomenological experience of willing (on which we base our certainty in the causal potency of our own will) is not sufficient to make us justifiably morally responsible for our actions. His argument relies on two premises. Firstly, and more explicitly, one component of the will (the 'commandeering thought') is itself causally determined by something *other than* the will. Secondly, and more implicitly, that a *causa sui* will is a necessary condition for the ascription of moral responsibility. Because the first premise denies the possibility of such a *causa sui* will, we must conclude from the second premise that our experience of willing is not sufficient for ascribing moral responsibility to our actions, and therefore Nietzsche must consider human beings as determined. Leiter summarises his conclusion as follows:

> Since we have shown that the "commandeering thought" that is part of the experience of will is not *causa sui*, it follows that the will it helps constitute is not *causa sui*, and thus any actions following upon that experience of willing could not support ascriptions of moral responsibility. (Leiter, 2009: 113-114).

Leiter does concede shortly after this claim that Nietzsche's rejection of the phenomenological experience of willing as a reliable guide to understanding the actual process involved in willing does not in itself exclude the possibility that we may be misled by this experience from an understanding of a nevertheless existent 'true will' that would allow for the ascription of responsibility. He (2009: 115) writes:

> [...] the argument from the phenomenology of thoughts doesn't rule out the possibility that our experience of willing misleads us as to our *real will*, and that this *real will* does, in fact, stand in the appropriate causal relationship with our actions. Of course, this 'real will,' if it exists, had better be one that the agent can claim as his own if we are to then saddle the agent with responsibility for the actions it produces.

But this is not the stance that Leiter ends up taking. He turns next to an account of the true source of actions according to Nietzsche, and the resultant conclusion is not one which would not allow for the sort of responsibility Leiter requires of Nietzsche's 'real will,' if it does exist (which, he concludes, it does not).

Leiter (2009: 115-116) claims that the 'real self' in Nietzsche's view comes down to a doctrine of types, which he explains as follows:

> Thus, Nietzsche, as I have argued, accepts what we may call a 'Doctrine of Types', according to which each person has a fixed psycho-physical constitution, which defines him as a particular *type* of person. Call the relevant psycho-physical facts here 'type-facts.' Type-facts, for Nietzsche, are either *physiological*

> facts about the person, or facts about the person's unconscious drives or affects, The claim, then, is that each person has certain largely immutable physiological and psychic traits that constitute the 'type' of person he or she is.

Leiter's claim is nicely illustrated by Nietzsche's (TI VI 1) discussion of Cornaro at the start of the 'The Four Great Errors' section of *Twilight of the Idols*. This section discusses the first of the four great errors Nietzsche ascribes to traditional philosophy: the error of confusing cause and effect. This particular error is of special significance to the question of freedom, and so merits extensive quotation:

> I give an example. Everybody knows the book of the famous Cornaro in which he recommends his slender diet as a recipe for a long and happy life – a virtuous one too. Few books have been read so much; even now thousands of copies are sold in England every year. I do not doubt that scarcely any book (except the Bible, as is meet) has done as much harm, or *shortened* as many lives, as this well-intentioned *curiosum*. The reason: the mistaking of the effect for the cause. The worthy Italian thought his diet was the *cause* of his long life, whereas the precondition for a long life, the extraordinary slowness of his metabolism, the consumption of so little, was the cause of his slender diet. He was not free top eat little *or* much; his frugality was not a matter of 'free will': he became sick when he ate more. But whoever is no carp not only does well to eat properly, but needs to. A scholar in our time, with his rapid consumption of nervous energy, would simply destroy himself with Cornaro's diet. *Crede experto* [Believe him who has tried]. (*ibid*).

This examples vividly illustrates Nietzsche's now familiar line of argument, which amounts to the simple but brilliant claim that traditional philosophy has, when it comes to cause and effect, been using the wagon to pull the ox. The deceptive seductions of the phenomenological experience of willing led Cornaro to believe that he *chose* to stick to a slender diet, which slowed down his metabolism and thus extended his life. In reality, Cornaro's inherent physiology led to his slow metabolism, and this in turn led him to follow a slender diet. If he ate more, he became ill. If a person constituted differently to Cornaro, and living a very different life with very different physiological demands (an athlete, for instance), were to follow the same diet then they would become ill. The arrogant assumption of will and choice as the *cause* of his long life led Cornaro to recommend the same life to others, and because these others were not Cornaro they ended up shortening their lives instead.

Cornaro's 'good', those conditions optimal for *his* physiological demands and lead to *his* health, are determined by psycho-physical type facts (his slow metabolism, resulting from his particular physiological constitution). He was never free to choose, for instance, to follow a

more robust diet instead. Because he mistook the long life that resulted from this as a consequence of *his* praiseworthy decision, he ended up recommending it to all (with disastrous consequences for all those who did not happen to closely match his particular constitution). The error of Cornarism is an example of the error of false causality; it is not Cornaro's decision to follow a slender diet which caused his slow metabolism, which then in turn caused his long life. Rather, as Leiter (2009: 117) puts it: "[...] what explains Cornaro's slender diet *and* his long life is the same underlying fact about his metabolism. Cornaro's mistake was to prescribe his diet for all without regard for how individuals differed metabolically, metabolism being the relevant type-fact in this context."

Thus, according to Leiter, Nietzsche holds that human behaviour is causally determined by the particular type-facts of each individual, and *not* by an act of conscious volition or free choice. We mistakenly take our conscious experience of willing to accurately represent our actual will, which we further mistake as the original cause behind our actions, but this is because of the error of false causality:

> The error of false causality is an error because we wrongly infer that we know what causation is from our *experience* of the will being causal; but the will is not, in fact, causal, which follows from the Doctrine of Types. But, on any account of free will and moral responsibility, the will must be causal (even if not *causa sui*), in order for agents to have free will and be morally responsible for their actions. Therefore, if the error of false causality is a genuine error, then it follows that there is no free will. (Leiter, 2009: 121).

Based on this, Leiter positions Nietzsche firmly in the determinist camp of the established 'free will vs. determinism' debate (free will must allow for the ascription of moral responsibility, and thus the will must be causally potent in order to count as free. The will is not causally potent, therefore it is not free, therefore it must be determined and we cannot saddle human beings with moral responsibility for their action).

But is moral responsibility ('deserts responsibility', which Nietzsche was shown to reject earlier in this chapter) the only sort of responsibility human beings can lay claim to? Could one agree with Leiter that Nietzsche does in fact reject 'free will' and its attached responsibility in the traditional sense, yet disagree that this must make Nietzsche a determinist? As a first step in arguing for this in the affirmative, I turn now to the 'normative' reading of BGE 19 by Clark and Dudrick.

4.2.1.3. *The normative reading: BGE 19 á la Clark and Dudrick*

According to Clark and Dudrick (2009: 248):

> The [Leiter's] naturalistic interpretation offers a plausible way to read BGE 19; indeed we think it is the way in which Nietzsche's writing sets us up to read it. But we do not think it makes the best sense of the passage. BGE 19 thus exemplifies a pattern we find throughout BGE: Nietzsche writes in a way that almost inevitably seduces readers into a naturalistic interpretation of his claims, but he also embeds certain features in the passage that cannot be made good sense of in naturalistic terms. The point, we claim, is to lead careful readers to a philosophically more sophisticated interpretation of Nietzsche's claims in normative rather than purely naturalistic – strictly causal – terms.

Clark and Dudrick aim to show the plausibility of their normative reading by pointing out the inadequacies of the naturalist reading, and by showing that Nietzsche is speaking of a very particular sort of 'willing' in BGE 19 rather than 'willing in general' (i.e. the experience of willing that precedes *any* action), as Leiter holds. Through this, they wish to show that

> [...] although Nietzsche is a naturalist in an important sense, and certainly rejects all forms of supernaturalism, there is an important sense in which he is not a naturalist, for he holds that human thought and action can be understood only from a perspective constituted by norms that have no role to play in our understanding of the natural world...In particular, BGE 19 aims to rehabilitate the traditional notion of the will in the face if the tendency of naturalism to simply dismiss it. (*ibid*.).

According to Clark and Dudrick, BGE 19 cannot an account of willing in general, of will that leads to actions or voluntary movements of the body. For Clark and Dudrick, this seems implausible, because we often engage in a wide variety of actions where none of Nietzsche's 'ingredients of the will' appear in consciousness:

> We engage in actions all the time without much, if any, of the feeling, thought, and effect Nietzsche attributes to the person engaged in willing. Typing the word 'actions' in the above sentence was certainly an action, yet I did not – and could not, even upon reflection – detect the 'complex of feeling' Nietzsche describes here. Nietzsche's phenomenology would be more plausible if it aims to capture a more restricted class of cases, namely, actions undertaken as the result of a deliberate decision. This is what Leiter seems to be assuming [...] (Clark and Dudrick, 2009: 250).

Even Leiter's more restricted sense of 'actions undertaken as a deliberate decision' remains implausible for Clark and Dudrick. Though many other of Nietzsche's 'ingredients of the

will' can be recognised in such cases[36], the all-important 'affect of command' (which Leiter himself recognises as key) remains absent.

> It does not seem plausible that such an affect of command appears in consciousness whenever one decides to go downstairs to check on the children (or do anything else). Even upon reflection on such actions, it does not seem necessary to find in them anything like commanding. (*ibid.*).

And this becomes more evident still when examining the part of BGE 19 where Nietzsche describes what Clark and Dudrick call 'the drama of willing'[37]. If, as Leiter assumes, this 'drama' is part of the *phenomenology* of willing whenever we deliberately take action, Nietzsche's phenomenology seems highly implausible. Clark and Dudrick propose that Nietzsche is here talking about an even more qualified and restricted sense of willing, and should this be the case, his dramatic phenomenological description makes much more sense:

> On our proposed interpretation, Nietzsche counts as cases of willing not actions in general or actions undertaken as a result of deliberation, but actions performed in opposition to temptation. His paradigm act of will takes place in a situation of psychic conflict and struggle in which a person is faced with a choice between alternatives, one of which she is drawn to and may prefer at the moment although it flies in the face of her values, the other of which is required by her values but is not what she wants to do. We propose that overcoming temptation to act in accord with one's values – the exercise of willpower – is the type of case for which Nietzsche offers a phenomenology in BGE 19. (Clark and Dudrick, 2009: 251).

In that case, one could interpret the descriptions in BGE 19 very differently. Rather than Leiter's view that the 'feeling of the state towards which' and the 'feeling of the state away from which' are descriptions of bodily feelings (literally the feeling of away from the computer and toward the children downstairs), these could be descriptions of a psychic feeling 'towards' as the attraction of temptation and the feeling 'away' as the resistant feeling of being able to act in accordance with one's values instead. This second interpretation fits the 'will as willpower' interpretation of Clark and Dudrick, makes the phenomenology much more plausible insofar as it now allows us to account for both the 'commanding thought' and the 'affect of command' described by Nietzsche. It is unclear why any and every action undertaken as the result of conscious deliberation ought to necessitate such an element of 'commanding', but cases of exercising willpower clearly require it. In cases of absolute obedience without resistance, there is no need for command. (*ibid.*).

[36] For instance, Leiter's example of 'deliberately deciding' to stop working in front of the computer and go downstairs to check on the children. See Leiter (2009: 109-110).
[37] See the quote at the top of page 104 above for Nietzsche's description of this 'drama'.

But even if Nietzsche is talking here exclusively about cases of exercising willpower, the phenomenology remains implausible (though much less so) for Clark and Dudrick. If Nietzsche's claim that "what is called 'freedom of the will' is essentially the affect of superiority over him who must obey..." is part of the phenomenology of willing, the phenomenology still seems implausible insofar as overcoming temptation through an act of will doesn't seem to imply a 'feeling of superiority over him who must obey'. The 'him' that must obey is none other than the 'I' that is commanding, and when I manage to overcome temptation (rooted in inclinations that, though I may experience them as external, still belong to or form part of me), it is unclear why this should cause me to feel a feeling of *superiority over myself*. (Clark and Dudrick, 2009: 252-253).

Clark and Dudrick (2009: 253) offer a clever solution to the problem: In this part of BGE 19, Nietzsche is no longer engaged in a phenomenological account of the *experience* of willing, but moving to an account of the reality of willing:

> When Nietzsche says that what we call 'freedom of the will' is 'essentially' an affect of superiority, he is no longer engaged in phenomenology. His use of 'essentially' signals that he is moving from the macro level, the level of the person and conscious experience, to the micro-level elements, which we know Nietzsche takes to be the drives.

Recall that we consciously experience, assume the perspective of, and identify with those drives in us which are strongest and thus in charge, while, as Nietzsche laments, ignoring the far more numerous lower drives which are just as much a part of our constitution. On the normative reading of BGE 19, it is these higher drives that command and feel superior to the drives that obey, and Nietzsche's point with the phenomenology is that we all too easily mistake these higher drives for an autonomous self or unitary 'I'.

> According to this account, in other words, when a person wills, commanding herself to do something against temptation, and so experiences the affect of command and 'freedom of the will', at the drive-level one set of drives is presenting itself as superior to the drives whose activity constitutes, on the person-level, the temptation of the person away from her values or commitments, i.e. from performing the commanded action. Nietzsche presents the 'drama of willing', then, not as part of how we experience willing, but as an account of what willing is, of how willing is actually constituted. (*ibid.*).

For Clark and Dudrick, the advantages of the normative reading over the naturalistic reading is that, firstly, it makes the phenomenological description in BGE 19 far more plausible, and,

secondly, that it take into account an implication of BGE 17 (also cited by Leiter) that the naturalistic reading cannot:

> [Leiter] misses or ignores what we take to be the most important implication of this point[38] for interpreting BGE 19, namely, a denial that 'I' and 'he' [...] belong to the phenomenology of willing. The phenomenology involves only feelings, a commanding thought, and the affect of command. BGE 17 shows that Nietzsche is committed to saying that the 'I' and 'he' contain an interpretation of the process and do not belong to the process itself, i.e., to what appears in consciousness. Likewise in BGE 19: 'I am free, 'he' must obey', is not a description of what is present in consciousness, but an interpretation of it – that is, an account of what is really going on when one experiences willing, an account of the reality that the experience reflects. That it can take account of this implication of BGE 17 is a second major advantage of our interpretation of BGE 19 over Leiter's. (Clark and Dudrick, 2009: 254).

These advantages notwithstanding, the normative reading of BGE 19 provides an account of Nietzsche's view of the will which fits better with his conception of the subject as a bundle of drives, does not require one to rely on Leiter's 'doctrine of types', and unlike this doctrine of types allows us to make sense of the passage in the context of Nietzsche's repeated denials of the 'unfree will', which he rejects as vehemently as *causa sui* free will.

But the problem of the ascription of moral responsibility is still problematic. If Clark and Dudrick are correct, then it is conceivable for a person to 'will' insofar as the dominant drives within that person can practice some measure of control and regulation over the rest of the drives, and thereby control and regulate the actions and behaviour of the person. But there is still no 'person' independent of these drives, no 'I', no autonomy in the metaphysical sense. Furthermore, because the operations of the drives remain for the most part unconscious, there is still no conscious volition. If responsibility does indeed require the sort of absolute freedom to *choose* between alternative courses of action, then the will as the exercise of willpower allows us to regard the dominant drives of a person as 'free'. But can we hold them responsible in the same way that we hold a person responsible? Can we punish a person for acting on the basis of the dominant drives, despite the fact that the person has no conscious control over these dominant drives? It hardly seems fair.

Leiter's naturalistic reading, for all its problems, does hit the nail perfectly on the proverbial head in this regard. The will as willpower, while less deterministic than Leiter's will as

[38] The point made in BGE 17, that a thought comes when 'it' wants to and not when I want it to. See pages 108-110 above.

phenomenological delusion, falls short of the traditional requirements needed to justifiably saddle an agent with responsibility (in the sense of ascribing praise or blame). In terms of the inherent assumptions of the traditional 'free will vs. determinism' debate, this means that Nietzsche may as well be a determinist. Freedom without responsibility is not properly freedom, and Nietzsche's will as 'willpower' still does not make us *responsible* for our own freedom, thus the normative reading of BGE 19 still does not pull Nietzsche's account of freedom out of this problematic hole.

But could it be that Nietzsche's very qualified freedom might allow for a very qualified sort of responsibility? If Nietzsche is attempting to rehabilitate the self (soul) and its freedom in the light of naturalism, rather than rejecting it as an illusion that should be replaced by purely naturalistic (that is, deterministic) explanation, perhaps he does something similar with responsibility. To make an argument for this, I turn now to the work of Ken Gemes, who holds that although Nietzsche rightly rejects 'deserts responsibility', he still advocates a sort of 'agency responsibility'.

4.2.2. Rehabilitating responsibility: Nietzsche on agency and deserts

According to Gemes (2009: 33), one can distinguish between two main approaches to the philosophical problem of free will as it has been articulated in the age-old and established debate. These are the notions of 'deserts free will' and 'agency free will'. The deserts approach is far more dominant in this debate, and commonly focuses on whether or not determinism precludes free will, and thus deflates the justification for ascribing responsibility (in the sense of deserts, reward or punishment for one's actions). The Principle of Alternative Possibilities, which requires that a person must have been able to act otherwise if that person is to be saddled with punishment or reward, is central to this approach. The other approach, that of 'agency free will', though less popular in the contemporary debate, has historically approached the problem of free will from another direction. This approach focuses on the question of agency rather than deserts; it is concerned with demarcating an *action* from a simple doing. This approach seeks to clarify the conditions that allow for *autonomy*, and so is less concerned with the question of whether a person could have acted differently than they did. Though these approaches are often tied together, usually by demarcating action and

doing by holding that an action is an action only when the actor could have done otherwise, the connection is not one of necessity.

Gemes (2009: 33-34) argues that Nietzsche makes use of precisely this insight:

> One might, for instance, deny that there is free will in the sense traditionally seen as needed for grounding questions of deserts while at the same time claiming that there is free will in the sense traditionally seen as needed for grounding the notion of agency and autonomy. It is the principle burden of this essay to argue that this is exactly Nietzsche's position; Nietzsche rejects deserts free will and affirms agency free will. Nietzsche wants to reject the notion that in doing such and such one might have done otherwise, yet he wants to affirm that genuine agency is possible, if only for a select few.

If Gemes (2009: 34) is right, we can finally address a contradictory tension that appears throughout both Nietzsche's own work and this dissertation. Gemes's distinction allows us to account for the fact that Nietzsche frequently rejects free will in various places and just as frequently affirms it in various others, and in a surprisingly simple way: the rejections are rejections of deserts free will, while the affirmations are affirmations of agency free will.

Furthermore, deserts free will and agency free will also imply distinct sorts of responsibility. This means that if Nietzsche does advocate agency free will, he recognises and affirms the established significance of the relation between free will and responsibility. Otherwise, Nietzsche could be accused of simply ignoring a widely recognised fundamental dimension of the question of free will:

> The notion of responsibility has long been tied to the notion of free will. Nearly all who write on free will take it that free will is a condition for responsibility. The not uncommon failure to separate deserts free will from agency free will is to some extent aided and abetted by an ambiguity in the term 'responsibility'... To say that so and so is responsible for such and such can mean that they deserve punishment or reward for it. On the other hand, to say that someone is responsible for such and such can simply mean that it was their doing. The first kind of responsibility is that which is intrinsically linked to the question of deserts, the second kind of responsibility is intrinsically linked to the question of agency. It will be helpful then to separate deserts responsibility, the kind of responsibility which is a precondition of deserved punishment and rewards, and agency responsibility, the kind of responsibility that goes with being the effective agent behind a doing. (*ibid.*).

But what precisely is the difference between being accountable for one's actions in a moral sense and in a sense of agency? Do they not imply each other? Below I will show that for Nietzsche they need not be necessarily or logically connected. While deserts free will and

responsibility have played a fundamental role in creating the conditions of possibility for agency free will and responsibility, the persistence of deserts free will now acts to make the process of becoming free all the more difficult.

4.2.2.1. *The moral ascetic: Nietzsche's rejection of deserts free will*

Gemes (2009: 35-36) also shows that many of Nietzsche's most cited passages that reject free will (HAH 38 and 105, TI IV 7, A 15) are clearly rejections of deserts free will and responsibility. In order to show that it is agency responsibility that is at stake in Nietzsche's affirmative passages on free will, Gemes turns to the most famous of these descriptions: the *Genealogy of Morals*'s 'sovereign individual'. This figure, described in the first few sections of the second essay of GM, describes the biological and historical process that allowed human beings to eventually attain the 'right to make promises'.

In the second essay of GM, Nietzsche approaches the question of freedom and responsibility from his trademark naturalistic genealogical perspective, and identifies this question as the 'real problem regarding man':

> To breed an animal *with the right to make promises* – is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set itself in the case of man? is it not the real problem regarding man? (GM II 1)

The first sentence of the above quotation reveals an important dimension of Nietzsche's perspective. Nature does not simply create or instil human freedom, but *breeds* it. Freedom is the result of an ongoing evolutionary and hereditary process. And freedom is considered a 'right' (not an innate capacity or God-given privilege) to *make promises*. A right that must be *earned*. As we shall see, most human beings can 'make promises', but to deserve the right to do so also requires that those promises be kept, and here most of the all-too-human herd falls short. For Nietzsche, freedom is primarily seen as the capacity to maintain a sufficiently strong unity of self that persists between the making of a promise and the act of fulfilling it, and for most weak human beings there is no such persistence of self over time.

The capacity for freedom in this sense is built upon two interrelated faculties, *forgetting* and *remembering*. Forgetting, in Nietzsche's view, is not a negative inability to remember, but a positive and active faculty of repression. It is because of this faculty that we are able to

distance ourselves from the complex inner processes that would otherwise constantly assail our consciousness:

> Forgetting is no mere *vis inertiae* as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression, that is responsible for the fact that what we experience and absorb enters our consciousness as little while we are digesting it [...] as does the thousandfold process, involved in physical nourishment [...] To close the doors and windows of consciousness for a time; to remain undisturbed by the noise and struggle of our underworld of utility organs working with and against one another; a little quietness, a little *tabula rasa* of the consciousness, to make room for new things, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for regulation, foresight, premeditation (for our organism is an oligarchy) – that is the purpose of active forgetfulness, which is like a doorkeeper, a preserver of psychic order, repose, and etiquette: so that it will be immediately obvious how there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no *present*, without forgetfulness. (GM II 1)

Forgetfulness in this active sense acts like a buffer between consciousness and the perpetual flood of both internal and external stimuli. It creates a distance between our consciousness (which amounts to a distorted reflection of our most dominant set of drives) and the manifold lesser drives being dominated. One can also note that Nietzsche here implies that the power-relations between the drives is not purely one of brute strength, but also political ('for our organism is an oligarchy'). Without this distance and buffering (which one can assume is exercised by the dominant drives), one would never achieve sufficient *space* in consciousness or store sufficient energy to develop what Nietzsche calls the nobler functions and (insofar as these functions are exercised by drives) functionaries. These nobler functions are clearly related to freedom, insofar as they allow for foresight, premeditation, and above all, *regulation* (of the manifold drives that compose the organism under a single 'ruling class'). Just after the above quotation, Nietzsche compares one in whom this faculty of forgetting is malfunctioning to a 'dyspeptic' that 'cannot have done with anything'. (*ibid.*).

Organisms in who this faculty flourish next breed an opposing faculty, that of *memory*, which again is not simply a capacity for recall but an active and positive faculty.

> Now this animal which needs to be forgetful, in which forgetting represents a force, a form of *robust* health, has bred in itself an opposing faculty, a memory, with the aid of which forgetfulness is abrogated in certain cases – namely in those cases where promises are made. This involves no mere passive ability to rid oneself of an impression, no mere indigestion through a once-pledged word with which one cannot "have done," but an active *desire* not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real *memory of the will*: so that between the original "I will," "I shall do this" and the actual discharge of the will, its *act*, a world of strange new things, circumstances, even acts of will may be

> interposed without breaking this long chain of will. But how many things this presupposes! To ordain the future in advance in this way, man must first have learned to distinguish necessary events from chance ones, to think causally, to see and anticipate distant eventualities as if they belonged to the present, to decide with certainty what is the goal and what the means to it, and in general be able to calculate and compute. Man himself must first of all have become *calculable, regular, necessary,* even in his own image of himself, if he is to be able to stand security for *his own future*, which is what one who promises does. (*ibid.*).

These capacities of remembering and forgetting can be seen as two interrelated techniques through which the dominant drives maintain their dominance over time. Forgetfulness, on the one hand, allows the organism to repress and ignore the various inevitable obstacles and impediments, both internal (in the form of subversive drives) and external (in the form of circumstantial obstacles), with which it is confronted after the making of a promise but before its actual fulfilment. The capacity for memory, on the other hand, allows the original desire (of the dominant drives) that led to the making of the promise to *persist* until its discharge.

The strength of these faculties can be measured in terms of the temporal distance between the making of the promise and its discharge, as well as the difficulty related to fulfilling the promise. For example: if I, while having a bottle of water in front of me, 'promise' that I will take a sip in the next minute, accomplishing this is not particularly impressive. If instead I promise that in three years hence I will, through daily practice and unceasing discipline, have mastered the guitar, fulfilling this promise would be more difficult and more impressive. This again points to Nietzsche's conception of freedom as a spectrum between the least free (weakest) and the most free (strongest) wills. Almost anyone can easily keep the promise of the first example, and so are 'free' but to a distinctly unimpressive and insignificant degree, whereas only a rare few would have the right (strength) to make promises that require both a long time and a lot of effort.

But what separates these rare few from the multitude of weaklings? How did man become sufficiently *calculable, regular, and necessary* to allow for calculation, regulation, or premeditation?

For Nietzsche, it is precisely the long history of slave morality that eventually produces the *sovereign individual*, and this often overlooked detail reveals an important qualification in Nietzsche's critical work: despite the fact that he spends a great deal of time and effort

criticising and deprecating 'slave morality', he does not see it as something without value. Rather, the long hey-day of slave morality was a necessary part of the historical-evolutionary process that eventually produced the few rare individuals capable of overcoming it. The process that led to this is, for Nietzsche, the very same process through which the notion of responsibility came to be:

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

An example of the barbarity of the morality of mores can be seen in Nietzsche's description of the origin of the faculty of memory required for the 'keeping of promises'. Memory is the result of ages upon ages of brutal punishment and pain inflicted upon those who 'forgot' to act in accordance with the dictates of their particular moralities. It was a means to giving early mankind (fully at the whim of their ever shifting anarchic drives) a measure of stability and continuity that was previously impossible:

> "How can one create a memory for the human animal? How can one impress something upon this partly obtuse, partly flighty mind, attuned only to the passing moment, in such a way that it will stay there?" One can well believe that the answers and methods for solving this primeval problem were not precisely gentle; perhaps indeed there was nothing more fearful and uncanny in the whole prehistory of man than his *mnemotechnics* [techniques of memory]. "If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory" – this is a main clause of the oldest (unhappily also the most enduring) psychology on earth. One might even say that wherever on earth solemnity, seriousness, mystery, and gloomy coloring still distinguish the life of man and a people, something of the terror that formerly attended all promises, pledges, and vows on earth is *still effective*: the past, the longest, deepest and sternest past, breathes upon us and rises up in us whenever we become "serious." Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself; the most dreadful sacrifices and pledges (sacrifices of the first-born among them), the most repulsive mutilations (castration, for example), the cruellest rites of all the religious cults (and all religions are at the deepest level systems of cruelties) – all this has its origin in the instinct that realized that pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics. (GM II 3).

This quotation also reveals the full ugliness of 'deserts responsibility' and its practices of reward and punishment. At least initially, no human being was properly responsible for his or her actions. They merely acted on the whims of their anarchic drives. Upon settling into stable societies where many humans had to live together, many of these actions became 'evil' (that is, detrimental to social cohesion). These actions, once identified, are codified on a moral tablet of 'shall not's' and hung around the collective neck of the society. Those who transgressed these rules (not out of choice, but because they were fully at the whims of their unregulated, anarchic drives) where brutally punished, hurt, or publically executed. Those who were punished became less and less prone to disobey the moral commandments (again, not out of choice, or out of a sense of moral 'rightness', but because whatever drives where causing them to break the rules became overpowered by a stronger drive: the drive to avoid future pain). Those who were executed had a similar effect on others who witnessed the executions. For Nietzsche, the best historical examples of this process come from the various ascetic traditions (especially Christianity). What these traditions now present as absolute moral truths were originally practical methods to promote the sort of social cohesion just discussed, a way of fixing certain ways of life (in Nietzsche's terminology, certain rank-orderings of the drives) above all others for the sake of promoting social cohesion and making man 'regular':

> In a certain sense, the whole of ascetisism belongs here: a few ideas are to be rendered inextinguishable, ever-present, unforgettable, "fixed," with the aim of hypnotising the entire nervous and intellectual system with these "fixed ideas" – and the ascetic procedures and modes of life are means of freeing these ideas from the competition of all other ideas, so as to make them "unforgettable." The worse man's memory has been, the more fearful has been the appearance of his customs; the severity of the penal code provides an especially significant measure of the degree and effort needed to overcome forgetfulness and to impose a few primitive demands of social existence as *present realities* upon these slaves of momentary affect and desire. (GM II 3).

This process can also be seen at the root of the traditional account of positive freedom, as the means through which it imposes its single 'true self' (again, for Nietzsche, a particular rank-ordering of the drives) on the vastly different and unequal 'empirical selves' that populate society. In a sense this is an improvement over the originally 'selfless' humans who were perpetually at the whim of a constantly fluxing 'war of all against all' between their inner drives, as it allowed (through external enforcement) for a particular set of drives to rise to dominance and remain dominant over time, allowing for something much closer to a

temporally persistent 'will' (a right to make promises) than was possessed by the flighty and unreliable creatures preceding it.

The problem comes in with the fact that for Nietzsche, this would constitute a grossly enlarged and far more dangerous version of the error of Cornarism discussed by Leiter. Some few human beings may coincidentally be so composed as to flourish under such a universally imposed ordering of the drives, because they just so happened to be made up of drives that attain maximal power under that particular ordering, but the vast majority would only be made regular and mediocre, prevented from attaining anything near their possible potential.

Here Nietzsche's genealogical approach once again allows him to account for the existence and persistence of something he rejects ('deserts responsibility', 'absolutist ascetic morality'), and to *affirm* it as a necessary phase of the historical process that leads to its overcoming (insofar as it improves upon the preceding anarchic and unreliable will, and eventually results in the sovereign individual), while at the same time giving us good reason to reject it (it has served its bloody purpose, and opened up better alternatives. Its time has passed, and it must now be overcome). Before turning to Nietzsche's discussion of such a better alternative, his figure of the sovereign individual, one last and particularly insightful element of his negative account needs to be discussed.

As things stand in the contemporary free will debate, we have seen that deserts responsibility takes as its prerequisite a sort of metaphysically superlative *causa sui* freedom entirely incompatible with determinism. It is claimed that if we are not free in this way, determinism must be true, and thus we cannot be justifiably held responsible for our actions. In GM II 4 Nietzsche clearly distances himself from this established debate by rejecting its core assumption that deserts responsibility requires such freedom, and that the only alternative is a determinism that disallows any responsibility. He does this by showing that our concept of 'guilt' and conventions of reward and punishment developed long before and quite independently from any considerations of free or unfree wills:

> Have these genealogists of morals had even the remotest suspicion that, for example, the major moral concept *Schuld* [guilt] has its origin in the very material concept *Schulden* [debts]? Or that punishment, as requital, evolved quite independently of any presupposition concerning freedom or non-freedom of the will? – to such an extent, indeed, that a *high* degree of humanity had to be attained before the animal 'man' began even to make the much more primitive distinctions between "intentional," "negligent," "accidental," "accountable," and

> their opposites and to take them into account when determining punishments. (GM II 4).

Moral concepts such as absolute distinctions between right and wrong, justifiable reward and punishment, justice, freedom of the will, which appear in many different and often incompatible permutations in our contemporary world, all parade themselves as if they are *the* truth and the others simply misunderstood. The false dilemma between absolute *causa sui* freedom or absolute determinism at the heart of the age old free will debate is to a large extent a moral problem; our ubiquitous and ancient practices of reward and punishment, being as brutal as they are, must be *explained* and *justified*, must be sanctified, else humanity appears little more than cruel and vindictive. We punish so-and-so because they deserve it. They deserve it because they knew the 'right' and 'wrong' alternatives, were capable of enacting either, and *chose* to do wrong instead of right. If they did not know, or could not act otherwise, punishing them would be purely of practical benefit insofar as it would discourage further 'wrong' action, but certainly not 'deserved'. But this second, more brutal, less 'humane' origin of our practices of deserts is precisely what Nietzsche suggests.

> The idea, now so obvious, apparently so natural, even unavoidable, that had to serve as the explanation of how the sense of justice ever appeared on earth – "the criminal deserves to be punished *because* he could have acted differently" – is in fact an extremely late and subtle form of human judgement and inference: whoever transposes it to the beginning is guilty of a crude misunderstanding of the psychology of more primitive mankind. Throughout the greater part of human history punishment was *not* imposed *because* one held the wrong-doer responsible for his deed, thus *not* on the presupposition that only the guilty one should be punished: rather, as parents still punish their children, from anger at some harm or injury, vented on the one who caused it – but this anger is held in check and modified by the idea that every injury has its *equivalent* and can actually be paid back, even if only through the *pain* of the culprit. And whence did this primeval, deeply rooted, perhaps by now ineradicable idea draw its power – this idea of an equivalence between injury and pain? I have already divulged it: in the contractual relationship between *creditor* and *debtor*, which is as old as the idea of "legal subjects" and in turn points back to the fundamental forms of buying, selling, barter, trade, and traffic. (*ibid*.).

Far from being a metaphysical state of affairs, our notion of responsibility (at least, deserts responsibility) and all its attendant otherworldly requirements are a late fruit of a long and bloody historically accumulated process rooted originally in humanity's earliest customs; our customs of commerce and trade.

4.2.2.2. *The sovereign individual: Nietzsche and agency free will*

Let us now turn to another of the 'late fruits' of this bloody historical process that made the human animal into what it is today: the sovereign individual, whose possibility both justifies the bloody history of deserts free will (slave morality) and overcomes it (by allowing for the better alternative of agency free will). Nietzsche's descriptions of this striking figure also constitute one of his most direct affirmative and positive descriptions of freedom. This figure stands in sharp contrast to the original results of slave morality from which it evolved:

> If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and the morality of custom at last reveal *what* they have simply been the means to: then we discover that the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*, like only to himself, liberated again from morality of custom, autonomous and supramoral (for "autonomous" and "moral' are mutually exclusive), in short, the man who has his own independent, protracted will and the *right to make promises* – and in him a proud consciousness, quivering in every muscle, of *what* has at length been achieved and become flesh in him, a consciousness of his own power and freedom, a sensation of mankind come to completion. This emancipated individual, with the actual *right* to make promises, this master of a *free* will, this sovereign man – how should he not be aware of his superiority over all those who lack the right to make promises and stand as their own guarantors, of how much trust, how much fear, how much reverence he arouses – he "deserves" all three – and of how this mastery over himself also necessarily gives him mastery over circumstances, over nature, and over all more short-willed and unreliable creatures? (GM II 2).

The affirmative character of this description of freedom stands in stark contrast with the negative accounts of the bare freedom of those at the whims of their drives and the slightly improved freedom of those at the whim of a more stable and persistent but uniform and externally imposed ordering of the drives. If, as Nietzsche says, our organism is indeed an oligarchy, then we can extend the political metaphor to distinguish between these stages of freedom.

The 'self' and 'will'[39] of early, primeval man, at the whim of an ever-shifting battle between the drives, can be seen as similar to a barbarian tribal oligarchy. The select few drives in power are constantly assaulted by competitors, and rarely hold their position for very long. Such humans have the least right to make promises, as the drives in charge when the promise is made are unlikely to stay in charge long enough to make sure it is fulfilled.

[39] Which we have seen, for Nietzsche, are inextricably interconnected.

The 'self' of humans under the 'morality of mores' can be seen as similar to a monarchic oligarchy. A single set of drives in a predetermined order of rank (manifesting as a codified table of rights and wrongs) is imposed universally upon all members of society. Though this set of drives may originally have come to dominance out of strength or merit, as necessary for a particular phase of human development during a particular socio-historical context, its right to rule is passed down in much the same way as monarchical bloodlines. A way of life suited to a particular age is passed down to the next by right of its original authority, regardless of its suitability, and over successive generations is mistakenly taken as *the* one and only way of life. Because it allows for a stable persistence in the rank-ordering of an organism's drives, humans of this type have slightly more of a right to make promises. But the promises that can be kept are limited to those who are guaranteed by the strict and inflexible 'shall's and shall not's' of the codified morality. Some measure of temporal effectivity of the will is attained, but its range of possibilities is extremely limited and its guarantee rests in an externally imposed code of conduct rather than the self-orchestrated strength and unity of an individual.

The sovereign individual type of self can be seen more as a meritocratical oligarchy. Using the very same powers of remembering and forgetting made possible by the morality of mores, such a sovereign individual creates a custom code of conduct suited to his or her particular drives, historical context, and external conditions. A stable rank-ordering of the drives is achieved and maintained, but one suited to a particular organism composed of particular drives, thereby avoiding the Cornarism of which the morality of mores is guilty. Such a self attains 'autonomy' (in the sense of an independence from reliance on externally imposed or codified rank-orderings) without falling back to the anarchic self that preceded the morality of mores. It does so through the same techniques of memory and forgetting instilled by the morality of mores, but turns these on the morality itself ('forgetting' the pre-packaged rank-ordering of morality, but maintaining a stable yet unique rank ordering through memory).

For Nietzsche, such 'sovereign individuals' are by no means the norm. To maintain a stable rank-ordering independent of the ancient and entrenched codes of morality requires a measure of strength beyond most humans. By determining its own rank-ordering of drives, which manifest as a self-created table of values prescribing a particular way of life very different from the norms of morality, such individuals, as Nietzsche notes, inspire fear and awe from the more numerous 'all too human' members of the moral herd. Where the morality

of the herd defines itself *against* or as the contrary of the unique ways of life of these sovereign individuals (as the lambs define the birds of prey as 'evil' and themselves as their opposite, 'good'), the sovereign individual defines its way of life *above* or independent of the morality of the herd.

> The "free" man,, the possessor of a protracted and unbreakable will, also possesses his *measure of value*: looking out upon others from himself, he honors or despises; and just as he is bound to honor his peers, the strong and reliable (those with the *right* to make promises) – that is, all those who promise like sovereigns, reluctantly, rarely, slowly, who are chary of trusting, whose trust is a mark of *distinction*, who give their word as something that can be relied on because they know themselves strong enough to maintain it in the face of accidents, even "in the face of fate" – he is bound to reserve a kick for the feeble windbags who promise without the right to do so, and a rod for the liar who breaks his word even at the moment he utters it. The proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of this rare freedom, this power over oneself and over fate, has in his case penetrated to the profoundest depths and become instinct, the dominating instinct. (*ibid.*).

Such affirmative freedom is, for Nietzsche, possible, but it requires a rare degree of strength inherent in only a rare few. Because such a freedom is so rare, and still achieved by the drives themselves rather than an autonomous 'I' (and thus not extricated from the causal order of the world), it cannot be used to ground deserts responsibility. Yet it seems to still be freedom in a significant and meaningful sense. In order for this to be the case, it must still allow for some meaningful sense of responsibility other than that of deserts, and to make a case for this I now return to the work of Gemes.

4.2.2.3. *Not an 'I' but a self: Nietzsche's agency responsibility*

According to Gemes (2009: 37)

> [i]t is typical of Nietzsche's deliberately confusing caginess that it is not at first clear whether the sovereign individual is a creature already achieved or one yet to come. The very terms Nietzsche uses to describe the sovereign individual – "proud", "quivering in every muscle", "aware of his superiority", "like only to himself", "bound to honour his peers" – clearly hark back to the descriptions of the masters in the first essay.[40] Since his audience are meant to identify themselves as the inheritors of slave morality, it is clear that they cannot be identified with this sovereign individual, who, unlike them, is "autonomous and supermoral", a "lord of the free will". The implicit message to his audience is that

[40] A comprehensive analysis of the first essay of GM is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see especially GM I 10, as well as the discussion of GM I 13 with which this chapter opens.

> you are not sufficiently whole to have the right to make promises; you have no free will, but are merely tossed about willy-nilly by a jumble of competing drives, and, hence, you cannot stand surety for what you promise. You can give no guarantee that the ascendant drive at the time of your making a promise will be effective when the time comes to honour that promise. The type of freedom Nietzsche is invoking here does not involve freedom from the causal order, nor is it bound to questions of deserts. Plainly it is tied to the question of what it is to have genuine agency.

If one approaches the question of freedom from the perspective of agency rather than moral (deserts) responsibility, the fundamental questions change. Where those interested in deserts free will ask such questions as 'what are the necessary requirements of an action for which one may be held justifiably responsible', those who are concerned with agency ask 'what is it to act? What is it to be a self capable of acting?'. Those who focus on deserts commonly take this second agency-related question as already solved, that is, they assume a final fixed answer to the question of what human beings are and based on this try to establish whether human beings are such that they can be held justifiably responsible. The agency approach, on the other hand, seeks to question these pre-established assumptions on the nature of selfhood and action themselves. For Gemes, Nietzsche is clearly interested in the positive question of agency, while his negative critiques of deserts are motivated by his ongoing personal struggle against absolutism and morality (especially the sort found in the Judeo-Christian tradition). (Gemes, 2009: 39-40).

The means through which Nietzsche attacks the Judeo-Christian worldview embodies precisely this questioning of fundamental assumptions that are taken for granted (the doer behind the deed, consciousness as fully volitional, the self as inherently unitary, etc.), but Gemes (2009:40) points out Nietzsche's negative conclusions on deserts free will boil down to the fact that "it is fundamentally inimical to the development of genuine selves [...]", thus indicating Nietzsche's deeper interest in the question of agency and how it may possibly be attained.

> It is for this reason that for Nietzsche the problem of agency takes precedence over the problem of deserts free will; those who take the deserts free will problem as central typically complacently assume that we have a coherent notion of self and agency already in hand. (*ibid.*).

So Nietzsche does provide a positive account of agency free will, and even a normative standard or at least hint of what it may look like (the sovereign individual), while at the same

time providing a negative account of deserts free will (by exposing the shortcomings in the assumptions on which proponents of deserts free will rely.

Through this, as I have stated, one can make sense of Nietzsche's often contradictory denials and affirmations of free will, and show that Nietzsche takes neither the liberal or determinist position in the established debate. His denials of deserts free will are not sufficient for ascribing to him the determinist position, because he rejects the mutually exclusive 'false dilemma' of 'either *causa sui* freedom or a deterministic lack of any freedom'. The sort of agency assumed by proponents of deserts free will, as a universal capacity of all human beings, is for Nietzsche a rare and difficult accomplishment, only attainable for a strong rare few.

> A helpful picture: according to Nietzsche most humans, being merely members of the herd, are merely passive conduits for various disparate forces already existing and operating around them. Some individuals, due perhaps to conscious design but more likely due to fortuitous circumstances, actively collect, order and intensify some of those disparate forces and create a new direction for them, thereby, in fortuitous circumstances, reorienting, to some degree, the whole field of forces in which we all exist. It is these individuals according to Nietzsche who deserve the honorific person [rather than simply 'human'], who by imposing their strong will exercise a form of free will and genuine agency. (Gemes, 2009: 42).

According to Gemes (2009: 45-46), this interpretation of Nietzsche shows that he has come to grips with the fundamental problem of post-metaphysical philosophy more than any of his predecessors and most of his contemporaries and successors have. In Nietzsche's terminology, this problem is famously called the 'death of God', and through this Nietzsche is seen to recognise that "[i]f we take the central trajectory of modern philosophy to be the move from a religious to a secular worldview, we (should) see that giving up the metaphysics of God and soul raises a crucial problem about what exactly we are." Various unsatisfactory solutions to this question have been posed, such as Hume's 'bundle of sensations', Descartes's 'cogito', and Kant's 'rational autonomous self'.

> Nietzsche offers an interesting and rather original alternative. He claims that in a sense we do not exist. This is not a version of that kind of academic, philosophic, scepticism that brings philosophy into deserved disrepute. The existence of human bodies, like the existence of the so-called external world is not something Nietzsche would ever dream of really denying. What Nietzsche questions is whether there are genuine selves inhabiting these bodies. In place of empiricist or rationalist accounts of the self, Nietzsche offers, what might be called, a naturalist-aestheticist account: To have a genuine self is to have an enduring coordinated hierarchy of drives. Most humans fail to have such a hierarchy; hence they are not sovereign individuals. Rather, they are a jumble of drives with no

> coherent order. Hence they are not genuine individuals or, we might say, selves [...] Nietzsche's various attacks on the Kantian notions of autonomy and free will have multiple objectives. The negative objectives are to show that the notion of a will that transcends the causal order is intellectually unacceptable, and to attack the notion of deserts – objectives hardly unique to Nietzsche. The positive, more profound and original, objective is to offer his readers the challenging notion that agency free will, genuine autonomy, and hence existence as an individual and a self, is possible for some. This challenge should awaken his readers to the profoundly disturbing possibility that they themselves are not yet persons. (Gemes, 2009: 46).

This challenge Nietzsche sets for his readers also reveals the normative dimension to Nietzsche's positive freedom, which according to Gemes (2009: 47-48) is an essential ingredient to any notion of free will:

> Acts involving deserts free will are typically seen as those which should be punished/rewarded. But acts involving agency free will, especially for those who deny deserts free will, might be seen as carrying no normative dimension. The worry here is that the terminology of agency free will amounts to a clever re-description that fails to capture the normative dimension that is essential to any free will debate. But this merely fails to identify the locus of normativity relevant to agency free will. Deserts free will says that one must have acted with free will if one's action is to merit punishment or reward, so the normative dimension flows from [...] the fact that the act involved deserts free will. In the case of agency free will the normativity is in the actual imperative to exercise agency free will, to be an agent rather than a mere cog in the causal network.

Through Gemes's analysis of Nietzsche's positive freedom, we see that Nietzsche does indeed put forth a positive account of freedom that allows for a qualified but still sufficiently meaningful measure of autonomy and so is capable of underwriting a qualified form of responsibility, without going beyond what his naturalised genealogical accounts of epistemology and selfhood allow. To be free, in Nietzsche's view, is to be a 'person' rather than just a human. A person has character, which is a stable, persistent orchestration and rank-ordering of inner drives, and an act is free when it stems from a person's character.

This also clarifies Clark and Dudrick's interpretation of Nietzsche's will being 'willpower'. The rank-order of your drives is what constitutes your values. A person who is celibate is not *choosing* to do so while he or she may just as well be doing otherwise. Rather, the inner rank-order of the drives is such that the drive to sexual gratification is relegated to a relatively insignificant position in the hierarchy. Should this person be placed in a situation where the drive to sexual gratification is strengthened enough to become subversive (say, when being persuasively propositioned by an attractive potential sexual partner), this drive appears in

consciousness as an unwanted desire for sex (unwanted, because it goes against the authority of the higher ranking drives). If the person turns down the opportunity, the dominant rank-order has been maintained and the subversive drive successfully suppressed, and so the person acted freely (because the action stemmed from the person's character, i.e. the persistent rank-ordering of drives). If the person succumbs to the subversive desire, the rank-ordering is broken, and the person has failed to live up to the self-imposed promise of celibacy.

In the first case, it is not that the person was free rather than unfree, but that the person *proved worthy* of claiming to be free by proving his or her freedom in the act of keeping a promise. In the second case, similarly, it is not that the person is unfree rather than free, but that the person has proved unworthy of claiming to be free, and proved that he or she is *not* as free as was thought, and that more work and effort is required to make claim to a that freedom has *not yet* been attained.

This interpretation of Nietzsche's positive freedom shows it to be, if not superior, then at least as tenable, plausible, comprehensive, rigorous and practical as any other account in the philosophical tradition. Furthermore, it overcomes many of the seemingly insoluble problems that have long plagued traditional accounts, and is far more compatible than those accounts with the growing naturalistic evidence of contemporary science.

It also allows us to finally answer a question that has repeatedly reappeared throughout this dissertation: how do we reconcile Nietzsche's often contrary claims of rejecting[41] and affirming[42] freedom? Is Nietzsche taking the traditional liberal position, or the traditional determinist position, or neither? Gemes (2009: 38-39) gives this answer so succinctly and clearly that it merits direct quotation:

> Why after so much denigration of the terminology of free will and autonomy does Nietzsche in *The Genealogy* employ it in a positive fashion? Presumably, as a subtle challenge to his readers. Rather than simply arousing his (libertarian) audiences' resistance with flat denials of free will and autonomy in the transcendent sense, or, in the case of (incompatibilist) naturalists, confirming their flat rejection of free will, Nietzsche uses that terminology in a positive, non-transcendent, manner in describing the sovereign individual. He then seeks to unsettle his audience with the uncanny idea that autonomy and free will are

[41] For example, in HAH 39, Nietzsche discussed the '*fable of intelligible freedom'* in a way that clearly rejects traditional freedom and responsibility.
[42] For example, the figure of the 'sovereign individual' in GM, discussed above.

> achievements of great difficulty, achievements which they themselves have by no means attained. While the thought that free will does not exist is disturbing, how much more so the thought that free will does exist but one does not oneself possess it! What is at stake here is clearly the notion of agency free will and agency responsibility. It is these that are being attributed to the sovereign individual.

This interpretation of Nietzsche as rejecting deserts while affirming agency shows that he undeniably does endorse a positive account of freedom, and also one which can prescribe a form of responsibility, but which is still compatible with his naturalised genealogical account of humanity and life. But only for some.

But there is still one fundamental problem staring us in the face. If there is no self independent of the drives, and if freedom is the result of a stable rank-ordering of the drives, not by an independent self, but by the drives, are we 'free to become free?' Nietzsche clearly encourages his readers to face up to their own lack of freedom and become more properly free, to become agents and sovereign individuals, but at the same time he seems to imply that it is a case of 'you either have it or you don't', that those with the strength to do so simply will, and those without that strength simply cannot. Put differently, let us say that Nietzsche is right, and that I recognise myself as an inheritor of slave morality, for the most part at the whim of my drives. How am I to answer Nietzsche's challenge? Having recognised my own lack of freedom, how would I, on Nietzsche's account, be free do to anything about it? How does one, for Nietzsche, *become* free? Gemes does not venture an answer, but I now attempt a provisional one.

4.3. Freedom as a return to health: Nietzsche on convalescence

A superficial reading of Nietzsche, especially with regards to the *Genealogy of Morals*, would suggest that Nietzsche regards the aristocratic nobles of ancient times (the *masters*) as paragons of *true* freedom (having the strength to have character), and the herd-people of modern times (the inheritors and results of the morality of mores, the weak, the *slaves*) as exemplars of self-delusional 'freedom'. Any human around today can at the very least lay claim to being a slave, as the longstanding historical entrenchment of slave morality has 'civilised' the human animal to the point where no human being raised in a society would be

fully devoid of any persistent ordering or completely at the mercy of primal anarchic drives, but at the same time has supplanted the noble, masterly moralities of the past. Those rare few who are fortunate enough to be the inheritors of this master 'morality' will have the required strength to maintain character, but the vast majority of us are inheritors of slave morality. The strong are simply strong, the weak are simply weak, and once you have identified your place in the food-chain you would do well not to overstep your boundaries. It should be easy to see how such a superficial reading could easily be construed in support of Nazism, or the elitist 'Satanism' of Anton LeVay, but only because it is so very superficial.

Though Nietzsche cites historical examples of ancient nobles to illustrate the difference between the masterly freedom of the sovereign individual and the slavish freedom of the weak herd, he is not simply advocating a return to ancient aristocratic life. Such is no longer possible in our contemporary age, as these ways of life predated the slave revolt of morality and its attendant consequences of 'guilt', 'bad conscience' and 'resentment'. We modern humans are the results and inheritors of a long process of bloody 'civilisation' conducted by slave morality, and carry its legacy in our very blood.

Does Nietzsche think it possible for creatures such as us to become sovereign individuals? And if so, how does he suggest we do so? This penultimate section of the chapter seeks to answer the first question in the affirmative, and venture an answer to the second.

4.3.1. Overcoming the Legacy of Morality: Recovering from Sickness

For Nietzsche, modern humanity is 'sick of itself', constantly under the assault of disparate competing drives, and seeking only that the war within them reach a peaceful conclusion. With the increasing mixing of races and cultures under globalisation, humanity has become more and more composite in culture and society, and therefore also generally weaker.

> In an age of disintegration that mixes races indiscriminately, human beings have in their bodies the heritage of multiple origins, that is, opposite, and often not merely opposite, drives and value standards that fight each other and rarely permit each other any rest. Such human beings of late cultures and refracted lights will on the average be weaker human beings: their most profound desire is that the war they *are* should come to an end. Happiness appears to them, in agreement with a tranquilizing (for example, Epicurean or Christian) medicine and way of thought, pre-eminently as the happiness of resting, of not being disturbed, of

> satiety, of finally attained unity, as a "Sabbath of Sabbaths," to speak with the holy rhetorician Augustine who was himself such a human being. (BGE 200).

This suggests an answer to Nietzsche's question posed in GM III 13,

> Where does it come from, this sickliness? For man is more sick, uncertain, changeable, indeterminate than any other animal, there is no doubt of that – he is *the* sick animal: how has that come about?

Modern humanity, for the most part, are simply disparate bundles of competing drives. Because one only identifies with the dominant drives, and these dominant drives never remain stable for very long in these weak humans, they (or rather, we) experience most of the drives that compose us as alien forces engaged in a perpetual assault. We are sick of the war inside of us, and desire only that it should end. This also helps to clarify why Nietzsche does not advocate a return to early historical forms of nobility. Though Nietzsche has much praise for the nobility of the Ancient Greeks, this noble way of life required social conditions and accepted boundaries that no longer exist for modern man. For example, we have no clearly delineated *polis* in a contemporary pluralist society, and we are the inheritors of far more diverse and disparate drives. To return to the ancient aristocratic way of life would require nothing less than time-travel.

One can better understand how Nietzsche envisions both the distinction and the relation between the free (that is, the strong willed and healthy) and the not-so-free (the weak willed and unhealthy) by considering two possible responses to the inherent sickliness of man.

Nietzsche alludes to these two 'ways of life' in GS 347, which also provides further elucidation on why Nietzsche relates proper freedom to strength and health, and false freedom to sickness, weakness, and morality:

> For fanaticism is the only "strength of the will" that even the weak and insecure can be brought to attain, being a sort of hypnotism of the whole system of the senses and the intellect for the benefit of an excessive nourishment [...] of a single point of view and feeling that henceforth becomes dominant – which the Christian calls his *faith*. Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he *must* be commanded, he becomes "a believer." Conversely, one could conceive of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence.

The morality of mores responds to this sickness by becoming ascetic; it denies passionate expression of life and its attached suffering, masking its sickness from itself by convincing itself that it has already attained perfect health (i.e. the state of ascetic self-denial). By imposing a morality (which is essentially an imposition of a predetermined rank-ordering of the drives) upon humanity, the ascetic approach allows one to 'quiet down' the inner war, and it is the inherent sickliness of modern humanity that explains the long-standing and far-reaching power of the ascetic tradition:

> That this ideal acquired such power and ruled over men as imperiously as we find it in history, especially wherever the civilization and taming of man has been carried through, expresses a great fact: the *sickliness* of the type of man we have had hitherto, or at least of the tamed man, and the physiological struggle of man against death (more precisely: against disgust with life, against exhaustion, against the desire for the "end"). The ascetic priest is the incarnate desire to be different, to be in a different place, and indeed this desire at its greatest extreme, its distinctive fervor and passion; but precisely this power of his desire is the chain that holds him captive so that he becomes a tool for the creation of more favourable conditions for being here and being man – it is precisely this *power* that enables him to persuade to existence the whole herd of the ill-constituted, disgruntled, underprivileged, unfortunate, and all who suffer of themselves, by instinctively going before them as their shepherd. You will see my point: this ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this *denier* – precisely he is among the greatest *conserving* [...] forces of life. (*ibid*.).

The ascetic denies life in the sense that ascetic traditions (most notably Christianity) seek to replace the actual world with an 'otherworld' (heaven) and the inherent forces of the actual world (life, strength, health, drives, the will to power) with 'otherwordly' props which allow them to justify their way of life as *the* way of life (God, absolute truth, *causa sui* freedom, the soul). This soothes and consoles the suffering of the weak in two ways. Firstly, it imposes a set rank-ordering of drives upon them, in the form a codified tablet of values that regulate behaviour, allowing the weak to repress the instincts that torment them. The drives promoted by this morality are those conducive to social cohesion and the mutually supported survival of the weak:

> As long as the utility reigning in moral value judgements is solely the utility of the herd, as long as one considers only the preservation of the community, and immorality is sought exactly and exclusively in what seems dangerous to the survival of the community – there can be no morality of "neighbour love". Supposing that even then there was a constant little exercise of consideration, pity, fairness, mildness, reciprocity of assistance; supposing that even in the state of society all those drives are active that later receive the honorary designation of "virtues" and eventually almost coincide with the concept of "morality" – in that period they do not yet at all belong in the realm of moral valuations; they are still *extra-moral* [...] In the last analysis, "love of the neighbour" is always something

> secondary, partly conventional and arbitrary-illusory in relation to *fear of the neighbour*. After the structure of society is fixed on the whole and seems secure against external dangers, it is this fear of the neighbour that again creates new perspectives of moral valuation. Certain strong and dangerous drives, like an enterprising spirit, foolhardiness, vengefulness, craftiness, rapacity, and the lust to rule, which had so far not merely been honoured insofar as they were socially useful – under different names, to be sure, from those chosen here – but had to be trained and cultivated to make them great (because one constantly needed them in view of the dangers to the whole community, against the enemies of the community), are now experienced as doubly dangerous, since the channels to divert them are lacking, and, step upon step, they are branded as immoral and abandoned to slander. (BGE 201).

This quotation illustrates more clearly the 'slave revolt in morals' that was alluded to in the discussion of 'predator and prey' at the beginning of this chapter. What we have come to call 'virtues or vices' in the moral sense were all originally drive-expressions. When society was still being established and not yet stable, its survival required certain 'strong' drives (such as an enterprising spirit, a lust to rule, etc.) , but once this stability has been achieved these drives cease to be useful and become a threat to the social cohesion they played a key part in establishing. Under such conditions, and over a long enough time, these drives become considered 'evil' (that is, threatening to social cohesion), and the opposite drives (such as 'pity', 'mildness', 'fairness') become considered 'good' (that is, as promoting social cohesion[43]).

> Now the opposite drives and inclinations receive moral honors; step upon step, the herd instinct draws its conclusions. How much or how little is dangerous to the community, dangerous to equality, in an opinion, in a state or affect, in a will, in a talent – that now constitutes the moral perspective: here, too, fear is again the mother of morals. The highest and strongest drives, when they break out passionately and drive the individual far above the average and the flats of the herd conscience, wreck the self-confidence of the community, its faith in itself, and it is as if its spine snapped. Hence just these drives are branded and slandered most. High and independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, even a powerful reason are experienced as dangers; everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates the neighbour is henceforth called *evil;* and the fair, modest, submissive, conforming mentality, the *mediocrity* of desires attains moral designations and honors. Eventually, under very peaceful conditions, the opportunity and necessity for educating one's feelings of severity and harness is lacking more and more; and every severity, even in justice, begins to disturb the conscience; any high and hard nobility and self-reliance is almost felt to be an insult and arouses mistrust; the "lamb," even more the "sheep," gains in respect. (*ibid.*).

[43] But still in a primarily negative way; not 'good' defined independently of what is 'evil', but defined as the opposite of evil, as 'not evil', as the repression or extirpation of the 'evil' drives without any direct positive contribution.

This is the state of affairs in which we find ourselves, weakened and indoctrinated by age upon age of morally instituted social stability, robbed of the right and chance to develop and express those strong drives which, throughout this chapter, have been shown to be key requirements for Nietzsche's positive freedom. How are we to overcome this? Indeed, it seems almost as if things are such that the very vast majority of us humans are condemned to be weak, and those rare few still capable of strength are in turn to be condemned by us.

This interpretation of Nietzsche, where the strong and the weak are considered mutually exclusive and pre-ordained states, was earlier accused of being superficial. This is because it results from a misunderstanding of 'sickness' and 'health' as binary opposites, much like the misunderstanding of 'freedom' and 'determinism', 'mind' and 'matter', the 'real and apparent', and so on. Rather, sickness and healthiness are linguistic strategies we use to describe different directions of the dynamic and evolving process of life.

Just like our linguistic biases lead us to assume a fictitious 'doer' behind our deeds, they lead us to regard sickness and health as separate and opposed states of existence, when in fact they are only words, metaphorical representations of two experiential interpretations of the same thing. Sickness is life caught in a movement of descending decay (where the strong, life-affirming drives are repressed), while health is life caught in a movement of ascending growth (where these drives are harnessed and given direction, causing them to flourish). For Nietzsche, it is precisely this 'sickness' that makes 'health' possible, as is shown in this quotation which immediately follows his claim that man is *the* sick animal:

> Certainly he has also dared more, done more new things, braved more and challenged fate more than all the other animals put together: he, the great experimenter with himself, discontented and insatiable, wrestling with animals, nature, and gods for ultimate dominion – he, still unvanquished, eternally directed toward the future, whose own restless energies never leave him in peace, so that his future digs like a spur into the flesh of every present – how should such a courageous and richly endowed animal not also be the most imperilled, the most chronically and profoundly sick of all animals? (GM III 13).

From the perspectives of the morality of mores, 'ascetism' and 'aestheticism' are believed to exclude one another, but Nietzsche affirms both states as necessary for a truly healthy self with a truly free relation to its environment, because he recognises that all sickness contains the conditions for new types of health, just as all health hold the risk of new types of sickness.

In a significant sense, the sickness of morality was a necessary precondition that enables the possibility of returning to health.

Nietzsche rejects this opposition between ascetism as negating life and aestheticism as affirming life as a result of these ideals being wrongly understood by the proponents of traditional morality, who are blind to the actual natural origins of the values they advocate universally and absolutely:

> It will be immediately obvious that such a self-contradiction as the ascetic appears to represent, 'life *against* life', is, physiologically considered and not merely psychologically, a simple absurdity. It can only be *apparent*; it must be a kind of provisional formulation, an interpretation of something whose real nature could not for a long time be understood or described *as it really was* – a mere word inserted into an old *gap* in human knowledge. Let us replace it with a brief formulation of the facts of the matter: *the ascetic ideal springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life* which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence; it indicates a partial obstruction and exhaustion against which the deepest instincts of life, which have remained intact, continually struggle with new expedients and devices. The ascetic ideal is such an expedient; the case is therefore the opposite of what those who reverence this ideal believe: life wrestles in it and through it with death and *against* death; the ascetic ideal is an artifice for the *preservation* of life. (*ibid.*).

Ascetism and the morality of mores that flourish under conditions of peace and social stability act to suppress the expression of the strong and masterly drives, but this does not mean that these drives simply disappear. Rather, they turn inwards on the very selves they inhabit, for Nietzsche (BGE 76) notes that "[u]nder peaceful conditions a warlike man sets upon himself."

This turning in of the drives that threaten social cohesion result in *ressentiment*, which is one of the major affects that Nietzsche identifies as impeding a return to health. The concept of *ressentiment* in Nietzsche can be roughly understood as 'resentment', but carries its own unique meaning in the context of his critique of 'slave morality'. According to Sokoloff (2006: 508), Nietzsche links the concept to a network of other concepts in the *Geneology of Morality*, which include suffering, bad conscience, guilt, will, debt, and meaninglessness.

Sokoloff (*ibid.*) provides a concise explanation:

> Ressentiment is a feeling that collects in the body as well as in human consciousness. Although all sensations are linked to specific empirical events that take place at particular moments, this is not the case with ressentiment. It breaks

> the link between feeling and time. The memories of unpleasant events accumulate in the body and are felt as festering wounds. This has a profound impact on subjectivity. In terms of one's relation with oneself, the immediate effect of ressentiment is self-hatred. Ressentiment also has an impact on one's relations with others. Once self-hatred runs its course, the self's feeling of distress is directed at others.

In this way, *ressentiment* is the primary reason that the weak suffer from themselves, and eventually becomes itself a threat to precisely that which it sought to preserve: social cohesion. According to Nietzsche (GM III 15*)*, *ressentiment* is rooted in a physiological desire to deaden one's own pain by blaming it on another:

> For every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an agent; still more specifically, a *guilty* agent who is susceptible to suffering – in short, some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects, actually or in effigy: for the venting of his affects represents the greatest attempt on the part of the suffering to win relief, *anaesthesia* – the narcotic he cannot help desiring to deaden pain of any kind. This alone, I surmise, constitutes the actual physiological cause of *ressentiment,* vengefulness, and the like: a desire to *deaden pain by means of affects.*

Suffering from one's own drives, being sick of oneself, is a symptom of weakness. Overcoming *ressentiment* is thus a way of increasing strength, but *ressentiment* itself works actively against such a return to strength by draining the vital energies of the weak. For Nietzsche (EH, 'Why I am So Wise', 6), nothing is more draining and detrimental to the process of recovery and convalescence than *ressentiment*:

> Nothing burns one up faster than the affects of *ressentiment.* Anger, pathological vulnerability, impotent lust for revenge, thirst for revenge, poison-mixing in any sense – no reaction could be more disadvantageous for the exhausted: such affects involve a rapid consumption of nervous energy, a pathological increase of harmful excretions – for example, of gall bladder into the stomach. *Ressentiment* is what is forbidden *par excellence* for the sick – it is their specific evil – unfortunately also their most natural inclination.

Ressentiment, then, is most detrimental to the resentful themselves. Those who are weak of will are most prone to burn up the little energy they have through frequent but fruitless discharges of *ressentiment,* and so are most unlikely to gather up the necessary energy and strength to break free. How, then, does Nietzsche suggest we weak moderns become strong enough to return to health? By doing as little as possible, giving *ressentiment* as little opportunity to express itself as possible, until a measure of strength has been gathered:

> Against all this the sick person has only one great remedy: I call it a *Russian fatalism*, that fatalism without revolt which is exemplified by a Russian soldier

> who, finding the campaign too strenuous finally lies down in the snow. No longer to accept anything at all, no longer to take anything, no longer to absorb anything – to cease reacting altogether [...] Because one would use oneself up too quickly if one reacted in *any* way, one does not react at all anymore: this is the logic. (*ibid.*).

In this section of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes how he himself coped with his own periodic falls lapses of weakness. Self-overcoming is a never-ending *process*, and no degree of strength can guarantee that one will not temporarily lapse back into weakness. It is thus essential to know how to best cope with these temporary lapses, and how to ensure that they do as little damage as possible to the over-all project of self-overcoming. Yet the experience of *ressentiment*, its perspective, is also a necessary ingredient in this recipe of convalescence. At the beginning of the section Nietzsche writes:

> Freedom from *ressentiment*, enlightenment about *ressentiment* – who knows how much I am ultimately indebted, in this respect also, to my protracted sickness! This problem is far from simple: one must have experienced it from strength as well as from weakness. (*ibid.*).

It is only through first experiencing the perspective of *ressentiment* that one can come to interpret it from a new perspective and thereby overcome it. The cause of *ressentiment*, the turning inwards of strong drives that seek to dominate, also provides the necessary capacities for self-mastery that eventually result in the sovereign individual. The drive to dominate and be master, not being able to discharge itself externally within stable societies, can turn inward and become 'master' of the organism it inhabits, thereby allowing for self-mastery:

> But when the opposition and war in such a nature have the effect of one more charm and incentive of life – and if, moreover, in addition to his powerful and irreconcilable drives, a real mastery and subtlety on waging war against oneself, in other words, self-control, self-outwitting, has been inherited and cultivated, too – then those magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable ones arise, those enigmatic men predestined for victory and seduction [...] They appear in precisely the same ages when that weaker type with its desire for rest comes to the fore: both types belong together and owe their origin to the same causes. (BGE 200).

The period of 'resigning oneself' to suffering, to stop reacting or trying to escape, of 'giving up', so as to gather the strength to overcome *ressentiment*, is for Nietzsche the least detrimental way to go through one's inevitable lapses of weakness. To keep plodding through the snow burns out the little energy one has left, where lying down in hibernation can conserve one's energy. The goal is not to lie down and die, but to lie down so as to increase the chances of *coming back to life*. Nietzsche describes his own personal experience of this

process as follows:

> Born of weakness, *ressentiment* is most harmful for the weak themselves. Conversely, given a rich nature, it is a *superfluous* feeling: mastering this feeling is virtually what proves riches. Whoever knows how seriously my philosophy has pursued the fight against vengefulness and rancour, even into the doctrine of "free will" – the fight against Christianity is merely a special case of this – will understand why I am making such a point of my own behaviour, my *instinctive sureness* in practice. During periods of decadence I forbade myself such feelings as harmful; as soon as my vitality was rich and proud enough again, I forbade myself such feelings as *beneath* me. I displayed the "Russian fatalism" I mentioned by tenaciously clinging for years to all but intolerable situations, places, apartments, and society, merely because they happened to be given by accident: it was better than changing them, than *feeling* like they could be changed – than rebelling against them. (*ibid.*).

This gives us an idea of how Nietzsche suggests we overcome the negative effects of the morality of mores and its universally imposed (and thus 'Conraric) rank-ordering of the drives. Through this process of resignation that allows one to gather strength, *ressentiment* can be overcome. But how does one then impose a new rank-ordering of the drives so as to avoid simply falling back to pre-moral disaggregation and the tyranny of the anarchic drives?

4.3.2. Spiritual pregnancy: returning to health

There is much more involved in attaining proper character than this resigned Russian fatalism, and it is precisely here that Nietzsche's accounts of selfhood and knowledge become most problematic. The process of forging a character and orchestrating a unique and healthy rank-ordering of one's inner drives cannot be done as the result of a conscious decision or design, nor can it be a 'free action', as it forms part of the process that eventually leads to the possibility of free action.

In EH 'Why I Am So Clever' 9, Nietzsche most directly addresses this question of 'how one becomes what one is':

> At this point the real answer to the question, *how one becomes what one is*, can no longer be avoided. And thus I touch on the masterpiece of the art of self-preservation – of *selfishness*. For let us assume that the task, the destiny, the fate of the task transcends the average very significantly: in that case, nothing could be more dangerous than catching sight of oneself *with* this task. To become what one is one must not have the faintest notion *what* one is. From this point of view even the *blunders* of life have their own meaning and value – the occasional side

> roads and wrong roads, the delays, "modesties," seriousness wasted on tasks that are remote from *the* task. All this can express a great prudence, even the supreme prudence: where *nosce te ipsum* [know thyself] would be the recipe for ruin, forgetting oneself, *misunderstanding* oneself, making oneself smaller, narrower, mediocre, become reason itself. Morally speaking: neighbour love, living for others, and other things *can* be a protective measure for preserving the hardest self-concern. This is the exception where, against my wont and conviction, I side with the "selfless" drives: here they work in the service of *self-love, of self-discipline*. The whole surface of consciousness – consciousness *is* a surface – must be kept clear of all great imperatives. Beware even of every great word, every great pose! So many dangers that the instinct comes too soon to "understand itself" [...] Meanwhile the organising "idea" that is destined to rule keeps growing deep down – it begins to command; slowly it leads us *back* from the side roads and wrong roads; it prepares *single* qualities and fitnesses that will one day prove to be indispensible as means toward a whole – one by one, it trains all *subservient* capacities before giving any hint of the dominant task, "goal,", "aim," or "meaning."

Becoming who you are, organising the drives into a stable and unitary rank-ordering that constitutes *character*, does not result from a conscious decision or adoption of a particular way of life. In fact, 'knowing', 'reason', and 'consciousness' act only to impede the process. The process is largely unconscious, and unfolds over *a long time*. A multitude of seemingly unrelated experiences eventually come together as *character*, but only if this character is allowed to work itself out (that is, it is not 'known too soon', assumed as this-or-that, kept as free as possible from plans, intents, and so on). Each human that so emerges as a person with character will be like only to him or herself, and so Nietzsche cannot give us a formula but only relate his personal experience of the process:

> Considered in this way, my life is simply wonderful. For the task of a *revaluation of all values* more capacities may have been needed than have ever dwelt together in a single individual – above all, even contrary capacities that had to be kept from disturbing, destroying one another. An order of rank among these capacities; distance; the art of separating without setting against one another; to mix nothing, to "reconcile" nothing; a tremendous variety that is nevertheless the opposite of chaos – this was the precondition, the long, secret work and artistry of my instinct. Its *higher protection* manifested itself to such a high degree that I never even suspected what was growing in me – and one day all my capacities, suddenly ripe, *leaped forth* in their ultimate perfection. I cannot remember that I ever tried hard – no trace of *struggle* can be demonstrated in my life; I am the opposite of a heroic nature. "Willing" something, "striving" for something, envisaging a "purpose," a "wish" – I know none of this from experience. At this very moment I still look upon my future – an *ample* future! – as upon calm seas: there is no ripple of desire. I do not want in the least that anything should become different than it is; I myself do not want to become different. (*ibid.*).

This section makes more sense of the GS 347 quotation discussed above, as any premature certainties lead to one 'believing fundamentally that one must be commanded', whereas this description illustrates what is meant by 'taking leave of all faith and every wish of certainty' and 'maintaining oneself on insubstantial ropes and dancing even near abysses'. Although this passage implicitly disallows that one simply 'identify' the capacities needed for becoming who one is and then striving for them, it does at least give some indication of what these capacities might be, at least in Nietzsche's case: the strength to contain a wide variety of different and opposed capacities (that is, value-perspectives, drives) within a single organism, and the ability to establish an order of rank and distance between them. These capacities, just like the capacities of memory and forgetting, originate in the bloody pre-history of humanity, and so are just as much a part of our 'inheritance'.

Nietzsche (BGE 257) identifies the origin of the capacity for *distance* and the possibility of higher types of humanity as something that emerged in early aristocratic societies preceding (and thus enabling) the slave revolt of morals. He writes that:

> Without that *pathos of distance* which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata – when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance – that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either – the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states – in brief, simply the enhancement of the type 'man', the continual 'self-overcoming of man', to use the moral formula in a supra-moral sense.

Further in the same section Nietzsche (*ibid*.) warns that we "should not yield to humanitarian illusions about the origins of an aristocratic society", and the possibilities of enhancement for types of human beings that it allowed for. For Nietzsche, like most of our capacities (such as memory and forgetting) the capacity for distance emerged historically out of blood, pain and suffering. He describes the beginning of every higher primitive culture hitherto as follows:

> Human beings whose nature was still natural, barbarians in every terrible sense of the word, men of prey who were still in possession of unbroken strength of will and lust for power, hurled themselves upon weaker, more civilised, more peaceful races, perhaps traders or cattle raisers, or upon mellow old cultures whose last vitality was even then flaring up in splendid fireworks of spirit and corruption. In the beginning, the noble caste was always the barbarian caste: their predominance did not lie mainly in physical strength but in strength of the soul – they were *whole* human beings (which also means, at every level, 'more whole beasts'). (*ibid*.).

Our human history has left us the inheritors of all the capacities that led to our becoming weak in the first place, and that we require for a return to strength and health, as they are the *same* capacities. The question remains how he suggests we orient these capacities away from sickness and towards convalescence, and so become persons with character. Nietzsche suggests an answer in GS 290, where he describes the process of 'giving style to one's character'.

> *One thing is needful*... To "give style" to one's character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and exploited for distant views; it is meant to beckon toward the far and immeasurable. In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and forms everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste!

This description echoes Nietzsche's discussion of becoming who one is in EH, but still seems to imply that it is not something that can be wilfully *done*, but something that will come naturally to the strong and be all but impossible for the weak.

> It will be the strong and domineering natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own; the passion of their tremendous will relents in the face of all stylized nature, of all conquered and serving nature. Even when they have to build palaces and design gardens they demure at giving nature freedom. Conversely, it is the weak characters without power over themselves that *hate* the constraint of style. They feel that if this bitter and evil constraint were imposed upon them they would be demeaned; they become slaves as soon as they serve; they hate to serve. Such spirits – and they may be of the first rank – are always out to shape and interpret their environment as *free* nature; wild, arbitrary, fantastic, disorderly, and surprising. (*ibid.*).

This section of GS gives a better idea of what is meant by Nietzsche's 'aesthetic-naturalistic' account of human selfhood, and also reveals a significant way in which Nietzsche's conception of freedom departs from the tradition. Freedom in the tradition is usually related to chaos, spontaneity, disorder and a *lack* of constraint, whereas determinism is associated with order, necessity, limitations, and calculability. Nietzsche here reverses this trend by showing that the sort of chaotic and boundless *causa sui* freedom of Liberal *laissez aller* is a symptom of those too weak for proper freedom and character, while the traditionally deterministic concepts of imposing measure, order, limit and boundary are essential parts of

proper freedom. It still, however, does not account for the *how* of becoming who you are. And understandably so, as Nietzsche's position does not allow for a *how* in the traditional sense of a linear formula to convalescence.

The closest Nietzsche comes to providing, if not a formula, then at least a metaphorical 'template', is found in his discussion of one's relation to oneself as a relation of 'pregnancy'. In an important sense, Nietzsche (D V 552) regards this metaphoric relation of spiritual pregnancy as the only appropriate way of thinking about one's relationship to oneself:

> And if what is expected is an idea, a deed – towards every bringing forth we have essentially no other relationship than that of pregnancy and ought to blow to the winds all presumptuous talk of 'willing' and 'creating'.

The 'forging oneself' terminology used up till now was perhaps misleading. We do not create or consciously 'will' our proper selves into existence, nor is it accomplished by some process of thought or action. Rather, each person's relationship to their proper self is one of uncertainty and prospective responsibility; of taking care of the potential that is growing within oneself despite the fact that one does not and cannot yet comprehend it; just as a mother cares unconditionally for the child growing inside of her, assigning it absolute value regardless of its particulars. This process cannot be 'willed', as it is this process that leads to establishing a proper self capable of true willing in the first place. This spiritual term of labour is not a task or goal, but a *state* of self-relation as self-consecration. For Nietzsche (*ibid.*) "[i]t is in this *state of consecration* that one should live! It is a state that one can live in!", and it is by living in such a state that one can replace the moral will with a new integration of drives that slowly becomes more genuinely self-willed. His description of this state merits lengthy quotation:

> Is there a more holy condition than that of pregnancy? To do all we do in the unspoken belief that it has somehow to benefit that which is coming to be within us! – has to *enhance* its mysterious worth, the thought of which fills us with delight! In this condition we avoid many things without having to force ourself very hard [...] Everything is veiled, ominous, we know nothing of what is taking place, we wait and we try to be *ready*. At the same time, a pure and purifying feeling of profound irresponsibility reigns in us almost like that of the auditor before the curtain has gone up – *it* is growing, *it* is coming to light: *we* have no right to determine either its value or the hour of its coming. All the influence we can exert lies in keeping it safe. (*ibid.*).

This ambiguous condition of orchestrating one's disparate drives toward a single purpose, without knowing as yet what that purpose is, initially amounts simply to acquiring a strong

conviction that this mysterious purpose is worth pursuing. Like the belief in morality, this as yet unknown value of the proper self one might become must be taken largely on faith. Unlike the faith in morality, the foundations and justifications for this faith are gradually revealed (within the actual world, and not an 'otherworld') as the process unfolds. This faith is in a future state that would be lived, experienced, and so be testable against reality for its value, rather than faith in a future otherworld that can only ever be imagined. The relationship between a mother and her unborn child is thus a very apt analogy for the metamorphosis of the self from a morally burdened camel to a noble lion.

Like the mother, such a spiritually pregnant self has limited control over the circumstances that led to its impregnation. Like her, it initially has almost no awareness of what is taking place within, but becomes more conscious as it gets closer to giving birth. Like her, a spiritually pregnant self regulates its behaviour not for the immediate gratification of its drives, nor according to the dictates of an external morality[44], but solely according to what it believes to be most beneficial to the self growing inside of it. Like the mother, it has no guarantee or certainty of what is most beneficial, nor that the end result is certain to be good, but remains willing in the face of such uncertainty to endure almost anything to see it through. This Nietzschean 'ideal selfishness' is *not* immediate self-concern, but *prospective concern* for the greater self you might become. It certainly does not seek to impose itself like the 'true self' of the traditional positive conception of freedom as self-realisation. Its spreads not by imposition or dominance, but by being an infectious positive example.

> This is *ideal selfishness*: continually to watch over and care for and to keep our soul still, so that our fruitfulness shall *come to a happy fulfilment*! Thus, as intermediaries, we watch over and care for the *benefit of all*; and the mood in which we live, this mood of pride and gentleness, is a balm which spreads far around us and on to restless souls too. (*ibid*.).

Nietzsche advocates this state of spiritual pregnancy and ideal selfishness almost as something of a moral imperative; he believes that it will result in a better world (on earth, and not a better otherworld). This quotation also adds to our understanding of Nietzsche's *prospective* agency responsibility. We have a responsibility to 'become who we are' because we owe it not only to our future possibilities of self, but to the future possibilities of humanity writ large:

[44] And certainly not for the sake of gaining independence through subjugation to the conventions of 'reason', as with the positive conception of freedom as self-realisation.

> *Perhaps premature.* – At the present time it seems that, under all kinds of false, misleading names and mostly amid great uncertainty, those who do not regard themselves as being bound by existing laws and customs are making the first attempts to organise themselves and therewith to create for themselves a *right*: while hitherto they had lived, corrupt and corrupting, denounced as criminals, free-thinkers, immoral persons, and villains, and under the ban of outlawry and bad conscience. One ought to find this on the whole *fair and right*, even though it may make the coming century a dangerous one and put everybody under the necessity of carrying a gun: by this fact alone it constitutes a counter-force and constant reminder that there is no such thing as a morality with an exclusive monopoly on the moral, and that every morality that affirms itself alone destroys too much valuable strength and is bought too dear. Men who deviate from the usual path and are so often the inventive and productive men shall no longer be sacrificed; it shall not even be considered disgraceful to deviate from morality, either in deed or thought; numerous novel experiments shall be made in ways of life and modes of society; a tremendous burden of bad conscience shall be expelled from the world – these most universal goals ought to be recognised and furthered by all men who are honest and seek the truth! (D III 164).

Nietzsche here clearly opposes any sort of absolutist morality, such as that suggested by the various traditional forms of the positive conception of freedom as self-realisation and its metaphysical need for certainty. Far from implying a universal standard of 'freedom', the 'good', or 'selfhood', to be imposed over all others as 'the true' ones, Nietzsche's description of the process of 'becoming who you are' actively resists such absolutising tendencies and promotes an irreducible plurality of possibilities. Those capable of conducting a spiritual pregnancy are deviants of morality *par excellence*. They have overcome the morality of mores within themselves, and are in the process of replacing it with a new self-legislated law acquired through personal experimentation rather than lapsing back to the tyranny of another conventional code of behaviour, or the worse tyranny of their anarchic drives.

If allowed to thrive, they would benefit their societies by acting as a balm for built up *ressentiment* and bad conscience. In this sense, our agency responsibility can be understood as a prospective responsibility to become agents, and thereby maximally contribute to the larger process of humanity's agency precisely by *selfishly* pursuing our own individual agency, by becoming strange and exceptional experiments in self-pregnancy. Alas, it is precisely these exceptions that society seeks to ostracise, because they are seen as a threat to long term stability and prosperity. Such 'pregnancy' utilises strong and dominant drives considered 'evil' (detrimental to social cohesion). Herd-morality is repulsed by the strange and unfamiliar, and Nietzsche laments this unfortunate state of affairs, urging us instead to cultivate societal conditions which would allow such deviance to flourish:

> But the pregnant are *strange*! So let us be strange too, and let us not hold it against others if they too have to be so! And even if the outcome is dangerous and evil: let us not be less reverential towards that which is coming to be than worldly justice is, which does not permit a judge or executioner to lay hands on one who is pregnant! (D V, 552).

This prospective sense of agency responsibility, this imperative to *risk* the dangerous experiment of self-pregnancy, to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of our, and humanity's, future *potential*, is summarised by Nietzsche as follows:

> I love him who justifies future and redeems past generations: for he wants to perish of the present. (Z I, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', 4).

4.4. Conclusion: Nietzsche's positive freedom

This chapter has used the foundations laid in the previous chapters by explicating Nietzsche's notion of freedom in a way that shows it to be compatible with his convictions of epistemology and subjectivity. I have argued that Nietzsche's positive account of freedom attempts to rehabilitate (rather than dismiss) the traditional accounts of freedom in the light of naturalism and genealogical historicity, just as his accounts of knowledge and the self have done.

I began with an analysis of Nietzsche's negative views on agency and responsibility through a reading of his parable of lambs and birds of prey in GM I 13. I then turned to the question of how Nietzsche's bundle of drives could posses a will, and what the extent and limits of such a will would be. Through a discussion of BGE 19, and the contemporary naturalistic and normative readings thereof, Nietzsche's self was shown to be capable of a limited yet nevertheless significant degree of willing, not in all instances of action but in the sense of willpower, the 'strength' to resist temptation and live in accordance with values. These values, which are essentially the expressions of particular rank-orderings of drives, have manifested as various different forms of selfhood and freedom, showing Nietzsche's notion of freedom to be more like a vast spectrum of lesser and greater possibility, and less like the exclusionary binary of freedom *or* determinism found in the established debate. Gemes's discussion of Nietzsche's rejection of deserts free will and responsibility reveals one of the most widespread types of freedom and self that has emerged, that of the 'morality of mores'. This freedom is shown to be guilty of the error of Cornarism, and detrimental to the higher

types of freedom Nietzsche encourages, but also shown to have played an essential role in turning humanity into the sort of thing that could possibly aspire to 'sovereign individuality'. Gemes's discussion of Nietzsche's affirmative agency free will and responsibility shows Nietzsche's positive freedom as a meaningful freedom, insofar as it contains both a normative dimension and a foundation for ascribing a certain sort of responsibility. Finally, my discussion of how Nietzsche suggests we rise to the challenge of 'becoming who we are' and 'giving style to our characters' (that is, how one establishes a stable and persistent rank-ordering of the drives, a personal table of values that regulate our conduct) shows it to be a process of returning to health and recovering from the sickness of the modern condition. This also shows his 'agency responsibility' to be a prospective responsibility aimed at maximising the *potential* of the human race, comparable to the prospective responsibility a mother holds to her child.

In the next and concluding chapter, I place Nietzsche's now clarified conception of positive freedom in relation to the established tradition as it was described through Berlin in the introductory chapter, and make my argument for Nietzsche's positive conception of freedom as more valuable and suitable to our contemporary context than Berlin's pluralist negative freedom, as well as some other contemporary accounts.

Chapter 5:

Nietzsche on the contemporary question of freedom

> *"No: the emotions will not make us cosmopolitan, any more than greed for gain could do so. It is only by the cultivation of the habit of intellectual Criticism that we shall be able to rise superior to race-prejudices [...] Criticism will annihilate race-prejudices, by insisting upon the unity of the human mind in the variety of its forms. If we are tempted to make war upon another nation, we shall remember that we are seeking to destroy an element of our own culture, and possibly its most important element. Nor is this all. It is Criticism that, recognizing no position as final, and refusing to bind itself by the shallow shibboleths of any sect or school, creates that serene philosophic temper which loves truth for its own sake, and loves it not the less because it knows it to be unattainable [...] [But] we are dominated by the fanatic, whose worst vice is his sincerity. Anything approaching to the free play of the mind is practically unknown amongst us. People cry out against the sinner, yet it is not the sinful, but the stupid, who are our shame. There is no sin except stupidity."*
>
> -Oscar Wilde[45]

In this concluding chapter, I return to the problems posed in the first chapter, having now discussed Nietzsche's account of freedom sufficiently to argue that his positive account of freedom can overcome many of these problems. Through this, I show the contemporary value and relevance of Nietzsche's positive freedom, and so support my claim that Nietzsche's account of freedom deserves at least as much respect and consideration as any other contemporary account, if not more. Aside from the work of a few notable Nietzsche-specialists, Nietzsche's positive account of freedom has been largely neglected in the contemporary debate. Some of the reasons for this include that Nietzsche is 'unphilosphical', or simply a naive determinist, or too contradictory to be taken seriously. Based on what has been discussed so far, these claims can be easily dismissed. While he does radically depart from traditional philosophy, his reasons for doing so are thoroughly philosophical, well-argued, and insightful. While Nietzsche may easily be mistaken as a determinist, we have seen that this is simply not the case, as he dismisses both absolute freedom and absolute determinism with equal vehemence. And while much of Nietzsche's scattered dismissals and affirmations of freedom may lead one to assume simple contradiction, or an unwillingness to commit to one position or the other, we have seen that the sort of freedom Nietzsche rejects is sufficiently different from the sort he affirms; that is, his rejection of deserts free will and affirmation of agency free will need not constitute a contradiction.

[45] From *The Critic as Artist.*

Now Nietzsche's positive account of freedom must be positioned within the contemporary intellectual landscape. I begin with a recounting of the most important parts of the preceding chapters by summarising Nietzsche's 'journey to freedom' through an outline provided by his discussion of the 'Three Metamorphoses of the Spirit' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The summarised version of his positive account of freedom is then shown to go against both the traditional negative and positive conceptions discussed by Berlin. On the one hand, Nietzsche gives us good reason to dismiss pure negative freedom as 'empty', insofar as it necessarily relies on at least some problematic metaphysical assumptions that it admittedly cannot justify. On the other hand, Nietzsche's positive freedom is shown to be based on a theory of knowledge and subjectivity that would not allow for the sort of tyrannous perversions that have given positive freedom such a barbaric and unacceptable legacy. I then turn to the merits of Nietzsche's positive freedom over Berlin's proposed suggestion of a pluralist negative freedom justified on practical grounds. Finally, I point to some remaining questions in Nietzsche's positive freedom (such as its relation to his concepts of the Overman), as well as some useful and valuable resources provided by other thinkers. Though these works are beyond the scope of this dissertation, they do point towards the possible political and ethical applications of Nietzsche's account. Finally, I conclude with what I regard to be the true value of Nietzsche's contemporary account: his philosophical approach of creative criticism.

5.1. Three metamorphoses: recounting Nietzsche's journey to freedom

In Z I 'On the Three Metamorphoses', Nietzsche gives a metaphorical account of the journey through which one may 'become who you are', and so attain proper selfhood and freedom.

> Of three metamorphoses of the spirit I tell you: how the spirit becomes a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child.

Obviously Nietzsche is employing the terms 'camel', 'lion', and 'child' metaphorically here, but how are we to interpret them? I argue that these three metaphorical concepts represent three of the most important stages of human development (in the sense of the evolution of the human self and its freedom), each of which represents a distinct approach to the rank-ordering of the drives.

Recall that for Nietzsche most of our 'higher' capacities only began to emerge under conditions of prolonged social stability. Before we turn to the three phases of freedom made possible by these capacities, let us first consider how Nietzsche might see a 'pre-societal' human being.

We can imagine, for instance, a prehistoric hunter-gatherer, when human society was still wild and nomadic. Such a human would be composed only of basic drives[46], and his behaviour easily explained by these drives. Let us say that the three main drives composing this fellow are: the drive to self-preservation, the drive to nutrition, and the drive to procreation. The drive to self-preservation, which is a manifestation of the will to power, would be primary, whereas the drives to nourishment and procreation would be more specialised permutations of the will to power *as* the will to self-preservation. The caveman in question would have something like a stable sense of self, insofar as his primary drive to self-preservation remains dominant. His behaviour would oscillate between feeding and mating, not out of conscious choice, but because his drive to nourishment would be prompted by hunger or thirst, become ascendant, and control the organism's behaviour. The *values* of that drive, what it takes as *good*, is to take in nourishment. While it is in power, this becomes the *good* of the whole organism. Once it is sated, and weakened from this discharge of dominating strength, its competitor sees an opportunity. The drive to procreation, perhaps stimulated by the sight of an attractive cavewoman, now overpowers the drive to nourishment and hijacks the driver's seat. Once the caveman lies spent and sated from mating, he has worked up an appetite again, and so the process carries on. Both drives, though they battle one another relentlessly for control of the organism, are still in service to a higher *good* (drive), that of self-preservation. What the caveman would experience consciously (if he had anything like consciousness) would be only the extreme peaks of this inner struggle, but would still experience a sense of inner unity because the participants of the struggle are united toward a higher goal. They struggle *for* the same reason.

Some of these cavemen, due to fortuitous conditions and constitutions, thrived more than the rest, became stronger than the rest, eventually became the early 'master-types', the barbaric 'beasts of prey' who's drives were strong enough to impose their will not only on the external

[46] We saw in the previous chapters that most of the more cognitively refined drives we traditionally regard as *human* capacities (such as consciousness, language, knowledge, culture, and so on), only developed under conditions of prolonged social stability.

world but also on other organisms (other, weaker, humans). Most of the rest of these cavemen, due to less fortuitous conditions and constitutions, eventually became the early 'slave-types', the timid little lambs and sheep, who were dominated and cruelly exploited by the masters.

The master-types brought the slave-types together and bent these slaves to their individual wills, so becoming capable of accomplishing things on a scale far beyond individual potential. One can think here of most early aristocratic societies, for example the pharaohs of Egypt who 'built the pyramids' (i.e. forced thousands of slaves to work themselves to death under extreme conditions, then took credit for it as the result of their will). As terrible as this was, it not only created many of the most impressive historical monuments we have today but also created 'society' in its early sense, bringing vast groups of human beings together in small areas to fulfil particular goals.

As more time elapsed under these conditions of social stability, our capacities for knowledge, language, will, consciousness, and selfhood began to develop (through a process, initially driven by the master-types, of bloody punishment and sacrifice which *burnt* the capacity for memory into man). This process forced the 'strong' drives of the slaves (such as the drive to dominate others) to turn inwards, because they are too weak to discharge these drives externally as the masters do. Over time the slaves, who outnumbered the masters, began to define their own values by negatively deriving their 'good' (born of weakness) from what is 'evil' (the brutal strength of the masters), and so the slave-revolt of morality began.

These slaves established their own rank-ordering of the drives through an externally codified table of moral 'shall's and shall not's', and so allowed the weak to have a stable and persistent set of dominant drives. But this is also why the slaves continue to suffer, for the dominant drives are taken from an external, uniform, suprahuman set of moral values. One can think here of the establishment of the major ascetic religions, especially Christianity (but including any sect that propounds ascetism as the only good life). Some of the 'slaves', those who were more masterly (the strong ascetics, or slave-masters), played a more active role in establishing this code out of the drives (values) under which they would flourish because of their unique constitutions; but because these constitutions were different from most of the rest of humanity (for all of our drives are unique), the vast majority became torn between these externally imposed values of 'good' and their inherited animal values which have now been

construed as 'evil', and so suffer (become sick) from this tension. A more extreme case of this describes the basic condition of modern humanity, who, following globalisation and the unprecedented mixing of cultures and ways of life which led to our contemporary value-plurality, became the inheritors of a disparate multitude of incompatible values. This state of being sick of oneself characterises what Nietzsche might call the herd-self. And it is this sad state that he feels any human being can lay claim to, whereas only an exceptional few will be able to overcome it and go beyond it.

The camel, the 'beast of burden', exemplifies the first attempt to overcome the 'herd-self' instituted under the morality of mores. Initially, the slaves took their 'will' from the 'masters'. The masters, who had the strength to orchestrate their own natural rank-ordering of drives, imposed this on the slaves. The slaves, eventually weary of the oppression of the masters, replaced these various unique masterly wills with a single, suprahuman will, the will of morality. Put crudely, they traded their earthly masters for a higher master, for a God, or an absolute metaphysical principle. Just as the slaves suffered under the rank-ordering of the masters' drives (which are healthy only for the masters, but make the very differently constituted slaves sick), they now suffer under an even more uniformly imposed rank-ordering, but one that allows them to construe their weakness and suffering as 'good', as a praiseworthy *choice*, and to *blame* the masters for *choosing* not to follow this moral rank-ordering. It is here where the illusions of an immortal soul and a *causa sui* will as pre-given human capacities originates. The 'camels' are those few strong types among the slaves that remained strong even under the 'civilizing' influence of the morality of mores, and who thus were driven to push the possibilities of these moralities to their limits.

> There is much that is difficult for the spirit, the strong reverent spirit that would bear much: but the difficult and the most difficult are what its strength demands. What is difficult? asks the spirit that would bear much, and kneels down like a camel wanting to be well loaded. What is most difficult, O heroes, asks the spirit that would bear much, that I may take it upon myself and exult in my strength? (*ibid.*).

As we saw near the start of the fourth chapter[47], the weak seek to avoid what is difficult, for they seek to avoid all that for which they are not strong enough. Those who are strong (that is, those who happened to inherit more of the blood of the master than of the slave) became,

[47] See pages 99-103.

for the most part, the 'new aristocracy' of the slaves, the ascetic priests and proponents of the morality of mores, for many of the ascetic ideals are, for Nietzsche, very difficult indeed:

> Or is it [the most difficult] this: feeding on the acorns and grass of knowledge and, for the sake of the truth, suffering hunger in one's soul? Or is it this: being sick and sending home the comforters and making friends with the deaf, who never hear what you want? Or is it this: loving those who despise us and offering a hand to the ghost that would frighten us?

These 'difficult tasks' most certainly have the stink of ascetism to them; self-denial, selflessness, the repression of drives to revenge, and so on. But they also have elements of autonomy; being independent from others, not needing their help, not letting the external world determine your behaviour. Those who are strong enough to accomplish these difficult things are driven to do so precisely because it is a test and a proof of their strength, whereas the weak blindly follow the dictates of these most difficult things because they are not themselves strong enough to undertake these most difficult things.

Instead, the weak retreat to a place where these difficult things become easy, where only the acorns and grass of knowledge are available, where one never needs comfort in sickness, where none despise us or are our enemies; in short, to a stable society uniformly governed by a tablet of morality. We have seen this obsessive approach to autonomy before, in the first chapter where the positive conception of freedom as self-abnegation was discussed[48], and also saw there why it is untenable. In this way Nietzsche can account for the existence and persistence of this form of positive liberty (as self-abnegation), while like Berlin he can reject it as a lesser form of freedom. But for some of these camels, these strong slaves who grow weary of the limits of their 'inner citadel', greater freedom is possible, should they be strong enough to become lions. It is their strength itself which will drive them to do so, for Nietzsche (*ibid*) also counts as 'most difficult' that one 'part from one's cause when it triumphs', and the morality of mores had stood triumphant for a long time:

> All these most difficult things the spirit that would bear much takes upon himself: like the camel that, burdened, speeds into the desert, thus the spirit speeds into its desert. In this loneliest desert, however, the second metamorphosis occurs: here the spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert. Here he seeks out his last master: he wants to fight him and his last god; for ultimate victory he wants to fight with the great dragon. (*ibid*).

[48] See pages 11-13.

For Nietzsche, one overcomes the herd self by escaping the herd, by 'going into your own solitude', your own desert. This path into yourself and your loneliness is for Nietzsche nothing less than the path to freedom, the 'way of the creator':

> Lonely one, you are going the way to yourself. And your way leads past yourself and your seven devils. You will be a heretic to yourself and a witch and a soothsayer and a fool and doubter and unholy one and a villain. You must wish to consume yourself in your own flame: how could you wish to become new unless you had first become ashes! Lonely one, you are going the way of the creator: you would create a god for yourself out of your seven devils. Lonely one, you are going the way of the lover; you yourself you love, and therefore you despise yourself; as only lovers despise. The lover would create because he despises. What does he know of love who did not have to despise precisely what he loved! Go into your loneliness with your love and with your creation, my brother; and only much later will justice limp after you. With my tears go into your loneliness, my brother. I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes. Thus spoke Zarathustra. (Z I 'On the Way of the Creator').

The difficulty of this task, of moving away from the herd and in to yourself, is further described by Nietzsche's Zarathustra in a discussion with a youth who has only just begun his journey to spiritual pregnancy. Here Zarathustra compares man to a tree, struggling to grow to the highest heights. To the youth sitting beneath a tree, Zarathustra (Z I 'On the Tree on the Mountainside') spoke thus:

> If I wanted to shake this tree with my hands I should not be able to do it. But the wind, which we do not see, tortures and bends it in whatever direction it pleases. It is by invisible hands that we are bent and tortured worst [...] But it is with man as it is with the tree. The more he aspires to the height and light, the more strongly do his roots strive earthward, downward, into the dark, the deep – into evil.

This comparison of man to a tree reflects many of Nietzsche's views discussed in this dissertation. It is not 'I', a conscious and autonomous self, that determines what I am or do or become, but the unconscious forces of the drives that compose me and the rest of reality, the invisible winds, both internal and external, that bend and torture me into shape. The more I 'aspire to the heights', the more I seek to overcome my limitations and increase my freedom, the more I seek to become who I am, the more my roots dig down, back to the old masterly drives so long repressed by the morality of mores. The more I aspire to the heights of freedom and authentic selfhood, the more I dig into evil; that is, strength as it is defined by slave-morality.

> "Yes, into evil!" cried the youth. "How is it possible that you discovered my soul?" Zarathustra smiled and said: "Some souls one will never discover, unless one invents them first." (*ibid.*).

Here again Nietzsche's views on the self are echoed. The only 'souls' (rank-orderings of drives) we can 'discover' are ones that are pre-existent, such as the pre-packaged 'souls' of the morality of mores. Each person who gives birth to his or her unique and proper self 'creates' a new and unique rank-ordering of drives, a new 'soul' and 'table of values'. Zarathustra can recognise the early stages of this process in the youth only because Zarathustra himself had to undergo such a process. But the first stages of this process, where one must go into the solitude of your own desert, can be very difficult and painful, for at this stage one does not yet comprehend what one is doing or why one is doing it:

> "Yes, into evil!" the youth cried once more. "You have spoken the truth, Zarathustra. I no longer trust myself since I aspire to the height, and nobody trusts me any more; how did this happen? I change too fast: my today refutes my yesterday. I often skip steps when I climb: no step forgives me that. When I am at the top I always find myself alone. Nobody speaks to me; the frost of loneliness makes me shiver. What do I want up high? My contempt and my longing grow at the same time; the higher I climb, the more I despise the climber. What does he want up high? How ashamed I am of my climbing and stumbling! How I mock at my violent panting! How I hate the flier! How weary I am up high!" (*ibid.*).

When the long-repressed masterly drives begin to resist the rank-ordering of the morality of mores, a painful inner battle ensues. Both sets of drives stem from the will to power, the will to dominate and be *the* master, and so one should not expect the moral rank-ordering to give its dominant position away without a fight. The youth loses trust in himself and the trust of others because his ascendant masterly drives disregard the established conventions of 'right and wrong', 'truth and lie', and so on. Nietzsche repeatedly remarks that the herd despise those who seek to transcend it, and view these 'free spirits' as dangers to social cohesion. Because the youth still has a large part of the herd within him, he also experiences this *ressentiment* towards himself. As the stability of the dominant moral rank-ordering begins to falter, the youth 'changes too quickly', his self, his rank-ordering of drives, becomes unstable. This entire process results in the most terrible loneliness, as the youth becomes shunned, despised, and misunderstood by the herd of which he was formerly a part, and on which he had learnt to rely.

Because there is still much of the herd in the youth, he yet experiences the impulses of his masterly drives from the perspective of his dominant herd-self, and so regards his aspirations to the heights as 'wrong' while being unable to account for the desire he despises even as he enacts it. This gives us a better idea of the difficulties and dangers involved in giving birth to

'who you are' and becoming authentically free. Nietzsche sees this as a task for the strong *because* it is an incredibly difficult and dangerous path, full of pain and peril. The youth is still sick of himself, torn between the inherited masterly drives and the indoctrinated slave drives battling within him, he is divided against himself.

The pain the youth undergoes tempts him to simply give up, fall back to the cold comfort of the herd, as Nietzsche warns inevitably happens to those who seek to give birth to themselves, and for which he recommends that 'Russian fatalism' discussed in the last chapter[49]. But Zarathustra consoles the youth and counsels him against this:

> It tears my heart. Better than your words tell it, your eyes tell me of all your dangers. You are not yet free, you still *search* for freedom. You are worn from your search and over-awake. You aspire to the free heights, your soul thirst for the stars. But your wicked instincts, too, thirst for freedom. Your wild dogs want freedom; they bark with you in their cellar when your spirit plans to open all prisons. To me you are still a prisoner who is plotting his freedom: alas, in such prisoners the soul becomes clever, but also deceitful and bad. And even the liberated spirit must still purify himself. Much prison and mustiness still remain in him: his eyes must still become pure. (*ibid.*).

The masterly drives were locked in their cellar by the morality of mores because they are strong, destructive, and threatening to social stability. The new rank-ordering replacing that of the morality of mores must be strong enough to maintain a persistent stability among these historically less tamed and more reckless drives, else they would simply war against each other and return the youth to the anarchic tyranny of the drives that preceded the morality of mores. Doing away completely with the morality of mores and returning to the strong masterly drives is not what Nietzsche is advocating, as this would simply amount to a return to pre-moral barbarism (which we have seen above is untenable in our contemporary context). *Both* the old slavish drives of the morality of mores *and* the older masterly drives must be revaluated and re-orchestrated into a stable yet unique individual rank-ordering, and this is a task of utmost difficulty even for the strong.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra explains these two dangers of spiritual pregnancy – the false danger of loneliness and alienation from the herd on which the youth so long depended, and the truer danger of falling back to a pre-moral barbarism that may well merit the description of 'evil' – as follows:

[49] See pages 137-141.

> "Indeed, I know your danger. But by my love and hope I beseech you: do not throw away your love and hope. You still feel noble, and the others too feel your nobility, though they bear you a grudge and send you evil glances [an example of *ressentiment* in action]. Know that the noble man stands in everybody's way. The noble man stands in the way of the good too: and even if they call him one of the good [as they do the camel, whose strength they explain away as 'good'], they thus want to do away with him. The noble man wants to create something new and a new virtue. The good [the lambs] want the old, and that the old be preserved. But this is not the danger of the noble man, that he might become one of the good, but a churl, a mocker, a destroyer. Alas, I knew noble men who lost their highest hope [their dominant instinct that maintains the rank-ordering of the drives]. Then they slandered all high hopes. Then they lived impudently in brief pleasures and barely cast their goals beyond the day. Spirit too is lust, so they said. Then the wings of their spirit broke: and now their spirit crawls about and soils what it gnaws. Once they thought of becoming heroes: now they are voluptuaries. The hero is for them an offense and a fright. But by my love and my hope I beseech you: do not throw away the hero in your soul! Hold holy your highest hope!" Thus spoke Zarathustra. (*ibid.*).

This echoes Nietzsche's view that the morality of mores, though now an impediment to proper freedom and self, was still a necessary part of the process that led up to the possibility of establishing such a self, and also a great improvement on the barbarity of the anarchic drives without any persistent rank-ordering. Overcoming the rank-ordering of morality without replacing it with a new rank-ordering causes just such a fall back to barbarism, as embodied by the 'voluptuaries'. Despite these hefty dangers, Nietzsche's Zarathustra yet encourages and beseeches the youth to continue his journey, for the end-result for those rare few that succeed is nothing less than the 'sovereign individual'.

For this, one needs the strength of a hero, the strength to slay the great dragon of morality, which for Nietzsche (Z I 'On the Three Metamorphoses') is found in the lion.

> Who is the great dragon whom the spirit will no longer call lord and god? "Thou shalt" is the name of the great dragon. But the spirit of the lion says, "I will." "Thou shalt" lies in his way, sparkling like gold, an animal covered with scales; and on every scale shines a golden "thou shalt." Values, thousands of years old, shine on these scales; and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons: "All value of all things shines on me. All value has long been created, and I am all created value. Verily, there shall be no more 'I will.'" Thus speaks the dragon.

The dragon embodies the particular uniform rank-orderings of all religious and metaphysical moralities, expressing the values of the drives of these rank-orderings as tablets (scales) of 'shall's and shall not's'. Because these moralities each claim to prescribe *the* true way of life, the dragon sees itself as 'all created value', and all other possibilities of rank orderings, all

other inventions of spirit, including all hitherto unknown future possibilities, are proscribed as false. The camel is needed to test and practice the strength of the spirit, and does this by pushing the values of herd morality to their most extreme limits, but success in this leads to loneliness and the *ressentiment* of the herd. This loneliness leads the spirit to its desert, where it is sufficiently removed from the herd to challenge and question its indoctrinated beliefs.

> My brothers, why is there a need for the spirit to become a lion? Why is not the beast of burden, which renounces and is reverent, enough? To create new values – that even the lion cannot do; but the creation of freedom for oneself for new creation – that is within the power of the lion. The creation of freedom for oneself and a sacred "No" even to duty – for that, my brothers, the lion is needed. To assume the right to new values – that is the most terrifying assumption for a reverent spirit that would bear much. Verily, to him it is preying, and a matter for a beast of prey. He once loved "thou shalt" as most sacred: now he must find illusion and caprice even in the most sacred, that freedom from his love may become his prey: the lion is needed for such prey. (*ibid.*).

The camels, those 'strong' members of the herd who are not quite strong enough to become lions (the ascetic priests and preachers of morality) have the strength to affirm their rank-ordering only because they believe it to come from a suprahuman authority, as *the* one and only true way of life, the only *true* values. Such camels are terrified of assuming the right to create values, as this right belongs alone to otherworldly authorities (such as God, or Reason). His claim that the camel regards this freedom of the lion as a matter for beasts of prey makes sense in light of Nietzsche's discussion of the origins of slave-morality and deserts free will at the beginning of the previous chapter[50].

The lion embodies a redirection of the capacity to forget instilled by the morality of mores. Instead of forgetting one's strong primal drives (suppressed under the morality of mores), and remembering that this morality is unquestionable, the lion turns this forgetting and remembering back on the morality itself. The lion, by 'forgetting' absolutely imposed uniform rank-ordering of the morality, and 'remembering' the true natural origins of all values, becomes capable of experimenting with the old values in a new way. This is because it forgets the absolute rank-order of the drives, not the drives themselves, and because it remembers that all these drives come from the same source and have the same potential for value. It can thus also include in these experiments of self all the values formerly proscribed by the morality. This redirection of forgetting and remembering, this 'sacred No', sets the

[50] See pages 99-103.

spirit free *from* the tyrannous limits of morality, and makes it free *to* experiment with its inherited values in new ways.

Nietzsche's above account of why the lion is needed helps to reveals the positive dimension of his freedom. It is not freedom for its own sake (as with the negative conception of freedom), but freedom *for* something higher (something for which freedom is needed, but which is not freedom). This end of freedom is the capacity to *create* new values (to invent new rank-orderings of drives, and so create new types of selves and new types of freedom). Freedom is, in this sense, but a frequent yet indirect result of the process of self-creation and the revaluation of values, just as the drive to self-preservation results from the will to power but is not equal to the will to power.

For this project of self-creation, one must first become a lion, a hero, with the strength to slay the dragon of morality (the dependence on otherworldly authority or metaphysical certainty as a foundation for our values). This is similar to the positive conception of freedom as self-realisation, where the 'freedom' of the true self is aimed at a higher goal (usually, the submission to the rational distinction between the necessary and contingent). Some proponents of this positive conception (for instance, Marx) may be considered lions (insofar as they sought to replace the previous supreme authorities of values with new supreme authorities), but this amounts to simply abandoning one uniform and supra-individual rank-ordering for another. True freedom, for Nietzsche, involves something more than this, and it is in this that his positive freedom can be distinguished from the traditional positive conception.

To become truly free is to establish authentic and individual character. For this one must create new values, new orderings of the drives, endless new experiments of self, until the rank-ordering most conducive to one's individual flourishing is discovered. These values, and their rank-ordering, will, if successful, be yours and yours alone; unsuited to anyone else, let alone to humanity writ large. Unlike the traditional positive conception of liberty, Nietzsche's positive freedom inherently opposes the prescriptive enlargement and imposition of a single 'higher goal', and so does not pose the threat of tyranny so feared by the negative conception.

But the lion is not enough. Such *creation* requires a further metamorphosis, and for this the lion must become a child:

> But say, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion could not do? Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred "Yes." For the game of creation, a sacred "Yes" is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world. (*ibid*.).

While the 'forgetting' of the lion was negative, a way of negating the morality of mores, the child's forgetting is positive, a way of 'creating' and saying "Yes". The 'child' sees value and possibility in all values and rank-orderings of these values, experimenting with new combinations again and again, forgetting those that fail (saying No), and remembering those that show promise, affirming them, at least until more successful experiments show themselves. This sacred Yes, this affirmation of unlimited possibilities of selfhood and freedom, this letting go of the need for a final solution or single certain answer, allows the child to establish an authentic and individual rank-ordering entirely unique to its particular constitution, and so return to health. The child 'creates' a new type of self with a new type of freedom, suited only to itself. This character gives it true freedom, the freedom of the sovereign individual, which Nietzsche here describes in a way very similar to the metaphysically superlative freedom of the liberal tradition (a self-propelled wheel, a first movement). This shows again that Nietzsche does not dismiss freedom, but seeks to rehabilitate it, and make us realise that while it is possible, it is far more difficult and rare than we take it to be, and must *still* be attained rather than taken for granted.

This is Nietzsche's positive freedom: the freedom of the child, the freedom of the sovereign individual, the freedom *to* give birth to a proper self with character, capable of creating new values and pushing humanity's evolution forward. Through this, a self is capable of integrity with keeping promises, because its drives are sufficiently integrated to sustain a persistent hierarchy; one that will be dominant when the promise is made, and stay so until the promise is kept. It is the freedom to take responsibility for *yourself*, to vouch for yourself and your will into the future.

It is not the freedom of the ancient aristocracy, nor is it the freedom of the herd, or the freedom of the ascetics, or the freedom of the hedonists. It is a higher type of freedom, and it is higher because it only becomes possible *through* the cumulative historical processes that first produces the barbarian master (the pre-moral self), then the slavish herd (the moral self, the self of the negative conception of freedom with its illusory metaphysical absolute

freedom), then the ascetic self (the camel, the self of the positive conception of freedom as self-abnegation), then the noble self (the lion, the self of the positive conception of freedom as self-realisation). Only the inheritors of all the various values and rank-orderings of this long historical process have the historically constituted capacities necessary to eventually revaluate old values and create new ones.

It is only through humanity's past failures to become sovereign individuals that we are now potentially capable of doing so. It is only by first being an animalistic bundle of anarchic drives that we become capable of establishing a uniform rank-ordering of drives that result in the herd-self. It is only by first being a mediocre and calculable member of the herd that we begin to desire testing our strength, and so become camels. It is only by being camels and seeing how much we can bear that we become capable of bearing still more and gathering the strength to become lions. And finally, it is only by being fearless lions and brave heroes that we can slay the dragon of fixed values and rank-orderings, and so become capable of creating *new* values, of giving *birth* to the child of our proper self. The child requires the lion, which in turn requires the camel.

> Of the three metamorphoses of the spirit I have told you: how the spirit became a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child. Thus spoke Zarathustra. (*ibid.*).

It is through this process of giving birth to an authentic self possessing a strong and refined character that we stand a chance of answering to Nietzsche's greatest challenge, the challenge he poses following his announcement of the death of God.

> "Whither is God?" he cried. "I shall tell you. *We have killed him* – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the horizon? What did we do when we unchained the earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder?" (GS 125).

When the popular imagination thinks of Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God, they usually imagine him himself making the proclamation with a look of mad glee, but this quotation shows the sorrowful lament of Nietzsche's madman, and the terrible burden of the news he bears. For Nietzsche, the death of God represents that point where biological explanations could account for the origin of existence and humanity in a way that no longer

requires otherworldly or metaphysical speculation (such as 'it was created by God' or 'set in motion by the First Mover' or 'it is the reflection of a higher, truer reality of Forms', and so on). Nietzsche realised that this raised a fundamental problem for our traditional justifications of epistemology, subjectivity, and morality, and this realisation lies at the heart of his naturalistic approach.

Nietzsche does not allow for the possibility of returning to our former otherworldly certainty, as that would amount to turning back time. But neither does he endorse the sort of nihilistic aimlessness and value-relativism which he fears as a consequence of the death of God. Nietzsche recognises that we need truth, values, aims, and means through which to understand and improve ourselves, but also recognises that the traditional otherworldly versions of these are no longer tenable. He does not seek to reject these traditional concepts in light of naturalism, and so either endorse or grudgingly accept the nihilistic and relativistic consequences this would imply. Rather, Nietzsche rejects the exclusionary binary at the heart of the absolutist metaphysical need; 'either absolute truth *or* absolute relativism'. Instead, Nietzsche seeks to rehabilitate these capacities in light of naturalistic evidence, and produce a philosophy capable of creating new values, ways of life, types of selves, and degrees of freedom, in a way that can accommodate the naturalistic evidence that threatens the traditional concepts.

In this sense, Nietzsche does not tell us to simply ignore or blindly accept the death of God. He feels we must recognise it, rather than simply clinging to our now untenable traditional beliefs. But he also does not mean that 'God is dead, and so everything is permitted'. If everything is permitted, humans would never amount to more than pre-moral barbaric bundles of anarchic drives. The death of God is a terrifying event, but it for the first time makes possible even higher forms of human life and possibility. What Nietzsche challenges us to do is to face up to death of God, and own up to the deed of killing God, by becoming gods ourselves; by creating our own values, and standing as their own justification, affirming *our* ways of life without the need for divine sanction or metaphysical certainty.

> Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever will be born after us – for the sake of this deed he will be part of a higher history than all history hitherto. (*ibid.*).

5.2. Back to the beginning: the contemporary position of Nietzsche's freedom

In the previous section, the journey to Nietzsche's positive conception was recounted, and this gives a clearer idea of how his notions of epistemology, subjectivity and freedom relate to one another, as well as to the tradition. Now I wish to explicate why Nietzsche's account gives good reason to reject both the traditional negative and positive conceptions, as well as Berlin's pluralist alternative of negative freedom, while avoiding the dangers of traditional positive accounts. Though Berlin's analysis showed the interrelatedness of freedom and determinism in a way that supports Nietzsche's rejection of this debate as based on a false dilemma, I also here take a moment to clarify why Nietzsche supports neither absolute freedom nor absolute determinism as they are propounded by the two main positions within the contemporary 'free will/determinism' debate.

5.2.1. Nietzsche contra Berlin: overcoming freedom's fatal flaw

Recall that the negative conception of freedom takes individual freedom for granted, as long as it is given a sufficient area of inviolability and non-interference. On this account, non-freedom is equated to external coercion by others. This core assumption of absolute freedom in the negative tradition necessarily relies on some permutation of the traditional conception of the self (as autonomous, consciously sovereign, and *causa sui*). Throughout this dissertation, but especially in the third chapter, Nietzsche was clearly shown to reject this notion of selfhood and freedom. Far from being an essential and metaphysical autonomous *causa sui* conscious agent, Nietzsche shows the self to be a dynamic and chaotic bundle of drives, a collection of biologically constituted and historically developed forces. Because Nietzsche rejects the most fundamental assumption (of a *free human essence*) on which the entire negative tradition relies, the only type of freedom he could advance is a positive one.

If Nietzsche has given us good reasons to reject the negative tradition, which I contend he has, then he gives us equally good reason to reject Berlin's pluralist negative alternative. Though Berlin tries to salvage the negative conception by justifying it on practical and ethical grounds, it is only tenable if human beings are indeed essentially free. Berlin justifies this assumption not on metaphysical foundations or as an absolute truth, but on the practical grounds that it is the *only* viable alternative to positive freedom, which he shows to be

dangerously prone to tyranny. His practical justification that negative freedom is more humane and in line with our pluralist context than positive freedom holds, if the only alternative is positive freedom of the dangerous totalitarian sort he describes, the sort that threatens and crushes the undeniable value-pluralism of our contemporary context through absolute impositions. If, however, a positive conception of freedom exists that fulfils the practical demands of pluralism without relying on the unjustifiable [51] metaphysical assumption of a universally free human essence, then we would have no reason to favour Berlin's alternative, and at least one good reason to reject it (bring that it depends on an admittedly unjustifiable assumption).

But does Nietzsche's freedom provide such a positive alternative? I believe that it does. As we saw in the first chapter, the positive conception of freedom in all its permutations is driven by the metaphysical need for absolute certainty. It shapes the negative conception insofar as it is only by virtue of this rationalistic belief in absolute metaphysical truth that the negative conception can ground its metaphysically superlative conception of freedom as an absolute, essential, and universal human capacity. By divorcing the negative conception from its positive undercurrent, Berlin is forced to give up the only means to justify the absolute freedom on which his negative alternative account relies. He does this because he sees the danger of positive freedom as stemming from its absolute certainty that it is *the* one and only true form of freedom and way of life, and due to this rationalist certainty it is incapable of appropriately handling our contemporary situation of value-pluralism and epistemological scepticism. It is this quest for absolute certainty in the final solution that constitutes the fatal flaw of positive freedom, and the quest to avoid the historically horrifying consequences of this fatal flaw forms the main grounds of practical justification for Berlin's alternative. His negative freedom amounts to the freedom from interference that allows one to *choose* between the plurality of available values which confront us in modern life, and is justified insofar as it allows for an area of inviolable freedom *from* the impositions of absolutist dogmas. But both the negative and positive traditions share one assumption that Nietzsche rejects: the assumption that we already have a complete understanding of what freedom and selfhood are. Nietzsche's approach has been shown to question these fundamental assumptions, and so is perpetually engaged in exploring the multiple possibilities of freedom

[51] As even Berlin admits, which is why he makes a practical argument for it. To justify it would require appealing to some or another absolute truth, and thus make Berlin's negative freedom vulnerable to the same tyrannous perversion as the positive conception.

and selfhood, rather than deciding on one 'true' one and then imposing it at the expense of all the other 'false' ones.

Nietzsche's freedom is undeniably positive; it is a freedom *for* the creation of new values, for becoming who one is and giving birth to one's authentic self and character. Yet, far from posing an absolutist threat to value-plurality inherent in traditional positive accounts, Nietzsche's positive freedom not only promotes but *assumes* pluralism from the outset. Nietzsche's epistemological perspectivism would never allow for the sort of certainty required by the traditional positive conception of freedom for the justification of its absolute imposition of a single 'true self'.

Nietzsche does endorse the idea of a true self as an aspiration each human being ought to strive for, but recognises that the 'true self' of every human being will be unique, unlike any other, a new experiment in selfhood. Thus it imposes an imperative on the level of the individual (to become who you are), but does not allow this imperative to be extrapolated to the supra-individual level, nor does it make any absolute claims on the content of the true self you might become. That is, it encourages every human being to turn their empirical self (a bundle of drives) into a true self (a stable rank-ordering), but could never justifiably prescribe a uniform 'true self' to a group of individuals, for this would amount to Cornarism. Because Nietzsche's accounts of the self and freedom are founded on his perspectivist epistemology, which inherently resists absolutism and promotes pluralism, it runs no internal risk of degenerating into a tyrannical or dogmatic 'final solution'.

This is the one reason that Nietzsche's account is superior to Berlin's; it fulfils all the practical demands of our contemporary pluralist context, but allows for a fuller, more meaningful, more positive notion of freedom than Berlin's 'sterilised' negative freedom. It also justifies itself from the outset on pluralistic grounds, without relying on any metaphysical assumption, where Berlin's alternative practically justifies its unjustifiable metaphysical assumptions on the grounds that they are compatible with our pluralist context.

A further advantage of Nietzsche's account over Berlin's is that it can account for and affirm the value of all the competing traditional accounts. Where Berlin's account seeks to separate negative freedom from its dangerous positive influences, Nietzsche's account affirms all the influences of past accounts as necessary stages in the evolution of human freedom and

selfhood. We have seen that the negative conception of freedom, as well as both main manifestations of the positive conception, have been accounted for in Nietzsche's description of the various stages of humanity's evolution. Nietzsche's account thus not only affirms these past blunders as necessary stages, but also explains their origin and persistence in a naturalistic and genealogical rather than metaphysical way. The various forms of traditional freedom are so many rank-orderings of drives and values, so many possible experiments of self, most of which have forgotten that they were experiments and mistook themselves as truths. Nietzsche's sovereign individual makes use of the whole range of values inherited from this tradition to create its authentic self and proper freedom.

For these reasons, I hold that Nietzsche's naturalistically rehabilitated positive freedom provides an immensely valuable set of resources for thinking about freedom philosophically in our contemporary context.

5.2.2. Nietzsche *contra* Leiter: overcoming the established binary

Now that we have seen why Nietzsche's positive freedom is preferable to Berlin's negative alternative, I would like to take a moment to explicate the relation of Nietzsche's position to the three main positions of the contemporary 'freedom/determinism' debate. These are incompatibilist freedom, incompatibilist determinism, and 'compatibilist' positions.

This division has been alluded to throughout the dissertation, but to recap and clarify: both the proponents and opponents of free will hold that freedom (of the sort that allows for moral responsibility) is incompatible with determinism. If we are free to choose between alternative courses of actions, and could have acted otherwise than we did, our action is free and we can be held responsible. For this to be the case, human beings must have a *causa sui* will unaffected by the natural causal order, and if human beings have such a will, then determinism must be false. On the other hand, if we are determined, part of the natural causal order, then we cannot possess a *causa sui* will, thus we could not have acted otherwise than we did, therefore we are not free and cannot be held responsible. Unlike these two opposed incompatibilist positions, the compatibilist position holds that freedom of the sort that could ground responsibility is not necessarily incompatible with determinism.

Nietzsche clearly rejects the incompatibilist freedom position, for a variety of reasons, but most directly because it relies on the untenable assumption of a *causa sui* will. Yet Brian Leiter claims that his naturalistic reading of Nietzsche lends support to contemporary incompatibilist determinism[52]. As already noted, I reject this interpretation of Nietzsche, on the grounds that it only makes sense to position Nietzsche's account in this way if one assumes the mutual exclusivity of freedom and determinism as it is understood in the debate on deserts free will, an assumption Nietzsche was shown to reject. Leiter's main justification comes from the fact that Nietzsche's account of freedom and selfhood resounds with the accounts of contemporary empirical psychology, most of which reject free will as an illusion. In chapter three, my discussion of the similarities between Nietzsche's account of the self and the contemporary neuroscientific account of Damasio[53] showed that Nietzsche's speculative philosophical account is indeed remarkably compatible with the evidence of modern science, but more importantly that the evidence of modern science is not necessarily evidence for determinism.

While clearly not an incompatibilist deterministic account, Nietzsche's accounts of freedom and selfhood (even his account of knowledge), are firmly naturalised and in-line with the evidence of modern biological science. This is another reason why Nietzsche's account is especially valuable to our contemporary intellectual context. Within the established incompatibilist debate, freedom is defended on the grounds that we cannot give it up without giving up responsibility along with it, while determinism is defended on the grounds that it is can make sense of the evidence of contemporary science, whereas this evidence strongly opposes the sort of metaphysically superlative self of the traditional liberal position. In Nietzsche's account we have a different notion of freedom and responsibility (agency rather than deserts) which is capable of accounting for this scientific evidence while moving beyond the incompatibilist binary and exposing both traditional incompatibilist positions (of freedom and determinism) as flawed and based on a false dilemma.

Does this then mean that Nietzsche is a compatibilist? Gemes (2009: 37-39) makes exactly this claim. He shows that Nietzsche employs very similar arguments to many contemporary compatibilists, insofar as he rejects absolute freedom (which amounts to chaotic, disordered spontaneity) as insufficient grounds for the ascription of deserts responsibility, just as he

[52] See my discussion of Leiter's naturalistic reading of Nietzsche, on pages 118-123.
[53] See pages 83-89.

rejects absolute determinism as insufficient grounds for its dismissal. Rather, the agency free will and responsibility that Nietzsche endorses requires many factors beyond individual control before it even becomes possible, and results in the sort of agency free will that is nevertheless within rather than extricated from the natural causal order.

I agree with Gemes to the extent that if one insisted upon positioning Nietzsche within this established debate, his account would have far more in common with compatibilism than with either of the incompatibilist positions. I disagree with Gemes insofar as I hold that one should do justice to the uniqueness of Nietzsche's account by resisting the urge to position it within a debate he himself dismissed as the result of a superficial and untenable binary distinction.

For Nietzsche, there is no real distinction between freedom and determinism, just as there is no real distinction between mind and matter, the real and apparent, the internal and external world, truth and lie, and so many other traditional binaries. As we have seen, these distinctions are at best conceptual and occasionally useful, but they remain but a few of a vast plurality of possible perspectives, and all perspectives emerge from the same thing: life, vitalistic, powerful, flourishing *life*. Life as the will to power. The perspectives of freedom and determinism do not need to be made compatible, nor could they possibly be incompatible. For Nietzsche, they are the already the same, and it is we who add or subtract from their value depending on how we use them to become who we are.

5.2.3. A provisional conclusion: Nietzsche's freedom today

From the above discussion, the justification for my claims made in the introductory chapter should be clear. Nietzsche's account of freedom, selfhood and knowledge manages to rehabilitate problematic traditional concepts in the light of naturalism and pluralism, without degenerating into the pathologically sceptical nihilism he feared would follow the death of God, and which constantly threatens much of postmodern philosophy. Nietzsche is a bridge between the overly extreme Enlightenment metaphysical assumptions of freedom, unity, certainty, and systematic truth and the equally extreme nihilistic reckless abandonment to relativism, absolute disunity, and hopelessness. For Nietzsche, our earlier traditional accounts made the fatal assumption that sovereign selfhood is a self-evident given, something already

achieved, while I hold that he would regard the postmodern tradition as making the equally fatal assumption that sovereign selfhood is impossible. In Nietzsche's view, it is something that must *still be* achieved, and something *worth* achieving because it is rare and difficult.

Nietzsche gives us a positive conception of freedom compatible with our contemporary intellectual climate, capable of accounting for all our other conceptions of freedom, and capable of overcoming the problems and dangers of traditional accounts. It gives us good reason to reject the traditional freedom position in light of naturalistic evidence, but also gives us an alternative interpretation of this evidence beyond merely surrendering to the counter-intuitive yet strongly evidenced 'fact' of determinism. Above all, it sets us a challenge, compels us to test and explore the possibilities of human potential, rather than simply making assumptions about this potential or the lack thereof. It encourages and supports value-pluralism, while also pointing to the possibility of forging a meaningful stability from this pluralism (both inside the individual, from his or her inner plurality of drives, and in society, from the plurality of rank-orderings of drives and competing claims of values). Unlike the negative conception, it does not tell us to simply accept human nature as it is. Unlike the positive conception, it does not demand we transform human nature into something that would allow for a final solution. It just gives us the imperative to change and not simply settle for our given human nature, to explore its possibilities, and to contribute to its unfathomable future possibilities. It gives us an imperative to be a little more humble in our certainty, and never to think that we could reach a final word on anything, for that would amount to the arrogance of thinking that we are capable of exhausting the possibilities of life. In short, it allows us to affirm both the metaphysical scepticisms of postmodernism and the empirical conclusions of contemporary biological science without lapsing into the nihilism that Nietzsche feared or the determinism he rejected.

5.3. Beyond the end: the possibilities of Nietzsche's freedom

In this section, I would like to point to some further resources that could be used to compliment this account of Nietzsche's positive freedom, but which fell beyond the scope of this dissertation. Each is accompanied by a reason for their non-inclusion, and what I regard

to be the loveliest thought they have to offer in terms of what has been discussed here. All works mentioned here appear in the bibliography.

I have claimed that Nietzsche, far from being the nihilistic denier of all higher capacities and possibilities he is often thought to be, embodied in his philosophy a significant bridge between modern and postmodern thought. His philosophy is a sort of documentary of the great turning point, the 'death of God', and philosophy's attempts to come to terms with its patricide. There are some thinkers who go further still, and seek to show that Nietzsche was more of a modernist than he himself would ever have admitted. Two particularly interesting examples are worthy of mention, though they have been largely unused in this dissertation because I feel that they disregard Nietzsche's strong oppositions to 'systematic philosophy' and do Nietzsche an injustice by seeking to systematise his philosophy. Nevertheless, see Will Dudley's *Hegel, Nietzsche, and Philosophy: Thinking Freedom* (2002) for a much more systematic and rationalised account of Nietzsche's thought on freedom and selfhood. Dudley contends that Nietzsche's thought on freedom resounds with that of Hegel, the rationalist system-builder *par excellence*. Another noteworthy perspective is found in William Sokoloff's article 'Nietzsche's Radicalization of Kant' (2006). Here Sokoloff argues that the modern tendency to position Nietzsche and Kant on opposing places on the theoretical spectrum is mistaken, and that Nietzsche had more in common with Kant than is commonly admitted. Both of these 'remodernisations' of Nietzsche's thought on freedom are well worth a read, and very interesting, but do not fit with the perspective of this dissertation.

For a contemporary account of ethics based on Nietzsche's perspectivist epistemology and naturalised account of the self and its freedom, that is, an account of ethics grounded on Nietzsche's agency responsibility, see chapters 5 and 6 of Robert Solomon's *Living with Nietzsche: What the Great "Immoralist" Has to Teach Us* (2003). Here Solomon gives us an idea of what a 'demoralised' and pluralist but positive account of Nietzschean ethics might look like, by comparing Nietzsche's ethics to a naturalised version of Aristotle's virtue-ethics. One beautiful thought we can take from here is Solomon's depiction of a 'virtue' as a drive that has been successfully orchestrated into the greater rank-ordering, and a 'vice' as a yet untamed and subversive drive resisting such rank-ordering. Solomon shows how Nietzsche revaluates the values and virtues of the past, rehabilitating them rather than rejecting them. For a concrete example of Nietzsche's idea of virtue, see his discussion of the virtue of chastity in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Z I 'On Chastity').

Though Berlin approaches the question of freedom from a political perspective, this dissertation has chosen to focus on the personal dimension of human freedom. I have said little about what a society based on this conception of freedom might look like, but for an account of the political applications of Nietzsche's philosophy, I highly recommend David Owen's *Nietzsche, Politics & Modernity* (1995). Here Owen first uses Nietzsche's philosophy to construct an 'agonsitic conception of politics' and then compares this to the two strongest forms of contemporary liberal politics, Rawls's 'political liberalism' and Rorty's 'liberal pluralism', showing it to be more suited to the political maintenance of a plurality of competing values that characterises our contemporary political context. Owen's account also allows us to assign a rank-ordering to these competing values, so that none are absolutely excluded (as 'comprehensive doctrines' are with Rawls) but without degenerating to self-affirmed value-relativism (as with Rorty). A beautiful thought from this account is Owen's characterisation of Nietzsche's 'Overman' as a *formal* rather than *substantive* political conception of the good. Rawls famously disallows any substantive or 'comprehensive' accounts of the good as a basis for political principles of justice, because this would threaten pluralism (in much the same way as the traditional positive account of freedom). Rawls's 'freestanding political conception' of justice amounts to little more than Berlin's sterilised negative conception of freedom, whereas Nietzsche's use of a formal rather than substantive standard of the good provides powerful political resources and direction without threatening pluralism. This is because the formal standard of the 'Overman' makes no substantive claims on what one is or the content of what one should become, but claims only that one *ought* to become more than what one is, become an authentic self, and so contribute to the flourishing of life by testing and questioning rather than simply accepting one's limitations and 'inherent' characteristics.

Finally, in terms of Nietzsche's relation to modern scientific accounts of freedom and selfhood, two further sources are worth exploring. The first is Daniel Wegner's *The Illusion of Conscious Will* (2002), which, following Leiter, provides a basis in contemporary empirical psychology for reading Nietzsche's position on freedom as that of incompatibilist naturalism. Because, as has been mentioned, I disagree with Leiter on this reading of Nietzsche, no direct exploration of Wegner is conducted in this dissertation, but Wegner's book is recommended to anyone who leans more towards Leiter's perfectly plausible and well-argued interpretation.

The second is Jose Delgado's article 'The Psychophysiology of Freedom' (1983). I chose to focus on the relation between Nietzsche and Damasio and their accounts of the self, because Damasio's work is far more recent than Delgado's. Damasio is also more eminent, and for these practical considerations I chose to include Damasio rather than Delgado. Nevertheless, Delgado's article provides a fascinating account of the psychophysiological processes behind human freedom and conscious volition, and these resound as much with Nietzsche's account of freedom as Damasio does with Nietzsche's account of the self. An especially beautiful thought from Delgado is his characterization of the neural mechanism of human freedom (the ability to deliberate between alternatives and choose one, the capacity of choice) as a recently evolved and high-order brain function requiring an enormous amount of nutritional energy. This gives us another way to understand the possibilities and limitations of Nietzsche's naturalised account of freedom: most of our thoughts, actions and behaviour is determined unconsciously because the organism only has limited energy and a free choice (in Nietzsche, 'willpower') is very costly in terms of energy. The stronger, healthier, and more 'fit' we are, the freer we can become.

5.4. Nietzsche as critical artist: a necessarily inconclusive conclusion

Nietzsche is often seen as more critical than anything else, but we have seen throughout this dissertation that his critical destruction is aimed at clearing room for critical creation, for the creation of new values, perspectives, and ways of life. I would like to finish this dissertation by clarifying my final claim: Nietzsche is indeed primarily a critic, but an artistic critic.

In his *The Critic as Artist*, Oscar Wilde's Gilbert describes true criticism, criticism *as* creation and artistry rather than mere interpreter, and its incredible importance, as follows:

> It is to Criticism that the future belongs. The subject-matter at the disposal of creation becomes every day more limited in extent and variety [...] The old roads and dusty highways have been traversed too often. Their charm has been worn away by plodding feet, and they have lost that element of novelty and surprise which is so essential for romance. He who would stir us now [...] must either give us an entirely new background, or reveal to us the soul of man at its innermost workings [...] People sometimes say that fiction is getting too morbid. As far as psychology is concerned, it has never been morbid enough. We have merely

> touched on the surface of the soul, that is all. In one single ivory cell of the brain there are stored away things more marvellous and more terrible than [we] have dreamed of, who [...] have sought to track the soul into its most secret places, and to make life confess its dearest sins. Still, there is a limit even to the number of untried backgrounds, and it is possible that a further development of the habit of introspection may prove fatal to that creative faculty to which it seeks to supply fresh material. I myself am inclined to think that creation is doomed. It springs from too primitive, too natural an impulse. However this may be, it is certain that the subject-matter at the disposal of creation is always diminishing, while the subject-matter of Criticism increases daily. There are always new attitudes for the mind, and new points of view. The duty of imposing Form upon chaos does not grow less as the world advances. There was never a time when Criticism was more needed than it is now. It is only by its means that Humanity can become conscious of the point at which it has arrived.

The interpretation of Nietzsche in this dissertation shows him to exemplify *this* critical spirit. Nietzsche not only delves into the nature of the human soul with unprecedented honesty and brutality, and not only exposes all the limitations and short-comings of our traditional perspectives, but does all of this in the spirit of critical creation, of allowing for new creations from 'fresh material'.

Nietzsche rejects 'I think therefore I am', but replaces it with 'I do, therefore I become'. He rejects 'as above, so below', but replaces it with 'as within, so without', and instead of claiming that his philosophy is the *true, right, proper* answer while all others are wrong, Nietzsche seeks to show us that it is possible to be *less* wrong (though never right) and challenges us to critically test everything (including, and often especially, his own philosophy) so as to perpetuate this process of becoming less and less wrong.

Nietzsche himself acknowledges that *his* philosophy is just that, *his* expression and rank-ordering of his particular drives. The way to proper selfhood and freedom he describes, the way to self-overcoming, is not a religious or spiritual doctrine, nor a formula for others to follow. This is perhaps the most significant way in which Nietzsche's entire philosophy affirms the irreducible plurality of values we live amongst: he displays *his* way at best as an example and a challenge, not a way of showing what is possible for all but a way of showing that *more* is possible for some:

> By many ways, in many ways, I reached my truth: it was not on one ladder that I climbed to the height where my eye roams over my distance. And it was only reluctantly that I ever inquired about the way: that always offended my taste. I preferred to question and try out the ways themselves. A trying and questioning was my every move; and verily, one must also learn to answer such questioning.

> That, however, is my taste – not good, not bad, but *my* taste of which I am no longer ashamed and which I have no wish to hide. "This is *my* way; where is yours?" – thus I answered those who asked me 'the way.' For *the* way – that does not exist. Thus spoke Zarathustra. (Z III 'On the Spirit of Gravity', 2).

The actual content of Nietzsche's positive account, as valuable and useful as it is for our contemporary context, was never intended by Nietzsche to be *the* answers or solutions, only an example of the new sorts of answers and solutions made possible by our unique post-metaphysical age, and a suggestion at how one might cope with its inherent nihilism and relativism. Of far more value to the individual seeking to become who he is and give birth to his authentic self in this age is the critical spirit embodied by Nietzsche's philosophical thinking. It is this that will allow each of us to find *our* way to *our* true self, while at the same time respecting the diverse ways and values of others, because all are just so many experiments in selfhood, freedom, and life. The value of these experiments, and their rank relative to one another, can only be determined *after* the experiments have clashed with one another, strengthened one another, and tested one another. Because this process of experimentation can never reach an end or be completely exhausted, no final or absolute value-judgements on these experiments could ever be made, but this does not mean that we cannot judge some approaches as more conducive to the perpetual flourishing of life and humanity than others. For this more than any other reason, Nietzsche's philosophy is of the utmost relevance and value to our contemporary world.

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to demonstrate the contemporary value and relevance of Nietzsche's conception of positive freedom. I begin with a brief history of the established philosophical debate around the question of freedom. Though the negative conception is traditionally regarded as less problematic or prone to tyranny than the traditional positive conception, these advantages come at a heavy price. I argue that Nietzsche's positive conception is capable of providing all the traditional advantages of positive freedom without running its traditional risk of tyranny. Furthermore, it can also account for the existence and persistence of both traditional conceptions of freedom. Nietzsche's freedom is shown to be rooted in a perspectivist epistemology that overcomes the absolutising tendencies of the rationalist foundations of traditional accounts. This epistemology is also far more suited to our contemporary postmodern intellectual climate. Nietzsche's freedom is also rooted in a naturalised account of human subjectivity that overcomes the problematic metaphysical reliances of traditional accounts (on, for example, autonomous subjectivity and *causa sui* free will) while also being far more compatible with the evidence of contemporary science. This leads to a conception of freedom that is both positive and conducive to our contemporary contexts of globalised political value-pluralism, as well as providing a more suitable way of thinking about our notion of responsibility in this context. It also overcomes the freedom/determinism binary of the established debate, showing that freedom develops best under conditions of restraint. But Nietzsche does not allow for freedom universally. Freedom, for Nietzsche, is something that must be earned, and few human beings truly attain it. Nevertheless, Nietzsche does at least give an indication of how one might increase one's freedom. From this I conclude that Nietzsche's account of positive freedom holds great potential value for reflection on the question in our contemporary context, and at the very least deserves the same consideration as any of the currently established accounts.

Key terms

'Freedom', 'Determinism', 'Compatibilism', 'Negative liberty', 'Positive liberty', 'Perspectivism', 'Subjectivity', 'Drives', 'Agency', 'Deserts', 'Naturalism', '*causa sui*', 'Autonomy', 'Responsibility', 'Will', 'Neuroscience', 'Creative criticism' 'Authenticity', 'Self-overcoming'.